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Changes in the Seasonality of Demand for Tourist Services in Uzbekistan

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Abstract

This article analyzes the seasonal nature of the demand for tourist services in Uzbekistan and its impact on the tourism sector. The flow of domestic and foreign tourists is studied on a monthly basis and the main reasons for changes in demand are based on: climatic conditions, holiday calendar, cultural and social factors. The economic consequences of seasonality, the impact on the efficiency of infrastructure use, and the unevenness of the labor market are considered analytical approaches.

Keywords: tourism, seasonality, tourist services, domestic tourism, foreign tourists, infrastructure, tourist demand, seasonal analysis, tourism strategy.

Introduction. In recent years, the tourism sector in Uzbekistan has acquired strategic importance and is undergoing consistent reforms to transform it into one of the important sectors of the national economy. The country's rich historical and cultural heritage, the diversity of natural landscapes, the opportunities for pilgrimage tourism, and its geopolitical location create a solid foundation for the comprehensive development of tourism. At the same time, the infrastructure for the sector - hotel services, transport system, guide services, and the number of modern tourist facilities - is also increasing.

However, one of the important factors limiting the development of the tourism sector is the seasonality of demand for tourist services. That is, the flow of tourists and the need for services are high in certain seasons of the year and low in others. This, in turn, leads to inefficient use of infrastructure, irregular distribution of labor resources, stagnation of profit levels, and a slowdown in investment.

In Uzbekistan, tourist activity is particularly high during the summer and spring seasons. The flow of foreign and domestic tourists to cities such as Samarkand, Bukhara, Khiva, and Tashkent increases. In the winter and autumn months, demand decreases, and seasonal "stagnation" is observed in the tourism sector. This situation creates certain problems in transforming tourism into a sustainable and profitable business in the country.

Today, tourism is seen not only as a means of strengthening cultural ties, but also as a means of diversifying the national economy, creating new jobs, increasing foreign exchange earnings, and enhancing the country's international prestige. Especially in the conditions of Uzbekistan, tourism

has become a strategic priority as an industry, and it is receiving wide attention at the level of state policy.

However, one of the main problems affecting the development of the sector is seasonal changes in demand for tourist services. The problem of seasonality means not only sharp changes in demand, but also instability in the income of tourism entities, and the idleness of infrastructure facilities in the off-season. This situation reduces economic efficiency in a number of sectors, such as hotels, catering establishments, transport services, and guide services.

Review of relevant literature. The manifestation of seasonality in the demand for tourist services is one of the widely studied problems in the global tourism industry. Foreign researchers assess this problem as a threat to the sustainable development of tourism and put forward a number of theoretical and practical approaches to its mitigation.

For example, Butler defines seasonality as a "physical and social constraint" on tourism, which he argues is related to natural climatic conditions, holiday calendars, and cultural traditions. He argues that seasonality often leads to tourism destinations operating under pressure and becoming passive during the off-season.[1] He also suggests that diversifying tourism products and encouraging off-season tourism are effective ways to combat seasonality.

D. Lundberg, M. Krast, and F. Stahl link seasonality to the unstable operation of tourism infrastructure, and argue that this leads to sharp changes in labor resources, service quality, and prices depending on the season . [2] They emphasize the need to systematize marketing research to forecast seasonal shifts in demand.

Yun Chang and H. Halliday, studying the sociocultural impact of seasonality, argue that excessive tourist flows at certain times can negatively affect the relationship between local residents and tourists, as well as the level of service. [3] They also point to the introduction of "off-season marketing" and "flexible tours" as effective solutions to mitigate seasonality.

Local researchers are also paying attention to this issue. M. Tursunov, in his research, He notes the negative impact of seasonality on the country's economy, noting that the main flow of tourism in Uzbekistan falls on the summer and spring seasons, while tourist activity almost ceases in the winter season. [4] He believes that this problem can be mitigated by activating winter tourism, ecological tourism, and pilgrimage tourism.

A. Rahimov, on the other hand, approaches the issue of seasonality in the context of domestic tourism, citing the population's vacation calendar, the uneven distribution of infrastructure, and seasonal price volatility as the main obstacles.[5] In his opinion, providing incentives for off-season services and restructuring tours related to school holidays will affect the problem of seasonality.

In general, the analysis of the existing literature shows that seasonality is closely related not only to climate and holiday calendars, but also to marketing, infrastructure, social culture and public policy. Therefore, the study of seasonal demand changes requires an integrated approach.

Research methodology. In the process of scientific analysis and development of changes in the seasonality of demand for tourist services in Uzbekistan , comparative analysis, statistical data study, economic comparison, logical analysis, scientific abstraction, analysis and synthesis, as well as induction and deduction methods were widely used.

Analysis and results. The high level of seasonality hinders the full potential of tourism in the country. For example, domestic tourism has a very high demand, which mainly falls on the summer and spring months, but this activity decreases sharply in the winter and autumn months. For foreign tourists, the range of seasons considered the "most favorable season" for visiting historical sites is limited, which reduces the possibility of obtaining sustainable income from tourism.

Mitigating seasonality, stabilizing demand throughout the year, and diversifying tourism products

have become urgent tasks in the industry. Especially in the post-pandemic period, the changing needs of the population for travel, the expansion of online services, and the popularity of regional tourism require new approaches to combat seasonality.

Table 1 Tourist influx seasonal league in Uzbekistan in 2024 (thousand people)

Months	Number of domestic tourists	Number of foreign tourists	Months	Number of domestic tourists	Number of foreign tourists
January	120	90	July	520	500
February	130	100	August	510	495
March	150	150	September	400	390
April	180	220	October	300	280
May	250	340	November	180	160
June	500	480	December	410	110

Source: Data from the Ministry of Ecology, Environmental Protection and Climate Change of the Republic of Uzbekistan

The table above shows the number of domestic and foreign tourists in Uzbekistan by month in 2024. Below, we analyze based on this data: winter season (January-February): the number of tourists is at its lowest, with an average of 125 thousand domestic tourists and around 95 thousand foreign tourists. This season, demand is mainly related to pilgrimage tourism and New Year holidays; spring season (March-May): tourism activity increases. Due to the Navruz holiday in March and favorable weather, the number of domestic tourists increased from 180 thousand to 350 thousand, and the number of foreign tourists from 150 thousand to 340 thousand; summer season (June-August): the peak of domestic and foreign tourism. In June - July, the number of domestic tourists exceeded 500 thousand, and foreign tourists were around 480-500 thousand . This is due to school holidays, the holiday season and many international events ; autumn season (September-November): demand gradually decreases. In September, activity increases again (around 400 thousand), but in October-November a decline begins ; in December: in the last month of the year, the flow of tourists decreases sharply again, the number of domestic tourists is about 140 thousand, foreign tourists - about 110 thousand.

Conclusion. It was found that the demand for tourist services in Uzbekistan undergoes sharp seasonal changes throughout the year. Especially in the spring and summer seasons (April-August), the flow of tourists is high, and the bulk of domestic and foreign tourism falls on these months. In the winter and autumn seasons, demand decreases, and the tourist infrastructure, hotel business, and service sectors begin to operate inefficiently.

Analysis has shown that seasonality has a serious impact on the sustainable development of the tourism industry. The practical consequences of seasonal problems include hotel vacancies, off-season staff layoffs, and high risks for investors.

Given the current situation, it is possible to mitigate the impact of seasonality and stabilize tourism based on the following practical suggestions and recommendations:

1. Developing winter tourism potential. By establishing sports and recreation activities in mountainous regions such as Tashkent, Chimyan, and Bostanlik, the winter season can be transformed from a "dead season" into an active tourism season.
2. Diversification of cultural and educational tours. By organizing museums, theaters, exhibitions, and historical excursions independently of the season, demand can be maintained throughout the year.
3. Off-season discounts and promotions. Special pricing policies and incentive programs offered by tour operators and hotels for the months of December-February can increase demand.

4. Tours that are combined with educational and school holidays. In order to stimulate domestic tourism, it is necessary to activate family tours and educational tourism projects for children in the off-season.
5. Rethinking marketing and PR strategies. It is important to provide broad information about off-season travel opportunities to foreign markets, as well as conduct targeted advertising on digital platforms.

In conclusion, seasonality is a natural process that cannot be completely eliminated. However, to mitigate it, make tourism activity sustainable throughout the year, and turn seasonal pressures into economic opportunities, a systematic approach, public policy, private sector activity, and innovative solutions are required.

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