

STATE POLICY OF ECO-TOURISM INDUSTRY IN THE DEVELOPMENT OF TOURISM DESTINATIONS: A CASE OF UZBEKISTAN

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Abstract

The way of tourism development in economic relations has been dramatically altering in the last decades. In Central Asian states, especially in Uzbekistan, eco -tourism is believed to be key factor of sustainability. Therefore, the formation and development of tourism in Uzbekistan as one of the most important social and economic policies requires the specific regulations of economic relations and measures of State support for the travel industry. The contemporary paper gives us the status quo of ecologic tourism with the major analyses of it while making major conclusions as whole. It was determined that the factors of the constant tourism development are connected with the national economic policy priorities, state administrative structure, the emerging of environmental problems and man-triggered risks. Briefly, tourism sector of Uzbekistan with current analytical basis are diffused and concluded in the paper.

Keywords: Eco-tourism, Uzbekistan, Silk Road tourism, tourism competitiveness, Central Asian tourism

INTRODUCTION

These days, tourism has experienced continued advance and increased diversification becoming one of the fastest evolving economic sectors in the world. Tourism is a main activity supporting an economic sector that is responsible for 9% of global GDP. In recent years, it has seen noteworthy progress that is forecasted to continue, especially in developing countries, which have seen a rate of increase in visitor arrivals that considerably exceeds the world average. Tourism accounts for 29% of exports in services worldwide and for many developing

countries, it provides a remarkable, and sometimes the primary, source of foreign exchange earnings (EHL/UNWTO Silk Road Strategy Initiative | UNWTO Silk Road Programme, 2013.).

Over the past six decades, tourism has continued to enlarge and diversify; it is now one of the leading and fastest-growing economic sectors in the world. These dynamics have turned it into a key driver of socioeconomic progress in countries worldwide. For the last twenty years, the idea settled in that in all aspects of contemporary life worldwide interconnectedness has amplified. Globalization has become one of the catchwords of the late 20th and early 21st Century('IUTF-2014', 2014). The period witnessed a significant increase in the number of tourist companies. Extensive development of tourism in the country made it necessary to adopt a number of important pieces of law. The Government of the Republic of Uzbekistan ministries and departments was accepted specific measures aimed to promote the tourism industry and the promotion of entrepreneurship in the field of tourism. In particular, the Guide is designed on a simplified tax regime for individuals engaged in entrepreneurial activities; provided incentives for value - added tax on tourist- excursion services, the right of registration of foreign citizens has been delegated to a variety of hotels(Berger & Paris, 2013).

However, beyond a general recognition of a real or perceived intensification of global interconnectedness, there is a substantial disagreement as to how globalization is best conceptualized, how one should think about its causal dynamics, and how one should characterize its structural consequences, if any(Alegre & Garau, 2010).

Currently, tourism is one of the major sectors in global trade and one of the main wealth creators for many developing countries, especially in Asia, Uzbekistan as well. Deployment of tourism means jobs, poverty eradication, gender equality, and the protection and promotion of our natural and cultural heritage. The recognition of the significance and potential influence of tourism in regional expansion strategies and in the global enlargement agenda is also charming an actuality (Binkhorst & Den Dekker, 2009).

TOURISTIC POTENTIAL OF UZBEKISTAN

Tour potential of untapped destinations, Uzbekistan in particular can be key drivers in this process by supporting Central Asian countries' implementing tourism in an integrated manner, by providing guidance, monitoring progress and mobilizing the necessary resources('EHL/UNWTO Silk Road Strategy Initiative | UNWTO Silk Road Programme', 2015.). Uzbekistan possesses many ancient monuments that attract the flow of tourists from all over the world, especially eco-tourism is one of the attractive segment. In particular, it flourishes on assets, such as the natural environment, a warm climate, rich cultural heritage and plentiful human resources, in which regions have a comparative advantage(Abramson, 1999). However,

tourism can also be a source of environmental damage and pollution, a heavy user of scarce resources and a cause of negative change in society. For these reasons, it is imperative for it to be well planned and managed, embracing the principles of sustainable tourism, defined as “tourism that takes full account of its present and future economic, social and environmental impacts, addressing the needs of visitors, the industry, the environment and host communities(Bank, 2015).

Sustainability principles refer to the environmental, economic and socio-cultural aspects of tourism development in the region, and a suitable guarantee of its long-term sustainability should be established within subsequent features according governmental policy of Uzbekistan:

- ✓ make optimal use of environmental resources that constitute a key element in tourism enlargement, maintaining essential ecological processes and helping to conserve natural resources and biodiversity;
- ✓ Respect the socio-cultural authenticity of host communities, conserve their built and living cultural heritage and traditional values, and contribute to intercultural understanding and tolerance.

Sustainable tourism: Case of Eco-Uzbekistan

The Government of Uzbekistan has identified tourism as a priority sector for deployment. With the support of global organizations, it decided to seek UNWTO’s technical assistance in the formulation of a long term National Strategy for the Sustainable Development of Tourism in Silk Road tourism destination. The Strategy was approved in April 2011 and formally launched in September that year. On this way, nature based tourism facilities have derived as a main facility source on tour packages of country. Role of ecotourism has identified and considered as an untapped resource of tourism potential, which provide extraordinary and attractive service types(David Airey & Myra Shackley, 1997).

In 99th session of UNWTO, which was held in Samarkand on October 1-3, 2014, was observed tourism potential of Uzbekistan both theatrically proved and practically advised. According to officials, the main recommendations related to following features:

- the need for a strengthened institutional and regulatory framework;
- the creation of a consolidated and diversified tourism offer;
- the strategic positioning of Uzbekistan within Silk Road tourism;
- quality tourism services and enhanced tourism management;
- creating an enabling environment for tourism investment in the country.

A concept also implemented the formulation of a new Eco-tourism Law for Uzbekistan, created a national platform for the harmonization of tourism statistics and formulated pilot demonstration projects that included a coastal management plan for Central Asian states. In order to guide implementation, detailed methods identified priority actions for the recent years, possible sources of funding, lead implementation agencies and a coordination, monitoring and evaluation framework for the implementation process (Karimov, 1998).

Sustainability principles refer to the environmental, economic, and socio-cultural aspects of tourism development, and a suitable balance must be established among these three dimensions to guarantee long-term sustainability. Hence, sustainable tourism should:

1. Efficient use of environmental resources that constitute a key element in tourism development, maintaining essential ecological processes and helping to conserve natural heritage and biodiversity.
2. Respect the socio-cultural authenticity of host communities, conserve their built and living cultural heritage and traditional values, and contribute to intercultural understanding and tolerance.
3. Ensure viable, long-term economic operations, providing socioeconomic benefits to all stakeholders that are fairly distributed, including stable employment and income-earning opportunities and social services to host communities, and contributing to poverty alleviation.

Sustainable tourism development requires the informed participation of all relevant stakeholders, as well as strong political leadership to ensure wide participation and consensus building. Achieving sustainable tourism is a continuous process and requires constant monitoring of impacts, introducing the necessary preventive and/or corrective measures whenever necessary. Sustainable tourism should also maintain a high level of tourist satisfaction and ensure a meaningful experience for tourists, raising their awareness about sustainability issues and promoting relevant sustainable practices. (Source: UNEP and UNWTO, 2005.)

SWOT analyses (Figure 1) define the major drawbacks and outcomes of tourism potentials in Uzbekistan. Analysis of the current situation shows that there is a whole set of problems, because of which the tourist industry in Uzbekistan may reach a stable level of development. These problems have repeatedly voiced by representatives of the government and various experts. The main obstacles to the development of the tourism industry in Uzbekistan are the following: low volume of attracted investments in tourism and unstable rates of their growth; the lack of attractiveness of tourism industry of Uzbekistan for foreign investment; multi-layered nature of the unsatisfactory state of tourism infrastructure; the system of professional training in the tourism and service; political and administrative

aspects of the development of the tourism industry; insufficiently favorable business climate; the non-recognition of tourist activity as a priority by the local government; insufficient financial resources allocated for the promotion of domestic tourism; poor quality of services provided (Bhatia, 2006).

Figure 1. SWOT analysis



CONCLUSION

Despite of the development of tourism infrastructure, quality of service at many touristsites remained low. This is due to the fact that the implementation of measures to improve the system of training for the tourism industry takes time. Together with experts from the UNWTO and the

Ministry of Education and Science continues to investigate the issue of a pilot project to introduce the system of certification based on one of the leading public institutions of higher education in Uzbekistan. Uzbekistan plans to become a center of tourism in the region, it is necessary to take measures to improve the system of training in the tourism industry, where the impact is particularly acute shortage of qualified professionals in middle and senior managers in demand in the tertiary sect. For this purpose, with the support and direct participation of the Agency implemented a pilot project to introduce a flexible qualification structure in the tourism sector as a pilot project. In the past two years, work was undertaken on amendments and additions to the Classification of Economic Activities and Classifieds areas of training by industry in conjunction with the Ministries of Labour and Social Welfare, Education and Science and the Statistical Agency, the Ministry initiated in connection with the implementation of cluster development tourism. At the same time, was introduced an auxiliary account in the tourism, which is formed on the basis of tourism statistics, and which allows us to estimate the contribution of the tourism industry to the economy of the state. However, it still needs to continue the improvement statistics on a par with countries, the share of tourism in the economy will increase noticeably (Bank, 2015). Additionally, with enormous underused capabilities in tourism and diversity of tourist attractions represent the potential of tourism in these tourism destinations. Location of the area, corridors on the Great Silk Road, with cities, which were main points of trade, make the destination attractive one for the flow of tourists internationally. Accessibility of several tourism types, different traditions and unique cultural background of Central Asia has considered as one of the leading key factor tourism and hospitality businesses (Abdulkarimov B.A, 2013).

After have been establishing and implying global experience, the attractiveness of tourism assessed to become as one of the essential ones in the Central Asian destination. Likewise, the optimization of visa facilities has listed as one of the main development of tourism policy by the UNWTO research group.

As one of the main Silk Road tourism destinations, Central Asian states have great potential to advance sector of hospitality and tourism that create many promotions for different fields. In the other perspective, tourism sector in Central Asia has already established and its policy has led to some fundamental enhancements in the last 20 years. Further investigations and explorations may be addressed to recognize the problems of the industry by learning all its sub-sectors.

In brief, Central Asian states, including Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Turkmenistan, Tajikistan, and Uzbekistan have great potential of tourism deployment as whole. Traditional policies and directed measurements in counties have made already its results. Forthcoming

diversifications and modernizations in the industry may contribute exponentially to the economies of the Central Asian countries. Nonetheless, tourism can be an important source of income and improved standards of life only if; economic, social and ecological goals are maintained in balance. Henceforth, conventional mass tourism approaches has yielded its place to community based role tourism strategies in order to minimize harmful effects while generating profits to local communities. Maintainable community tourism should object to improving quality of life for the host community by producing social and economic benefits, as well as, by defending natural environment.

In order to manage sustainable tourism development, destination management organizations should respect the local needs; thus, they need to engage with local communities' decisions. In other words, ecotourism observations and weaknesses should be taken into account by policy makers in order to develop tourism in a sustainable manner. Community based tourism methods have succeeded throughout the globe in the protection and promotion of natural environment together with the development of communities' standards of living.

The notion of community-based tourism was identified through sustainable community tourism, which certainly constitutes the base of community-based tourism. As a final point, community based ecotourism was estimated in agreement with its key principles and challenges in the non-developed world.

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