



Tourism Infrastructure Development in Uzbekistan during the Covid-19 Pandemic and Post-Pandemic Period

Norchaev Asatullo Norbutaevich

*Professor of the "Tourism and Service" department of Tashkent State University of Economics,
Doctor of Economics (DSc).*

Abstract: *The research article describes suggestions and recommendations for determining the directions of tourism development in our country during the post-pandemic the COVID-19, in order to determine the directions of development based on the analysis of the work conducted abroad, and to develop new types of tourist services.*

Keywords: *World Tourism Organization, COVID-19, post-pandemic period, domestic tourism, airline industry, tax privileges, tourism recovery, tourism development*

Date of Submission: 03-11-2022

Date of Acceptance: 07-12-2022

According to the World Tourism Organization (UNWTO), international travels will decrease by 90% and jobs will decrease by 80 million, the total losses in the tourism sector will be in the amount 1 trillion US dollars by the end of 2020.

It is known that our country was closed for foreign and domestic tourists since March 16, 2020. As a result, more than 1,500 tour operators and 1,200 hotels stopped their activities. These, together with guides, national handicrafts, shrines and sanatoriums, catering, transport, etc., seriously affected the income of more than 250,000 people.

In order to mitigate the consequences of the pandemic, a number of privileges were given to this sector. In particular, 60 billion UZS tax privileges from property, land and social taxes for 1750 subjects were provided. However, these benefits and preferences are temporary. For continuous sustainable development, it is necessary to adapt working under pandemic conditions.

Our tasks in front of us are to study what the main attention should be focused on developing tourism industry and its directions in order to mitigate the consequences of the pandemic. One of the main goals of our research is to eliminate the problems caused by the COVID-19 pandemic and ensure stability in the development of tourism. This research work is dedicated to the methodology of getting tourism out of the crisis in Uzbekistan in the context of the global pandemic.

Tourism has a special role in the adaptation of the economy of our country to the rapid changes in the world and in the integration processes, and there are a number of problems that need to be solved on the development of the sector. Based on this, an integration process, a new approach to meet tourists' demands and organizing tourism infrastructure are required.

Taking this into account, the Presidential Decree is adopted regarding "Organizing the activities of the Ministry of Tourism and Cultural Heritage" on February 18, 2022.

At the same time, the following are the strategic directions of tourism development:

- creating a favorable economic and organizational-legal conditions for the rapid development of tourism as a strategic branch of the country's economy, more complete and effective use of the huge tourism potential of the regions, fundamental improvement of the tourism network management, creating national tourism products and their promotion in the world markets, in the field of tourism in order to form a positive image of Uzbekistan tourism;
- forming and implementing consistently a holistic concept of tourism development, giving the tourism status regarding a strategic sector of the economy, turning this sector into a powerful tool for economic diversification, structural change and sustainable development, which should become a leading force for the rapid development of all regions and interrelated industries, creating gross domestic implementation of systematic measures in order to increase the share of tourism in gross domestic product (GDP), local budget revenues, to ensure employment, to increase the standard of living and quality of the population;
- further improving legal documents and normative legal framework in the field of tourism aimed at creating favorable conditions for the activity of tourism industry entities, eliminating all obstacles in the tourism development, simplifying visa registration procedures, passport and custom control, state- management on the basis of private partnership and optimization of the regulation mechanism in a market-specific manner;
- developing rapidly tourism in the country, more complete and effective use of the existing huge tourism potential, along with traditional cultural-historical tourism, other types of tourism potential, such as pilgrimage, ecological, educational, ethnographic, gastronomic, sports, treatment-health, rural, industrial, business tourism and rapid development of other types, strengthening the social importance of tourism by developing children, teenagers and youth tourism, family tourism, social tourism for the elderly, establishing new tourism directions in the regions;
- expanding international cooperation in the field of tourism, first of all, cooperation with the UN World Tourism Organization (UNWTO), influential international and national tourism organizations of foreign countries - active participants of the regional and world markets of tourism services;
- developing rapidly tourism industry facilities - hotels and accommodation facilities, catering facilities, transport-logistics structures, information centers, cultural and sports institutions - meeting the needs and demands of tourists in all regions of the country.

Along with this, on January 5, 2019, the President signed another important decree No. PD-5611 "On additional measures for the rapid development of tourism in the Republic of Uzbekistan". On the basis of this decree, a concept for the development of tourism was developed. In the concept, the development and implementation of the tourism system of our country was defined in the next six years. The goal of the concept is to radically improve the indicators of tourism development, to increase the export of services, to develop competitive tourism products, and to take an innovative approach for the tourism industry.

As it can be seen from the above, despite the ongoing pandemic, the process of forming the tourism infrastructure in Uzbekistan is being carried out rapidly. As a result, a number of achievements have been obtained in the country for a short time.

In particular, the export of tourism services have been 546.9 million in 2017, 1041 million in 2018, 1313.0 million in 2019, 260.1 million in 2020, 422.1 million in 2021, the amount in US dollars.

Table 1. Number of tourists visiting Uzbekistan and indicators of tourism services' exports

Indicators	2017 y.	2018 y.	2019 y.	2020 y.	2021 y.	2025 y. (plan)
Tourist arrivals (thousand persson)	2847,9	5300,0	6748,0	1504,1	1881,3	9000,0
Tourism services' exports (million USD)	546,9	1041,0	1313,0	260,1	422,1	2500,0

Source: Compiled by the author based on the information of the Ministry of Tourism and Cultural Heritage and stat.uz.

Accordingly, a large number of foreigners visiting our country is increasing considerably. If we see the last 16 years, the trend of foreign citizens' visits to Uzbekistan has increased again in the last two years. In this regard, it increased from 442.1 thousand in 2002 to 2847.9 thousand in 2017, 5300.0 thousand in 2018, and 6748.0 thousand in 2019. Due to the pandemic that occurred at the end of 2019, the indicators were 1504.1 thousand in 2020 and 1881.0 thousand in 2021.

If we look at hotels and accommodation facilities in our country, in 2017 there were 676, in 2018 886, in 2019 1188, in 2020 1308, in 2021 1442. Despite the pandemic, the number of hotels and accommodation facilities have been increased.

Table 2. Available hotels in Uzbekistan and the number of rooms available

Indicators	2017 y.	2018 y.	2019 y.	2020 y.	2021 y.
Number of hotels and accommodations	676	886	1188	1308	1442
Number of rooms in hotels and accommodation facilities	17703	19832	26147	29218	33411

Source: Compiled by the author based on the information of the Ministry of Tourism and Cultural Heritage and stat.uz.

To sum up from the above, there are a number of options in order to support the tourism development in unexpected situations such as a global pandemic:

- first of all, broad promotion of domestic tourism;
- carrying out a policy to activate domestic tourism, effectively using the fact that foreign countries have closed their borders;
- after the pandemic will be over, more than 35 million people will be able to activate services on domestic tourism routes and thereby to create an opportunity in order to improve the infrastructure of domestic tourism by making time effectively use in our country;
- to create favorable conditions for tourism companies, hotels, cafes, restaurants, so that they won't be closed down, and tourism specialists do not move to other jobs, by supporting domestic tourism to the extent possible;
- widely promoting eco-tourism or rural tourism in order to attract tourists for domestic tourism (most tourists have become very cautious after the pandemic). Tourists try to avoid crowded places. Tourists do not use public trips to historical and cultural monuments or pilgrimage tourism in our big cities as much as before. Under such circumstances, using the possibilities of ecotourism and rural tourism will help to get out of the situation. Tourists traveling to the heart of nature do not need to maintain social distance. There are fewer people in villages than in cities. There is no traffic in hotels, restaurants, and transport);

- Uzbekistan has a lot of opportunities for internal travels and natural landscapes being worthy in showing to the beaches in the villages, but most of our local people do not have information about those places. Therefore, we believe that it is time to create the domestic tourism infrastructure.

At the same time, another option to quickly recover tourism back on itself after the pandemic has to be diversified tourism. Foreign tourists mainly visit to our country by air. The number of tourists with average income has drastically decreased due to the fact that our ticket prices are relatively expensive compared to the international level. Accordingly, we should try to improve service quality in hotels and restaurants as well. We should encourage entrepreneurs and investors to construct small comfortable 3-4 star hotels in Kashkadarya, Surkhandarya, Jizzakh and Fergana valleys, which have got rich tourist resources, rather than modernizing the hotels of Tashkent, Samarkand, Bukhara, and Khiva, which are our traditional tourist centers. Wealthy tourists prefer quiet places rather than crowded places and demand value for money. In this case, 3-4 star hotels do not need to have so many rooms, it has to be small and cozy. In turn, it is considered being necessity to achieve high quality of services.

REFERENCES

1. Presidential Decree No. PD-4861 "On measures to ensure rapid development of the tourism sector of the Republic of Uzbekistan". 02.12.2016
2. Presidential Decree No. PD-5611 "On additional measures for rapid development of tourism in the Republic of Uzbekistan". 06.01.2019
3. Alieva M.T. THE IMPORTANCE OF ANALYSIS AND COOPERATION IN ENSURING SAFE TOURISM. EUROPEAN JOURNAL OF LIFE SAFETY AND STABILITY (EJLSS) ISSN Volume 3,2021
4. Alieva M., Ochilova X. ECONOMIC COOPERATION IN THE TOURISM INDUSTRY OF THE COUNTRIES "ONE BELT -ONE ROAD", Научно – практический журнал «ЗАМЕТКИ УЧЕНОГО» г.Ростов-на-Дону-2021. № 4.стр.551.
5. Norchaev A. Status and conditions of tourism development in Uzbekistan. International Journal of Scientific and Engineering Research. Volume 11, Issue. September 2020. Houston. USA. P-1564-1568.
6. Norchaev A. Geography of tourism. Textbook. - TSEU. 2022 -415 p.
7. Norchaev A. Innovation in hospitality. EMS. - TSEU. 2019. -280 p.
8. [www. stat.uz](http://www.stat.uz)
9. [www. uzbektourism.uz](http://www.uzbektourism.uz)
10. www. UNWTO
11. www. stat.uz
12. www. uzbektourism.uz
13. www. UNWTO