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Main Indicators of Tourism Potential Development in the Central Tourism Region and Their Analysis

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Abstract: This study examines the main indicators reflecting the tourism potential development of the Central Tourism Region of Uzbekistan, comprising the Samarkand, Bukhara, and Navoi regions. The research aims to assess the current state of tourism development, identify key trends, and determine the effectiveness of utilizing regional tourism resources. The study employs a systematic approach, comparative analysis, statistical analysis, grouping methods, and dynamic series analysis based on official tourism statistics for 2023–2024. The findings reveal a significant increase in the number of tourists served, tourism vouchers sold, and the overall value of tourism services in the region. The results also indicate positive growth in tourism infrastructure, including accommodation facilities and hotel employment. However, despite absolute growth in several indicators, the region's share in certain national tourism indicators has slightly declined due to the rapid development of tourism infrastructure in other regions of the country. The study highlights the need to strengthen regional competitiveness through infrastructure modernization, digital promotion, diversification of tourism products, and improvement of human resource capacity. The practical significance of the research lies in providing evidence-based recommendations for policymakers and tourism stakeholders aimed at ensuring the sustainable development of tourism and enhancing the contribution of the Central Tourism Region to Uzbekistan's tourism economy.

Keywords. Central Tourism Region, tourism potential, tourism services, tourist flow, tourism firms, tourism packages, hotel industry, accommodation facilities, tourism infrastructure, regional tourism, tourism economics, competitiveness.

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Introduction

In the global economy, the tourism sector is one of the important sectors ensuring the socio-economic development of regions. Tourism not only serves to increase employment, expand the service sector, and attract investment but also plays an important role in shaping the economic specialization of regions, preserving cultural heritage, and strengthening international ties. Therefore, in recent years, the assessment of tourism potential, the identification of its structural elements, and the study of factors influencing tourism development have become one of the most pressing areas of scientific research.

Uzbekistan pays special attention to the development of tourism as a strategic sector of the economy. The country's rich historical and cultural heritage, unique natural resources, ancient cities, and favorable geographical location create great opportunities for the development of the tourism industry. In particular, the Central Tourism Region, which covers the Samarkand, Bukhara, Navoi, and Jizzakh regions, plays an important role in the

republic's tourism system. The growth of tourist flows in these regions, the expansion of hotel management and tourism services infrastructure make the issue of effective use of tourism potential even more relevant.

At the same time, despite positive changes in the tourism sector, issues remain regarding the decrease in the region's share in the republic based on certain indicators, the efficiency of tourism organizations, and the level of labor resource utilization. This determines the need for a comprehensive assessment of tourism potential, an analysis of the dynamics of its structural indicators, and the development of scientifically grounded proposals and recommendations aimed at the effective use of existing opportunities.

Literature review on the topic. Issues regarding the assessment of tourism potential and the development of regional tourism have been extensively researched by foreign and domestic scholars. In the scientific literature, the concept of tourism potential is interpreted based on various approaches, with special attention paid to evaluating its economic, social, institutional, and infrastructural aspects.

The theoretical foundations of regional tourism development and issues regarding the formation of tourist zones are covered in the scientific works of scholars such as A.Yu. Alexandrova, V.A. Kvartalnov, M.B. Birzhakov, N.I. Kabushkin, A.B. Kukupov, and Yu.A. Barzikin[1,2,3,4]. In particular, A.Yu. Alexandrova evaluated tourism as an important component of the regional economic system and substantiated the interdependence of tourism resources and infrastructure. V.A. Kvartalnov[5] emphasized the importance of market mechanisms and the competitiveness of tourism products in the development of tourist regions. In the research of M.B. Birzhakov[6,7], the interaction of elements in the tourism industry and the developmental characteristics of the tourism services market are analyzed in detail.

Scientists of our country have also conducted a number of studies on the theoretical and practical aspects of tourism development. In particular, the scientific works of N. Tukhliev, I.S. Tukhliev, M.T. Alimova, B.Sh. Safarov, and A.A. Eshtaev[8,9,10,11] study the organizational and economic mechanisms of tourism development in Uzbekistan, the effective use of tourism resources, regional tourism management, and the improvement of the tourism services market. In particular, the research of M.T. Alimova[12] analyzes the relationship between the regional economy and tourism, and the impact of tourism on regional development is scientifically substantiated. N. Tukhliev and I. S. Tukhliev[13] formulated important scientific conclusions regarding the efficiency of tourism resource utilization and the strategic directions for the development of national tourism.

Research methodology. To evaluate the tourism potential of the Central Tourism Region and identify its development trends, the study utilized methods such as a systems approach, analysis and synthesis, comparative analysis, statistical analysis, grouping, and dynamic series analysis.

Analysis and results. The Central Tourism Region covers the Samarkand, Bukhara, and Navoi regions and plays an important role in the country's tourism sector. This region is distinguished by its rich historical and cultural heritage, unique natural resources, and diverse landscapes. Thanks to these aspects, the region has become one of the most attractive tourist destinations for domestic and foreign tourists.

In particular, the Samarkand region, considered one of the centers of ancient civilization and culture, is located along the Great Silk Road and is one of the leading tourist destinations in the republic[14]. The tourist attractiveness of the region is primarily determined by its rich cultural and historical heritage. According to official data on cultural heritage sites, the area contains "291 architectural monuments, 1452 archaeological sites, 36 historical monuments, and 188 examples of monumental art and sculpture". These facilities will increase the tourism potential not only of the Samarkand region but of the entire country[15]. To evaluate the tourism potential of the central tourism region, key indicators reflecting the industry's level of development were

analyzed. In particular, the role and significance of the region in the republic's tourism system were assessed based on data on the number of tourists served, the activities of travel agencies, the volume of travel vouchers, hotel facilities, and the number of employees employed in the tourism sector. During the analysis, special attention was paid to the change in indicators over the years, their share in the republic, and development trends. This will allow for the identification of the existing potential of the Central Tourism Region in the tourism sector, the assessment of factors influencing the development of the sector, and the determination of priority directions for future development. Below are the results of the analysis conducted based on these indicators.

Analysis of the data in Table 1 shows that the number of tourists served in the Central Tourism Region increased from 717,965 in 2023 to 819,378 in 2024, with the tourist flow increasing by 101,413 during this period[16,17]. This means that the tourist attractiveness of the region and the demand for tourist services are steadily growing. At the same time, the region's share in the republic's overall indicator decreased from 21,6% to 21,4%. This situation is explained by the fact that, despite the absolute growth in the number of tourists, tourist activity and tourist flow in other regions of the country have increased at a higher rate. As a result, although the Central Tourism Region retained one of its leading positions, a certain reduction in its relative share in the republic's tourism market was observed[18].

Table 1 . Key indicators for tourism potential development opportunities in the Central Tourism Region of the Republic of Uzbekistan[19]

№	Key indicators	Total by region			Share of the region in the republic (%)		
		2023 year	2024 year	Difference (+;-)	2023 year	2024 year	Difference (+;-)
1.	Total number of tourists served (units)	717965	819378	101413	21,6	21,4	-0,2
2.	Number of firms and organizations engaged in tourism activities (units)	209	216	7	35,2	29,1	-6,2
3.	Number of tourist passes sold	29332	119853	90521	11,2	21,0	9,8
4.	Value of sold travel vouchers (million soums)	230582,4	640118,6	409536,2	13,7	17,7	4,1
5.	Number of hotels and similar accommodation facilities (units)	495	528	33	38,4	36,8	-1,6
6.	Number of beds in hotels and similar accommodation facilities (units)	22575	23928	1353	32,4	30,1	-2,3
7.	Number of employees in travel agencies and organizations (units)	916	899	-17	23,6	22,8	-0,9
8.	Number of employees of hotels and similar accommodation facilities (units)	4687	5012	325	28,1	28,5	0,4

According to the results of the analysis, the number of firms and organizations engaged in tourism activities in the Central Tourism Region increased from 209 in 2023 to 216 in 2024, and their number increased by 7. This indicates a growing interest in organizing a tourism business in the region. However, at the national level, the region's share decreased from 35,2% to 29,1%. This situation indicates that the pace of establishing

new tourism enterprises in other regions of the country during this period was relatively high. As a result, although an absolute increase in the number of firms was observed, the relative position of the Central Tourism Region in the republic decreased to a certain extent.

Analysis of the number of sold travel vouchers indicates that the tourism services market is actively developing in the region. Specifically, the number of vouchers, which was 29,332 in 2023, increased to 119,853 by 2024, resulting in an increase of 90,521. At the same time, the share of this indicator in the republic increased from 11,2% to 21,0%. This testifies to the growing demand for tourism products in the region, the improvement of the efficiency of tourism companies, and the increased competitiveness of tourism services in the market.

The value indicators of travel vouchers also show positive dynamics. Specifically, the value of vouchers, which was 230.5 billion soums in 2023, reached 640.1 billion soums in 2024, with a growth volume of 409.5 billion soums. The share of the republic increased from 13,7% to 17,7%. This situation indicates the expansion of the volume of tourism services in the region, an increase in the share of high-value tourism packages, and the strengthening of the economic efficiency of the tourism industry. Overall, the increase in the number of vouchers and their cost confirms the active development of the tourism services market in the Central Tourism Region and the growing economic potential of the industry.

The results of the analysis show that the number of hotels and other accommodation facilities in the Central Tourism Region increased from 495 in 2023 to 528 in 2024, and their total number increased by 33. This demonstrates the effectiveness of the work being carried out in the region to expand tourism infrastructure and develop accommodation services. However, the share of this indicator in the republic decreased from 38,4% to 36,8%. This situation means that although the number of hotel construction and accommodation facilities has increased in the Central Tourism Region, the pace of development in this direction has been relatively high in other regions of the country[20].

The number of beds in hotels and accommodation facilities also showed positive dynamics. In particular, the number of places, which was 22,575 in 2023, reached 23,928 in 2024 and increased by 1,353. At the same time, the share in the republic decreased from 32,4% to 30,1%. This indicates that, despite the increase in accommodation capacities in the region, the overall growth rate across the republic was even higher. As a result, while the region maintains its potential, the competitive environment for expanding accommodation infrastructure is intensifying.

A slightly different trend was observed regarding the number of employees working in travel agencies. The number of employees, which was 916 in 2023, decreased by 17 people to 899 in 2024. The republic's share also decreased from 23,6% to 22,8%. This situation may be related to the efficient use of labor resources in tourism companies, the expansion of digitalization processes, the automation of certain services, and the optimization of management systems.

The number of employees employed in the hotel industry, on the contrary, showed an upward trend. In particular, the number of hotel employees, which was 4,687 in 2023, increased to 5,012 in 2024, an increase of 325[21]. The increase in the republic's share from 28,1% to 28,5% indicates an increasing demand for labor resources in this sector. This situation also means that new jobs are being created as a result of the expansion of the number of hotels and their service capacity[22,23].

Overall, the Central Tourism Region recorded significant positive growth in terms of the number of tourists, sold travel vouchers, and their value. However, the decrease in the republic's share of travel agencies, hotels, and accommodation facilities indicates that tourism infrastructure is developing faster in other regions. At the same time, two different trends have formed in the labor market: the number of employees in tourism firms has

decreased, while the level of employment in the hotel industry has increased. This situation indicates the development of the tourism industry based on structural changes and the need to further improve infrastructure and strengthen human resource potential in the future.

Conclusions and suggestions. The conducted analysis showed that the Central Tourism Region remains one of the leading regions of the country's tourism industry. High growth rates were recorded in the region in terms of the number of tourists served, sold travel vouchers, and their value. In particular, the significant increase in the flow of tourists and the volume of travel vouchers in 2024 confirms the increasing tourist attractiveness of the region and the growing demand for tourism services. At the same time, the growth of employment in the hotel industry indicates the growing importance of tourism in the regional economy and employment.

However, the analysis revealed that despite the absolute growth in the number of travel agencies, hotels, and accommodation facilities, their share in the republic has decreased to a certain extent. This situation indicates the high rates of development of tourism infrastructure and the tourism services market in other regions of the country. As a result, the issues of effective use of available resources and opportunities, modernization of tourism infrastructure and increasing competitiveness in the Central tourism region are becoming relevant.

Based on the research results, it is considered appropriate to implement the following proposals:

- expanding the network of hotels and other accommodation facilities in the central tourist region, especially the creation of modern accommodation facilities in areas with a high tourist flow;

- increasing the competitiveness of the tourism services market by supporting the activities of travel agencies and developing new tourism products and tour packages;

- strengthening the promotion of tourism services in foreign and domestic markets through the widespread use of digital technologies and electronic marketing tools;

- increasing the efficiency of the use of cultural and historical heritage sites and natural recreational resources, as well as forming new tourist routes;

- improving the system for training qualified personnel for the hotel industry and tourism services, and increasing labor productivity in the industry;

- increasing the volume of investment in tourism infrastructure by expanding public-private partnership mechanisms.

The effective use of the existing historical and cultural heritage, tourism resources, and economic opportunities of the Central Tourism Region serves to ensure the sustainable development of the tourism sector, strengthen the region's position in the republic's tourism market, and increase its international competitiveness.

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