



International Conference of Economics, Finance and Accounting Studies

International Conference of Economics, Finance and Accounting Studies is a double-blind peer-reviewed, open-access journal published to reach excellence on the scope. It considers scholarly, research-based articles on all aspects of economics, finance and accounting. As an international congress aimed at facilitating the global exchange of education theory, contributions from different educational systems and cultures are encouraged. It aims to provide a forum for all researchers, educators, educational policy-makers and planners to exchange invaluable ideas and resources.

Digital Tourism in Uzbekistan: Strategic Improvement of Online Tour Operator Systems

Toshev Akmal Salimovich

Director of the tour operator "Euro Vostok"

Abstract

This scientific article provides a comprehensive analysis of the foundations for developing online tour operator activities in Uzbekistan, with a particular focus on the regulatory and legal framework. The author proposes specific directions for improving the organizational and economic mechanisms supporting this sector. In the process of analyzing these proposed directions, particular attention is given to identifying and classifying key obstacles to the development of tour operator services, with an emphasis on factors posing high levels of risk.

Keywords: Regulation, tour operator, tour operating activity, license, online tour operator, commission, organizational factor, economic factor, mechanism.

The Presidential Decree No. PQ-238 dated July 27, 2023 [1], “On Accelerating Reforms in the Tourism Sector and Improving the Public Administration System” outlines measures aimed at attracting additional investments to tourism, enhancing infrastructure, increasing employment, expanding transportation routes, promoting Uzbekistan’s tourism potential in domestic and international markets and introducing new procedures in state management of the tourism sector.

Moreover, the Cabinet of Ministers’ Resolution No. 433 dated July 10, 2020, approved the “Regulations on Providing Tour Operator and Travel Agency Services” and “Regulations on Establishing and Operating Tourism Information Centers” [2]. Based on these documents, the enhancement of organizational and economic mechanisms for online tour operator activities in Uzbekistan is both timely and crucial.

Studies by scholars such as N. Čavlek [4], A. Panasiuk [9], G. Rafailova [10], M. Macháč, J. Oriška [7], E. Eijgelaar, R.M.J. Bongaerts [5], A. Dłużewska [13] and T. Pančić [11] have explored trends in global tourism, marketing strategies of European tour operators, and factors influencing the market. Comparative analyses have also been conducted on city-break packages offered by Polish and British tour operators.

Uzbek scholars like Y. Sultonova [6], U. Mamadaliyev [8], and F. Qutlimurotov [12] have focused on diversifying tourism products and services, evaluating the current state of tour operator activities and integrating international practices into Uzbekistan’s tourism sector.

Theoretical foundations are based on previous academic work by the aforementioned researchers.

The study involves the analysis of regulatory frameworks and licensing requirements for tour operators. Organizational and economic aspects of online tour operator development are investigated separately and categorized for clarity. The study also identifies existing organizational, legal, technological, and socio-cultural barriers that hinder market growth.

According to regulations [3], tour operator services include promoting and selling tourism products, such as transportation, accommodation, food services, information support (e.g., guides and interpreters), and other contracted services.

Certification applications must include staff qualifications, relevant contracts, and supporting documents. A special commission evaluates the applicant's compliance with normative requirements.

Key licensing requirements in Uzbekistan include: compliance with tourism legislation, employment of at least one specialist with a degree or certificate in tourism, regular re-certification of tour guides and related personnel, deposit of \$15,000 (for outbound tourism) into the Safe Tourism Fund, implementation of safety systems for tourists' life, health, and property, transparent e-commerce agreements, public access to company information and credentials via the official website, availability of multilingual websites with electronic payment capabilities, possession of civil liability insurance, operation within licensed tourism sectors only.

Licenses are issued for [14]:

1. Domestic tourism,
2. Outbound tourism,
3. Inbound tourism.

Organizational Measures Proposed: development of a unified online platform for tour operators, improvement of electronic document exchange systems, digitization and simplification of the licensing process, implementation of monitoring and rating systems for online services, integration with regional tourism offices, development of online review systems, integration into public service portals, establishment of training centers for operators, creation of open data platforms to ensure transparency, technical support centers for digital services, customer service standards for online platforms, adoption of AR/VR for virtual tourism, establishment of service centers through public-private partnerships, collaboration with local IT firms, introduction of QR code-based service identification, development of international-standard certification systems, improvement of cybersecurity for online platforms, strengthening technical infrastructure to support digital continuity.

Economic Measures Proposed: tax incentives for online tour operators, state grants for digital infrastructure development, partial government funding for marketing and advertising, subsidies for initial capital, enhanced access to bank loans via guarantees, investment guarantees for domestic and foreign investors, granting IT Park resident status to operators, financial support for start-ups, development of infrastructure via public-private partnerships, customs benefits for digital service imports, export bonuses for tourism services, reduced commission fees in payment systems, tax benefits for tourism service exports, reimbursement for participation in international exhibitions, simplified taxation procedures for digital service providers, creation of a special fund for online tourism exports, subsidies through private sector support programs, reduced income tax rates for online revenues, launch of a "tourism bonus" program.

Additionally, it is advisable to classify and analyze existing obstacles. Thus, we will review the organizational-legal barriers identified by the author.

Firstly, the absence of a regulation tailored to online tour operators leads to a legal vacuum. Alongside this, the underdevelopment of a national certification system for online services is also one of the key problems.

Secondly, the complexity and variability of tax and customs regulations create a number of

difficulties for tour operators. Moreover, inconsistencies between local and international legislation, insufficient legal frameworks for the protection of personal data of service users, limited cooperation with international tourism platforms, and the lack of effective competition regulation mechanisms in the online tourism market further complicate the situation.

Thirdly, the complexity of certification processes for online services and their non-compliance with international tourism standards are also considered among the organizational-legal obstacles.

Among social and cultural barriers we identify the following seven main issues:

1) low trust of the local population in online services; 2) differences in cultural perceptions towards tourism; 3) insufficient focus of the education system on tourism; 4) underdeveloped public cooperation mechanisms; 5) existence of gender inequality in the tourism sector; 6) difficulties local brands face in entering the international market; 7) low youth participation in the tourism sector.

Based on the research conducted on improving the organizational and economic mechanisms for the development of online tour operator activities in Uzbekistan, we present the following conclusions and proposals:

We consider it essential to further enhance the technological infrastructure available to online tour operators in our country.

Given the existing challenges in adapting to technological innovations, it is important to actively promote the effectiveness and benefits of technological advancement among both the general public and entrepreneurs.

Revisiting and improving the management of databases will create a solid foundation for the growth of the sector.

Weak cybersecurity in online services remains a critical issue. Therefore, we believe it is necessary to engage top specialists to address and resolve these challenges.

To ensure continuous improvement in the skills of professionals in the technology sector, it would be highly beneficial to invite leading international experts in online tour operations to conduct training sessions and interactive discussions in our country.

In order to address the low quality of mobile applications and websites for online tour services, strengthening collaboration between relevant ministries and agencies is viewed as an effective solution.

References

1. Resolution of the President of the Republic of Uzbekistan No. PQ-238 dated July 27, 2023 "On Measures to Further Accelerate Reforms in the Field of Tourism and Effectively Organize the System of State Administration in the Sector" Link: <https://lex.uz/docs/-6549286>
2. Resolution of the Cabinet of Ministers of the Republic of Uzbekistan No. 433 dated July 10, 2020 "On Measures to Create Favorable Conditions for the Restoration and Development of the Tourism Sector in the Republic of Uzbekistan" Link: https://www.norma.uz/oz/qonunchilikda_yangi/turoperatorlar_va_turagentlarning_faoliyat_yuritish_tartibi_belgilandi
3. Regulation on the Certification of Tourist Services and Classification of Tourist Industry Facilities (Chapter 1) Link: <https://lex.uz/docs/-4930291?ONDATE=27.07.2022>
4. Čavlek N. The global development trends of European touroperators. – 2000.
5. Eijgelaar E., Bongaerts R. M. J. Reizen op groenere voeten? Een blik op de externe kosten van touroperators //Trendrapport toerisme, recreatie en vrije tijd. – NRIT Media, 2013. – C. 62-65.

6. Kamoldinova S. Y. Turistik mahsulotlar va xizmatlarni diversifikatsiyalashni boshqarish mexanizmlarini takomillashtirish //Qo‘qon universiteti xabarnomasi. – 2023. – T. 8. – C. 66-69.
7. Macháč M., Oriška J. Coherency of touroperators and travel agencies and key factors influencing the service sales //recenzovaný sborník on-line konference 26. KVĚTNA 2021 KARVINÁ. – C. 115.
8. Mamadaliyev U. O‘zbekistonda turoperatorlik foaliyatining rivojlanish holati //University Research Base. – 2024. – C. 528-531.
9. Panasiuk A. Assessment of the level of the marketing orientation of touroperators on the European market. – 2018.
10. Panasiuk A., Rafailova G. The Concept of analyzing the marketing orientation of touroperators on the European market. – 2018.
11. Pančić Kombol T. Structure and interdependence of the marketing system of touroperators //Tourism and hospitality management. – 1995. – T. 1. – №. 1. – C. 145-155.
12. Qutlimurotov Fayzullo. Using the experiences of developed countries in organizing tour operator activities in Uzbekistan // CARJIS. 2023. №7 (19). URL: <https://cyberleninka.ru/article/n/using-the-experiences-of-developed-countries-in-organizing-tour-operator-activities-in-uzbekistan> (дата обращения: 22.04.2025).
13. Dłużewska A. Comparison of city break trips in the offer of polish and british touroperators and online tourist agencies //Вестник ЗКУ. – 2022. – Т. 85. – №. 1. – С. 75-75.13.
14. <https://kun.uz/75496298?q=%2F75496298>