

PROSPECTS FOR THE DEVELOPMENT OF SOCIO-ECONOMIC POTENTIAL OF TOURISM IN UZBEKISTAN

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Abstract: The article is devoted to the analysis of the current state of development of Uzbekistan's tourism potential and its effective use. The contribution of the tourism sector to the gross domestic product of our country and other indicators of its development were analyzed. Conclusions and recommendations on the impact of the pandemic period on the tourism sector, its negative consequences and the effective use of tourism potential are given.

Keywords: tourism, tourism potential, crisis, pandemic, coronavirus, security, digitization, economic growth, economic development

INTRODUCTION

Studying the problems of developing the potential of tourism and its effective use from the point of view of applying innovative approaches to it is an urgent issue in any country and in different periods, especially in times of crisis. Our country is no exception, especially in the conditions of sustainable development, the tourism industry is known to be the most actively developing and radically changing industry in the world. Accordingly, the use of tourism potential can be effective even with the use of new approaches in the context of economic crisis events.

In the pre-pandemic period, the tourism sector was considered one of the most profitable sectors for the global economy. If the rapid development of tourism was called a phenomenon of the 20th century, in the 21st century tourism makes a significant contribution to regional, national and global economic development, generates income from exports, and serves to the development of infrastructure.

At the same time, the tourism sector is one of the crisis-prone segments of the economy, which was confirmed by the emergence of the COVID-19 coronavirus pandemic. The global and local practice of various crisis related events show that the impact of any crisis is proportionally felt in all sectors of the country's economy, but not in tourism. Perhaps its negative impact with the emergence of a pandemic. gave the most serious blow to the tourism industry. Summarizing the results of 2020, the UN World Tourism Organization (UNWTO) recognized that world tourism has returned to the level of 1990, 30 years ago [1].

President of the Republic of Uzbekistan Sh.M. Mirziyoyev defined restoring the tourism industry and tourist exchange after the coronavirus pandemic as one of the important directions [2]. At the fifteenth summit of the Economic Cooperation Organization held in Ashgabat on November 28, 2021, the President proposed the development and adoption of a regional program for the development of safe tourism in the post-pandemic period. (2022, in the city of Bukhara). The program pays special attention to the development of pilgrimage tourism and

other tourist products, the expansion of air transport geography, and the improvement of tourism infrastructure [2].

Of course, the tourism industry will start to recover after the when the restrictions gradually lifted. Therefore, it is important to understand what tools are available to promote its development and tourism potential, even after the pandemic. This is necessary to develop a systematic approach to managing the consequences of the pandemic in order to further develop tourism and its tourism potential. It is important to understand what tools are available to industry players to manage tourist flows and encourage safe activities for citizens. In this regard, as a result of the pandemic, the ability to further develop the tourism sector and effectively respond to problems is a priority, and their solution requires new approaches.

ANALYSIS OF LITERATURE SOURCES

Analysis of literary sources and positions of authors allows synthesis of different points of view on the impact of the crisis on the tourism industry and its potential. Economic activity related to tourism is a type of activity affected by crisis conditions, during which the demand for tourist products and services decreases, but does not disappear completely [3] (Keller, 2013). On the general situation of the tourism sector during the pandemic, I.V. Loguntsova [4] (Loguntsova, 2020), thinks that "such a serious crisis in the tourism business has not been observed since the Second World War." M.N. Zabaeva believes that tourism is one of the "points" for many countries to get out of the crisis and increase economic growth (Zabaeva, 2011) [5], so tourism "significantly exceeds the growth rate (in the growth phase) of economic growth and a significant decrease in the rate of decline of tourism production (in the crisis stage) is observed. The rate of economic decline. Therefore, the timely introduction of anti-crisis models of tourism production will help to maintain the competitive positions of the regions in the conditions of economic growth, and increase the positive impact of tourism on the regional economy.

Russian Federation scientists M.F. Mizintseva, T.V. Gerbinalarin and M.A. Chugrin [6] (Mizintseva et al., 2020), considering the unprecedented and rapidly developing crisis, claim that it is currently very difficult to assess the impact of COVID-19 on international tourism. The assessment of its impact should be interpreted with caution, since the current crisis cannot be compared with the SARS epidemic, nor with the economic crisis that occurred in 2008-2009.

The scientific and practical aspects of the formation and development of tourism potential in Uzbekistan are considered by many authors. However, as a basis for their development under the influence of various crises, they are not well studied, especially in the regions. Ochilova H.F. [7] (Ochilova, Zhaloliddinova, Nurmatova, 2021), "each subsequent crisis creates opportunities for the development of new types of services in the tourism sector. For example, after the financial crisis of 2008, sales of tour packages decreased sharply, but services such as Airbnb and BlaBlaCar began to develop, which allowed consumers to travel and create their own tours economically.

The coronavirus pandemic is a catalyst for the tourism industry, which can not only negatively affect and slow down the further development of some of its types, but also create new ones,

change consumer perceptions and travel habits. Such a period of stagnation creates opportunities for the development of domestic tourism. Today, new types of tourism for Uzbekistan, including pilgrimage, ecological, educational, ethnographic, gastronomic, sports, wellness, rural, business, etc., are successfully developing.

In order to organize active recreation of the citizens of the Republic, for example, the project "Walking route" (walking in the city, health corridor, trekking and walking) aimed at reducing the incidence of heart diseases, among others, is being implemented. As part of the systematization and expansion of medical services provided to citizens of foreign countries, the medical tourism development program "Uzbekistan - the land of hope and healing" ("Uzbekistan - the land of hope and healing") is being implemented. .

In our opinion, in the current conditions, it is impossible to fully realize the potential of tourism in large cities and rural areas without forming and implementing various new approaches that can satisfy the tourist needs qualitatively and quantitatively. on the basis of the quarantine established for tourists and business entities providing services to them.

The purpose of the study is to analyze the current state of development of Uzbekistan's tourism potential and its effective use, focusing on highlighting the negative consequences of the COVID-19 pandemic. Restrictions related to the pandemic can be considered as a factor that temporarily hinders the development of the tourism industry, a forced break that allows us to evaluate the existing conditions for using its potential and choose the next directions of effective development. In the stages of research presented in the article, we previously, we paid attention to the scientific methods of studying and summarizing data, taking into account the period covering the tourism sector and the processes of tourism potential development. Their use makes it possible to identify and propose new directions for solving existing and emerging contradictions, taking into account the changes and effects taking place in the republic's tourism industry due to the pandemic.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

1. Tourism industry of Uzbekistan: development before the pandemic and current situation. In the republic, tourism is recognized as one of the main sectors of the economy and became one of the "growth points" of the national economy in the following years before the pandemic. According to the statistics of the World Tourism Organization, at the end of 2019, the tourism industry of Uzbekistan was among the five fastest growing countries [8].

The tourism potential of the country, which lives in harmony with the rich historical heritage and modern architecture and high-tech development, is huge. The advantage of the tourism sector of Uzbekistan as a tourist destination is related to the natural and cultural heritage, historical and anthropogenic resources, 7.4 thousand objects of cultural heritage. 209 of them are objects included in the UNESCO World Heritage List (four museum cities ("Ichan Castle in Khiva", "Historical Center of Bukhara", "Historical Center of the City"). Shahrizabz" and "Samarkand City")). 8 reserves in our country There are 2 natural and 1 national parks, 6 natural monuments, 11 nature reserves, more than 50 water protection zones, which are important tourist attractions, as well as about 350 cultural and entertainment facilities (museums, theaters,

cultural and amusement parks) and many other tourism facilities. Tourists from different countries should see all these when they come to Uzbekistan.

The importance of the tourism industry in our country and its potential are confirmed by the results of the analysis of the following statistical data. In the gross domestic product of Uzbekistan, the tourism sector increased from 1210.8 billion soums (2008) to 14102.6 billion soums (2019) in absolute terms (Figure 1). At the same time, only in 2019, the contribution of this sector to the republic's gross domestic product was 2.7 percent.

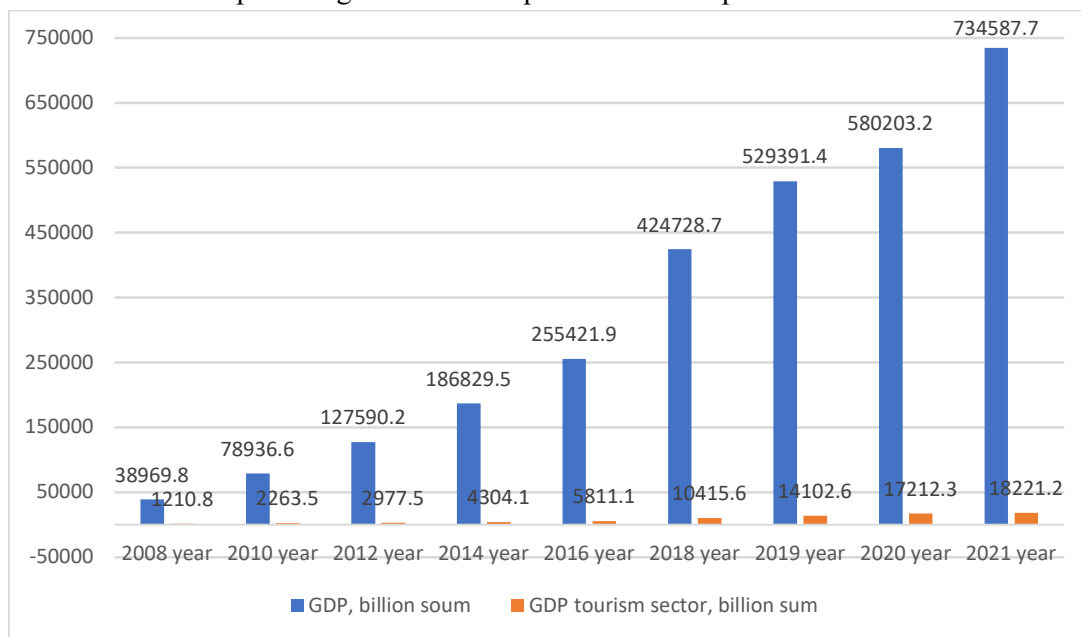


Figure 1. GDP and tourism indicators in Uzbekistan in 2008-2021

The development of the tourism industry in 2017-2019 (the three-year period before the pandemic) shows a positive growth trend in terms of its main indicators. Thus, the export of services in this sector increased from 546.9 million US dollars (2017) to 1313 million US dollars (2019) or 2.4 times (table). The following numbers confirm that the number of foreign tourists coming to Uzbekistan has also increased. If in 2017 the number of such tourists was 2.7 million, by the end of 2019 their number reached 6.7 million. However, with the emergence of the coronavirus, the number of people wishing to visit Uzbekistan decreased sharply, which is almost 78% less than in 2019.

The number of hotels and similar tourist accommodation facilities for 2017-2019 increased by 1.5 times, and the number of rooms in them increased by 1.4 times. The number of tour operators in the republic increased from 561 to 1482.

Today, the strategic and program management documents adopted in the republic specify the development of the entire economy and its branches, including tourism. In the Action Strategy for further development of the Republic of Uzbekistan in 2017-2021 [9] measures are defined for the rapid development of the tourism sector, increasing its role and contribution in the economy, diversification and improvement of the quality of tourism services, expansion of the

tourism sector. tourism infrastructure. The concept of development of the tourism sector in the Republic of Uzbekistan in 2019-2025 (hereinafter referred to as the Concept) [10] summarizes the views and main priorities of the state on the further development of the competitive tourism industry. It is to turn it into a strategic sector and achieve the goals by diversifying it and improving the quality of tourism services, attracting tourism infrastructure, including foreign investments, and conducting effective advertising and marketing activities.

In 2021-2025, by developing the necessary infrastructure and successfully promoting the tourism potential of the republic in world markets, the goal was to increase the share of tourism in the gross domestic product of our country to 5%, as well as to attract more than 9 million tourists. By the end of 2025, including 2 million from far abroad.

Indicator	Actual indicators				Target indicators		
	2017 y.	2018 y.	2019 y.	2020 y.	2021 y.	2023 y.	2025 y.
Export of tourist services, mln	546,9	1041,0	1313,0	370,0	1399,1	1739,4	2232,8
The number of foreign tourists who came to Uzbekistan, thousand people	2690,0	5346,8	6748,0	1504,1	6743,3	7865,4	9089,3
Number of domestic tourists, thousand trips	10560	14000	15640	18000	18806	21867	25010
Number of tour operators, units	561	983	1482	1158	1262	1458	1676
Number, units of hotels and similar accommodation facilities	816	914	1188	1226	2394	2715	2994
Number of rooms in residential buildings, thousand units	18,6	20,2	26,1	29,2	48,7	55,2	60,9

Tourism has a great role in creating new jobs in the republic. In 2019, a large number of jobs were created in the field of tourism, where 230,500 people worked only in organizations established as legal entities. Travel agencies and other travel booking services for tourists employed 3192 people. Figure 1 shows the composition of employees in organizations by types of services provided in the field of tourism.

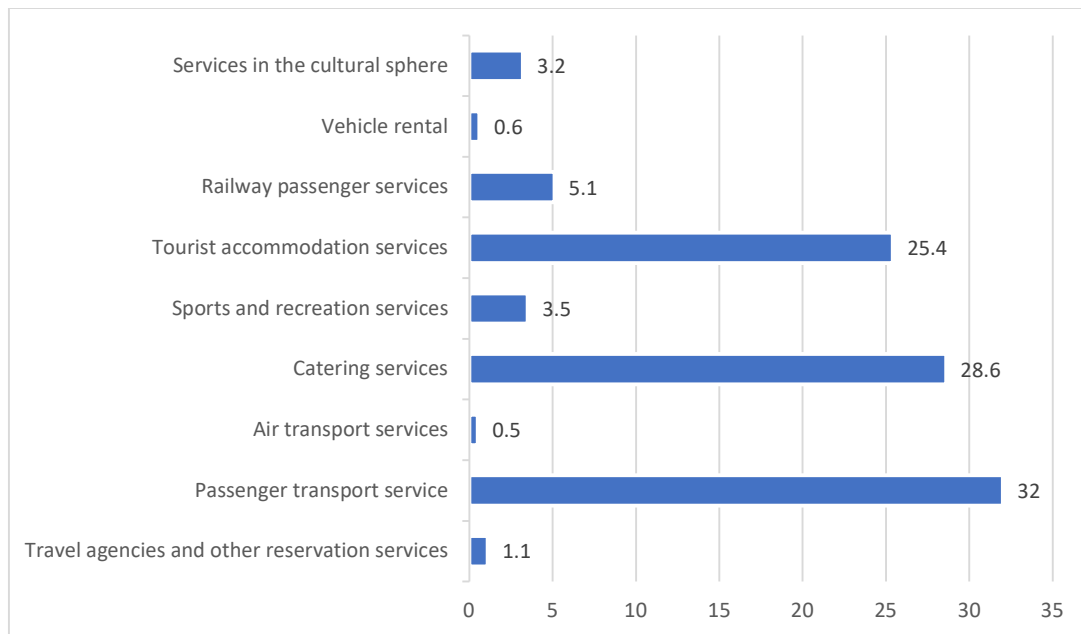


Figure 2. The composition of employees in organizations (legal entities) by types of services provided in the field of tourism, on average in 2019-2021, %

However, starting from 2020, hotels, restaurants, tour operators and other organizations engaged in providing services to tourists have suspended their activities for an indefinite period. As economic activity has plummeted during the pandemic, workers in the labor-intensive tourism industry are facing massive reductions in hours, potential job losses and worsening commute problems.

Measures to resuscitate the tourism sector and develop it in 2020-2021. In order to combat the consequences of the crisis caused by the pandemic, comprehensive measures were taken to restore the entire economy of our republic, as well as special measures aimed at directly supporting the tourism industry. It also supports the tourism business, which has led to the preservation of jobs and sources of income for the population. This is important for the tourism industry, especially for small businesses and private enterprises. According to the Ministry of Tourism and Sports of the Republic of Uzbekistan, in the last nine months of 2021, 6.5 billion soums have been allocated from the state budget to support the tourism business [11]. In order to mitigate the impact of the coronavirus, a number of benefits and preferences were given to the tourism sector, including: a 50% reduction in income tax rates for tour operators, travel agents and accommodation facilities; exempting legal entities of tour operators, travel agents and accommodation facilities from paying land tax and property tax; social tax is set at a discounted rate of 1%; calculation and payment of fees for tour operators, travel agents, as well as accommodation facilities has been stopped; Partial reimbursement of the interest costs of tourist organizations on previously granted loans from commercial banks for the construction of residential buildings, as well as the costs of reconstruction, reconstruction and strengthening of the material and technical base for the modernization of hotels. From June 1, 2020 to December 31, 2021 accommodation facilities are subsidized in the amount of 10% of the cost

of accommodation services (hotel services) [12]. In general, 1 thousand 750 tourism entities were given benefits of about 60 billion soums in terms of property tax, land and social taxes. The results of the implemented measures have already shown their results. Thus, the tourism industry in the republic in 2020-2021. It began to increase its position again, ensuring the attraction of foreign and domestic tourists. According to the Ministry of Tourism and Sports of the Republic of Uzbekistan, 1.2 million foreign tourists visited our country during the 9 months of 2021, and the export of tourism services amounted to 273 million dollars [13].

Today, the volume of sales of tourist and hotel services is increasing, their range and quality are increasing, and the safety of tourists is the main priority. An additional 105 new hotels, 1001 family guest houses, and 90 tourist enterprises were launched in the republic. However, 294 tour operators lost their jobs due to the coronavirus in 2020 [13].

According to experts, hotels and other accommodation facilities will increase their production capacity due to the conditions they will face when moving tourists during the pandemic, and the demand for innovation, automation and contactless technologies will increase. For example, according to HotelTechReport, the coronavirus will accelerate digital transformation in the hospitality industry by 10-15 years [14]. For example, electronic check-in and contactless check-in allow tourists to avoid unnecessary contact with hotel staff and contact with keys, i.e., the level of security and speed of service increases.

Focus on sustainable development of domestic tourism. Today, the current conditions caused by the coronavirus allow the national tourism industry to introduce the population to the potential of their country. People in Uzbekistan are using this opportunity very actively. This is shown by the following numbers. If in 2019 the number of domestic trips increased by 5,080 compared to 2017, only during the pandemic period, 2,360 such domestic tourist trips were made in 2020 alone.

The state encourages the development of domestic tourism by giving tour operators and travel agents 15% subsidies for air and railway tickets and 10% for housing to organize tours around Uzbekistan for local tourists. About 5 billion soums were allocated from the state budget for this purpose.

In the conditions of the current pandemic, the change of focus on domestic tourism, which applies to the entire republic or one of its regions, is accompanied by the development of new offers, routes, including complex and author tours. "Travel across Uzbekistan!" within the implementation of the domestic tourism development program, the organization of tourist zones and mountain-tourist clusters in the territories of the republic has a special place in the development of domestic tourism. [fifteen]. Particular attention is paid to the reasonableness and economic expediency of their placement in a certain region of the republic, to providing them with engineering communications, and to the implementation of projects for the construction of tourism facilities, determining the sources of their financing and taxation. benefits given to investors. In our opinion, today the task of expanding the register of settlements with the status of "Tourist town", "Tourist neighborhood" and "Tourist town" leading to the development of tourism among the population is at the peak of relevance. In accordance with the decision of the President of the Republic of Uzbekistan No. PF-5781 dated

August 13, 2019, the regions with the status of "tourist" will be implemented state programs in priority order. As part of such state programs, improvement of their infrastructure is underway [16]. If at least 20 guest houses are established by local residents and at least five services are provided to tourists in addition to food and accommodation (for example, craft workshops, stables), the villages and neighborhoods of the republic can have the status of tourists. or camel riding).

For the development of such guest houses, a simplified procedure for the certification of guest houses was established and it was recommended to allocate preferential loans to commercial banks for opening them. In April 2020, the Association of Owners of Guest Houses and Hostels of Uzbekistan, which established cooperation with the International Federation of Youth Hostels and the International Booking Network to increase the flow of young tourists, was established [17] (Abriev, 2020).

Of course, where appropriate conditions and infrastructure exist, tourism services can be "import substituted" for domestic tourism. Much depends on factors such as the responses of the tourist service offering side; ratio of price and service quality; the dynamics of the population's income according to the results of the pandemic; willingness of consumers to switch to their national domestic tourist destinations. The latest of these developments also comes with increased demand for relatively budget-friendly vacation options.

New attributes for tourists related to the pandemic. Countries of the world that faced the Covid syndrome in tourism felt all its consequences, because this industry will no longer be the same. At the same time, the pandemic became a special impetus for important structural changes that determine the conditions for the development of the tourism industry and its potential after the gradual lifting of restrictions.

New attributes introduced in the tourism of Uzbekistan due to the pandemic appeared today. Among such necessary innovations, ensuring the safety of tourists also implies the introduction of new standards of hygiene and cleanliness, increasing the demand for travel insurance adapted to personal needs, vaccination certificates.

In Uzbekistan, a lot of attention is paid to the safe travel of tourists. In the tourist safety rating for 2020 published on the French portal Insurly [18], Uzbekistan took the 46th place among 180 countries of the world, and the 1st place among the CIS countries. Such a ranking system includes the probability of natural disasters, the level of public health, the situation of crime, including terrorism, and the risk of traffic.

These and similar security ratings are taken seriously by foreign citizens - potential tourists, which naturally has a significant impact on the flow of inbound tourism, excluding domestic tourism.

A new sanitary-epidemiological safety system for tourists based on world standards is being put into practice in the republic. This is "Uzbekistan. Safe travels are guaranteed", according to which certification of tourism facilities and related infrastructure, tourist services in the republic based on new sanitary and hygiene requirements is required for all state border departments, tangible cultural heritage objects, museums, theaters, etc. will be mandatory. In the conditions of the pandemic, a complete digital restoration of the tourism industry was

carried out due to the deep assimilation of new technologies. Today, it is possible to accompany the tourist to the exchange of impressions via the Internet. Most travelers often rely on online platforms to plan and book their travel while choosing travel destinations. An important role in adapting to new conditions is played by the creation and analysis of the user path on the website, the launch of digital advertising and the placement of services on aggregator sites.

In world practice, it is widely used to replace traditional services with an online format (online tours, exhibitions and master classes). The growth in the use of social networks and travel blogs has fueled the trend. This has reduced the influence of institutional and traditional communication channels in destination selection. It is also a cost-effective opportunity for lesser-known destinations to build a strong tourism brand and image among consumers. The created special platform "Silk Road Project" promotes the tourism potential of the Silk Road countries and promising regional tourism products and destinations.

In order to make it easier for foreign tourists coming to Uzbekistan, visa and registration procedures have been radically simplified. The procedure for temporary registration of foreign citizens on the territory of our country has been completely transferred to the electronic format of E-guest, and the procedure for temporary registration of foreign citizens has been simplified. The system provides accommodation facilities, medical facilities, tourist companies, guest houses that provide the right to register foreign citizens. Independent travelers across the country can do this through the Internet and mobile apps.

Citizens of about 80 countries can apply for an electronic visa in a simplified manner. Five new types of visas have been introduced for certain categories of foreign citizens: "Citizen", "Student", "Academic", "Medical" and "Hajj". According to the Ministry of Tourism and Sports of the Republic of Uzbekistan, the average increase in the number of foreign tourists in 2019 was 26 percent, while the growth rate among the countries where the visa-free regime was introduced reached 58 percent [19].]

5G and Wi-Fi connections are becoming essential services in Uzbekistan's tourism industry and are being implemented by hotel chains and other tourism service providers. is changing. As practice shows, the emergence of new players, such as accommodation (AirBnB, Homeaway), transportation (BlablaCar, Uber), dining (EatWith) and guide services (ToursByLocals), has revolutionized the tourism industry.

Summary

1. Many countries have come to the conclusion that the tourism industry will not be able to recover from the COVID-19 crisis without experiencing repeated shocks. This industry is known for its ability to withstand economic downturns and crises. This was shown by many epidemics that the countries of the world had to go through. Tourism can play one of the main roles in the recovery of the economy of all countries.
2. Uzbekistan has a huge tourism potential. Rich natural potential, availability of cultural and historical heritage sites, development of hotel and resort business, high level of tourist safety, stable political situation and others are favorable factors for its further development.
3. At the same time, despite the abundance of attractive natural and cultural resources, there are deficiencies in other important parameters that make up tourism potential, including some

problems in transport and tourism infrastructure, the solution of which depends on the number of visits, tourist expenses.

4. Improving the infrastructure and ensuring regulatory procedures in the tourist areas and clusters established in our country today is one of the main tasks of further development of tourism potential. Initiatives to increase the attraction of international tourists to tourism clusters may include: improving the aviation sector and low-cost air services; development of centers with transit stop function in clusters; harmonization of visa regimes; development of public-private partnership and others.

5. The task of developing the potential of tourism in Uzbekistan more effectively than it was before the pandemic can be carried out under the condition of integral connection with the country's Sustainable Development Goals. This will create a tourism industry with greener, more inclusive and sustainable tourism potential.

6. In the current conditions, ensuring the ecological stability of the objects that make up the tourism potential of Uzbekistan is an urgent direction. This can be ensured if appropriate sustainable development measures and practices are introduced to protect natural tourist sites during the development and implementation of various tourism programs and projects.

7. In the conditions of the pandemic, the activation of the development of domestic tourism is of decisive importance in the economy of the republic. There are many local tourists in Uzbekistan on weekends. Such resident departures within the country for holidays and vacations help flatten the seasonal curve in the tourism industry, thereby generating year-round business for tourism facilities and associated small businesses. In this regard, it is necessary to study the practices of foreign countries for the development of domestic tourism and the mechanisms of encouraging such trips and, if possible, to attract the local population, to adapt this experience to national interests.

8. Digital and communication technologies are at the center of the most profitable activities in the tourism value chain. Therefore, the development and implementation of innovative solutions for the provision of tourism services, improving the marketing and promotion of destinations, as well as educational tools and digital tourism content development support is necessary.

The trend of digitization of tourism, especially in the context of the pandemic, involves the gradual orientation of all market participants to the online sphere. In this regard, it is necessary to create the necessary conditions to increase the profitability of the tourism industry. Development and promotion of digital products for traditional and new tourist destinations is a promising direction.

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