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# ESSENCE OF INDEPENDENT TOURISM AND POSSIBILITIES OF DEVELOPMENT BASED ON INTERNATIONAL EXPERIENCE IN THE REPUBLIC OF UZBEKISTAN

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Kamol Sharifovich Yuldashev<sup>1</sup>

#### **ABSTRACT**

The article describes and studies the segment of tourists who prefer self-organized travel planning, its development level and scientific hypotheses about how it will lead to changes in the field of tourism in the future. The English terms which are related to independent tourism are categorized and explained, and the needs of individual tourists are classified. Economic and social benefits will result from the development of independent tourism in the Republic of Uzbekistan.

Key words: Independent Tourism, Independent Travel, Travel Planning, Independent Decision-Making, Amateur Tourism, Organized Tourism, Online Reservation Systems.

#### Introduction

In the post-pandemic period, it is critical to organize and promote tourism destinations in order to promote the country's tourism industry. There is a steady growth trend in the number of tourists who independently plan travel on a global scale. Travelers prefer to arrange their trips independently rather than choosing an organized tourist product. It is time to increase the diversity and attractiveness of the tourism industry in Uzbekistan. Also, it is time to improve the quality of services in tourist areas. This will increase the opportunities for direct booking and purchase of the services of tourist organizations operating in the field of tourism. In this new segment, the President of Uzbekistan emphasized the term independent tourism in the newly adopted tourism law of the Republic of Uzbekistan. This law has given the No. 549 dated 18.07.2019, Article 3, Basic Concepts. It states that independent tourism is a trip organized independently by tourists without the participation of tour operators and travel agents [1]. At the next stage of development, such an approach leads to the development of all organizations operating in the field of tourism, the development of the infrastructure necessary for an independent traveler, the increase in the volume of direct online sales, the development of small organizations in the field of tourism, and ensuring a sustainable flow of tourists by eliminating low season.

Nowadays, the use of web pages is increasing day by day. According to researchers, in 2021, almost 70% of the young generation will use the Internet almost 24 hours a day. People in this category often use various services offered by websites. This shows that the trend of the industry to move to a virtual environment continues. In addition, the segment of independent travelers is considered a digital tourism category. Therefore, this terminology has scientific and practical importance [2].

Due to this, in order to diversify tourism services in the country, it is time to introduce supplementary services. By establishing an infrastructure in remote areas of the country, places with tourism potential, we can take the weak types of tourism to a new level. For example, demand for tourism will increase such as

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eco-tourism, extreme tourism, agro tourism. Independent travelers gather information about each service individually and create their own itineraries. It encourages them to sell their services directly to all tourist organizations in our country and forces them to provide more information about their services. It forms a healthy competition between tourist organizations and leads to a sharp change in the quality of services.

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#### LITERATURE REVIEW

Foreign scientists who conducted research on this topic contributed and studied many elements. One of them is Kenneth F. Hyde, a scientist from New Zealand. His study investigated the level of travel planning by independent travelers, the extent to which travel plans are implemented, and the temporal sequence of leisure element selection [3].

Scientists Loker-Murphy, L, and P. L. Pearce from Australia reviewed the origin of the budget traveler form and proposed a modern definition of the term backpacker which focuses on budget accommodations, meeting different people, arranging independently and exploring flexible travel schedules and long vacations instead of short ones [4].

Juan Luis Nicolau, one of the Spanish scientists, conducted research on the independent choice of different new destinations by travelers. He also examined how ready they are for this type of travel. From this point of view, this study analyzed the moderating role of the desire for variety and behavior under the influence of "distance" characteristics in the choice of tourist destinations.

CIS scientists O. Sutirina, S. Domracheva, N. Akhotina and Y. Pavlova conducted research on the role of information and communication technologies in the development of sustainable independent tourism. In their opinion, it was the rapid development of information technologies that pushed the trend of independent tourism to a new level [5].

One of the scientists from Uzbekistan, N. Ibragimov, in his monograph "Priorities" Primary directions for sustainable development of the tourist area", scientifically substantiated the theoretical aspects of increasing the attractiveness of the tourist area of Uzbekistan from the point of view of independent organized tourists. It proved the existence of 1) initiative tour operators, 2) receptive tour operators, 3) service reservation and booking systems, 4) national and local tourism portals, 5) local travel agent models of tourist flow formation. If the flow of tourists formed through initiative and receptive tour operators is included among organized tourists, those formed through reservation systems, national and local tourism portals and local travel agents are independent group tourists [6].

# Research methodology

Duringthe research, scientific studies were analyzed on international and national experiences of the development of independent tourism. In the process of creating the article, we used scientific-theoretical, observation and selection, empirical observation methods. Foreign statistical official sources and BJTT official sources explained the reliability of the research results.

#### **Analysis and results**

In the tourism industry, a tour product is defined as the pre-booking by tour operators of air tickets and hotels or other services consumed by travelers during the tour. Such travelers are considered to have purchased the tour product in advance. All independent travelers belong to the traveler category, but do not purchase tourism products. Their air tickets and hotel services are not booked through intermediaries. Even if only air and railway tickets are booked through tour operators, such travelers are considered independent travelers. Travelers who book hotels and other travel services on the Internet are also called independent travelers.

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Independent travelers also have their own segmentation by age category. According to Solo Travel Statistics, middle-aged tourists are more likely to travel alone. Another thing to note isthat this survey was conducted through newspapers and magazines only in English-speaking countries. This is shown in the figure below (Figure 1).

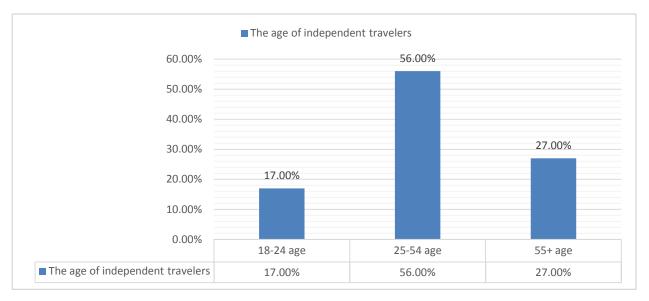


Figure 1. The age of independent tourists is expressed in age %

The statistics above show that the majority of independent travelers are young people, that is, they belong to the 24-55 age category, and they make up 56%. The second age category includes seniors over 55 years old, and about 17% are teenagers aged 18-24 years. Solo Travel Trends provides statistical data on solo travel around the world by gender. They are shown in the figure below (Figure 2).

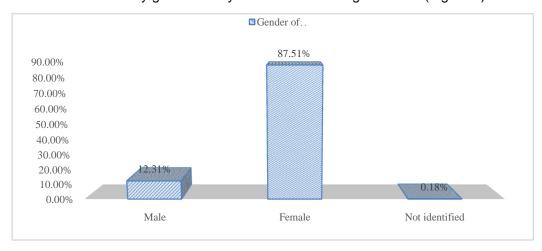


Figure 2. The gender of independent tourists is reflected

According to their gender, women fall into the category of women when traveling alone. Other Internet research sites have also confirmed that women travel independently more than men. In 2016, according to VBT Bicycling and Walking Vacations, about 68% of female customers visited alone [7].

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Independent travelers use a variety of tools to plan their trips. Currently, taking into account the development of the information infrastructure, tourists first of all turn to human websites in order to book tourist services. Some try to get the necessary information from family members and close friends. Solo Travel Trend, conducted the following surveys for a magazine that provides statistical information on independent travelers throughout the year. These are shown in the picture below.

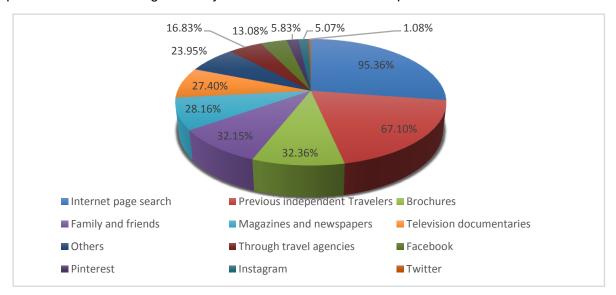


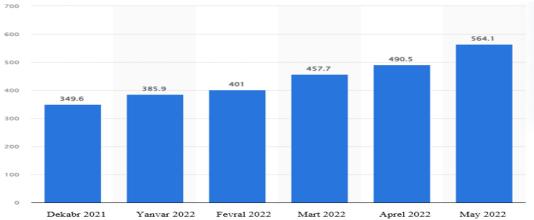
Figure 3. List of infrastructures that independent travelers refer to when planning a trip

How independent travelers can get information about the destination at the initial stage of drawing up a route and what kind of information they use is explained on the basis of a questionnaire. To begin with, independent travelers search for all services during the trip on the Internet.

In recent years, due to the development of Internet resources, the demand is growing for independent tourism, and this market segment is developing further. Due to the development of modern technologies, tourism is evolving and less dependent on tourist companies. In recent years, while the whole world is moving to a digital economy, the development of various electronic booking platforms has opened up significant opportunities in the tourism sector. This has allowed travelers to independently create their own travel programs. These include:

Booking.com, Expedia, TripAdvisor, Uber, Airbnb, Agoda, Hostelworld and others. Through these platforms, all tourist organizations can register their services, establish direct contact with travelers and make sales. These platforms provide great opportunities for independent travelers to organize their own trips. Tourism organizations have also led to an increase in service sales without intermediaries.

Almost every traveler can book accommodation from anywhere in the world on the world-famous Booking.com platform. Because independent travelers use this platform to find hotels when planning their route. According to statistics provided by Booking.com, in December 2021, 349.6 million people visited this website, and by May 2022, their number reached 564.1 million, an increase of 241.5 million.



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Figure 4. Total number of booking.com travel and tourism visitors worldwide from December 2021 to May 2022

In May 2022, Booking.com, the world's largest travel and tourism website, was used by 564 million people. It plays a great importance in the organization of directions.

The theoretical and scientific terms of the concept of an independent traveler were initially defined in English literature. These terms are reflected in foreign literature in different ways. In Italy, independent travelers are called solo travelers, but in English-speaking countries it is interpreted differently.

The following terms are used in scientific communication at the international level related to independent tourism:

The term FIT stands for "free independent travel".

- DIYT is also called "do it yourself travel" [8].

"Independence means "freedom". Independent travelers take a flexible approach to travel. This concept is used in a broad sense for all people who refuse mass tourism, that is, package holidays. Psychologically, independent travelers see themselves as free-wheelers compared to travelers who favor mass tourism. The main difference between FIT tourists and others is that they constantly share their knowledge and experiences with other travelers. As a result, such tour itineraries are developed with the help of advice from various forums. In this case, individual tourists are responsible for all parts of the tour itinerary, just like tour operators. There are special clubs for solo travelers. Usually, travelers share their impressions and experiences during the trip.

There are three categories of service needs in trip planning

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| Pre-travel needs  | Necessities during the trip   | Post-Travel Needs                       |
|---|---|---|
| Figuring out where to go  | Transportation  | Evaluationof services used              |
| Determine the duration of the trip  | Diningareas   | Reasoning                               |
| Determining whether totravel alone or with a partner                                      | Washrooms   | Makerecommendations                     |
| Study of costs (booking<br>air tickets, hotel meals,<br>transport services in<br>advance) | Small hotels for a short stay   | Shareyourexperiences                    |
| Fundraiserforthetrip  | Pharmacies  | Join the Independent Travelers Club     |
|   | Carrying out financial<br>transactions (exchange, Visa,<br>Master Card) | Write down the shortcomings of the trip |
|   | Shops selling food and clothes  |   |
|   | Gas stations and electric mobile charging stations                      |   |
|   | Railway and air ticket sales offices                                    |   |

Figure 5. The basic needs of the independent traveler

This table covers the needs in the planning stages of a trip, the needs that come up during the trip, and the needs that come up after the trip. Organizing a trip in a complete and safe manner requires consideration of all three factors. Because every detail is significant during the trip. First of all, it is necessary to determine in advance the destination of the trip and its duration. This is because these two main factors lead to the determination of expenses for the trip. Based on the economic situation of the destination, future expenses can be determined. Air tickets, hotels, transportation, and food prices are factored into the traveler's decision to reach this destination, and on this basis, sufficient funds are collected from the traveler. A solo traveler should take these factors into account when making an independent trip.

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Independent travelers often prefer to travel alone or in small groups. They are opposed to travelers who welcome mass tourism. Eastern European markets are mostly adapted to mass tourism, while independent travel is developing in Western Europe and Scandinavian countries. Such travelers prefer to have more unique experiences.

During the research into English literature and internet pages, it was found that there are different definitions of independent tourism. The most common terms related to independent tourism are presented in Figure 4. The table also breaks down the most common uses of the terms geographically. In foreign literature, tourists are divided into different groups based on the method of travel organization and economic behavior factors.

The following conclusions were reached as a result of the independent tourism category research. Each of these terms has different meanings at the international level, and each of these terms has developed in different regions [9].

### By financial importance:

- Backpacking is a type of budget travel. This type of travel is often carried out by independent and young travelers. They usually prefer to stay in cheap accommodation, travel with minimal luggage and carry everything they need in a backpack. The advantage of this type of travel is flexible, that is, the traveler has the opportunity to develop the travel route according to themselves [10].
- The term flashpacking is a relative concept to the term backpacking. This type of traveler likes to travel alone like backpackers, but is willing to invest more time in hotels, transportation, and food. Flashpackers will be in a better financial position. A flashpacker is an independent traveler with spending money. Flashpackers also travel independently with one backpack, on a budget, but spend more on better amenities during the tour [11].
- Poshpacking prefers to use the same high-level services as flashpackers, but they put more emphasis on the design, condition and uniqueness of the product. For example, the appearance of the hotel, the cleanliness of the rooms and bathrooms, the comfort of the vehicles and even the cleanliness of the items in the dining areas are considered very significant factors for them [12].
- Budget tourism means a budget traveler is usually a person who travels by finding cheap air tickets, accommodation, eating cheap food (for example, street food) and cheap tourist places. Budget travelers differ from backpackers in that they can move without a backpack or travel for a certain period through tour operators.
- Begpacking is an example of poor tourism and a type of backpacking trip. This term is used for those who travel between countries in exchange for begging. Travelers of this type use 3 main methods of begging. Their first tactic is to sit in crowded places and beg with a piece of paper to pay for their travel. Their second tactic is to board local buses and ask someone with the same note or a musical instrument to help them. Travelers can earn money by playing music on the streets, and thirdly, by selling products or services, such as handmade art, jewelry, or handicrafts [13].

# By profession:

Student travel - Travels independently organized by students for the purpose of studying, with the expenses covered by the student's family. Unlike usual trips, student travel is a way for students to learn about other cultures, gain unusual life experience and study the educational system of other countries. This includes work experience [14].

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- Explorer Researcher-traveler. A person who usually conducts geographical or scientific research explores areas that are not usually visited by tourists.
- A drifter is a wanderer, abandoning the usual way of life, often moving from one place to another, absorbing local traditions, traveling on his own. Drifters are independent travelers who do not have a specific destination, but constantly change their place of residence [15].

## According to the form of organization:

- Unorganized tourism is a type of independent tourism, similar to drifter travelers, but it is a type of travel that has a clear direction and purpose, but no services are booked in advance. Such travelers are also called risk-takers.
- Self-organized tourism is a self-organized trip. Such travelers pre-determine their destinations and book all basic services (air ticket, hotel, transportation, meals, and interpreter) in advance [16].
- Semi-organized tourism a semi-organized trip, in which the traveler organizes his trip himself, but buys some services through tourist companies, for example, booking a hotel in advance [17].
- Do-It-Yourself travel planning and execution of the trip is organized only by the traveler. They choose the travel direction independently and want to do and see what they want during the trip, including the choice of accommodation and food [18].

A self-guided tour is a tour that the traveler guides themselves, that is, the traveler moves independently from one direction to another. In this, the traveler uses a personalized audio tour or audio guide to the sights. These special devices determine the direction, time and information of travel. Many attractions now have their own app, map, directions, and special devices. Audio tours are often presented in a self-guided tour format using booklets, smartphones, or stand-alone handheld devices, such as virtual tours [19].

# Based on the mode of transport:

- Caravanning is a specialized form of caravan tourism in which it serves the dual purpose of providing a means of transport as well as accommodation. Such vehicles can be immovable and located in parking lots, or they can be mobile from one place to another, tied to one vehicle. Currently, this form of tourism is classified as accommodation on wheels, and travel is mainly carried out in campers [20].

Traveling by hitchhiking is one of the cheapest ways to travel. Traditionally, hitchhiking is defined as passengers standing on the side of the road, against traffic, with a thumbs up to call for traffic to stop. It is a form of transportation that can be obtained by asking passengers, usually strangers, for a ride in their car or another vehicle [21].

- Megaloping is traveling by public transport only. This mainly means that independent travelers use local transport, i.e. trains, local buses and taxis [22].

- New Age tourism travelers are members of various movements. The main purpose of this movement is to learn about the customs, lifestyle, religion and people of other countries as a group. Members of the New Age movement move from place to place in groups and spend the night in cars [23].

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# According to the category of individual tourism:

FITs are travelers who always plan their own trips. They refuse to travel in groups, to follow routes planned by others. In some cases, they use the help of travel agents [24].

- Group inclusive tourism (GIT) is a trip organized in groups of more than 5 people with the help of a travel agency. A GIT is usually a type of trip organized by at least 10 people with a single goal and going to the same destination. All services are provided by tour operators or sometimes guides.
- An open trip is a group excursion organized by a travel agency for an unfamiliar group. The members of the group will not be known in advance. The lineup is announced in advance and the group members are formed one by one. The number of this group is unknown, and the members of the group may be complete strangers to each other.

### Conclusions and suggestions

The following conclusions were reached as a result of the research into the category of independent tourism. These terms are most often found in English literature. All of them belong to the category of independent tourism. The basis of these categories is the organization and implementation of travel independently. Therefore, these terms are often used in countries with a stable economy and tourist flow. Most of these terms are new to Uzbekistan.

Independent travelers prefer to create their own trips rather than traveling with group travelers [29].

Independent travelers travel alone, in pairs or with a small group of people. Their goal is to follow the path they choose, explore the things they want to see, and thus have their own unique travel experiences. By planning their own trips, they can travel independently without being tied to a group [30].

Nowadays, social media gives travelers better access to research their complete travel information. They also get travel information from photos, videos, stories and online reviews. The Internet has become the most convenient place for independent travelers to obtain travel information. This means that tourism service organizations are always connected online so that independent travelers can find the services they need.

According to the above terms, independent travelers prefer cheap tours, but other independent travelers, such as flashpackers and poshpackers, choose high-quality services and spend a lot of money during the trip. We can list various reasons that encourage a traveler to travel alone. For example, a travel company may have a different outlook than solo travellers, even if they are in the same financial situation. Food that one person likes may not be liked by the second person; one person prefers light hotel rooms, while the other prefers dark rooms; one person prefers a soft bed, while the companion likes a stiff one. There are hundreds of reasons for this. So, in conclusion, the main reason for independent travel depends on the character, nature, lifestyle and interest of the travelers.

International experts predict that after the pandemic, tourists will travel independently more often. For this reason, in order to increase the number of independent travelers in Uzbekistan, it is necessary to organize tours that attract more independent tourists. A large percentage of independent travelers are young people. They are more interested in such types of tourism as extreme, religious, agro, cultural, golf, cruises, caravan parks, inter-country travel in private cars. Almost all of the above-mentioned types of tourism can be implemented in our country. The following proposals were developed based on this:

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- 1. Look for ways to further improve the infrastructure of accommodations suitable for this market segment. Establish guest houses, private houses for rent, roadside motels. Because independent travelers are often looking for cheap accommodation and the length of their trip is always changing.
- 2. Organize information centers at airports and railway stations. All information on accommodation, transportation, dining options, facilities, translators, local transportation, rental vehicles, cheap accommodations for rent, mountain and desert deserts upon arrival. Must have information. Creating conditions for free internet access for 10 minutes at airports and railway stations. The most significant thing is that the employees of the airport and the railway can communicate at least in Russian and English. Because independent travelers are those who travel alone without using the services of an interpreter.
- 3. Ensuring security. Someone who intends to travel alone will first determine the level of safety at the destination. In this regard, according to the information provided by the Solo Travel Safety Report - 2019, our country took 5th place after Singapore, Norway, Ireland, and Finland [31]. Based on the fact that 84% of independent travelers around the world are women, it is necessary to ensure their safe and free travel.

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