

Prospects for The Development of Tourism In Uzbekistan During The Coronavirus Pandemic and Its Aftermath

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Abstract: The article describes the development of international and domestic tourism in the coronavirus pandemic and its aftermath, the prospects for future development of the industry and the factors influencing it, scientific conclusions and recommendations on forecast indicators.

Introduction:

The global spread of the coronavirus pandemic had a major negative impact on the development of the tourism industry as well as other sectors of the economy. Due to the closure of international and domestic borders and the transition of people into self-isolation, the growth rate of the tourism industry has slowed down significantly. According to the World Tourism and Travel Council (WTTC), before the pandemic, every fourth new job in the world was created in the tourism sector, 10.6% of all jobs (334 million people) and 10.4% of global GDP (\$9.2 trillion). corresponds to tourism [1]. According to the World Tourism Organization (UNWTO), "in 2020, the number of foreign tourists around the world decreased by 74% compared to 2019, and the loss of tourism services exports amounted to 1.3 trillion US dollars." According to general indicators, it is also known that world tourism has fallen to the level of 1994[2].

The World Tourism Organization (UNWTO) developed 3 scenarios for the recovery of international tourism after the pandemic [2].

According to the first scenario, the indicators of international tourism are projected to return to the level of 2019 in the next 2.5 years. According to the second scenario, the indicators of international tourism are projected to recover to the level of 2019 in the next 3 years, that is, until the end of 2023. According to the third scenario, international tourism will reach the results of 2019 in the next 4 years. According to research by international organizations and experts, by the beginning of 2022, the USA, Great Britain, Singapore, Canada and Hong Kong, most countries of the European Union will complete the vaccination of the majority of the population and it is estimated that the tourism industry will be fully restored [2].

Until 2019, tourism in Uzbekistan showed a dynamic growth process, but like all the countries of the world, the coronavirus pandemic had a serious impact on this industry in our country. In particular, more than 7 million foreign tourists were expected to visit our country in 2020, but their number did not exceed 1.5 million. Export of tourism services fell to 261 million US dollars. Business entities in tourism and related fields faced financial difficulties. Tour operators and accommodation services suffered losses from 100 million to 1 billion soums. As a result of the damage, entrepreneurs stopped their activities. In particular, 63 percent of

accommodation services, more than 80 percent of tour operators were forced to stop their activities, as well as reduce the number of employees [3].

In order to prevent these negative situations and to develop the industry in general, a number of works have been carried out in our country and are planned to be carried out in the future. A number of measures have been adopted in order to mitigate the negative consequences of the coronavirus pandemic in the network, to support business entities in the field of tourism. Including:

- the tax burden of entrepreneurs was reduced;
- the term of loan repayments was extended;
- supporting the cancellation of financial and economic audits, tax arrears were cancelled.

In order to support the tourism sector during the pandemic, the government has developed a number of measures. In particular, interest-free subsidies, compensation and interest-free loans provided to subjects of the tourism industry based on the Decree of the President of the Republic of Uzbekistan "On urgent measures to support the tourism industry to reduce the negative impact of the coronavirus pandemic" adopted on May 28, 2020 No. PF-6002 The funds allocated to the non-budgetary Tourism Sector Support Fund and the funds of the Anti-Crisis Fund under the Ministry of Finance will not be withdrawn if they are not used in the reporting year, and later they were used in the order and for the purposes established for the use of funds under the State Committee for Tourism Development [4]. In accordance with the decision of the President of the Republic of Uzbekistan "On additional measures to develop the tourism sector in strict compliance with the requirements of the enhanced sanitary and epidemiological safety regime" No. PQ-4755 of June 19, 2020, the Safe Tourism Fund was established under the State Committee for Tourism Development[5]. Resolution No. 433 of the Cabinet of Ministers of the Republic of Uzbekistan on July 10, 2020 "On measures to create favorable conditions for the restoration and development of the tourism industry in the Republic of Uzbekistan"[6].

Taking into account factors such as reducing the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic, increasing the effectiveness of the ongoing reforms to create favorable economic conditions and factors, setting priority goals and objectives for the rapid development of the tourism sector, increasing its share in the economy, diversifying and improving the quality of services, and improving the tourism infrastructure a concept was developed for the development of tourism in the Republic of Uzbekistan in the next 5 years.

The concept includes:

- a. analysis of the current state of tourism;
- b. the main goals, stages and tasks of the development of the tourism sector;
- c. priority areas of development of the industry;
- d. problems (dangers) in the field and measures to eliminate them;
- e. directions and growth points of effective use of tourism opportunities of regions;
- f. proposals for the development of the industry;
- g. monitoring and controlling the implementation of the concept.

In 2022-2026, the number of foreign tourists visiting Uzbekistan will reach 9 million as a result of the tasks defined in the concept. people, the export volume of tourism services will reach 1.8 billion US dollars, the number of visits by local tourists will reach 19 million [3].

Taking into account the analyzes of international organizations and experts and the situation in the country, it is possible to forecast the revival of tourism in Uzbekistan based on 3 different scenarios [2]. In the first scenario, the COVID-19 pandemic will continue, new

strains of the virus will appear, and vaccination efforts will not produce the expected results. Restrictions on international tourism and between countries in 2020 will continue in 2022-2023. The country's tourism indicators for 2019 will be reached by the end of 2024. During this period, the share of independent travelers grows. In the tourism market, small and medium-sized tourism companies face economic difficulties. They will be forced to stop their activities. Large, multi-profile and tourist organizations offering unique services will continue to operate in the market.

In the second scenario, in 2021-2022, vaccination measures will give positive results and passports on vaccination against COVID-19 will be recognized by states. Accordingly, the borders of the countries will be opened and mutual relations will be restored. Domestic tourism remains the main priority tourism destination in the countries. However, its volume will be lower than before the pandemic. In this scenario, the most profitable and stable segments of the tourism industry will be mass tourism and the premium segment.

In 2022, about 40% of tourists from 2019 will be ready to go on tourist trips. Providing services to tourists and guaranteeing travel safety will be a priority. The share of online sales in service industries will increase significantly, and by the end of 2023, tourism will reach pre-pandemic results.

According to the third scenario, from 2021, restrictions will be gradually lifted around the world and air traffic between countries will be restored. In the absence of new threats, the restrictions imposed by January 2022 will be lifted and air traffic with Uzbekistan's main tourism markets will be restored. At the beginning of 2022, the results of the country's external, internal and inbound tourism will correspond to the indicators of 2017-2018. By the end of 2022, the country's tourism indicators will be fully restored. Prices for tourism services in all scenarios are average 5-10 percent growth is forecasted. In this regard, maintaining prices in the tourism market of Uzbekistan at an acceptable value for future tourists and increasing competitiveness in comparison with other countries is a priority.

A number of activities are planned to improve the position of our republic in international tourism. In particular, Special attention is paid to promoting the tourism potential of Uzbekistan in neighboring countries. In particular, measures will be taken to organize information tours in the border regions of the country for media representatives and tourist organizations of the neighboring countries, to prepare propaganda materials in the languages of the neighboring countries and to place them on their territory, to organize "Tourism Months" for the neighboring countries in our country [3]. In order to widely promote the image of the country in the field of tourism abroad, expanding the linguistic diversity of web pages related to the field of tourism (in Chinese, Japanese, Korean, Arabic, French, Spanish, German and other languages) and making videos dedicated to the promotion of tourism potential in various foreign languages. To carry out promotional projects in foreign countries, marketing research is first conducted in the target markets. As a result of the studies, a marketing concept for the target countries is developed and promotional activities are organized.

Measures will be taken to adequately participate in international tourism exhibitions and fairs in foreign countries with a national stand, and the flow of foreign tourists to the country will increase. Digital marketing and modern branding methods are used in the promotion, and this saves a certain amount of money that can be spent on many exhibitions, that is, online promotion through the Internet gives the opportunity to quickly achieve the desired result in a short period of time. With the support of the country's diplomatic missions in foreign countries and compatriots, "Days of Uzbekistan" promotional events are regularly organized worldwide.

We will continue to organize information tours around the country for the world-famous stars of art, cinema, and culture from the target countries, as well as popular bloggers, vloggers and influencers with a wide audience who work in the direction of travel.

In order to promote the potential of pilgrimage tourism of the Republic of Uzbekistan, create the brand "Uzbekistan - the center of Islamic culture" and use it in the central mosques of Malaysia, Turkey, Russia, Indonesia, Singapore, Pakistan, India, Great Britain and other foreign countries, depending on the situation related to the pandemic, a weekly event and mobile exhibition and promotion work will be carried out within it. Also, in order to widely popularize and promote the priceless heritage of Imam Bukhari, it is envisaged that the pilgrimage tourism satellite TV channel "Imam Bukhari" in Indonesian, Bengali, Malay, Turkish, Arabic, Hindi, Urdu, Pashto and other foreign languages, and its correspondents will operate in foreign countries. taking measures to organize and develop it. In order to develop regional cooperation within the framework of the Cooperation Council of Turkic-speaking countries of the Republic of Uzbekistan in the field of tourism, including the development of the transport logistics system, the quality organization of promotional activities, the organization of a fund for the preservation of cultural heritage objects, the creation of a unified calendar of events, the organization of joint tours, the project "Tabarruk Ziyat" organizes measures in the direction of implementation.

In addition, within the framework of the World Tourism Organization - UNWTO, it is planned to strengthen relations in the field of tourism with the countries that are part of the European Regional Commission, and regularly hold international events in Uzbekistan. In particular, in 2023, relevant organizational work was carried out in connection with the promotion of Uzbekistan's candidacy for holding the XXV session of the UNWTO General Assembly in Samarkand, and it was decided that this session would be held in Samarkand.

In order to improve the position of Uzbekistan in the international rankings of the sector, to reach 3 places in 2026 from 4 places in the UNWTO list of rapidly developing countries in tourism, ranking of safe countries for tourists (among 180 countries) to enter the list of 20 safest countries in 2026 from 46 places in 2020, Solo The Travel Safety Report ranked the safest countries for solo travelers in 2019

To reach at least 50 places in 2026 from 80 places, Global Muslim Travel Index halal tourism ranking from 7 places in 2020 in 2026

It is aimed to reach the 3rd place, to include Uzbekistan in the first 50 in the Travel and Tourism Competitiveness Index in 2026 [3].

Conclusion

In general, the development of the tourism sector of Uzbekistan has a great impact on the socio-economic development of our country on the global and domestic scale.

References

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