

## TOURISM SECTOR TRANSFORMATION AND REGIONAL DEVELOPMENT: THE CASE OF NAMANGAN REGION

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**Abstract:** The article presents the development of tourism in the Namangan region, the results of positive work being carried out in this regard, the conditions being created for the development of the tourism sector in the region, the assessment of the tourism potential of the regions in the formation and implementation of a tourism strategy, and the main directions of development of the tourism sector in the region in the future.

**Keywords:** state, tourism, opportunity, factors, economic resources, tourist companies, profit.

### 1. Introduction

The geographical location of our republic, its favorable natural and climatic conditions, unique, wonderful historical monuments, fruits, national cuisine, traditions and customs indicate the great potential of tourism. The current political instability in our country also plays an important role in the development of the tourism sector. In recent years, a number of Resolutions and Decrees have come into force in Uzbekistan, especially in the regions and remote villages, which serve as a solid legal basis for the sustainable development of the sector. Measures for the development of tourism in Uzbekistan are directly determined by the state, and international agreements and agreements are being signed with many foreign countries to further develop economic relations and develop the tourism sector with foreign partners.

### 2. Literature review

Research on strategic tourism development directions generally emphasizes sustainable economic growth, efficient use of resources, and the development of tourism in an ecologically balanced manner. For example, it has been shown that for a tourism strategy to be effective, harmony between environmental, cultural heritage, and economic objectives is necessary (Kaikara, 2020).

In a model developed by Rodrigues et al. (2025) based on an analysis of the scientific literature, areas such as sustainability, infrastructure, governance, and innovation in tourism

were identified as important, which indicates the need for an integrated approach to strategic decision-making.

The introduction of innovations in the tourism sector, in particular through digital technologies and experiential marketing, has been widely noted in research. Damiasih (2025) has expanded the role of innovative marketing strategies in developing sustainable tourism, and this direction includes strategy, technology integration and collaboration.

The role of marketing strategies at the local level has also been in the spotlight, with Kusekeev (2025) suggesting directions for digital platforms, brand building and domestic market development using the example of Karakalpakstan.

The domestic segment of tourism has been identified as an important area for economic growth and cultural exchange. Osarov (2025) analyzed the current state of domestic tourism and its development strategies based on SWOT analysis and made recommendations for strengthening domestic tourism. The socio-economic aspects of tourism have also been a major object of research, highlighting the need to integrate historical and cultural heritage with tourism and the need to preserve cultural values through tourism (Meliboyeva, 2025).

Innovations are also influencing the direction of improving the quality of tourism services and digitalization. Bakhshilloev (2025) emphasized the importance of achieving sustainability and integration through the application of innovative processes in tourism. Also, research published in 2025 revealed the prospects of digital "digital twins" technologies in tourism management and improving the quality of experience (Almeida, 2025).

A study on the strategic development of tourism in the Kashkadarya region noted that components such as infrastructure, clusters, and investment attraction play an important role (Daminova, 2025).

Infrastructure development directly affects the qualitative growth of tourism. Yunusova (2025), describing the complex directions of tourism infrastructure development, emphasized the importance of digitalization.

Ismailov (2025) proposes strategies for sustainable tourism development that combine environmental, economic, and social approaches. These directions are recommended for the implementation of sustainable tourism.

### **3. Analysis and results**

Our country has a huge tourism and recreation potential, with a total of 7.4 thousand cultural heritage sites, 209 of which are located in four museum cities - "Ichan-Kala in Khiva",

"Historical Center of Bukhara", "Historical Center of Shakhrisabz", "Samarkand", and are included in the UNESCO World Heritage List.

In recent years, major investment projects have been implemented to develop tourism infrastructure, including the opening of the "Nyatt Regency Tashkent" and "Lotte City Notel Tashkent Palace" branded hotels in Tashkent, the creation of cultural and entertainment parks in Andijan, Urgench and Tashkent, the opening of the "Angren-Pop" railway, and the opening of electrified railways for high-speed trains to the cities of Bukhara, Karshi, Shakhrisabz and Khiva [1].

Statistics on foreign and domestic tourists visiting the Republic of Uzbekistan show significant changes between 2017 and 2023. While the number of foreign tourists in 2017 was 5.35 million, in 2019 this figure reached around 7 million. At the same time, in 2020, due to the introduction of restrictions due to the COVID-19 pandemic, the number of foreign tourists decreased sharply, falling to 1.7 million. In 2021 and 2022, a recovery process was observed, with the number of foreign tourists reaching 2.72 million and 5.23 million, respectively, and in January-March 2023 this figure reached 2.59 million. In terms of age, tourists in the 31–55 age group accounted for the largest share (1.4–2.6 million people during 2017–2023), while the shares of the 0–18 and 19–30 age groups were relatively smaller.

Table -1

INFORMATION about foreign tourists who visited the Republic of Uzbekistan and local tourists who traveled there

Indicator name	unit of measurement	2017	2018	2019	2020	2021	2022	2023
Foreign tourists	a thousand people		5 346,0	6 041,0	7 010,0	1 700,0	2 720,0	1 487,5
		2 690,1	5 346,2	6 748,5	1 504,1	1 881,3	5 232,780	2 589,2
	percentage		100,0	111,7	21,5	110,7	192,4	174,1
of which in the youth segment:	a thousand people	2 690,1	5 346,2	6 748,5	1 504,1	1 881,3	5 232,8	2 589,3

From 0 to 18 years old		218,7	434,6	611,8	140,7	270,9	723,3	328,6
From 19 to 30 years old		548,6	1 090,3	1 315,9	285,8	312,6	846,5	401,5
From 31 to 55 years old		1 401,7	2 785,7	3 458,6	787,5	935,4	2 593,4	1 317,7
Over 55 years old		521,1	1 035,6	1 362,2	290,2	362,5	1 069,6	541,6
then according to the purpose of the trip:		2 690,1	5 346,2	6 748,5	1 504,1	1 881,3	5 232,8	1 487,7
service	a thousand people	28,4	56,5	53,1	17,4	60,7	83,8	27,0
study		7,4	14,6	21,4	4,7	6,4	8,8	3,3
rest and leisure		230,5	458,1	1 043,9	129,3	155,1	392,2	108,1
the elimination of relatives		2 371,7	4 713,5	5 520,7	1 321,4	1 613,1	4 657,6	1 322,2
treatment		26,4	52,5	55,5	15,0	32,4	70,0	17,5
commerce		25,6	50,9	53,9	16,3	13,6	20,5	9,7
by visit geography	Thousand people		5 346,2	6 748,5	1 504,1	1 881,3	5 232,8	1 487,7
from neighboring countries			4 658,4	5 827,1	1 350,4	1 540,9	4 364,8	1 273,0
from the rest of the CIS countries			406,2	495,6	90,0	208,2	606,4	147,6

from other countries			281,6	425,8	63,8	132,3	261,6	67,1
Export	Thousand US dollars		1 041 000,0	1 180 000,0	1 360 000,0	400 000,0	900 000,0	300 000,0
	Thousand US dollars	531 022,4	1 041 088,6	1 313 032,3	260 987,4	422 069,7	1 610 099,7	833 469,2
	Percent		100,0	111,3	19,2	105,5	178,9	277,8
from which:	Thousand US dollars		1 041 074,5	1 313 009,6	260 979,6	422 063,0	1 610 099,7	437 315,7
from neighboring countries			583 135,9	695 931,8	158 554,8	195 900,9	880 877,4	256 134,8
from the rest of the CIS countries			258 180,7	315 022,4	57 191,3	132 331,9	450 398,3	109 649,2
from other countries			199 757,8	302 055,4	45 233,5	93 830,2	278 824,0	71 531,8
Domestic tourists	a thousand people		15 493,0	16 100,0	17 230,0	7 500,0	10 000,0	1 687,1
		10562,1	12 489,2	14 748,0	3 534,1	5 813,9	11 435,5	2 013,3
	Percentage		80,6	91,6	20,5	77,5	114,4	119,3

In terms of travel purposes, the majority of tourists came to Uzbekistan to visit relatives. For example, in 2019, out of 5.52 million people, 1.04 million traveled for recreation and leisure, 53 thousand for business, and 21 thousand for study. At the same time, the share of tourists for medical treatment and business purposes was relatively low.

From a geographical point of view, the majority of tourists visiting Uzbekistan came from neighboring countries, with 4.66 million in 2017, 406 thousand from other CIS countries, and 282 thousand from other countries. This trend is expected to continue in 2023, with 1.27 million



tourists from neighboring countries, 148 thousand from other CIS countries, and 67 thousand from other countries.

Export figures also corresponded to the volume of tourism-related services. While in 2017 the volume of exports amounted to 1.041 billion US dollars, in 2022 this figure reached 1.61 billion dollars, and in the first quarter of 2023 it was equal to 833 million dollars. This growth was mainly due to tourists from neighboring countries and the rest of the CIS countries.

Domestic tourism also showed significant growth indicators. While in 2017 the number of domestic tourists was 15.49 million people, in 2022 this figure was 11.43 million people. Domestic tourism also decreased significantly during the pandemic, but in the first quarter of 2023 a trend of growth was observed again.

Uzbekistan has achieved steady growth in tourism, but the global pandemic and other economic factors have caused temporary declines. The accuracy of the number of tourists by age and destination, as well as export and geographical distribution indicators, serve as an important source of information in the formation of tourism policy.

The state policy in the field of tourism is aimed at ensuring that the tourism sector leads in the complex and accelerated development of regions and their infrastructure in the future, solving urgent socio-economic problems, increasing jobs, ensuring diversification and development of regions, increasing the income, standard of living and quality of life of the population, and improving the investment attractiveness and image of the country.

When analyzing the travel purposes of foreign citizens who entered Uzbekistan in 2022, the majority of them were determined to be close relatives (89.0%). There were also those who came for study (0.2%), medical treatment (1.3%), business trips (1.6%), leisure and recreation (7.5%), and commercial purposes (0.4%). As can be seen from the figures, most foreign citizens are visiting Uzbekistan to visit close relatives [2].

The Namangan regional tourism department is also carrying out positive work in the region to be in the center of attention, attract more visitors, as well as to ensure the implementation of a number of resolutions and decrees of the President of the Republic of Uzbekistan and the Cabinet of Ministers on the development of the tourism sector. In particular, during January-September 2024, 569.9 thousand foreign tourists (114% of the annual plan) and 3569.9 thousand local tourists visited the Namangan region, and 184.7 million. (92.4% of the annual plan) US dollars worth of tourism services were exported. At the same time, within the framework of the "Travel around Uzbekistan" program, 147.8 thousand people were attracted

to domestic tourism in September, and a total of 2016.3 thousand people since the beginning of the year were attracted, and the annual plan for 2024 was achieved by 92%.

In addition, during the past period, the annual plan set for 2024 was implemented by 633% by establishing a total of 19 tour operators and travel agents. Also, to date, 5 hostels with 121 beds (125% compared to the annual plan), 1 dormitory with 9 beds, 1 family hotel with 10 beds, and 2 hotels with 161 beds have been established. At the same time, according to the approved plan-graphic table for creating new jobs in the tourism sector in 2024, it was planned to create 2,300 new jobs during the last 9 months of 2024, and this plan was reached by 2,380, and the plan set for this period was implemented by 103.4%.

During January-September 2024, in order to improve the tourism infrastructure and create adequate conditions for visiting foreign and local tourists, 18 Wi-Fi points and 19 tourist road signs were installed, and as a result of the launch of tourism service facilities in cities and districts, a total of 45 sanitary and hygiene stations were put into operation through construction and renovation.

During the past period, a total of 54 services were launched by business entities, including 3 tourist buses, 2 SUVs, 4 quadricycles, 3 minibuses, 20 electric cars, 20 city and district buses and 2 other types of vehicles (225% compared to the annual plan), bringing their total number to 186 [3].

In addition, the village of Nanay in Yangikurgan district of Namangan region, which has high tourism potential, was granted the status of "Tourism Village" in August 2024, and the village of Chodak in Pop district in September.

Training of qualified specialists in the field of "Tourism and Hospitality" has been launched at 2 higher educational institutions in the region, namely Namangan State University and Namangan Engineering and Technology Institute. In agreement with SamISI, which is the base higher educational institution for students of this field of education, training is being established on the basis of three-year higher education programs and the educational process is being organized in the form of dual education based on the "block-module" system.

In addition to the above, in September, the Namangan regional tourism department organized an infotour in the village of Chodak with the participation of media representatives, bloggers, tour operators, representatives of other enterprises operating in the tourism sector and budget organizations in the Namangan region. In addition, it should be noted that special attention was paid to the development of master plans for 5 districts in the Namangan region.

In order to ensure the implementation of this task, the following design organizations were assigned to Chust district: "Proyekt Servis" LLC, Yangikurgan district: "Art Design Project" LLC, Chortoq district: "Kelajak-s" LLC, Pop district: "Ultra group" LLC, Kosonsoy district: "Uzgashkliti" DM. Together with the heads of the regional department of the Cadastral Chamber, the Department of Construction and Housing and Communal Services, and the Department of Tourism, vacant land plots in the areas of the above districts with high tourism potential were identified, and the boundaries of the areas for which master plans will be developed were determined together with the district khokimiyats and competent organizations.

To date, the working group has surveyed 56 hectares of land in the "Rezaksy" reservoir area in Chust district, 94 hectares in the "Qayroki" MFY area in Yangikurgan district, Nanay village, 20 hectares in the vicinity of the "Chortoq" stream in Chortoq district, 116 hectares in the "Guliston" MFY in Pop district, and 40 hectares in the "Olmazar" massif in Kosonsoy district. The surveys have been fully completed, the land plots have been selected, and the regional construction commission has issued relevant conclusions. Currently, the concepts and technical terms of reference for the master plans of 5 districts have been fully developed by the designers, finalized, and agreed with the relevant organizations.

Also, together with the regional administration, a list of new tourism projects planned to be implemented in 5 districts, a "package" for attracting investments of at least \$50 million for each of them, was formed, a presentation was prepared and defended by the responsible employee of the department in the tourism committee. After the allocated funds are allocated by the tourism committee, a contract will be concluded with the developers of the master plans and measures will be taken to complete the master plans by the established deadlines.

#### **4. Conclusions and recommendations**

In the future, the following should be done to develop the tourism sector in our country:

1. Further improve the regulatory and legal framework for tourism in our republic, introduce international norms and standards aimed at creating favorable conditions for the development of the tourism sector;
2. Create broad opportunities for the development of tourism infrastructure in all regions of our country;
3. Develop transport logistics, expand external and internal routes, and improve the quality of transport services;
4. Develop and implement comprehensive measures to reduce the impact of seasonal factors by diversifying tourist products and services;



5. Develop domestic tourism, which will ensure the stimulation of the activity of tourism entities aimed at meeting the need for tourism services within the republic;

6. Promoting the tourist product of the Republic of Uzbekistan in the domestic and foreign tourism markets, strengthening its image as a safe country for travel and recreation;

7. Training highly qualified specialists in the field of tourism, improving the system of retraining and advanced training of service personnel, etc.

The above-mentioned main directions will serve the development of the tourism sector in our Republic in the future and the increase in the tourism potential of our country. As a result, the material interest of our country's population in the tourism sector will increase.

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