



ENHANCING TOURISM COMPETITIVENESS AND DEVELOPMENT IN NAMANGAN REGION

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ABSTRACT

This article analyzes tourism development in the Namangan region, highlighting recent achievements, created opportunities, and supportive conditions. It evaluates regional tourism potential for strategic planning and outlines key future directions to enhance tourism growth, economic resources, business activity, and the overall effectiveness of the local tourism sector.

The geographical location of Uzbekistan, together with its favorable natural and climatic conditions, rich historical and cultural heritage, national cuisine, traditions, and customs, demonstrates the country's strong potential for tourism development. Political stability and consistent state reforms further strengthen this potential by creating a supportive environment for sustainable growth in the tourism sector. In recent years, numerous presidential decrees and governmental resolutions have been adopted to promote tourism, particularly in regions and remote rural areas, forming a solid legal and institutional framework for long-term development. The government plays a leading role in shaping tourism policy, expanding international cooperation, and signing agreements with foreign partners to enhance economic and tourism relations.

Academic research on strategic tourism development emphasizes sustainable economic growth, efficient use of resources, and ecological balance. Scholars argue that successful tourism strategies require harmony between environmental protection, cultural heritage preservation, and economic objectives (Kaikara, 2020). Similarly, Rodrigues et al. (2025) identify sustainability, infrastructure, governance, and innovation as key pillars of tourism development, highlighting the need for integrated and systemic approaches in strategic decision-making.

Innovation has become a crucial factor in increasing competitiveness. The introduction of digital technologies, smart management systems, and experiential marketing tools improves service quality and customer satisfaction. Damiasih (2025) emphasizes that innovative marketing strategies, including technology integration and stakeholder collaboration, contribute significantly to sustainable tourism growth. At the local level, digital platforms and destination branding are essential instruments for market expansion, as illustrated by Kusekeev's (2025) study of Karakalpakstan. Domestic tourism is also recognized as an important driver of economic activity and cultural exchange. SWOT-based analyses demonstrate that strengthening internal travel stimulates regional economies and reduces dependence on international markets (Osarov, 2025). Furthermore, integrating

historical and cultural heritage into tourism ensures the preservation of national values while generating income (Meliboyeva, 2025).

Technological modernization continues to transform the sector. Researchers note that digitalization, innovative processes, and even “digital twin” technologies can improve tourism management and enhance visitor experiences (Bakhshilloev, 2025; Almeida, 2025). Regional studies, including those conducted in Kashkadarya, confirm that infrastructure, clustering, and investment attraction play decisive roles in achieving sustainable growth (Daminova, 2025). Yunusova (2025) particularly stresses that modern infrastructure and digital solutions directly affect tourism quality and competitiveness. In line with these views, Ismailov (2025) proposes comprehensive strategies that combine environmental, social, and economic considerations.

Uzbekistan possesses significant tourism and recreational resources. The country has more than 7,400 cultural heritage sites, including 209 located in the UNESCO-listed historic cities of Khiva, Bukhara, Shakhrisabz, and Samarkand. These destinations provide strong international appeal and position Uzbekistan as a key cultural tourism hub in Central Asia. In recent years, large-scale investments have improved infrastructure through the construction of modern hotels, cultural parks, new railway lines, and electrified high-speed train routes connecting major cities. Such projects enhance accessibility and visitor comfort, thereby increasing the attractiveness of destinations.

Statistical trends between 2017 and 2023 illustrate both growth and vulnerability in the tourism sector. Foreign tourist arrivals increased from 5.35 million in 2017 to approximately 7 million in 2019. However, the COVID-19 pandemic caused a sharp decline to 1.7 million in 2020. Recovery began in 2021–2022, with numbers rising again, and continued improvement observed in 2023. The majority of visitors belong to the 31–55 age group. Most trips are made to visit relatives, while leisure, business, education, and medical purposes account for smaller shares. Geographically, most tourists come from neighboring countries and other CIS states, indicating the importance of regional tourism flows.

Tourism exports follow similar dynamics. Revenues increased from just over one billion US dollars in 2017 to more than 1.6 billion dollars by 2022, demonstrating the sector’s growing contribution to the national economy. Domestic tourism also remains significant. Although internal travel decreased during the pandemic, it has shown steady recovery and now plays a vital role in supporting local businesses, creating jobs, and stimulating regional development.

State tourism policy aims to make tourism a leading driver of socio-economic progress. The sector is expected to promote regional diversification, increase employment, raise incomes, and enhance the country’s investment attractiveness and international image. Programs encouraging domestic travel and regional tourism initiatives further contribute to these goals.

The experience of Namangan region illustrates the effectiveness of targeted policies. The region has seen growth in both foreign and domestic visitors, expansion of hospitality facilities, and increased tourism service exports. New hostels, hotels, tour operators, and transport services have been launched, while Wi-Fi zones, signage, and sanitation facilities have improved infrastructure. The establishment of “tourism villages,” the development of

master plans for several districts, and the attraction of large-scale investments demonstrate a systematic approach to destination development. Educational institutions have also introduced programs in tourism and hospitality, implementing dual education models to prepare qualified specialists and improve service standards.

Overall, Uzbekistan's tourism sector demonstrates strong potential supported by rich cultural resources, strategic reforms, and infrastructure modernization. Despite temporary setbacks caused by global crises, the sector continues to recover and expand. Sustainable policies, innovation, digitalization, and regional development initiatives will remain essential for long-term success. By strengthening these areas, tourism can serve as a key engine of economic growth, employment creation, and international recognition for the country.

In the future, the following should be done to develop the tourism sector in our country:

1. Further improve the regulatory and legal framework for tourism in our republic, introduce international norms and standards aimed at creating favorable conditions for the development of the tourism sector;
2. Create broad opportunities for the development of tourism infrastructure in all regions of our country;
3. Develop transport logistics, expand external and internal routes, and improve the quality of transport services;
4. Develop and implement comprehensive measures to reduce the impact of seasonal factors by diversifying tourist products and services;
5. Develop domestic tourism, which will ensure the stimulation of the activity of tourism entities aimed at meeting the need for tourism services within the republic;
6. Promoting the tourist product of the Republic of Uzbekistan in the domestic and foreign tourism markets, strengthening its image as a safe country for travel and recreation;
7. Training highly qualified specialists in the field of tourism, improving the system of retraining and advanced training of service personnel, etc.

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