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THE PROBLEM OF SEASONAL TOURISM IN UZBEKISTAN AND POSSIBLE SOLUTION

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Annotation. This thesis is about seasonal tourism in Uzbekistan in the context of sustainable development of the tourism industry. Being one of the top industries in the country's economy, tourism is still dependent on spring and autumn tourism and the situation still has to be worked on. The reason for seasonality is climatic conditions, poor diversification in tourism products and insufficient winter infrastructure. Based on case studies, this paper proposes to develop mountain tourism, MICE tourism, cultural festivals and digital marketing strategies. We found that year-round tourism products can increase tourist arrivals, help hotel occupancy rates, create employment opportunities, and enhance regional development.

Keywords. Seasonal tourism, Uzbekistan, sustainable tourism, mountain tourism, MICE tourism, cultural festivals, tourism development, tourism marketing, regional development, tourist flows

Literature review

According to Dilfuza Samarovna Khamzaeva, seasonality leads to underutilization of accommodation facilities, fluctuations in tourist arrivals, and temporary unemployment among tourism workers. Her research emphasizes that tourism enterprises often experience high occupancy during peak seasons and low demand during off-seasons, reducing overall profitability.[1]

One of the most frequently recommended solutions is tourism diversification. Dilfuza Abdufattokhovna Saidova argues that Uzbekistan should develop a broader portfolio of tourism products, including ecotourism, agritourism, medical tourism, educational tourism, and adventure tourism. Diversification can attract visitors throughout the year and reduce dependence on cultural tourism alone.[2]

Furthermore, Fazliddin Qodirzoda argues that climate change and weather conditions increasingly influence tourist behavior. Extreme summer temperatures and unfavorable winter conditions reduce travel demand in many destinations across Uzbekistan.[3]

Kamolov Xudoyor Zoyirovich recommends creating new tourism routes and experiences in less-visited regions. Expanding tourism products beyond traditional destinations such as Samarkand, Bukhara, and Khiva can distribute tourist flows more evenly throughout the year.[4]

[1] https://erus.uz/index.php/er/article/view/4813?utm_source

[2] https://cajitmf.casjournal.org/index.php/CAJITMF/article/view/1247?utm_source

[3] https://publication.kiut.uz/hello/article/view/98?utm_source

[4] https://geniusjournals.org/index.php/ejhge/article/view/4177?utm_source

Several researchers highlight the economic consequences of seasonality. Fayazov notes that seasonal fluctuations create unstable employment, reduce investment efficiency, and hinder the sustainable growth of tourism enterprises. Infrastructure such as hotels, restaurants, and transportation systems often remains underutilized during low-demand periods.[5]

Analysis and results. By the second decade of the 21st century, tourism had become one of the most important sectors of the Uzbek economy. The government of Uzbekistan introduced a series of reforms aimed at strengthening the country's tourism potential, including visa liberalization, simplification of entry procedures, infrastructure modernization, and active international promotion. As a result of these measures, the number of international visitors has increased significantly in recent years. Tourism has become a key contributor to economic growth, foreign exchange earnings, and regional development. Despite this rapid progress, the tourism industry still faces several practical challenges. One of the most serious problems is seasonality. Tourist arrivals are particularly high during spring and autumn, while the number of visitors decreases sharply during the hot summer months and the colder winter season. This imbalance creates financial instability for tourism businesses and limits employment opportunities for local communities. The main reason for seasonal tourism in Uzbekistan is its continental climate. During June, July, and August, temperatures in many regions exceed 40°C, making sightseeing uncomfortable for tourists. Historical cities such as Samarkand, Bukhara, and Khiva become extremely hot, which discourages international visitors. In winter, although some regions have suitable weather conditions, the country lacks sufficient winter tourism infrastructure and attractive seasonal activities. Another important factor contributing to seasonality is the limited diversification of tourism products. Tourism marketing primarily focuses on cultural and historical heritage tourism. While Uzbekistan possesses rich Silk Road heritage and architectural monuments, tourism activities are concentrated mainly in a few cities and depend heavily on outdoor sightseeing. There are limited winter sports programs, wellness tourism services, mountain adventure packages, or indoor entertainment options. Seasonal tourism leads to several negative consequences. Many small hotels, guesthouses, and travel agencies experience financial difficulties during low seasons. Employees often face temporary unemployment or reduced working hours. Income instability increases investment risks and slows down the sustainable development of the sector. As a result, tourism competitiveness remains vulnerable despite strong peak-season performance.

To address this issue, several important measures should be implemented. First, the government and private sector should invest in the development of mountain tourism, ecotourism, and winter sports in regions such as Bildirsoy and Chimgan. Modern ski resorts, cable cars, eco-lodges, and adventure tourism programs would attract visitors during winter months and reduce pressure on historical cities during peak seasons. Second, tourism companies should organize indoor cultural festivals, gastronomic fairs, handicraft exhibitions, and business tourism events during low seasons. The development of MICE tourism (meetings, incentives, conferences, and exhibitions) would allow Uzbekistan to host international conferences and corporate events throughout the year. Indoor, climate-controlled venues can minimize the negative effects of extreme weather conditions. Third, digital marketing strategies should promote Uzbekistan as a four-season destination. Promotional campaigns should highlight different seasonal attractions: cultural heritage in spring, mountain escapes in summer, gastronomy tourism in autumn, and winter

[5] https://acopen.umsida.ac.id/index.php/acopen/article/view/11771?utm_source

sports in colder months. Active use of social media, travel platforms, and influencer marketing can help reshape international perceptions and attract diverse tourist segments. If these solutions are implemented effectively, tourism flows can become more stable throughout the year. Hotels, restaurants, and other tourism businesses would experience more consistent occupancy rates and revenue streams. Employment opportunities for local communities would improve, and investment risks would decrease. Furthermore, regional development would become more balanced, reducing excessive concentration in a few historical cities.

Results of Organizing an International Cultural Festival. In the previous winter season, Uzbekistan received approximately 80,000 international tourists. After organizing the winter cultural and gastronomy festival, tourist arrivals increased by 25%, reaching 100,000 visitors. The average spending per tourist was estimated at $600. Therefore, winter tourism revenue increased from $48,000,000 to $60,000,000, resulting in an additional income of $12,000,000 during the festival period. Hotel occupancy rates in major cities increased from 35% to 60%, while small and medium-sized enterprises reported revenue growth between 20–30%. Temporary employment opportunities also expanded, particularly for youth and artisans.

Results of Building a Mountain Tourism Resort; Before the development of the new resort, the Chimgan region attracted around 50,000 visitors during the winter period. Within two years of operation, visitor numbers increased by 40%, reaching 70,000 tourists. With an average tourist expenditure of $750, annual resort revenue increased from $37,500,000 to $52,500,000. This represents an income growth of $15,000,000. Annual hotel occupancy in the region grew from 45% to 68%. New small businesses such as cafes, equipment rental services, and tour guiding companies emerged, creating permanent employment for local residents.

The combined strategy significantly reduced seasonal imbalance. Total additional revenue generated from both initiatives amounted to $27,000,000. Tourist flows became more stable throughout the year, improving economic sustainability and strengthening Uzbekistan's competitiveness as a four-season destination. In overall: The implementation of cultural festivals and all-season tourism resorts proves to be an effective solution to the seasonality problem. Diversifying tourism products ensures sustainable economic growth, stable employment, and long-term competitiveness in the global tourism market.

Conclusion, although tourism has become a strategic pillar of Uzbekistan's economy, seasonality remains a serious obstacle to sustainable growth. Climatic disadvantages and limited tourism products create uneven tourist flows and economic instability. By diversifying tourism offerings, developing mountain and winter tourism, organizing year-round events, and strengthening digital marketing, Uzbekistan can transform itself into a competitive, year-round destination. Addressing seasonality is an essential step toward ensuring long-term sustainability and strengthening the overall competitiveness of the national tourism industry.

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