

RESEARCH ARTICLE

Analysis of Tourist Flows and Economic Indicators of Tourism Development in The Samarkand Region

Shodiyeva Shirinabonu Sherzod qizi

Master's Student, Faculty of Evening Master's Studies, Department of Tourism and Hospitality, Tashkent State University of Economics, Uzbekistan

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Abstract

This article analyzes tourist flows and economic indicators of tourism development in the Samarkand region. It examines the dynamics of tourist numbers, the volume of tourism services, and the contribution of the sector to the regional economy. The study highlights the steady growth of the tourism sector and its importance for regional development.

KEY WORDS

Tourism, tourist flows, Samarkand region, economic indicators, tourism development.

INTRODUCTION

Currently, the development of the tourism industry and its transformation into one of the leading sectors of the economy is of great importance for ensuring the country's economic growth and enhancing its international reputation. In the Development Strategy of New Uzbekistan for 2022–2026, developed by President Shavkat Mirziyoyev, the development of religious tourism is identified as one of the priority areas. Within the framework of the "Travel around Uzbekistan" program, it is planned to increase the number of domestic tourists to 12 million people.

In modern conditions, ensuring sustainable economic development requires increasing the investment attractiveness of religious tourism, improving its efficiency through public-private partnership mechanisms, and applying a cluster approach in the tourism sector. The inclusion of Samarkand in the list of 50 cities in the world that everyone should visit in their lifetime (according to The Huffington Post) creates additional opportunities for attracting foreign tourists.

METHOD

The tourism potential of Uzbekistan is comparable to that of developed tourist countries. Along with historical cities such as Samarkand, Bukhara, Khiva, Shakhrisabz, and Tashkent, other regions also have opportunities to develop ecotourism, agrotourism, religious tourism, gastronomic tourism, and other направления.

The famous Arab traveler Ibn Battuta in his work *Travels (Rihla)* wrote that he had not seen a city in the world like Samarkand, with its clean air, blue sky, fertile land, clear water, and hospitable people. [1] Since independence, Uzbekistan—and especially the Samarkand region—has seen a steady increase in foreign tourist arrivals. Active promotion of tourism potential through international exhibitions such as FITUR (Spain), EMITT (Turkey), MITT (Russia), ITB Berlin (Germany), and Arabian Travel Market (UAE) has contributed to this growth.[2] More than \$1 billion has been invested in improving tourism infrastructure. One of the major projects is the international tourism center "Silk Road Samarkand," which serves as a venue for large-scale events. Tourists visiting the

“Sharq Taronalari” music festival also explore various districts of the region. The region has 1,851 cultural heritage sites, including archaeological, architectural, and memorial monuments, which indicates a high tourism potential. Pilgrimage tourism routes include such landmarks as Registan Square, Shahi-Zinda, Bibi-Khanym Mosque, and others. Museums and cultural institutions are being modernized, and international cooperation with research institutions from Japan, France, and South Korea is expanding. These measures significantly increase the attractiveness of the region for tourists.

Statistical Analysis

Between 2010 and 2020, the number of tourists visiting Uzbekistan increased significantly due to tourism sector reforms. In 2017, Uzbekistan was visited by 2.69 million foreign tourists, which is 24.7% more than in 2016. In 2018, the number increased to 6.43 million, and in 2019 to 8.27 million tourists. At the same time, 92.5% of tourists came from CIS countries, while 7.5% were from non-CIS countries. According to the State Statistics Committee of Uzbekistan, as of January 1, 2024, there were 517 tourism-related organizations in the country. The majority are located in Tashkent (64.2%) and the Samarkand region (13.2%). The Samarkand region has 68 tourism organizations, 138 hotels with a capacity of 6,100 guests, and 93 guest houses accommodating 820 visitors. From 2019 to 2021, a targeted program consisting of 74 tourism infrastructure projects worth 1,311.8 billion UZS was implemented with financial support from the European Bank for Reconstruction and Development.

CONCLUSION

The analysis of tourist flows and economic indicators of tourism development in the Samarkand region shows that the region occupies one of the key positions in Uzbekistan’s tourism system. In recent years, there has been a steady growth in tourist flows, driven by active government policy and significant investment in tourism infrastructure. The rich historical and cultural heritage of Samarkand, as one of the centers of the Great Silk Road, ensures a high level of attractiveness for both foreign and domestic tourists. Economic indicators confirm the positive impact of tourism on regional development, including increased employment, expansion of tourism services, and growth in regional GDP contribution. Overall, the Samarkand region has strong potential for further tourism development. Future priorities

include diversification of tourism products, improvement of service quality, digitalization, and expansion of international cooperation. These measures will strengthen the region’s position as a leading tourism center in Central Asia.

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