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Tourism in Uzbekistan After the Pandemic: Problems and Solutions

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Abstract: the article mainly analyzes the trends of the development stage of the tourism sector in Uzbekistan after the pandemic, the reliefs created for the representatives of the tourism sector and the observed problems. Because the tourism sector is one of the most affected sectors not only in Uzbekistan but also in the whole world due to the pandemic. The relevance of the article is that before the pandemic, one tenth of the population employed in tourism was engaged in this activity. In particular, after the start of the Pandemic in Uzbekistan, the volume of tourist services in terms of income from the tourism sector fell by almost 80%. Therefore, the article discussed in detail what the situation of the tourism sector would be in Uzbekistan after the pandemic.

Key words: tourism sector, income, economy, tourism types, safe tourism, hotel industry, transportation, infrastructure.

Introduction.

Today, the tourism sector has become one of the service sectors that greatly benefits the country's economy. That is why many useful works in this regard are being implemented step by step in our country. Of course, it is highly appreciated by many world tourist organizations and countries. To date, more than 100 regulatory legal documents have been adopted to support the tourism industry. From this, we can know that the development of many types of tourism in our country will serve a great purpose in increasing the attractiveness of Uzbekistan in the world tourism market.

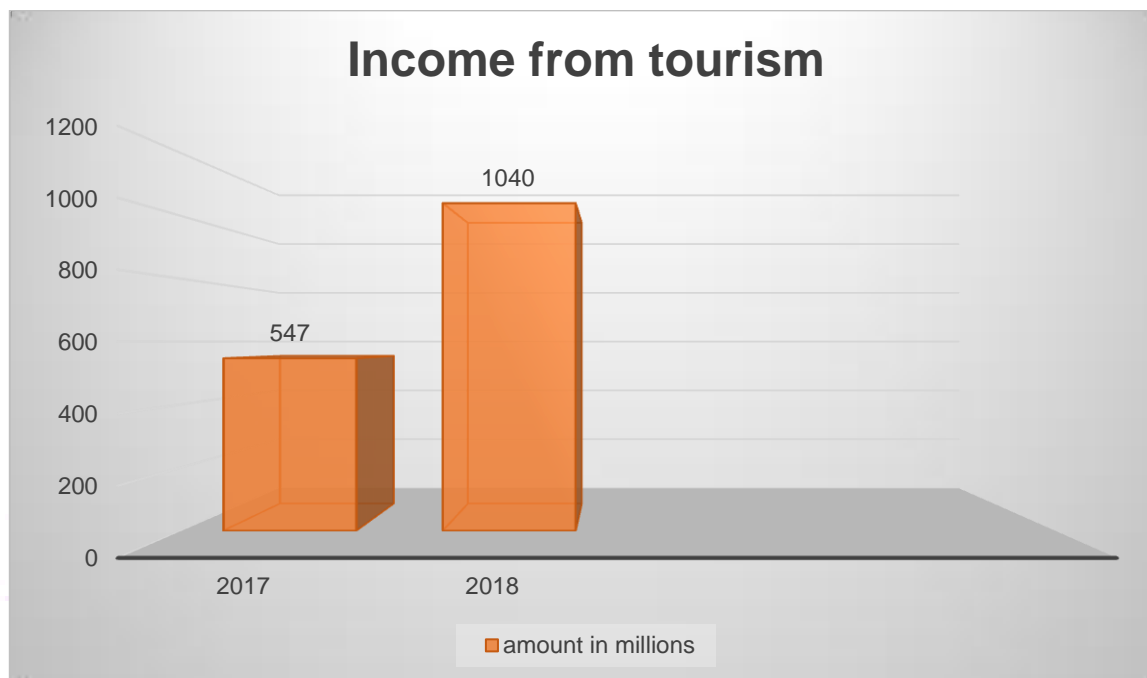
Considering this, it is not for nothing that the head of our country pays great attention to this field, and that the tourism sector creates great opportunities for representatives. Based on the latest statistics, it can be said that about 25% of the profits from tourism are paid to the employees. In other service industries, this indicator is much lower. It can be seen that one job created in the tourism industry will lead to the creation of three to four new jobs in a similar direction. Because the tourism industry is closely related to many service industries. It can be seen that the tourism sector greatly helps the population in terms of employment, increasing economic income, and increasing the export of services.

The flow of tourists is expanding year after year, owing mostly to the numerous opportunities and benefits provided by this industry. Because of the rebound of tourism following the pandemic, the number of international tourists that visited our country by September surged thrice compared to 2021.

Tourism exports totaled 926 million dollars since the beginning of the year. The average length of stay for visitors to our country grew to 4-5 days, and their spending increased to 305 dollars. Domestic tourism grew by 3.5 times over the previous year, reaching 7.5 million¹.

In 2019, Uzbekistan earned 1.3 billion dollars from the export of tourist services. It accounted for 2.3 percent of the country's overall share of GDP. It also accounted for 7.3 percent of overall exports.

Diagramma-1



For the fact, the tourism industry grew steadily until the pandemic began. In particular, the income from the export of tourist services was 547 million dollars (0.9% of GDP) in 2017 and 1.04 billion dollars (2.1% of GDP) in 2018 (*Diagramma-1*). According to Aziz Abduhakimov, chairman of the Tourism Development Committee (now the Ministry of Tourism and Cultural Heritage), at a briefing held in AOKA in January of this year, the income from the export of tourist services will be 261 million dollars in 2020, and 1 million 504 thousand tourists will visit.

"In 2021, we want to do all the work based on specific plans and a detailed calculation of flight-by-flight route, not through general numbers, and we want to pay more attention to pilgrimage tourism. In 2021, it is planned to ensure the visit of 1 million 700 thousand foreign tourists to Uzbekistan, and the income is expected to be 370 million dollars," said Aziz Abduhakimov.

When we compare these figures to the situation in the "world without a pandemic" in 2019, the income from tourism service exports plummeted by 80% in 2020. If the vaccination process accelerates in 2021 and the committee's estimates come true, revenue from the industry might rebound to 28% of what it was in 2019. Furthermore, tourism harmed the economy by producing secondary demand in other sectors such as transportation, hotel business, catering, and trade².

Literature review

In the future, tourists will opt for holiday destinations that are both safe and medically sophisticated. They are opposed to public transportation. After the coronavirus outbreak, visitors do not want to share a

¹ <https://uzlidep.uz/uz/news-of-party/13068>

² <https://kun.uz/uz/11780695>

room with a large number of strangers. This phobia will not go away immediately, but it will last a long time. Given these circumstances, it is unavoidable that steps to promote tourism growth will be implemented.

In her article, M.A. Zakirova spoke about the improvement of the situation in the field of tourism in the next few years, along with the adoption of new decisions and the creation of new strategies for the future. She also emphasized in his article that in the fight against the pandemic, planning should be done in addition to managing and mitigating the crisis

She also stated that the pandemic has caused major problems in several sections of the country. These include guide-excursion schools, hotels, tourist bases and complexes, vacation homes and zones, boarding houses, camping grounds, motels, national guesthouses, herbal resorts, sanatoriums, cafes, restaurants, and other eating establishments. These sectors require special attention, and the postulates and principles of systematic rehabilitation and recovery should be formulated as soon as feasible in order to revitalize them. These objectives are vital and relevant in any situation, but in the current crisis and epidemic, supporting a healthy lifestyle and well-being for people of all ages is without a doubt the most pertinent. If we look at tourism not as an economic category, but as a cultural and wellness category, recreation is a useful tool to reach this goal, but all precautions must be done to ensure the health of citizen's³.

The relative stability of this industry amid economic downturns and geopolitical instability, as well as its quick recovery following these and other sorts of crises, are thus significant characteristics of international tourism, as demonstrated by global experience.

Regarding anticipated losses and outcomes, the current tourism crisis brought on by the coronavirus pandemic is unprecedented. Forecasts for the ensuing recovery sound significantly different from one another. When predicting when the tourism market would start to rebound, analysts most frequently refer to the third quarter of 2020 and beyond. According to some experts, it will take several years to find a solution to the situation⁴.

In their work, Eidelman B.M. and Eidelman L.O. outline the major developments in the tourism sector following the end of the coronavirus pandemic. The process of rebuilding this sector of the economy will be highly tough and time-consuming because the pandemic has had a very profound impact not only on the tourism industry but also on associated industries.

The authors also noted a number of encouraging developments in the tourism and hospitality industries that were sparked by the circumstances surrounding the coronavirus epidemic. The writers specifically cited the growth of domestic tourism, the creation of alluring travel routes and destinations, the usage of novel forms of tourism, and the quickening of the process of digitalization of tourism-related businesses. Their work highlights how various tourism-related organizations are beginning to prioritize deeper research into these trends and incorporating them into daily operations. In addition, taking into account the objective trends in the growth of the tourism sector following the end of the coronavirus pandemic will enable tourism businesses to quickly reach pre-crisis levels and boost their competitiveness in the market⁵.

³Zakirova. M. A. (2021). O'zbekistonda Covid-19 pandemiyasi davrida turizmni rivojlantirish istiqbollari. *Oriental renaissance: Innovative, educational, natural and social sciences*, December 1(11), 244-pp.

⁴Логунцова, И. В. (2020). Индустрия туризма в условиях пандемии коронавируса: вызовы и перспективы. *Государственное управление. Электронный вестник*, (80), 50-67.

⁵Эйдельман, Б. М., & Эйдельман, Л. О. (2021). Особенности развития индустрии туризма после окончания пандемии коронавируса. *Вестник ТИСБИ*, (1), 58-с.

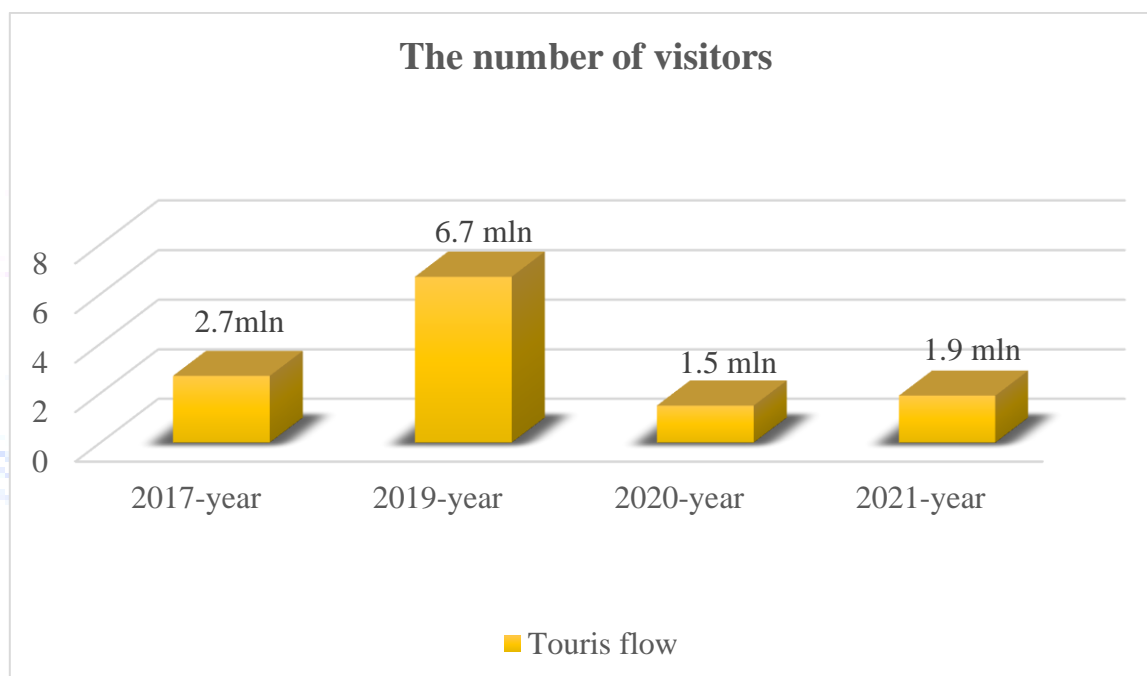
Results and discussion

Experts from the Institute of Forecasting and Macroeconomic Research (PMTI) examined the outcomes of tourism modifications implemented in Uzbekistan in past years.

Tourism is critical to our country's economic future. Tourism has recently emerged as one of the country's "growth engines." It serves as a catalyst for the development of other tourism-related industries and increases income with a high multiplier effect. Tourism is also an essential component in the creation of new jobs in Uzbekistan.

The number of visitors has grown by 2.5 times in three years as a result of tourism development activities. If there were 2.7 million in 2017, there were 6.7 million in 2019. Because of the pandemic, 1.5 million foreign tourists visited our country in 2020, and over 1.9 million in 2021 (*Diagramma-2*). Tourism service exports totaled 370 million US dollars in 2020, and this figure climbed by 15.1% to 422.1 million US dollars in 2021. A total of 4.5 million tourists are predicted to come in 2022, resulting in a major growth in tourism service exports.

Diagramma-2



Positive tendencies are emerging in Uzbekistan's tourism industry's quick revival. At the moment, the country is entirely open to foreign visitors. For those wishing to visit Uzbekistan, all restrictions have been lifted. Following the pandemic, special emphasis is being placed on the restoration of domestic tourism as well as the systematic organization of people's travel throughout the country⁶.

According to the decision of the Cabinet of Ministers of the Republic of Uzbekistan No. 433 of May 27, 2019 "On measures to create favorable conditions for the further development of the hotel industry," the Regulation on the procedure for allocating funds from the State budget for partial financing of organizations based on franchise agreements was approved.

1. According to the regulation, the following funds will be granted from the State budget to reimburse a portion of the expenses incurred in the construction and furnishing of a hotel for investors and organizations:

⁶ <https://aniq.uz/uz/yangiliklar/turizm-iqtisodiyot-drayveri>

In 3-star hotels, a room costs 40 million sums.

In 4-star hotels, a room costs 65 million sums.

2. The regulation also provides for partial funding from the State budget of cash spent by organizations for royalties in the following amounts:

The first 50 hotels in the 3-star category will pay \$200 per year for one room in each hotel; the first 30 hotels in the 4-star category will pay \$400 per year for one room in each hotel.

Financing of royalties for the use of well-known and prestigious hotel brands around the world (based on the TOP-50 hotel brands in the rating of "Brand Finance" or the list formed by the Coordinating Council for Tourism Development) is completed within three years of the franchise agreement's entry into force^{7, 8}.

In addition, it will be appropriate to develop more types of tourism in Uzbekistan after pandemic. That is, the tourists who come want a very quiet and clean place for themselves. Considering this, Uzbekistan is the right destination for the further development of tourism. Therefore, we considered it appropriate to further develop these types of tourism below:

Rural tourism comprises any sort of tourism outside of urban areas that does not degrade natural complexes and contributes to environmental protection and the well-being of local populations. Rural tourism include not only the accommodation of tourists in rural homes, but also the operation of the full infrastructure, which includes good transportation links between villages, recreation areas, and the supply of various information and services. Small restaurants, cafes, and taverns, in addition, each guest, and in rural tourism, a tourist is referred to as a "guest," should always feel at ease and receive personalized care.

The village family is the primary provider of lodging, food, and attractions in the village. According to its goal, rural tourism refers to a passive style of recreation that is more social and not merely commercial. Rural tourism differs from other types of tourism in that it does not necessitate major public investments. For the time being, he is content with the present potential of rural areas, such as the use of unique natural resources and historical and cultural objects, a private housing fund in the village, food produced in private households, and so on⁹.

⁷ <https://uzbektourism.uz/privileges/hotels>

⁸ Resolution of the Cabinet of Ministers of the Republic of Uzbekistan, No. 433 dated 05.27.2019

⁹ Samandar, I., & Rayxona, A. (2022). Qishloq turizmi va uni rivojlantirish istiqbollari, qishloq turizmining turlari. *Ta'lim fidoyilari*, 22(7), 422-423 pp.

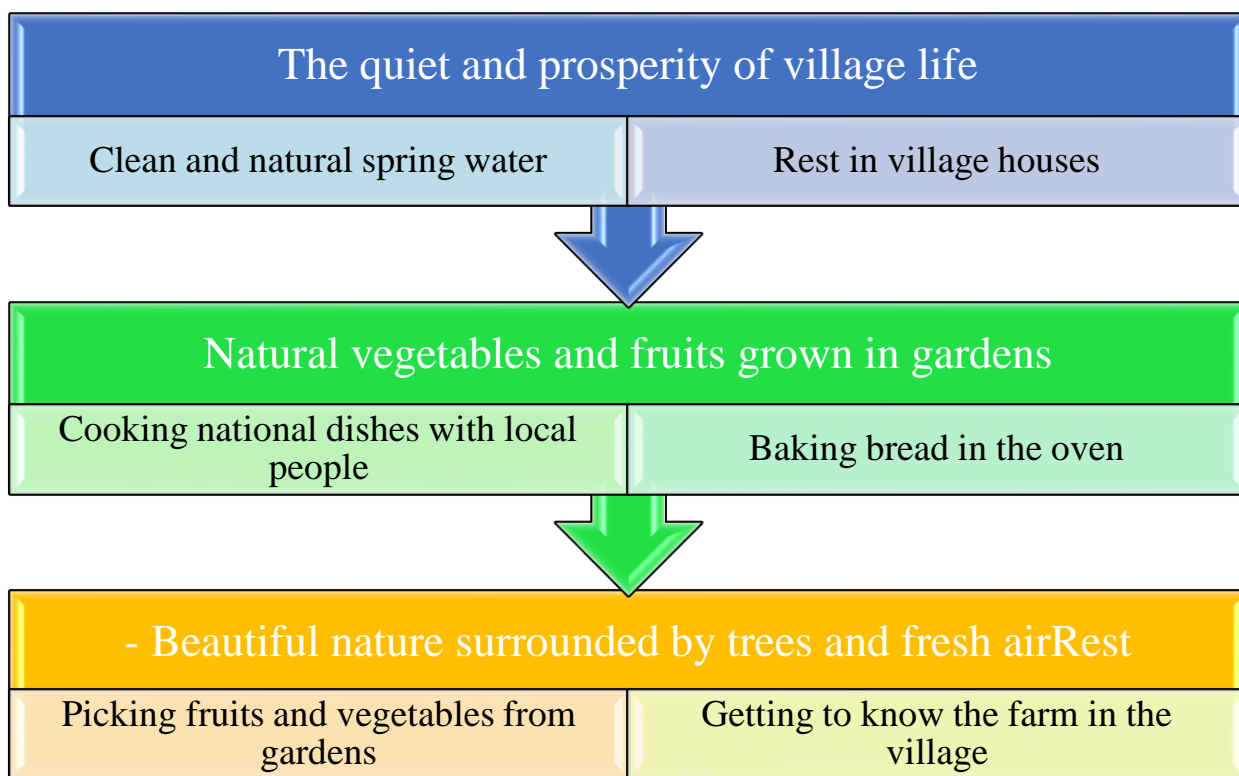


Table-1. Several features of rural tourism (done by author)

By developing rural tourism, it creates several opportunities for local residents:

There will be an opportunity to receive additional income from tourists.

*The possibility of improving the infrastructure in the area.
Opening of vacancies for local residents*

Communication with tourists

*Increasing the level of education and knowledge
Increase in family income.*

Increase in language skills.

Table-1. Opportunities of rural tourism (done by author)

Conclusion

The majority of travelers who visit Uzbekistan mention that geolocation is not sufficiently established. According to tourists, an independent visitor visiting the country will have difficulty going where he wants and finding what he wants. It is critical to reform this sector during the country's post-pandemic period. According to travelers who have visited the nation, the most difficult aspect of traveling to

Uzbekistan is registration. Even during check-in and checkout, a separate form is filled out for entering and exiting the country.

In addition, there are no private currency exchange offices in Uzbekistan, and it is only possible to exchange it in banks and specialist exchange services. Furthermore, in comparison to food and other things, the cost of hotels and transportation in the country is relatively high (clothes, drinks, gifts, etc.). There are some issues with connecting the various regions of the country (for example, there are no direct flights from Shahrisabz to Khiva even during the peak of the tourist season)¹⁰.

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