

Research Note

Japan's Practice in the Tourism Development of Uzbekistan:

Tourism Strategy in the Japanese and Uzbek Economies

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Tourism is a rapidly developing and highly profitable sector of the economy. It is capable of raising the level of the economy to a new height of development. In Uzbekistan, tourism is given great attention and at the same time, large investments are being made to improve its infrastructure. Cooperation between Japan and Uzbekistan has been continuing for a long time and the support from Japan represents such great significance. Currently, a large number of joint projects are being implemented between the two countries, and in the long term, this will lead to an unprecedented success of the tourism sector. The main purpose of this study is to reveal the essence of tourism and its role in the economy of two countries – Japan and Uzbekistan. Moreover, to explore the experience of tourism development of aforementioned countries and the possibility of applying Japan's experience in Uzbekistan. The study begins with the consideration of the goals of tourism, its prospects, tourist infrastructure that includes the hotel business, transportation, and communications. Further, the study discusses past experiences in the development of tourism, its present situation, as well as prospects for development in Japan and Uzbekistan.

Keywords: Japanese Practice, Tourism Development, Hotel Industry, Tourism Infrastructure, Uzbekistan

Introduction

The tourism industry is one of the most powerful global industries that exist today. For its rapid growth, the industry is recognized as an economic phenomenon of the latest century. The tourism industry possesses immense economic potential through which it can create new employment opportunities, tax revenues, and economic diversity (Andereck et al., 2005). Therefore, in various countries, tourism plays a substantial role in the formation of GDP, the creation of additional jobs, and employment. In addition, the industry has a huge impact on key economic sectors such as transportation, communications, construction, agriculture. In other words, it acts as a kind of accelerator for social and economic development. Moreover, it can offer tourism companies the potential to play a leadership role within the tourism industry and the business community (Ashley et al., 2007).

The previous years have seen certain “growth in the attention paid by governments, development experts, and industry leaders to the contributions made by the tourism sector in many countries, especially in the developing world” (Ashley et al., 2007, p.6). Some of them are “within the United Nations (UN), the UN Commission on Trade and Development promotes the importance of tourism to least developed countries; and the UN Environment Program promotes sustainable tourism. The UN World Tourism Organization is not only exclusively devoted to tourism but has even created an international foundation to enhance its contribution to development” (Ashley et al., 2007, p.6).

The importance of tourism as a source of foreign exchange earnings and expanding international contacts is

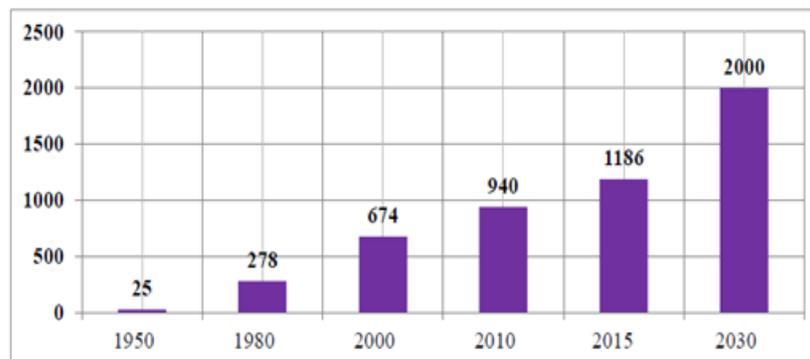
constantly growing. Tourism is an extremely competitive, specialized, swiftly evolving commercial sector. It is composed of a variety of large companies and an excess of small owner-operated firms running on tight profit margins (Ashley et al., 2007). These companies work for the development of the country economy, as well as to enhance the lives of the population. Tourism brings much profit to the state budget, enriches people's attitude toward a diversity of world cultures, and shares experience in lifestyles.

The tourism sector consists of so-called infrastructure, which is an interconnected system of enterprises and entrepreneurs that provide tourists with all the tourism services, works, and goods necessary for consumption and sufficient for the implementation of the tourism process itself. The rapid development of mass tourism globally caused the equivalent development of the tourism industry and related sectors of the economy, science, culture, and the education system. Proceeding from these prerequisites, the tourist infrastructure is a set of hotels and other means of accommodation, vehicles, catering facilities, entertainment facilities and facilities, cognitive, medical, health, sports, religious, business, and other purposes; organizations that carry out tour operator and travel agency activities, as well as provide tourist and excursion services. Most studies adopt total revenue as output variable (Assaf et al., 2010; Anderson et al., 2000).

The size and degree of influence of international tourism in the world can be assessed by the following indicators. In 1950, the number of international tourists in the world amounted to 25 million people; in 2000, 674 million people, and receipts from international tourism reached USD 423 billion. The number of tourists in the world reached a record level of 1.235 billion (UNWTO, 2017). This is 3.9% more than in 2016 (see Figure 1).

According to the annual report of the World Tourism Organization (WTO), the contribution of tourism to the world economy is 10.9% of world GDP, and tourism provides 30% of export services (USD 1.5 trillion) and 6% of export goods and services (UNWTO, 2017; UNWTO, 2014). In addition, every 11th working place in the world economy is created in the sphere of tourism (UNWTO, 2017). To service such a large number of people moving around the world, more and more specialists from many tourism-related industries are involved, which are the essence of the industry and tourism infrastructure.

Figure 1 Dynamics of world tourist growth in the period from 1950 to 2030, (in millions of people)



Source: Compiled by the authors based on Tourism News UNWTO (2016) <http://www.tourprom.ru/news/34796/> (accessed 3 June 2018).

Today, the governance of Uzbekistan pays a great deal of attention to the tourism sphere, adopting programs at the state level for developing tourism, and setting the task to study international advanced practices in the field of improving the tourism industry. Furthermore, Japan is an advanced developed country with high-level tourist infrastructure and great tourist potential from where a large flow of tourists comes to Uzbekistan. Moreover, for the last several years Japan has done many improvements in the tourism sphere. Japan has already developed its domestic tourism, while Uzbekistan is in its first steps to broaden its so-called *ziyorat* tourism. One of the key points is the similarity of the mentality of the Japanese and Uzbek peoples, which is manifested in hard work, hospitality, and respect for history. The next important thing is a student exchange program. For example, every year, five to eight Japanese students from the University of Tsukuba, the Tokyo University of Foreign Studies, and Hosei University arrive at the Tashkent State Institute of Oriental Studies (TSIOS) to learn the Uzbek language and culture. In turn, annually 20 to 30 students from TSIOS go to Japan for three-month or one-year programs. Similarly, there are several mutual programs in the tourism sphere between Japan and Uzbekistan. It should be taken into account that the Japanese mass media play an important role in the promotion of the Uzbek brand. This leads to strengthening Japanese-Uzbek cooperation, including contribution to the development of each country's tourism potential.

1. Improved Infrastructure Leads Active Tourists Flow

(1) General Information on Infrastructure Development in Uzbekistan

In the Republic of Uzbekistan over the past few years, there has been an increase in extra-budgetary investments in tourism infrastructure. Recently, the largest investment projects have been implemented in the field of tourist infrastructure development, including the restoration and reconstruction of the historical part of the city of Shakhrisabz, construction of the Hyatt Hotel in Tashkent, cultural and entertainment parks in the cities of Andijan and Tashkent, the Angren-Pop railway, stretching the Tashkent-Samarkand railway line to the cities of Karshi and Bukhara, and three Boeing-787 aircraft (Shaherezada Sam Star Tour, 2018).

Through the efforts of the republic's leadership, tourism infrastructure has been raised to a rather high level in recent years. In the country, in particular, 1,176 tourist organizations, including 621 tour operators and 555 accommodation facilities function successfully.¹ It should be noted that tourism service exports increased by 24% to USD 1,557 billion compared to 2016. In addition, 101 placement facilities were created in 2017, with a total number of 1,355 places, and 128 legal entities providing tour operator services are registered (Shaherezada Sam Star Tour, 2018). Under the package of measures to ensure tourist safety and health, 442 organizations are certified to provide tourist services, of which 221 provide hotel and 221 provide tour operator services. During the period under review, issuing licenses for the right to conduct tour operator activities for 128 entrepreneurs was organized. An extensive network of hotels for more than 25,000 rooms meet modern international standards.²

As a result of the large-scale work on the construction and reconstruction of infrastructure facilities in Uzbekistan, 11 airports have received the status of international airports during the years of independence. In 2016, the country's civil aviation fleet was supplemented by two modern Boeing Dreamliners.

(2) Hospitality Industry

In our time of expansion of international cultural ties and globalization, the issue of the development of modern, comfortable hotels, ready to open wide the doors to guests from other countries, was especially acute. It is important to create so-called hotel chains, i.e. network hotels, which have their own special, recognizable image and high-level service, as well as effective tourism agencies with highly qualified staff.

The hospitality industry is a sphere of entrepreneurship consisting of such types of services which are based on the principles of hospitality, characterized by friendliness towards the guests. An important place in the industry is occupied by the hotel business, the wide and diverse nature of which encompasses elements of the related sectors of the industry, for example, food, recreation, and entertainment. Accordingly, the hotel business demonstrates a broader and more diverse organizational structure than other sectors of the industry.

The development of international tourism in the background of the improvement of small business and private entrepreneurship in Uzbekistan has led to the fact that in practice in the international tourist market of the country, hotels of different levels of comfort are offered at different price categories (www.un.int, 2016). Every year the mass media inform about new forms of this service for numerous clients.

At the moment, the government repairs roads, facilitates bureaucratic delays in documentation, actively implements investments in this field, and gives guarantees to foreign investors. It is necessary to take advantage of this situation and start activities in the sphere of tourism services. Taking into account the peculiarities of the regions and other aspects of tourism, it is expedient to organize tourism centers in all the cities of Uzbekistan. Effective management of such an enterprise will be fully paid for by investments and will be released on profit within the first seven years from the beginning of work. The payback period of interest (at discounted values) is seven to twelve years. The effectiveness of the project is confirmed by the positive value of the net present value (NPV) criterion.

In addition, hotels provide a range of related services in accordance with the wishes of customers: booking tickets to theaters and cinemas, stadiums, concerts, etc., providing reference information, guides, and interpreters, as well as renting vehicles to other travel agencies.

As of 2017, there were 851 hotels and similar accommodation facilities in Uzbekistan, which is 8.3% more than in 2016 (compared to 2011, an increase of 32%), and the average annual growth rate for the period 2011-2016 was 9.2%. The one-time capacity in these accommodation facilities was 17,779 rooms (compared to 13,485 rooms in 2011) and 34,898 beds (compared to 25,526 beds in 2011). The largest concentration of accommodation facilities falls on the city of Tashkent (19.8%), Samarkand (16.4%) and Bukhara (15.4%), and the lowest are in Djizak (2.8%), Namangan (2.8%) and the Syrdarya (1.6%) regions. The number of accommodation in hotels and similar

¹ The permanent Mission of the Republic of Uzbekistan to the United Nations. <https://www.un.int/uzbekistan/news/развитие-туризма-в-узбекистане>

² Information from the interview of A. Abdukhakimov, the Chairman of State Committee of the Republic of Uzbekistan for Tourism Development. <http://uznews.uz/ru/article/8547>; (Accessed 3 June 2018).

accommodation facilities in 2016 amounted to about 13 million people, which is 4.2% more than in 2016 (compared to 2011 by 18.1%), the average annual growth for 2011-2017 was 7.1%. A large proportion of visitors using the services of hotels and similar accommodation facilities were for business and professional purposes (54.7%), followed by tourists for leisure and recreation (36.2%), and finally for other objectives (9.1%) (Uzbek Government Portal, 2018). As for Japan and Uzbekistan, an increase in the number of hotels and other accommodation facilities, tourist firms and organizations contributes to the increase in the level of employment by creating additional jobs in the tourism sector.³

(3) Transport Infrastructure

An important factor in the development of tourism in Uzbekistan is the condition of a sufficiently developed transport infrastructure. Thus, the total length of the railway lines (for 2017) is more than 6,020 km. There are 4,237.5 km of public roads, and 19.5% of the roads are electrified. There are 20 international transport routes and destinations throughout Uzbekistan⁴ (Toshshahartranzhizmat, 2018). The number of passengers carried is steadily growing. In 2017, 20.1 million people were transported by rail, which was 5.4% higher than in 2016, due to an increase in the volume of passenger transportation in domestic communications.⁵ By automobile transport, 7.2 billion passengers were transported in 2017, which is 3.8% more than in 2016.⁶ Despite the positive developments that have taken place in recent years in the passenger rail transport has unresolved problems such as the shortage of rail transport in high season, the difficulty of buying train tickets, and no electronic tickets for international shipping.

Air traffic is widely developed with routes to more than 40 cities of the world including Europe, Asia, and America). At the end of 2017, there were 22,950 flights on provided by the national airline and 2.7 million passengers were transported. In total for the year 2017, the airline carried 489,000 tons of cargo, including tolls and mail, an increase of 11.6% compared to the previous year.⁷ Despite the renewal of the aircraft fleet and reconstruction of airports in certain regions, certain issues remain unresolved. For example, the following do not contribute to the development of the tourism sector and the increase in the tourist flow: the low level of service at airports, the monopoly position of the national carrier for domestic and international flights, the lack of budget aviation transportation, the underdevelopment of domestic flights and the weak marketing policy of the national air carrier.

Visiting tourists in Uzbekistan have the opportunity to get to the sights of the republic by rail. Thus, in addition to the usual trains, high-speed "Afrosiab" trains produced by the Spanish company Talgo run daily between Tashkent, Samarkand, and Karshi, which have considerably improved the quality of customer service and reduced travel time. Moreover, in June 2016, another breakthrough in the development of the tourism and transport industry in Uzbekistan happened via the opening of the electrified railway line Angren-Pop that connects the Fergana Valley with the rest of the country (Uzbek Government Portal, 2018).

2. Uzbekistan Turns to be one of the most Attractive Countries for Tourists

(1) Past Situation

The geopolitical location of Uzbekistan in Eurasia is the main factor in the development of international tourism in Uzbekistan. Uzbekistan is a novelty for tourists who are lovers of antiquity, nature, and traditions of the ancient East. The Government of the republic comprehensively supports tourism. In recent years, regulatory acts have been adopted ("Tourism Act," 1999; State Program for the Development of Tourism, 2005) for the development of tourism in Uzbekistan. Rich nature, numerous historical architecture, economic and political stability, and relatively inexpensive prices are the main factors attracting tourists to Uzbekistan. To date, the attendance of the Republic by tourists of different classes is more than 2 million people and increased by 24.3% compared to 2016, while export of tourism services increased by 24% compared to 2016 to USD 1.557 billion.⁸ In the republic, there was a program created to increase the flow of tourists to 3 million people per year by 2018.⁹

³ The concept of development of the tourism industry of the Republic of Uzbekistan for the medium term, available at: <https://my.gov.uz/en/getPublicService/332?item_id=1296&action=view>; (Accessed 3 June 2018).

⁴ Information from the website of "Toshshahartranzhizmat" Joint Stock Company, <http://tshtx.uz/index.php?lang=en>, (Accessed 3 June 2018).

⁵ Information from the website of "Uzbekiston Temir Yullari" State-owned Joint Stock Railway Company, <http://railway.uz/en/>; (Accessed 3 June 2018).

⁶ Information from "Toshshahartranzhizmat" JSC, <http://tshtx.uz/index.php?lang=ru>; (Accessed on 3 June 2018).

⁷ Information from the website of "Uzbekistan Airways" National Airline Company, <https://www.uzairways.com/>; (Accessed 3 June 2018).

⁸ Information from the website of State Committee of the Republic of Uzbekistan for Tourism Development, <https://uzbektourism.uz/ru/novosti-turizma-uzbekistana/press-reliz-press-konferentsiya-na-temu-perspektivy-razvitiya-turizma-v-uzbekistane-i-ego-znachenie-v-ekonomike-strany>; (Accessed 3 June 2018).

⁹ Information from the interview of A. Abdukhakimov, the Chairman of State Committee of the Republic of Uzbekistan for Tourism

The growth of real GDP in 2016 by 7.8% was mainly due to the dynamic development of the basic branches of the economy¹⁰ (World Bank Group, 2018). Last year, industrial production increased by 8%, agricultural production by 7%, construction by 18%. In addition, systematic work was continued to ensure the dynamic development of the service sector as one of the most essential factors and directions for extending structural transformations and diversifying the economy, increasing employment, income, and quality of life for people (Stat.uz, 2017). Over the years, the program for the development of the service sector in the Republic of Uzbekistan for 2012-2016 increased the contribution of the industry to GDP. At the beginning of the program, the share of services in GDP was 50.5%; by 2016 it reached the level of 56.5%¹¹ (Stat.uz, 2017; Ministry of Economics of the Republic of Uzbekistan, 2016).

Accelerating the transformation and economic development of Uzbekistan and, in particular, its regions, is facilitated by the establishment and development of the tourist industry. The main share of tourists who visited Uzbekistan last year were visitors from Russia (22.4%), Korea (8.2%), Germany (3.8%), France (3.6%), and other Western countries, Europe and South-East Asia (Rasulova, 2016). Over the past three years, the number of foreign tourists arriving in Uzbekistan has increased by more than 30%.¹² Demand for the organization of leisure among foreigners and citizens of the country is growing, and the number of proposals is increasing proportionally.

Moreover, in recognition of the special place of the republic in the global tourism industry, in 2004, in Samarkand, a regional UNWTO office was opened to coordinate tourism development on the Silk Road. It should be noted that such an office exists only in two countries—Japan and Uzbekistan. Its main function is to designate directions in the development of not only regional but also international tourism. Uzbekistan's opportunities are evidenced by the presence of over 7,000 sites of material cultural heritage from different eras and civilizations, including the historical centers of Bukhara, Khiva, Samarkand and Shahrisabz, included in the UNESCO World Heritage List. World-famous historical monuments, modern cities, the unique nature of Uzbekistan, unique national cuisine, as well as the unsurpassed hospitality of the people attract travelers (Rasulova, 2016).

All above-mentioned results were accomplished under the leadership of the first President of the Republic of Uzbekistan, Islam Karimov. The development of a unified state policy in the sphere of comprehensive modernization and development of the tourist industry is being carried out by the Uzbektourism National Company, established by a Decree of the President of the Republic of Uzbekistan dated 27 July 1992.

The Decree of the Cabinet of Ministers of the Republic of Uzbekistan "On measures for further support and development of tourism in the Republic of Uzbekistan" dated October 10, 2012, and the Presidential Decree to the Republic of Uzbekistan served as important guides to the development of tourism and tourism infrastructure, as well as active promotion of national tourist services to international tourism markets.

Great attention was also paid to the education of future experts. Several higher education institutions in the country produce specialists in the field. For instance, the Tashkent State Institute of Oriental Studies, the Samarkand Institute of Economics and Service, the Tashkent State Economic University, the Bukhara and Urgench State Universities, and the Singapore Institute of Management Development in Tashkent are amongst such institutions. Annually more than 500 students graduate from universities in this specialty and receive bachelors' diplomas and over 40 receive master's degrees. In addition, more than 3,500 professionals are nurtured in 12 specialized professional colleges.

At present, the Republic of Uzbekistan has consolidated its presence in the world tourist market, but it is too early to speak about significant progress. This is confirmed by the fact that, according to the rating of the competitiveness of countries in tourism, which defines 140 tourist destinations with the highest level of attractiveness (cultural resources, affordable infrastructure, prices of tourist products, security level, international openness), Uzbekistan is not included. At the same time, Japan ranks 9th in this rating; Kazakhstan, 85th place; Kyrgyzstan, 116th; and Tajikistan, 119th (Travel and Tourism Competitiveness Index, 2018).¹³ According to the estimates of the World Tourism and Travel Council (2018), Uzbekistan ranks 115th among countries in terms of

Development. <http://uznews.uz/ru/article/8547>; (Accessed 3 June 2018).

¹⁰ Information from the website of World Bank Group, <http://www.vsemirnyjbank.org/ru/country/uzbekistan/overview>; (Accessed on 3 June 2018).

¹¹ Information from the website of Ministry of Economics of the Republic of Uzbekistan, <https://mineconomy.uz/ru/node/1098>; (Accessed 3 June 2018).

¹² Rasulova N.N. (2016). "Potential and prospects of tourism development in Uzbekistan" *Young Scientist*, Vol. 13, pp. 500-502, available at: <https://moluch.ru/archive/117/32279/>; (Accessed 3 June 2018).

¹³ Travel and Tourism Competitiveness Index 2018, <http://reports.weforum.org/travel-and-tourism-competitiveness-report%E2%80%932017/>; (Accessed 3 June 2018).

total contribution to the country's GDP formation, 103th place in the use of investments, and 69th in terms of the number of employed in the industry, and 150th in terms of tourist arrivals, accounting for 0.2% of the total flow.¹⁴

However, there have been some problems hindering the development of tourism. First, the potential of Uzbek tourism has not been fully realized since the development of this sphere directly depends on the formation of a modern competitive tourist complex with the necessary infrastructure of the transport and logistics system. Therefore, according to experts, it has been necessary to reconstruct the checkpoints across the state borders (aviation, road, and railway) and improve the process of crossing borders, making it relevant to the needs of foreign citizens in tourist services. The second problem has been high prices for air travel, low coverage of potential markets for domestic and international airlines, as well as poor visa policies, registration system, and security issues in Uzbekistan. Other problems include inaccessibility and low levels of service in recreation areas.

(2) New Era in Tourism Sector and Further Problems

Shavkat Mirziyoyev, the President of the Republic of Uzbekistan, after coming to power in December 2016, adopted the Strategy of Action on the five priority directions of the development of the Republic of Uzbekistan for 2017-2021, which have served to promote the modernization process and bring it to a new level. The goal of the Strategy of Action is a radical increase in the effectiveness of the reforms being implemented, the creation of conditions for the comprehensive and accelerated development of the state and society, as well as the modernization of the country and the liberalization of all spheres of life. Concerning the world practice, tourism plays an important role in the economy of the country: firstly, it is an increase in foreign exchange earnings; secondly, it is a solution for social problems by creating new jobs, as well as the development of other sectors of the economy, in particular, social and industrial infrastructure; and it is a positive impact on sustainable economic growth.

On the basis of the Uzbektourism National Company, the State Committee of the Republic of Uzbekistan for Tourism Development was formed in 2017. Priority directions of the State Committee are the development of legal and economic bases of tourism, improvement of the country's infrastructure due to the attraction of foreign investment, and the wide propagation of historical heritage and tourist opportunities in Uzbekistan.¹⁵ Regulation of the tourism industry in the country is carried out on the basis of regulatory documents presented in the form of laws "On Tourism", "On Insurance", "On Certification", "On the State Border", "On Measures to Ensure Accelerated Development of the Tourism Industry of the Republic of Uzbekistan", the "Resolution of the President of the Republic of Uzbekistan on the Authority Activities of the State Committee of the Republic of Uzbekistan for Tourism Development", and government decrees. These documents are aimed at forming an investment climate, denationalization, and privatization in the tourism sector, providing benefits, improving the hotel infrastructure, as well as building roads and resorts.

With a view to sustainable and balanced development of tourism activities and the creation of the necessary material and technical base, ensuring the safety of life and health of foreign tourists and citizens of the Republic, the President of the Republic of Uzbekistan Shavkat Mirziyoyev issued a decree "On measures to ensure the accelerated development of the tourism industry in the Republic of Uzbekistan". Consequently, there have been positive changes in the development of tourism. One example of this is the above-noted fact that Uzbekistan has now become more open, which is manifested in the simplification of the visa system for 39 countries. This results in Uzbekistan becoming a more tourist-friendly country.

The President Shavkat Mirziyoyev is highlighting the role of tourism in the economy and is analyzing in detail the current state of the sphere and the measures taken to develop it. A program of priority measures for the development of tourism for 2018-2019 was adopted, also it is planned to adopt a strategy until 2030. The adoption by the President only in February of this year of four important documents related to this sphere is evidence of the high attention paid by the government to tourism development. These documents set priority tasks for solving existing issues in the industry, developing tourist potential, and providing various benefits and preferences for the

¹⁴ World Travel & Tourism Council (WTTC), <https://www.wttc.org/research/economic-research/economic-impact-analysis/>; (Accessed 3 June 2018).

¹⁵ After the transformation, the Committee for Tourism Development increased its status to the state, increased the staff, expanded its powers, and opened branches in all regions of Uzbekistan. Its tasks and functions are to ensure the formation and implementation of a holistic concept of tourism development; to carry out marketing research in foreign and domestic tourist services markets; to ensure the creation of new tourist routes in the regions; to develop proposals for optimizing state and market regulation in tourism and developing competition in the tourist market of services; expanding international cooperation in the field of tourism activities, primarily with the United Nations World Tourism Organization, authoritative international and national tourism organizations, as well as foreign companies operating in the field of tourism; introducing into the practice of tourist activities international and interstate standards and norms; making proposals for training personnel for the tourism industry; organizing regular retraining and raising the qualifications of employees of tourism activities; assisting the development of industry-specific tourism science (Embassy of Uzbekistan in New Delhi, 2017)

continuous development of domestic tourism. Moreover, it attempts to attract tourists to experience pilgrim tourism (a.k.a. *ziyorat*) through visiting holy places in Uzbekistan with the solution of logistics issues, including the organization of charter flights.

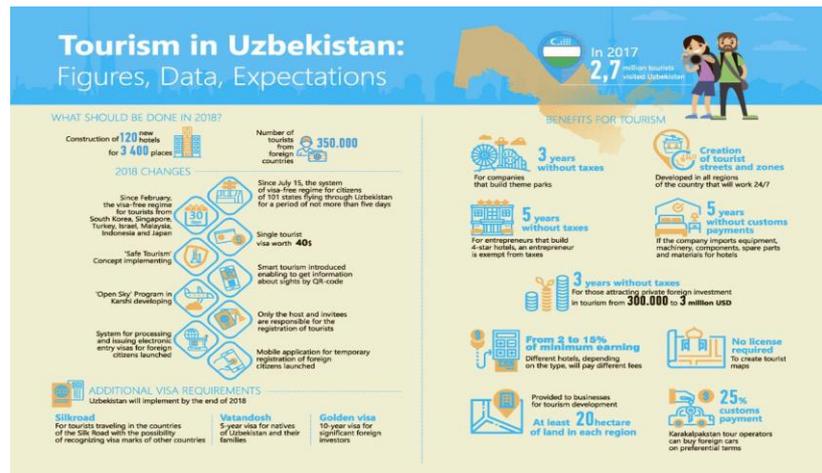
The development of tourism infrastructure is now becoming important for increasing the competitiveness of tourist destinations, and has an impact on the volume of tourist flows and economic indicators not only of the tourism industry but also of the region as a whole.

Due to the efforts of the Government of the Republic of Uzbekistan, fundamental, qualitative and institutional changes took place in the sphere of tourism and its infrastructure, and market elements of market relations began to be widely introduced. State-owned enterprises operating in the industry have been transformed into joint-stock, collective, private, leased and joint ventures. In order to strengthen the position of tourism and improve its image, also in order to widely advertise the cultural, historical, and spiritual heritage of Uzbekistan in foreign countries, close cooperation with international tourism organizations; in particular, the World Tourism Organization has been established.

Among other achievements, there are such key moments as:

- The introduction of a visa-free regime for transit passengers from 101 countries for a period of not more than five days;
- In 2017, Uzbekistan introduced a single tourist visa issued for a month and reduced its cost to USD 40;
- In 2017, the introduction of smart tourism in historical cities of the country. A project of allowing foreign tourists to obtain information about sightseeing via QR codes was tested in Khiva;
- Since July 15, 2018, the launch of three methods for remote registration of foreign citizens: via the “emehmon.uz” website, a mobile application, and in accommodation facilities (hotels, hostels). At the same time, tourists were exempt from registration. This responsibility is imposed on the receiving party. Independent tourists can also register online;
- At the beginning of July 2018, the concept of “Safe Tourism” was introduced in Bukhara. Within the project, Huawei Tech Investment Tashkent was supposed to donate modern terminals and smart video cameras with face-recognition function and base stations operating on the LTE band to the tourist police of Bukhara;
- From February 10, 2018, citizens of South Korea, Singapore, Turkey, Israel, Malaysia, Indonesia, and Japan are granted visa-free travel for a period of 30 days from the date of entry into the territory of Uzbekistan;
- Since July 15, the system for processing and issuing electronic entry visas in Uzbekistan E-VISA.UZ has been introduced along with abolishing the appeal of foreign citizens to diplomatic missions and consular offices of Uzbekistan abroad. Through this service, in one month, Uzbekistan issued 5025 electronic visas;
- The open sky regime will be introduced in Karshi and the low-cost posters will be allowed to fly there;
- By the end of 2018, three additional visas will be introduced: Silk Road, Vatandosh and Golden Visa;
- Many changes relate directly to the guest accommodation: Now hostels can be located in high-rise buildings, which will reduce the cost of tourists to expensive hotels. The certification system for family guest house services has also been simplified;
- Regular inspections of travel agencies by government agencies have been reduced, and hotels have been freed from paper reporting—all activity has been transferred to reports in electronic format;
- For the development of the industry, entrepreneurs are provided with tax and customs benefits:
 - Companies that build theme parks are exempted from taxes for three years;
 - Five years may not pay taxes to entrepreneurs who build four-star hotels;
 - Customs privileges for five years are provided for equipment and materials for hotels (see Figure 2).

Figure 2 Development of Tourism in Uzbekistan



Source: Compiled by the authors from the data by Development Strategy Center of Uzbekistan, Tourism (2018) https://www.spot.uz/ru/2018/08/24/tourism/?fbclid=IwAR2xCOFd-yoJX_PAJ8Yqx1AFnVsO7D7qf-fc1iJ9Z9BZ5LEHw-dgfkCKYrg (accessed 14 November 2018).

In recent years, new types of travel have been actively introduced in Uzbekistan, including ecological tourism. Presence of reserves, national parks, nurseries, reserves, natural monuments, and a biosphere reserve in the republic makes ecotourism a very promising area.

In addition, in Uzbekistan, various forms of tourism including geotourism, medical tourism, along with rock climbing and rafting have been developed. In the regions, recreation areas and comfortable infrastructure facilities are being built. For example, in the sports and health centers "Chimgan", "Beldersay", and "Charvak" located in the Tashkent region, necessary conditions for skiing and other winter sports have been created (Embassy of Uzbekistan in New Delhi, 2017). There are mountain routes of different types with a length of 300 to 3,000 meters. Vacationers can climb the ropeway using a special lift. In Uzbekistan, the gastronomic direction of tourism is gaining popularity, making it possible to make *plov* and other national dishes a recognizable brand of the country.

A major role in ensuring the accelerated development of the tourism sector in Uzbekistan, the formation and maintenance of the country's image on the world market is played by large-scale events held regularly in the republic. One of the most important annual events is the Tashkent International Tourism Fair "Tourism on the Silk Road". Today it is the largest forum in Central Asia where industry professionals meet and various negotiations are held including business-to-business negotiations. In addition, the Hosted Buyers program is being implemented for buyers of the national tourism products and various conferences are being held on topics concerning the questions of development of the tourism industry in the country and worldwide.

Representatives of Uzbekistan also regularly participate in international fairs and exhibitions held abroad to present the tourism potential of the republic. Participation allows them to keep abreast of the latest trends in the world tourism market, concluding business contracts, and developing cooperation with foreign partners (Uzbek Government Portal, 2018).

Thus, the intensive development of the tourism industry in Uzbekistan, including a careful attitude to the historical and cultural heritage, the creation of an infrastructure that fully meets global standards, the establishment of international relations have made our country one of the most visited destinations in the world.

However, despite positive changes in the tourism industry, there are still problems that require obligatory qualitative and responsible solutions. Among them, the inadequate use of tourist potential, the need to improve the quality of servicing tourists to the level of world standards, the lag in the training of personnel from the current level of tourism development should be noted.

The first problem is that at the moment Uzbekistan as a tourist destination is unknown to most tourists due to the lack of a multi-purpose PR strategy of the country. Secondly, there is a lack of qualified personnel in the field. Nevertheless, Uzbek government is attracting highly qualified foreign experts to enhance the tourism sector. Other problems include a poorly developed transportation system, social and engineering infrastructure, and underdeveloped roadside infrastructure.¹⁶

¹⁶ The government systematically meets with representatives of international financial organizations to provide loans for infrastructure development.

(3) Perspectives of Uzbekistan on Development of Tourism

Transport and infrastructure

The “Karshi” international airport will be transferred to the management of a specialized company and withdrawn from the national joint stock company (NJSC) “Uzbekistan Airways”. The regime of “open skies” will be launched.

In Bukhara, preparations for the launch of the rent-car service have been started. The project will be launched on the basis of public-private partnership. Pilot projects are also planned to be launched in Bukhara, Samarkand, and Khorezm. Cars will be leased without a notarized registration and registration with the internal affairs bodies.

In Tashkent, Samarkand, Bukhara, and Khiva, shuttle buses will run between airports, railway stations, bus stations, large hotels. The project will be implemented on the basis of public-private partnership.

In addition, it is planned to establish tourist signs, symbols, and signs in the framework of the introduction of the concept of “safe tourism” in Bukhara, Samarkand, Khiva, and Shakhrisabz. The hotels will implement security systems and 24-hour video surveillance.

Tourist information centers will be set up on the territory of cultural heritage sites, railway stations, airports and hotels, where they will sell SIM cards, tickets for cultural events, short-term tours, as well as rail and air tickets.

There will be fixed and mobile info kiosks providing tourists with maps, information about public catering establishments, accommodation facilities, as well as allowing them to call a taxi, purchase tickets to museums, souvenirs, and SIM cards. The project will be implemented including the public-private partnership scheme.

Development of new directions of tourism

The plan sees prosperity in building thematic parks taking into account the landscape design of the adjacent territory from organizations of places for recreation, planting of greenery, construction of a cafe, reconstruction of adjoining streets, establishment of outdoor equipment with illumination. Earlier versions noted what theme parks are and why they are needed in Uzbekistan. In the Bukhara region, it is planned to organize safaris, camel riding, fishing, hunting, pilgrimage and beach holidays. Also, it is planned to develop aeronautics. By the end of the year, 15 balloons will be launched in the cities of Uzbekistan. It is planned to organize spectacular thematic festivals with the involvement of international balloonists. Previously, the first launch of a balloon with tourists on board successfully took place in Bukhara. Annually, the Forum of Investors will be held in the tourist industry of Uzbekistan with the involvement of a wide range of investors, including foreign ones.

The State Committee for Tourism Development and the Spanish company Innova Taxfree have decided on the joint preparation of a strategy for the development of shopping tourism in the country. Duty-free shops will be opened in the tourist cities of Uzbekistan. The President pointed out the need for the production of souvenirs and their sale in special kiosks, the opening of duty-free and tax-free shops operating in airports, as well as the organization of car rental centers and wi-fi zones with the involvement of business entities (Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Republic of Uzbekistan, 2016).

In every major city, there will be a shopping street. On the city streets, stores will be placed, as well as supermarkets, shopping centers, and complexes. It is planned to create pedestrian areas with souvenir shops, cafeterias, restaurants, teahouses, shops, handicrafts, and other entertainment places in all major cities. Moreover, platforms for trading goods of domestic manufacturers with seasonal discounts and application of discount systems will be created in such cities.

Establishing a concept for the development of medical tourism with appropriate mechanisms of legal regulation is particularly important. It is planned to create modern medical complexes to simplify the entry and exit of foreign citizens with organizational and consultative support during their stay in Uzbekistan.

The Samarkand region will develop “*ziyarat* tourism.” Projects are being prepared for tourists from Turkey, Malaysia, Indonesia, and Tatarstan, which include visiting places sacred to Muslims. In Samarkand, there will be a tourist zone on 20 hectares of land, where it is planned to build a number of new hotels and restaurants for tourists from Asia and Europe. Bukhara should become another center of countryside tourism. In the new city, there will be a tourist center with hotel complexes, a park zone with a lake, restaurants, and villas for VIP guests, an entertainment complex and a nightclub. The project is planned to be introduced in 2019. Furthermore, foreign tourists will be given free Uzbekistan Pass cards upon receiving entry visas to enter the country.

Promotion of the brand

There will be ambassadors of Uzbekistan tourism in foreign countries. These will be prominent representatives of political, cultural, sports, and business circles of foreign countries. Promoting the tourism brand of Uzbekistan and tourist sub-brands of the regions will also be conducted through the creation of a national PR-center in the sphere of tourism.

Exporters of domestic products will use the trademark “Welcome to Uzbekistan” on packages and technical passports, and manuals on the use of exported products with the indication of the portal “Uzbekistan.travel” and the

corresponding QR code.

3. Role of Japan in Reinforcing the Tourism Sphere in Uzbekistan

(1) The case of Japanese Tourism Development

Every year, tours to Japan are very popular with sophisticated travelers of Europe and demanding American tourists. In Japan, there are undoubted advantages: an extremely diverse, sometimes grandiose mountain landscape, an exceptionally rich cultural and historical heritage, and a highly developed tourist infrastructure. According to the statistics of the “Japanese Economy 2015-2016” published by the Cabinet in December 2015, the Japanese economy in 2015 saw a moderate recovery trend, compared to the previous year, which was facilitated by the employment and income situation. As in the previous year, Japan had many opportunities to share the country’s global attractiveness in 2017 (www.mlit.go.jp, 2018).

In June 2015, it was announced that the G7 summit would be held at Ise-Shima in 2016 on May 26 and 27. In July 2015, “The place of the Japanese Meiji Industrial Revolution: iron and steel, shipbuilding and coal mining in Japan” was listed as a UNESCO World Heritage List. The place of the Japanese industrial revolution in the Meiji era consists of 23 assets in eight prefectures (Iwate, Shizuoka, Yamaguchi, Fukuoka, Saga, Nagasaki, Kumamoto and Kagoshima). This is the first world heritage designation in Japan where there are facilities that are still partially functioning, for example, the Yawata iron and steel works. As of 2017, the transport infrastructure of Japan has steadily improved. The opening of the extended Shinkansen line to Kanazawa on March 14, 2015 in Hokuriku resulted in a significant reduction in travel time between Tokyo and Kanazawa from 3 hours 50 minutes to 2 hours 28 minutes. To meet the growing demand for LCC (low-cost carriers, which means low-cost transportation) at Narita International Airport, on April 8, 2015, a terminal was opened exclusively for LCCs. The Ken-O Expressway (Metropolitan City Expressway) entered service in part in the prefectures of Saitama and Chiba in March, June, and October of that year. The Higashi (Eastern) Expressway section of Kyushu between Saiki and Kamae was put into operation in March, directly linking the city of Kitakyushu, north Kyushu, with the city of Miyazaki in the south, through the city of Oita (www.mlit.go.jp, 2018). This reduced the travel time between Kitakyushu and Miyazaki.

Japan is positioning tourism as a main and promising branch of the economy. According to the Japanese National Tourism Organization, in 2017, about 28.7 million foreign visitors came to Japan (see Table 3). This is 19.6% more than in 2016, and a new record number for the fifth consecutive year. Of the 20 countries from which most tourists come, the largest number of visitors came during the holidays. This was announced by the Minister of Land, Infrastructure, Transport and Tourism, Keichi Ishii. For the first 9 months of 2017, almost 18% more foreigners arrived compared to a year earlier. The cost of foreign residents is 900 billion yen. The number of tourists from different countries has proportionally increased: for example, 24.03 million people (89.7%) came from Asia. Tourists from Asian countries (two-thirds of the stream) and the United States visit Japan for leisure, and Europeans visit for business purposes. Summer in Japan is humid and warm, so the best time to travel is the end of spring and the beginning of autumn. In 2017, foreign tourists in Japan spent 3.871 trillion yen, which is 73.5% more than a year earlier, and this amount has grown even more than the number of tourists. The government has revised its target to 40 million by 2020 and to 60 million by 2030 (JNTO, 2018).¹⁷

¹⁷ Information from JNTO, https://www.jnto.go.jp/jpn/statistics/data_info_listing/index.html (Accessed 3 June 2018).

Table 3 Some indicators of tourism development in Japan

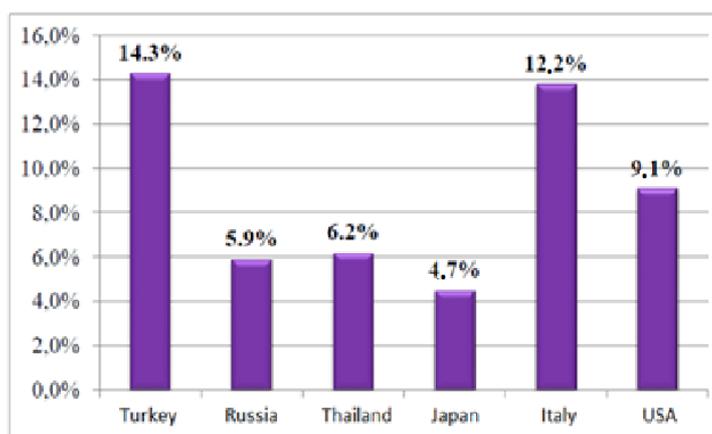
Year	Expenditure on tourism sector in Japan		Number of inbound tourists to Japan (million people)
	Value (million USD)	Trend (%)	
2017	-	-	28.69
2016	25.783	10.80%	24.03
2015	23.252	-19.13%	19.74
2014	28.608	-11.28%	13.41
2013	32.244	-21.29%	10.36
2012	40.967	3.04%	8.36
2011	39.760	1.16%	6.22
2010	39.306	12.99%	8.61
2009	34.787	-10.74%	6.79
2008	38.971	4.60%	8.35
2007	37.258	-1.05%	8.35
2006	37.655	-21.71%	7.33
2005	48.096	-0.16%	6.73
2004	48.175	31.97%	6.14

Source: Compiled by the authors from data made available by World Bank <http://data.worldbank.org/indicator/ST.INT.XPND.CD?locations=JP&start=2004>, and the Japan Tourism Agency

According to Table 3, tourism infrastructure spending in Japan in 2016 was USD 25 billion, in 2015 it was USD 23 billion, in 2014 it was USD 29 billion, which is USD 3.64 billion less than in 2013 (USD 32 billion). The rate of decline compared to 2013 was equal to 11.3%. During the period from 2006 to 2014, tourism spending in Japan fell by USD 9.05 billion to an average value of USD 38 billion.

The cost of tourism as a percentage of total imports is 2.9%. Employment in this industry is 4.3 million people (6.7% of the population). In 2017, the share of tourism in the country was 4.7% of GDP (see Figure 3).

Figure 3 Share of Tourism in Countries as a % of GDP, 2017



Source: Compiled by the authors based on the data from The Travel & Tourism Competitiveness Report (2017) of the World Economic Forum (WEF) (accessed 3 June 2018). <https://www.weforum.org/reports/the-travel-tourism-competitiveness-report-2017> (accessed 3 June 2018).

The cost of passenger transport was USD 9 billion, expenditure on travel goods was USD 19 billion, income from international tourism was USD 21 billion, income from international tourism as a percentage of total exports was 2.4%, receipts from passenger transport were USD 2 billion, and revenues from travel goods were USD 19 billion.¹⁸

¹⁸ Information from JNTO, http://www.jnto.go.jp/jpn/reference/tourism_data/visitor_trends/ (Accessed on 3 June 2018).

Figure 4 shows that revenues from the tourism sector in Japan were mostly obtained in April and October, at JPY 23.2 billion and JPY 23 billion respectively.

Figure 4 Japan tourism revenues, Mar 2017- Feb 2018 (JPN thousand)



Source: Compiled by the authors based on the data from Ministry of Land, Infrastructure, Transport and Tourism (2018), <https://tradingeconomics.com/japan/tourism-revenues> (Accessed 3 June 2018).

In these revenues, the main role is played by Tokyo, since a large number of tourists come to this region. The second in attractiveness and profitability is Osaka.¹⁹ This is all due to a development of the potential of regions, which are actively improved by the government.

The Japanese government has promoted programs such as the Visit Japan Campaign to revitalize tourism and increase the influx of foreign tourists (Honma & Hu, 2012). To justify its status of “Japanese quality” and improve the efficiency of tourism and hotel activities, initiatives are being proposed for prefectures that have been implemented to some extent, as well as awaiting implementation (White Paper on Tourism in Japan, 2016).

1. *Hokkaido*. About 70% of foreign visitors to Hokkaido remain in Sapporo or elsewhere in central Hokkaido. Various efforts have been made: Demonstration experiments using wi-fi routers installed in intercity buses to test connections to wi-fi networks to improve the comfort of tourists who spend long hours enroute from the central region to the eastern regions of Hokkaido, the creation of a website to provide tourist information covering a large territory, marketing and promotion of tourism, easy and reliable booking of rooms in hotels of different types from traditional to business hotels, preparation for the reception of foreign tourists and the dissemination of tourist information (www.mlit.go.jp, 2018).

2. *Tohoku*. In June 2015, the “Study Deeply the North of Japan” plan was approved, which was developed by the Tourism Development Organization in Tohoku to create an extensive survey route in the Tohoku region. Marketing efforts have been made in Taiwan, Hong Kong, China (Shanghai and Guangzhou), ASEAN (Association of Southeast Asian Nations) member countries, Europe, the United States and Australia to promote historical tours, culture and food in the Tohoku region, where landscapes are distinctly beautiful in each of the four seasons. The environment is characterized by natural splendor, and a special climate attracts many literary figures of exquisite taste (www.mlit.go.jp, 2018).

3. *Kanto*. Regional cooperation should be strengthened for tourism in Kanto because of the need to host an increasing number of international tourists in anticipation of the 2020 Olympic and Paralympic Games. In this regard, in April 2015, the Association for Promoting Regional Cooperation campaigns in the Kanto region was founded by tourism organizations, railway operators, travel agencies, retailers and local governments of eight prefectures in the Kanto region (www.mlit.go.jp, 2018).

4. *Hokuriku*. On March 14, 2015, the Hokuriku Shinkansen line was extended from Nagano to Kanazawa. Since the expansion, foreign visitors have gathered in the sightseeing areas along the Shinkansen line, as well as tourists from all over the country. In response to a sharp increase in the number of tourists, the main hotels in Kanazawa began to actively provide information on the availability of rooms, and the tourist information office at Kanazawa Station helps visitors to book hotels on the day of their stay. In Japan, a system of exemption from consumption tax for foreign guests was introduced (www.mlit.go.jp, 2018).

5. *Chubu*. The Association for the Promotion of the Shorudo Project aims at achieving by 2018 an annual target of six million guest nights of foreign guests. However, the Association decided to set an ambitious goal of 11 million guest nights by 2019. In order to popularize regional tourism with a focus on sake (rice wine), within which

¹⁹ Information from the website of Japan Tourism Statistics. <https://statistics.jnto.go.jp/en/graph/#category--6>; (Accessed 23 October 2018).

breweries of special brands are located, dishes with which paired sake were well served were offered. These dishes are shown in combination with various brands of sake on the Shorudo site (www.mlit.go.jp, 2018).

6. *Kinki*. “The Flower of Japan, Kansai” is the name of an extensive sightseeing route that covers five World Heritage sites and seven superb natural scenery objects in Kansai. This route was proposed to attract foreign visitors, who tend to concentrate in the so-called Golden Way, in the vicinity of Kansai. Efforts were made to ensure that 40% of foreign visitors to Japan visited Kansai, and this increased the total number of foreign visitors to Kansai to 8 million people and consumption of foreign tourists to JPY 1 trillion (www.mlit.go.jp, 2018).

7. *Chugoku*. On May 28, 2015, the Omotecho Shopping Center and the Romantic-dori shopping center in Okayama jointly installed a counter for tax exemption procedures at a department store in the city. These were the first shopping centers in Japan to introduce a system of collective exemption. A committee on increasing the attractiveness of shopping centers was organized for the following purposes: Increase the number of stores offering consumption tax refunds in these shopping centers and combine the efforts of these shopping centers in creating conditions in which foreign visitors can enjoy comfortable shopping (www.mlit.go.jp, 2018).

8. *Shikoku*. In June 2015, the “Spiritual Island Project: Shikoku HENRO”, developed by the Travel Agency Shikoku, was approved by the Minister of Land, Infrastructure, Transport and Tourism as one of the projects promoting the development of extensive survey routes. In this project, there is a sustainable culture (hospitality) that is unique to Shikoku Henro (the pilgrimage of Shikoku whose history dates back more than 1200 years) so that visitors can experience this spirit. In order to increase the number of repeat visitors, comprehensive strategies have been developed in Shikoku (www.mlit.go.jp, 2018).

9. *Kyushu*. In June 2015, the project for the creation of the “Extensive Route for the Inspection of the Island of Kisyu Onsen” was approved by the Minister of Land, Infrastructure, Transport and Tourism as one of the projects promoting the development of extensive inspection routes. In the first year of the project, marketing research was conducted to complete the compilation of route plans and identify typical routes. A contest for articles for the blog and a contest for hot springs were held for international volunteers. These competitions were a way to disclose the opinion of foreign people about the appeal of regional tours in Kyushu (www.mlit.go.jp, 2018).

10. *Okinawa*. As a result of the increase in the number of cruise ships and ports, the number of domestic and foreign visitors to Okinawa increased for the third year in a row and reached a record level. In 2014, South Korea moved Hong Kong to second place after Taiwan on the total annual number of visitors to Okinawa. Against this backdrop, efforts aimed at South Korea's air carriers and travel companies were aimed at attracting more visitors to Okinawa. The year 2015 marked the 50th anniversary of the restoration of diplomatic relations between South Korea and Japan. This year's event facilitated the expansion of tourism exchange between South Korea and Japan through tourism and deepening mutual understanding between the two countries (www.mlit.go.jp, 2018).

(2) Implementation of Japanese Practice in the National Economy

Uzbekistan and Japan have been cooperating and developing mutually beneficial relations since 1992, the year of establishing diplomatic relations. Based on the strategic partnership established in 2002, bilateral cooperation is expanding in all areas. As a result of official high-level visits—the President of the Republic of Uzbekistan I.A. Karimov to Japan in 2011 and the Prime Minister of Japan, Shinzo Abe to Uzbekistan in 2015—there have been joint documents, contracts and agreements on the implementation of investment projects for a total of more than USD 11.5 billion.²⁰ At the moment, cooperation in the educational, scientific, technical, telecommunication and energy spheres is also gaining momentum.

In the development of economic relations between Uzbekistan and Japan, the main task is to expand cooperation in the field of foreign trade, investment, and finance. The volume of foreign trade does not yet correspond to the available potential, but it should be noted that there is direct air communication between Uzbekistan and Japan twice a week. Of particular importance is the further development of cooperation in the energy sector and tourism. A project is underway to build a Japanese hotel in Uzbekistan.

Japan has a developed hotel sector, which presents various types of hotels for different classes and categories of tourists, which is an undoubted advantage of the tourist infrastructure. Japan's hotel sector is represented by various types of hotels: *hoteru*, *ryokan*, traditional Japanese hotels, *minshuku*, onsen hotels, business hotels, capsule-type hotels, dating hotels, luxury hotels, and youth hostels. The downside of Japanese hotels is considered to be their high cost, and pluses include national identity and atmosphere of Japanese hospitality.

Another positive side that attracts tourists to Japan is the cherry blossom. In the flowering season of cherry blossoms—a symbol of Japan—hundreds of thousands of tourists come to the country. The dates of the beginning of flowering in different parts of the country vary, so a pink “wave” is rolled across Japan, followed by tourists. In

²⁰ Information from the website of Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Republic of Uzbekistan, <http://mfa.uz/ru/press/news/2016/08/8103/>; (Accessed 3 June 2018).

the past, cherry trees blossom in Fukuoka and Tokyo, and lastly, the trees in Sapporo in the north of the country are covered with flowers. You can usually see lush cherry orchards in bloom from late March to early May. This year, one of the “control trees” in the territory of the Yasukuni temple in Tokyo, cast buds five days earlier than usual, Interfax reported, citing the Japanese media. To catch the “wave” of flowering, tourists are recommended to use a special card on the site of the Japanese National Tourist Organization.

In addition, the most popular sight among tourists is the Mount Fuji volcano, which has a conical ideal shape only for a short time as the snow disappears from its peaks, and the island of Matsushima with its magnificent pine forests. And also mountain skiing and snowboarding offer tourists active pastimes of more than 500 ski resorts in Japan, the best of which are located on the islands of Honshu and Hokkaido. On the territory of this beauty of the mountains, there are various excursions lasting a whole day. While in Uzbekistan in the mountains of Chimgan and Beldersay all year round there are various kinds of attractions, from skiing to riding on horseback. It is also possible to promote excursion trips, giving even more popularity among tourists.

One of the ways to improve the quality of hotel business is to obtain a qualified education in the sphere of tourism and hotel services. It seems that the first years of bachelor’s studies should be devoted to a practical acquaintance with the tourism and hospitality industry, which is done in Japanese universities. It is quite logical that students begin to study management and other disciplines of specialization only at senior courses when they already know the work of hotels or travel agencies from within. In the universities, in the first and second years, the main place in the curriculum is occupied by general educational subjects, and specialization and production practice begin only in the last two courses of study. One of the features of foreign hotel schools is the practice that students take for several months each academic year. Any successful trainee may, at the end of the practice, receive an offer to take up a certain position.

The practical use of the program proposed by K. Ishikawa²¹ is another direction for improving the studied industry. This program provides for a thorough study of the quality management system. Having understood this document, it is possible to apply it to the training of personnel, which undoubtedly will give its results already at the first stage of its application. Therefore, the importance of studying the Ishikawa program is very high.

The next possibility of applying the Japanese experience to Uzbekistan is that the Japanese government considers the potential of its prefectures and provides solutions for their improvement. Uzbekistan would have an advantage in doing something like that. Trends in world economic development are in constant change; therefore, Uzbekistan needs a continuous study of the situation on the world market of services and the desires of consumers of the hotel industry. And the best experience, accumulated abroad, undoubtedly, it is necessary to apply in the development of hotel business in the Republic of Uzbekistan.

A new priority direction in the development of economic cooperation between Uzbekistan and Japan is the sphere of innovation. Following the visit of Prime Minister Shinzo Abe to Uzbekistan in 2015, a lot of work was done to create the Japanese-Uzbek Youth Innovation Center with the participation of universities in both countries. This center opens unique opportunities for the development of mutually beneficial relations between the two nations, taking into account the availability of rich resources of Uzbekistan and high technologies and innovative ideas of Japan. The possibility of applying the Japanese experience of development of this sector for Uzbekistan lies in the fact that the Japanese government considers the potential of its prefectures and provides solutions for their improvement. Uzbekistan would have advantages in doing something like that.

Comparing the experience of development of the tourist infrastructure of Japan, certain transformations should be made in the Republic of Uzbekistan for the development of tourism infrastructure in the international and domestic tourist markets which assume:

- Attracting investments and innovative technologies to the hotel sector for the development of its infrastructure and improving the quality of construction of buildings and structures related to and servicing segments of this infrastructure;
- Improvements in the quality of transport infrastructure, the construction of an interconnected land transportation system in the country, similar to the Keisei and Japan Railways train system among Japan’s prefectures;

²¹ The aim is to promote quality management with the participation of all links, training in quality management methods should be organized among all the company's employees - from the president to the worker on the assembly line. Quality management provides for the restructuring of the management of the entire company, which requires a change in the thinking of all employees of the enterprise. To solve this problem, the learning process must be continuous. In Japan, detailed training programs have been developed for each service level, including the president of the company, members of the management board, managing directors, department heads and participants, engineers, craftsmen, promoters of quality circles, leaders and members of the quality circles and production workers; Special courses for employees of sales and logistics departments have also been established.

- Strengthening the operation of segments of the tourism infrastructure in the Internet space, including the placement of information through search marketing, banners on specialized websites, mobile advertising, and the creation of a specialized online platform that reflects all tourist offers in Uzbekistan and provides online booking functions;
- The opening of information centers in the republic, providing free tourist information, the possibility of booking, the acquisition of souvenirs, books, and maps, especially at airports and railway stations;
- Encouraging the participation of tourism organizations in the promotion of their tourism products on the international market, including through the partial subsidization of participation in international tourism exhibitions;
- Holding major international conferences, symposia, congresses, and other events on the basis of bilateral and multilateral international cooperation, as well as cooperation with major intergovernmental organizations;
- Creation of an integrated nationwide multi-level system of continuous professional tourism education (training, retraining, advanced training) that meets international requirements;
- Ensuring the interaction of educational institutions and tourism entities by increasing the number of communication platforms in the form of conferences, educational events and seminars;
- Promotion of best practices of public-private partnership in the system of higher and secondary specialized vocational education for the possibility of investment by private companies in future labor resources and monitoring the learning process in accordance with the needs of the tourist market;
- Development of mandatory qualification requirements/standards for tourism industry employees who directly provide tourist services (guides, instructors, workers of tourist duration entities, public catering establishments, transport, etc.) in the field of inbound and domestic tourism.
- The implementation of these measures will contribute to the strengthening of the modern highly efficient and competitive tourist complex, the expansion of opportunities to meet the needs of tourists due to the high quality and diversity of the tourism product line of the regions of Uzbekistan and the intensification of its promotion to foreign consumer markets.

(3) Cooperation Projects between Japan and Uzbekistan

Uzbekistan considers Japan as one of the key and reliable partners in the field of joint development of tourism. Our mutual cooperation is confirmed by many striking examples. As shown in Table 4, in 2017, 3,992 Japanese people with tourism purposes came to Uzbekistan. That year became the peak within five years. Compared to 2013, the number of travelers from Japan with general purposes increased by 46% in 2017. This means that further partnership between Japan and Uzbekistan is actively developing and progressing. Moreover, this table shows that each year people from Uzbekistan are visiting Japan more and more. The peak flow of visitors was in 2017, at 2,856, out of which 660 came with tourism purpose.

Table 4 Japan–Uzbekistan: Cross-country Number of Tourists in 2013-2017

Years	Citizens of Japan visiting Uzbekistan		Citizens of Uzbekistan visiting Japan	
	General	Tourism purpose	General	Tourism purpose
2013	2194	2131	1445	328
2014	2423	2340	1439	281
2015	2306	2225	1859	332
2016	3012	2918	2075	340
2017	4086	3992	2856	660

Source: Compiled by the authors based on the materials of State Committee of Uzbekistan for Tourism Development.

A Japanese delegation of 93 people led by APA Group Chairman Toshio Motoya visited Uzbekistan on May 26-29 of this year to discuss promising areas of partnership in the field of tourism (Samarkand Regional Government, 2018). The delegation included businessmen and representatives of APA Hotels. APA Group was founded in April 1971 and is engaged in town planning, as well as the management of hotels, restaurants and other facilities in the leisure industry. The APA Group owns 449 hotels with a total room stock of 75,370 rooms. The staff of the State Committee for Tourism of the Republic of Uzbekistan and representatives of the Uzbek Embassy in Japan participated in the organization of the visit. The delegation was received by the Chairman of the State Committee

of Tourism of Uzbekistan, Aziz Abdulkhakimov. At the meeting, there was a presentation of the tourist potential of the republic, acquaintance with the infrastructure, as well as discussion of cooperation issues, attracting investments to Uzbekistan and construction of hotels. The parties agreed on the assistance of the APA Group in promoting the tourism potential of Uzbekistan and issuing a number of publications in the pages of their own magazine, the circulation of which exceeds 80,000 copies and is distributed in the hotels of the APA Group.²² Another delegation with magazine publishers is coming in the middle of June 2018.

Annually, the two countries hold business forums, meeting, and expositions to show the potential in the tourism sector. One of these events took place in Japan, where the Embassy of the Republic of Uzbekistan in Tokyo took part in the 13th Tourism Exhibition and Forum “Activation of Tourism in Japan” in Kochi Prefecture (Shikoku region), which took place on February 13-14, 2018. Another conference held in Tokyo in March 2018, where the Chairman Aziz Abdulkhakimov visited, was also devoted to the issues of tourism. The events was organized by the All Nippon Travel Agents Association (ANTA) with the support of the Ministry of Land, Infrastructure, Transport and Tourism, the Ministry of Economy, Trade and Industry of Japan, the Japan National Tourism Organization, the Japan Travel Agents Association, the Japan Chamber of Commerce and Industry and the Kochi Prefecture. About 200 tourist companies and organizations were represented at the exhibition and forum, the event was visited by more than 10,000 people. Participants of the forum got acquainted with tourist opportunities, sights, and national traditions of Uzbekistan. The great interest of visitors was caused by the materials devoted to the rich history and original culture of Uzbekistan, architectural monuments of Termez, Karakalpakstan, Samarkand, Bukhara, Khiva, and Tashkent, which were important points on the ancient Great Silk Road. Moreover, on September 20-23, 2018 Tokyo welcomed a delegation from Uzbekistan for an exhibition of tourism potential and ways to enhance it.

On December 27, 2017, there was the meeting of the Chairman of the State Committee of the Republic of Uzbekistan for Tourism Development, A. Abdulkhakimov, with the Ambassador of Japan to the Republic of Uzbekistan, N. Ito. The purpose of the meeting was to discuss the prospects for the development of bilateral cooperation in tourism. The parties also discussed the issue of developing a “road map” to attract tourists from Japan to Uzbekistan. In particular, it was noted that three Japanese experts in the field of tourism, staying in the Republic of Uzbekistan through the Japan International Cooperation Agency (JICA), are actively involved in the development of this document.²³

Another important vector of mutually beneficial cooperation will be the involvement of leading Japanese media to promote the tourism potential of the republic among the Japanese public through television. Hence, in order to prepare video materials about tourism in Uzbekistan, an agreement was reached on organizing study tours for a number of Japanese media: TBS, Fuji TV, Nippon Television Network Corp., NHK, Asahi TV, and TV Tokyo. In addition, in 2018, together with the Japanese company Loaded films Inc., under the direction of film director K. Kurosawa, a full-length film about Uzbekistan will be shot. It is going to be widely shown in 2019. Following the meeting, the parties agreed to make the necessary efforts to further deepen bilateral cooperation in the field of tourism, as well as to regularly hold consultations on various topical issues of partnership in the field of tourism.²⁴

During the stay of the delegation of the State Committee for Tourism in Japan to participate in the work of the global tourism forum and the presentation of the national stand of Uzbekistan at the exhibition “JATA EXPO-2017”, the Chairman of the State Tourism, A. Abdulkhakimov, spoke with the director of the Japanese promotion company “Foresight Marketing”, Mr. S. Noto. The meeting was held in the format of a constructive dialogue. The parties reaffirmed that increasing the popularity of Uzbekistan among the Japanese people is an important area for increasing the number of reciprocal tourist traffic between the two countries. In this context, the sides discussed practical aspects of cooperation on the promotion of the tourist potential of Uzbekistan in the Japanese market. Mr. Noto suggested considering the possibility of concluding a contract for three years to promote the Uzbek tourism potential. In turn, the Uzbek side became interested in the forecasts of this cooperation with the company “Foresight Marketing” in digital terms. The agenda raised the issue of concrete proposals of the company, taking into account the planned growth of the flow of tourists from Japan to Uzbekistan. For his part, Mr. Noto proposed stable cooperation, which over the next three years will increase the flow of tourists from Japan to Uzbekistan by half, without taking into account the ongoing charter flights between the parties.²⁵

²² Information from the website of State Committee of the Republic of Uzbekistan for Tourism Development, <https://uzbektourism.uz/ru/novosti-turizma-uzbekistana/goskomturizma-respubliki-uzbekistan-prinyal-predsedatelya-apa-group-iz-yaponii>; (Accessed 3 June 2018).

²³ <https://www.uzbektourism.uz/ru/novosti-turizma-uzbekistana/sostoyalas-vstrecha-predsedatelya-goskomturizma-uzbekistana-s-poslom-yaponii-v-uzbekistane>; (Accessed 3 June 2018).

²⁴ Ibid.

²⁵ Information from the website of State Committee of the Republic of Uzbekistan for Tourism Development, <https://uzbektourism.uz/ru/vstrechi-i-intervyu/yaponskaya-kompaniya-foresight-marketing-predlagaet-promoutorskie-uslugi>;

In April 2018, there were direct flights opened for tourists from Japan. This project was implied by the State Committee of the Republic of Uzbekistan for Tourism Development, the Embassy of Japan in Uzbekistan and the Samarkand regional *hokimiyat* together with the Japan International Tourist Association. Over the past year, Japanese citizens traveled to Uzbekistan through ten charter flights, this year the number of such flights is planned to be increased to 15. It is planned that about 3,000 Japanese tourists will arrive in Uzbekistan by charter flights. During the week, tourists will visit Samarkand, Bukhara, Khiva, and Tashkent, and get acquainted with their historical and cultural monuments, national traditions and values. This year, special attention is paid to the development of tourist routes and programs based on the wishes and interests of the guests. "Within the framework of the upcoming evening program for Japanese tourists, an exhibition of products of local craftsmen, national costumes, performances of folklore groups, as well as 3D shows will be organized on Registan Square" (Uzbekistan National News Agency, 2018). Additionally, it is planned that 1,500 Japanese tourists will visit Uzbekistan in December this year.

4. Conclusion

This study describes the important role that tourism plays in the sustainable development of the economy of the two countries. The service industry plays a big role in the economy of Uzbekistan. It is no accident that in recent years, serious changes have been paid to the development of this segment in the process of structural transformation and diversification of the Uzbek economy. As a result, all its directions are developing at an accelerated pace, and especially tourism, which is an important factor in providing employment for the population, raising incomes and improving people's quality of life. The policy of the President of the Republic of Uzbekistan, Shavkat Mirziyoyev, is aimed at Uzbekistan's openness and the formation of a new image of Uzbekistan, and a tremendous work has been done in this direction for two years of his presidency.

The main goal of the state policy of tourism development in the Republic of Uzbekistan for the period 2017-2021 is the creation of a modern highly efficient and competitive tourist complex that provides ample opportunities to meet the needs of citizens of Uzbekistan and foreign visitors in a variety of tourist services and its integration into the global tourist community.

Uzbekistan has a huge tourist potential due to its geographical location and natural and climatic conditions. Today, according to the number of historical sites, Uzbekistan firmly occupies a place in the top ten of the world's countries. There are more than seven thousand monuments of architecture and art in the territory of the republic, which are taken under state protection. The cities of Samarkand, Bukhara, Khiva, and Shakhrisabz are included in the UNESCO World Heritage List. Known in the world as an "eternal city," Samarkand is recognized as one of 50 cities on the planet, which must be visited at least once in a lifetime.

The most important role in the further development of tourism and hotel business is the benchmarking of proven experiences of developed countries. Thanks to this, today the tourist industry and hotel industry are developing at a fast pace. This, in turn, opens up broad prospects for recovery in such related sectors as the food industry, agriculture, transport, and services.

The Japanese tourism industry is one of the most developed in the world. Japan together with other powers largely determines the new trends in the development of the tourism services market, takes part in the creation of global alliances and strategic alliances in various areas of the tourism industry, in the air travel market, as well as in the online travel product reservation system.

Japan and Uzbekistan are cooperating in many areas such as politics, economics, and social sector. Tourism in the Republic of Uzbekistan, as in Japan, is seen as a priority sector in the structure of the national economy and one of the main factors of regional development. At present, the leadership of the country pays much attention to the development of the tourism industry in the Republic of Uzbekistan.

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