

PROBLEMS AND PROSPECTS OF TOURISM DEVELOPMENT IN SMALL TOWNS OF UZBEKISTAN

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***Abstract:** In recent years, the development of tourism in small towns of Uzbekistan has increased, but, despite this, compared to other cities of Uzbekistan, there is a noticeable difference in the development of tourism. The following course work reveals information about the process of tourism development in small towns of Uzbekistan. First of all, the course work analyzed theoretical and scientific sources about tourism in general. In addition, it identifies and describes the main problems and issues that hinder the development of tourism in small towns of Uzbekistan. The author used a qualitative study in the form of a structured interview, which consisted of 5 questions with the general managers of 2 travel agencies in Uzbekistan in order to obtain information about the demand and future tourist tours to small towns of Uzbekistan.*

Keywords: tourism industry, small towns, tourism development, problems and prospects.

Introduction

Uzbekistan has long been considered a country with great tourist potential. The resources of educational tourism are very large. The country has about 7,000 historical and cultural monuments, medieval mosques and madrasas, grandiose architecture of the Tamerlane era. Uzbekistan impresses with its mountain landscape, desert and lakes! The nature of Uzbekistan surprises with incomparable landscapes and gives room for the formation of various options for active tours.

The main tourist cities of the country are Samarkand, Khiva, and Tashkent, known since the time of the Great Silk Road (Kamalova S., 2019). Currently, inbound tourism in Uzbekistan is going through difficult times, primarily due to the recent pandemic situation. As a result, the number of foreign visitors is small. Recently, the main direction of state support has been the development of inbound and domestic tourism. Although recently there have been positive developments in the development of domestic tourism and attracting foreign visitors (Mirziyoyev, S., 2018).

Aim of the research:

To find main problems issues what hinder the tourism development in small cities in Uzbekistan.

Objects of the work are:

1. To analyse theoretical and scientific sources about the tourism development, main problems and specific of small towns of Uzbekistan.
2. To characterize shortly small towns of Uzbekistan and their role in tourism.
3. To create research methodology (design, methods, population and sample, instruments – questionnaire, interview questions).
4. To carry out survey among Uzbek nation about their experience in small towns.
5. To make in-depth interviews with representatives of travel agencies organizing tours to small towns.
6. To analyse collected data, identify and state problems of tourism development in small cities of Uzbekistan.
7. To characterize prospects of tourism development in small towns.
8. To give conclusions and appropriate suggestions.

Methodology: to get primary data the author contacted the general managers of “Talisman” and “Rodi” tour agencies. The author was provided with main information about the company's strategy and tours which are provided by agencies. The questions that were discussed in the interview, as well as the answers, are attached in the Appendix. Second research method is making a questionnaire and identifying the thinking of people. The main goal of the study is to analyze the requirements that are important for people when they are travelling and making travel plan.

1. Peculiarities of tourism development in small towns

According to the world Council for tourism and travel (VSTP), Uzbekistan holding the 150-th place among the countries of the world in tourist arrivals (to his share accounts for 0.2% of the total flow with an estimated potential of 2.2%), 115-e – on the cumulative contribution to GDP of the country, 2019, 103rd – on using investment and 69 – the number of people employed in the industry (Abdukhakimov, A., 2020).

There are 1851 objects of material and cultural heritage on the territory of small towns, including: 1105 archaeological, 670 architectural, 37 sightseeing, 18 monumental, 21 memorial (Moldan, B., 2019).

Dynamics of the number of the number of foreigners served in recent years is shown below (Berg D., 2020)
See table 1.



- Blue**- Number of companies and organizations engaged in tourism activities
- Green**- Of these, small firms and enterprises
- Violet**- Total users served

Figure 1. Scientific research of the faculty of Economics. Electronic journal

92 out of 118 cities of Uzbekistan have the status of historical ones. In contrast to the newly formed cities, a small historical town is a special type of community, in which the domestic historical and cultural potential has been largely preserved, which can be updated in modern times. Small towns of Uzbekistan are a kind of transition stage from urban culture with its significant professional component to traditional rural culture (Dunyo, I., 2019).

The difficult conditions of small towns in Uzbekistan are associated with social conservation and economic stagnation, along with the surrounding natural landscape and the ancient history of the Uzbek lands (Saatova, X., 2018). In the conditions of almost complete destruction of the real sector, only culture can become a source of development.

2. Small towns of Uzbekistan and their role in tourism

Uzbekistan is divided into 12 regions which are: Tashkent, Samarkand, Bukhara, Andijan, Navoi, Surkhandarya, Ferghana, Jizzakh, Kashkadarya, Namangan, Syrdarya, Khorezm) and includes one autonomous Republic of Karakalpakstan.

Uzbekistan is a country where representatives of various nationalities, religious denominations and cultures live. This is a region whose rich historical heritage is harmoniously combined with modern architecture and high-tech development (Sharakhmedov, S., 2021). In Uzbekistan, especially in small towns, there are high mountains, hot deserts, endless lakes, wonderful valleys and gardens. Exciting eco-tours have been developed for tourists: riding camels in the Aralkum desert, eating traditional Uzbek dishes, spending the night in a yurt and admiring the beautiful starry sky of Uzbekistan. Moreover there is opportunity to take a walk through the stunning nature reserves, where you can see unique juniper forests, jade lakes, meet rare species of animals and birds. Along with traditional cultural and historical tourism, such new types of tourism for small cities of Uzbekistan as pilgrimage, ecological, educational, ethnographic, gastronomic, sports, medical and wellness, rural, industrial, business and other types of tourism are successfully developing (Dune, I. A., 2019). In the modern world, and in particular in Uzbekistan, tourism represents a dynamic, often self-developing, branch of the economy. The landscape itself and the environment, the space as a whole, acts as the foundation for the development of tourism. However, the potential of the tourism industry in small cities of Uzbekistan, as one of the most important factors of regional development, is still underestimated (Dunyo, I., 2019).

3. Research

For this research, the author used a public opinion poll among the population living in Uzbekistan. The total number of participants is 25 people. The survey includes 20 mandatory questions where 3 are open questions. Non – random questionnaire was created via Goodge Forms and sent to all respondents via social media. First research method is making a questionnaire and identifying the thinking of people.

Author analyzed the results of a questionnaire by inserting a figure and according to the information received through the questionnaire. Age of participants was divided into 5 main groups, the majority of respondents, in category of 18-24 years (16 people, 64%).

Dynamics of the number of hotels and travel companies in the regions in Uzbekistan. The number of hotels in general has a negative trend. So, for the period in 2016-2020, there was a decrease in the number of hotels in the Samarkand region by 2.7%, in the Andijan region — by 7.4%. In the Bukhara region, there was an increase in the number of hotels by 10%, but at the same time the number of travel companies decreased by 18.4%, which did not happen in the other subjects of small towns of Uzbekistan.

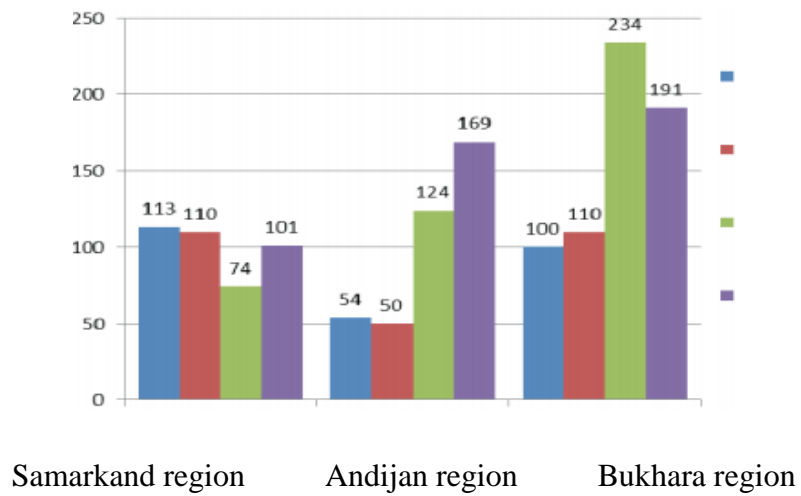


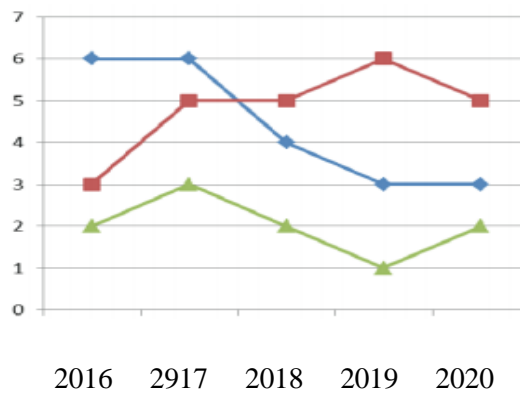
Figure2. Dynamics of the number of hotels and travel agencies in the regions of Uzbekistan in 2016 and 2020.

Blue - Number of hotels (2016)

Red - Number of hotels (2020)

Green - Number of tour agencies (2016)

Violet - Number of tour agencies (2020)



Blue - Samarkand region

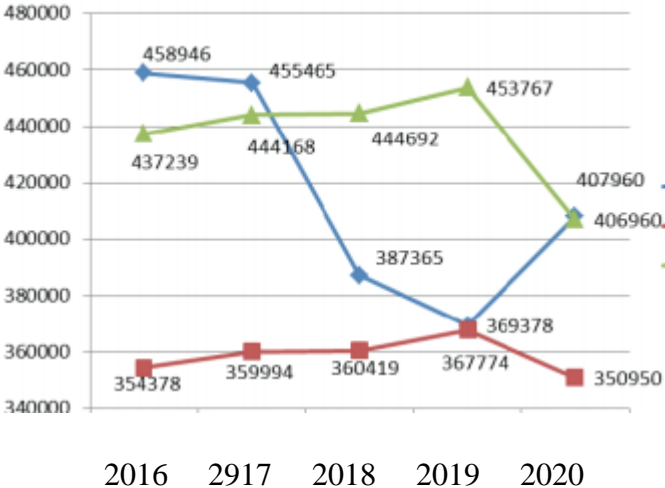
Red - Andijan region

Green - Bukhara region

Figure3. Dynamics of the number of tourist camps in the subjects of Uzbekistan (2016-2020)

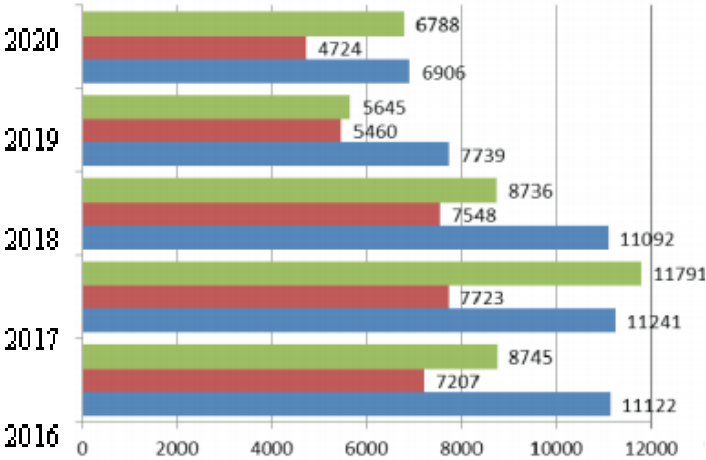
Figure 3 shows the dynamics of the number of tourist bases in the regions of Uzbekistan. In addition to the Samarkand region, the number of tourist bases in the regions decreased during the period under review. This indicates a reduction in tourist accommodation facilities, which, in turn, reflects the negative dynamics of the tourist potential of the regions. This conclusion is confirmed by the indicators of recreation centers, which also had a negative population dynamics in the considered regions.

Further, the dynamics of the number of officially registered tourists by region is presented.



- Blue - Samarkand region
- Red - Andijan region
- Green - Bukhara region

Figure4. The number of officially registered tourists by region in 2016-2020



Blue - Samarkand region

Red - Andijan region

Green - Bukhara region

Figure4. Dynamics of the number placed on tourist bases and other similar objects for the period 2016-2020

Dynamics of the number of tourists by the considered regions in 2019-2020 negative — this applies to the Andijan and Bukhara regions. In general, everything the regions show a negative trend. Thus, in the Samarkand region, the number of tourists decreased by 11.1% in 2016-2020, in the Andijan region — by 1.0%, in the Bukhara region-by 6.9%. This indicates a decrease in the interest of tourists to these regions. The negative trend should be overcome as soon as possible, as the reduction in the number of tourists will quickly lead to a decrease in the number of accommodation facilities, as well as the collapse of the tourist infrastructure.

The second method used by author in study paper is Structured Interview: The author chose the structured interview, because it is beneficial way of collecting detailed and indispensable information about research questions. This type of primary data collection researcher has a chance to clarify determined issues during the process. The questions asked during a structured interview control, the data elicited by the respondent quite tightly. The interview is structured because the researcher follows a specific set of questions in a predetermined order with a limited number of response categories.

4. Conclusions

Nowadays, the development of small towns in Uzbekistan is slow and difficult. There are numerous economic, social, political and other problems. Some small towns are coping with them, others are teetering on the edge of survival, and others are degrading, turning into villages. The author found 3 main problems of tourism in small towns of Uzbekistan via structured interview:

1. Population outflow

A serious problem is the gradual disappearance of many small towns due to the outflow of residents to larger cities, in such cases, there is a "Depopulation" of certain territories. In small towns, this trend has led to a lack of basic necessary specialists in the social and service sectors.

2. Destruction of the housing stock

Two-thirds of small towns in Uzbekistan do not have centralized sewerage and water supply. This is due to the fact that small towns that were not affected by Soviet industrialization, respectively, were not sufficiently developed. Such problems were not solved in time, and the housing stock began to collapse without the support of its state. In each small town, these features unfold in their own way and form their own set of negative effects and restrictions.

3. The devastation of small towns

Based on the fact that mostly able-bodied, young people leave small towns, the deserted settlements become "living areas" for pensioners and a few middle-aged people. It is not uncommon for able-bodied residents to live in anticipation of retirement, since working in the social sphere often brings a salary less than a pension. There are not enough jobs in commercial structures and wages there are also relatively low.

Based on the questionnaire conducted by the author, other conclusions of shortcomings were also made, such as:

- Quality of tourist services;
- Lack of Wi-Fi zones with stable Internet;
- Lack of recreation areas
- Benches and umbrellas for tourists
- Poorly developed transport infrastructure between the objects of tourist attention
- High cost of hotel services.

5. Recommendations

The author believes that in any situation there is a way out, since in modern conditions small cities of Uzbekistan also have a path of successful development.

1. Population outflow

To prevent the disappearance of small towns due to the outflow of residents to larger cities and to avoid the "depopulation" of certain territories, it is necessary to attract specialists in the social sphere and the service sector. To do this, you need to invest in small towns, opening and developing enterprises in the service sector.

2. Destruction of the housing stock

Such problems cannot be solved without the support of the state. Therefore, in order to prevent the destruction of the housing stock in each small town, it is necessary to completely restore or replace the destroyed buildings. It is also necessary to build new hotels and buildings for housing, with all amenities and with the possibility to rent for foreigners.

3. The devastation of small towns

It is necessary to encourage able-bodied young people not to leave small cities, providing them with jobs, and also to raise wages.

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Appendix

1. Questionnaire addressed to Uzbek people
2. Interview with Karima Agzamova , general manager of “Talisman” tour agency

Appendix 1

Here is link for questionnaire:

https://docs.google.com/forms/d/e/1FAIpQLSeIIBDyPiIeohbF0iWDHuAgVKygZBmTveBg4KtiITzyS_08wg/viewform?usp=sf_link

Appendix 2

THE TRANSCRIPT OF INTERVIEW WITH GENERAL MANAGER OF “TALISMAN”

Interviewer: Karima Agzamova

Position: General Managers of Talisman Tour Agency

Date of Interview: from 25.03.2021

Interview type: via phone call (93 3979600)