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## **Tourism Growth in Uzbekistan: Trends in Visitor Numbers and Demographics in 2023**

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### **ABSTRACT**

This study examines the recent trends in foreign tourism in Uzbekistan, focusing on visitor numbers, demographics, and the geographic distribution of tourists in 2023. Uzbekistan's tourism sector experienced a notable growth with 6.6 million foreign visitors, marking a 1.3 times increase compared to 2022. However, despite this increase, there is limited analysis of the specific characteristics of the tourism demographic, such as age groups, length of stay, and country of origin, creating a gap in knowledge regarding targeted tourism strategies. Using descriptive statistical analysis, data from 2016 to 2023 was collected to examine patterns in tourist arrivals, their country of origin, and the changes in their duration of stay. The findings reveal that 80.7% of tourists come from neighboring countries, with Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, and Tajikistan leading, and an increasing share of younger tourists aged 19-30 and 31-55 years. Additionally, the average stay of tourists rose to 4-5 days, a significant improvement from previous years.

### **KEYWORDS**

*Uzbekistan tourism, foreign visitors, regional tourism, tourism demographics, cross-border travel, CIS countries, Central Asia, tourism trends, tourism statistics, sustainable tourism development..*

**Introduction.** Tourism has become a vital economic and cultural sector for many countries, including Uzbekistan, contributing to job creation, foreign exchange earnings, and the promotion of cultural heritage. In recent years, global tourism has experienced rapid growth, fueled by technological advances, improved transport networks, and greater global interconnectedness. For Uzbekistan, the number of foreign visitors has steadily increased, with 2023 seeing 6.6 million foreign tourists. This increase presents opportunities and challenges for sustaining growth while

ensuring the country's cultural and environmental resources are preserved.

The specific context of this study focuses on understanding the patterns and characteristics of foreign tourists visiting Uzbekistan. Regional tourism, particularly from neighboring countries such as Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, and Tajikistan, has played a significant role in this growth. Theoretical frameworks on cross-border travel dynamics, socio-cultural proximity, and the role of regional cooperation in tourism development are central to this analysis. These frameworks help explain why tourism from neighboring countries constitutes over 80% of Uzbekistan's inbound travel.

While much research has been conducted on tourism in Central Asia, few studies have specifically addressed the demographic breakdown, length of stay, and geographic origins of tourists to Uzbekistan. This study fills this gap by providing detailed data on the nature of tourism flows, particularly from CIS and non-CIS countries, offering insights that can inform future tourism strategies.

The study utilizes quantitative methods, analyzing tourism data from 2016 to 2023. Descriptive statistics are employed to evaluate key trends in visitor numbers, country of origin, and changes in tourists' behavior over time.

It is expected that the findings will provide actionable insights for policy-makers and tourism stakeholders. The results, showing an increase in younger tourists and longer stays, suggest opportunities for tailored tourism services, regional marketing, and sustainable tourism planning that align with demographic and geographic trends.

The results provide insights into the shifts in tourism patterns and demographic trends, suggesting opportunities for Uzbekistan to tailor its tourism services to specific age groups and regions[1]. The implications of this research emphasize the need for more strategic planning in the tourism sector, targeting specific countries and age demographics to sustain and build on the growth. This study contributes to filling the knowledge gap by providing detailed data-driven insights into Uzbekistan's evolving tourism landscape[2].

### **Main part**

The tourism sector in Uzbekistan experienced significant growth in 2023[1], with the number of foreign visitors reaching 6.6 million, an increase of 1.3 times compared to 2022[1]. Most of these tourists came from neighboring countries (80.7%), such as Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, and Tajikistan, while a smaller percentage of tourists were from CIS countries (11.5%) and other international destinations (7.8%)[3]. The data also revealed that the average duration of stay increased from 3 to 4-5 days, which suggests a shift in the nature of tourism, potentially towards more in-depth exploration of Uzbekistan's offerings[4].

#### **Demographics and Visitor Distribution**

The findings indicate a clear age distribution trend[5], with the majority of tourists falling within the 19-30 and 31-55 age brackets, which collectively represent a significant share of visitors. This demographic suggests a rise in younger, working-age individuals as key participants in the tourism sector, likely attracted by Uzbekistan's cultural heritage, affordability[6], and the ease of travel between neighboring countries[7]. The rise in the number of tourists from Kazakhstan and Kyrgyzstan highlights the effectiveness of regional cooperation and cross-border travel facilitation. However, while tourism from other CIS and international countries is growing, it remains a smaller fraction of the overall tourism population, signaling a potential area for expansion[8].

#### **Knowledge Gap**

Despite the upward trajectory, a notable knowledge gap exists regarding the motivations,

preferences, and behaviors of the tourists visiting Uzbekistan[9], especially concerning non-neighboring and non-CIS countries. While we have quantitative data on visitor numbers and demographics, a deeper understanding of tourists’ preferences—such as the attractions, experiences, and services they favor—remains underexplored. This gap limits Uzbekistan’s ability to develop targeted tourism marketing strategies for broader, more diverse international audiences[10].

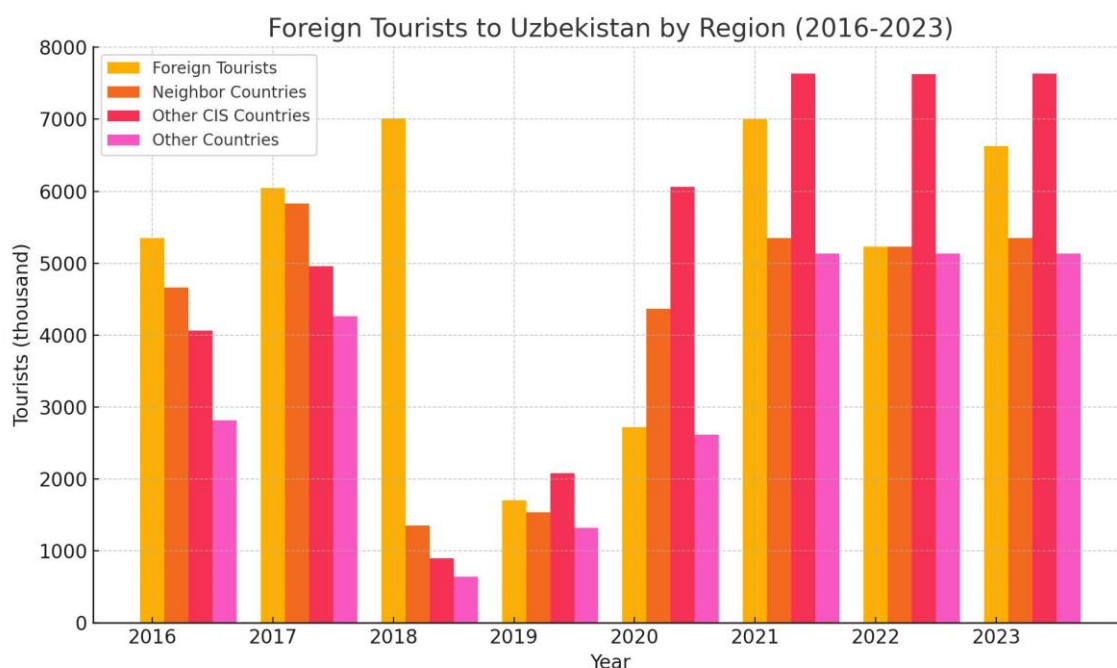
#### Theoretical and Practical Implications

Theoretically, this study highlights the relevance of socio-geographical proximity in shaping tourism flows to Uzbekistan, particularly from Central Asian and CIS countries. The dominance of neighboring countries in Uzbekistan’s tourism suggests that the concept of regional tourism—rooted in shared cultural, historical, and economic ties—plays a significant role in driving travel. The tourism sector could benefit from applying regional tourism theory more rigorously to understand cross-border travel dynamics in Central Asia, where historical, ethnic, and linguistic ties remain strong.

Practically, Uzbekistan could leverage this growth by focusing on improving tourism services that cater to younger age groups and travelers from diverse regions. Improving infrastructure, offering age-specific experiences, and facilitating travel procedures will enhance the country’s appeal. Marketing efforts should also target regions with underrepresented tourist numbers, such as Western Europe, East Asia, and the Americas, where Uzbekistan has a smaller but growing presence. Furthermore, extending the average tourist stay and promoting lesser-known destinations within the country can support more sustainable tourism growth.

#### Further Research

Future research should focus on qualitative studies that explore the motivations, satisfaction levels, and behavioral patterns of foreign tourists visiting Uzbekistan. Such studies would provide a comprehensive understanding of how different tourist groups perceive Uzbekistan’s attractions, accommodations, and overall experience. Additionally, further research into the economic and social impacts of increasing tourism on local communities would be beneficial, particularly in balancing growth with sustainability and cultural preservation.



*Here is the bar chart illustrating the number of foreign tourists visiting Uzbekistan from 2016 to 2023, categorized by their regions of origin: foreign tourists, neighboring countries, other CIS countries, and other countries. This visual representation highlights the distribution and growth trends of tourists visiting Uzbekistan over the years.*

**In conclusion,** Uzbekistan's tourism sector has experienced significant growth in 2023, with a 1.3-fold increase in foreign tourists compared to 2022, reaching 6.6 million visitors. The majority of these tourists, around 80.7%, came from neighboring countries, particularly Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, and Tajikistan, while tourists from other CIS and international regions constituted a smaller yet growing proportion. Additionally, the average stay duration increased from 3 to 4-5 days, indicating a positive shift in tourist engagement. These findings suggest that while Uzbekistan has successfully attracted regional tourists, there is substantial potential for expanding its reach to other international markets. The implications of these trends highlight the need for targeted tourism strategies that cater to specific demographics and regions, improving infrastructure, and diversifying tourism services. Further research should focus on understanding the motivations and satisfaction levels of tourists from different regions, as well as examining the long-term economic and social impacts of tourism growth on local communities, ensuring that the sector's expansion is both sustainable and inclusive.

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