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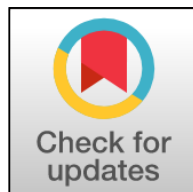
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Mitigating Seasonality in Uzbekistan's Tourism Sector: Impacts and Countermeasures

Mitigasi Musim di Sektor Pariwisata Uzbekistan: Dampak dan Penanggulangan

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Abstract

This research undertakes a comprehensive examination of seasonality in Uzbekistan's tourism services market, with the ultimate goal of devising strategies to mitigate its adverse effects. Utilizing methods such as logical reasoning, deductive analysis, and statistical as well as economic analyses, the study explores various factors influencing seasonality in tourism. These factors include natural-climatic conditions, economic solvency, social timing, demographic demand, psychological elements, logistics development, and service quality. The analysis categorizes these variables into primary (natural-climatic) and secondary (all remaining) influences. Our results indicate that 94.9% of foreign tourists to Uzbekistan in the first quarter of 2022 were from CIS countries, reflecting a marked decrease in tourist arrivals, particularly from non-CIS countries, attributable to pandemic-induced flight restrictions and quarantine measures. This downturn underscores the urgency for strategic interventions to minimize seasonality's negative impact on Uzbekistan's tourism economy, thereby improving the country's tourism sector's resilience against external shocks.

Highlights:

- Seasonality in tourism is driven by diverse factors, both primary and secondary.
- Pandemic-led measures triggered an 80.3% plunge in Uzbekistan's foreign tourist arrivals in Q1 2021.
- Strategic actions to minimize seasonality's impact can boost the resilience of Uzbekistan's tourism sector.

Keywords: Seasonality, Uzbekistan, Tourism Sector, Mitigation Strategies, Pandemic Impact.

Introduction

A general trend and at the same time a serious problem of international tourism is seasonality, which is characterized by a sharp increase in the flow of tourists in the summer and a decrease in the winter and especially in the autumn-spring months. Seasonality in international tourism is influenced by both climate and social factors [1].

The influence of *climate factors* is explained by the fact that favorable weather conditions for recreation and tourism in most regions of the world are not the same throughout the months, so people tend to take vacations at the most favorable time of the year [2].

Some social factors are also important. In particular, in various firms, institutions, organizations, and in particular, in industrial enterprises, for a long time, a certain work procedure has been developed that ensures that most of the workers and employees go on vacation in the summer [3].

"Season" for a specific tourist area is defined as the period when the monthly number of incoming tourists exceeds their average monthly number throughout the year [4].

The negative consequences of seasonal uneven demand require the study of this phenomenon and organizational, economic and social measures to mitigate seasonal peaks and troughs in tourism. Alleviation of seasonality in tourism has a great economic effect, it allows to extend the life of the material and technical base, to increase the level of utilization of human resources throughout the year, and to increase tourism income.

Methods

The methods of logical approach, deductive analysis, statistical and economic analyzes were used in the study of seasonality problems in the tourism services market of Uzbekistan in the innovative development of the economy. Also, seasonal factors in the development of the tourism sector and the analysis of the flow of tourists in the season and off-season are considered.

Results

Factors determine seasonality in tourism

The multifaceted aspect of seasonality in the tourism sector is primarily determined by various interconnected factors. One of these is the quantity and quality of unique advantages tailored for the development of different kinds of tourism driven by natural and climatic conditions, including sports, wellness, and educational tourism. A second significant aspect is the economic influence represented by the composition of consumed goods and services, which contributes to the formation of demand solvency through supply dynamics. Lastly, the availability of free time, which is a social factor, also has an evident influence on the seasonality of tourism. Demographics play a crucial role as well. The demand is often differentiated by the gender and age structure, alongside other demographic characteristics. This includes the specific tourism preferences of different demographic groups and the seasons in which they prefer to travel [3].

Furthermore, psychological factors such as traditions, prevailing fashion trends, and the tendency to imitate popular tourism activities can significantly impact tourism seasonality. The development of logistics, including accommodation, food and beverage services, transport, and the broader network of cultural and leisure services, also shapes the seasonal trends in the tourism industry. Lastly, the technological factor, which signifies the comprehensive approach to providing quality services, significantly influences the seasonality in tourism [5].

The ability to offer state-of-the-art, user-friendly, and value-adding services can attract tourists regardless of the season. These seasonal fluctuation factors can be classified into primary and secondary categories. The primary factors are those formed under the influence of natural and climatic conditions, whereas the remaining factors can be classified as secondary.

In the specific case of the Republic of Uzbekistan, data from the first quarter of 2022 show that 94.9% of foreign visitors were tourists from CIS countries, while the remaining 5.1% were from other foreign countries. The global pandemic and the resultant quarantine measures, coupled with bans on international flights, led to a significant decrease in tourist arrivals until spring 2021. A comparative analysis of the first quarter of 2021 with the same period in 2020 shows a sharp decline of 975.1 thousand people, equivalent to a reduction of 80.3%. This substantial decrease underscores the profound impact of global events on tourism seasonality, reinforcing the need for strategic planning and resilience in the tourism sector.

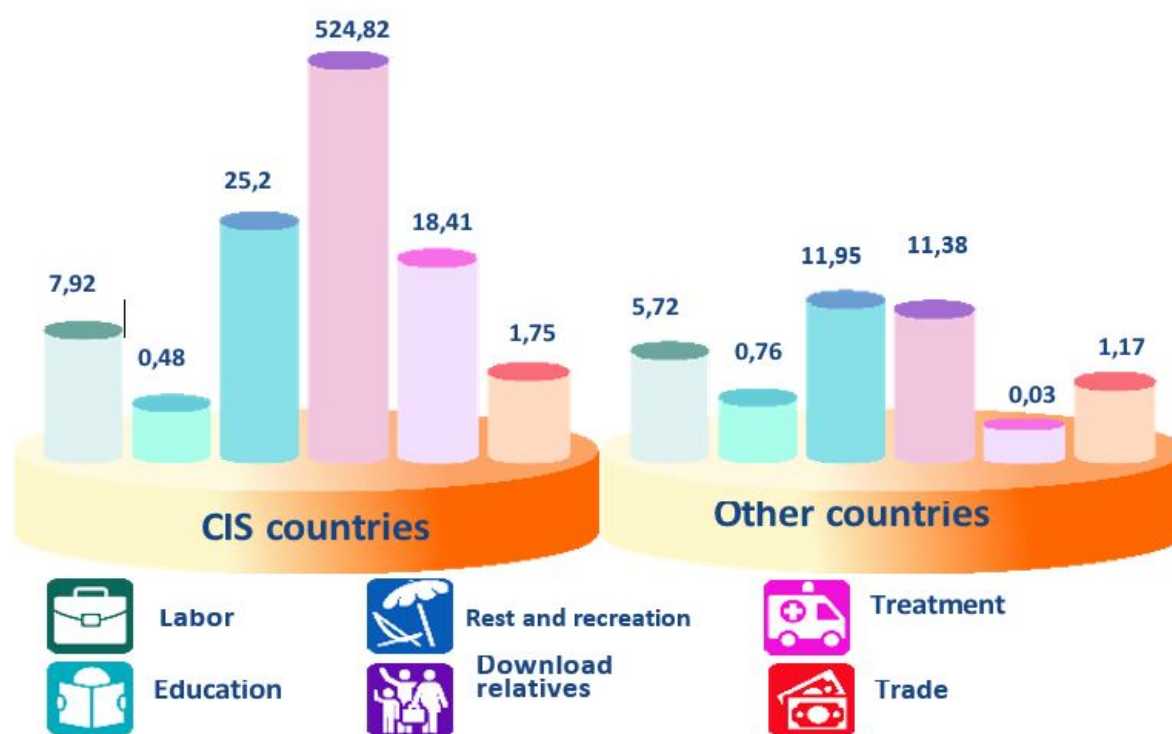


Figure 1. The goal of visits in the first quarter of 2022

Purpose of visits

Based on the figure 1, it is known that the main purposes of the visit of the citizens of the CIS countries who visited Uzbekistan are visiting relatives (90.7%), rest and recreation (4.4%), treatment (3.2%).

More than the total number of trips with the purpose of visiting relatives were from the Kyrgyz Republic - 211.55 thousand people (39.5%), from Tajikistan - 178.75 thousand people (33.3%) and from Kazakhstan - 88, 78 thousand people (16.6%).

For recreation and leisure, they came mainly from Russia - 10.35 thousand people, which accounted for 27.9% of the number of trips for the purpose of recreation, from Kazakhstan - 6.85 thousand people (18.4%) and from Turkey - 4, 16 thousand people (11.2%).

The climate of Uzbekistan is sharply continental, but it should be noted that it has its own characteristics for each region. Of course, this is related to the geographical location of the country. About 80% of the territory is occupied by steppes and deserts, and the remaining 20% by foothills and mountain ranges. The mountains located in the east and southeast prevent the entry of wet masses from the southwest. The deserts of Kyzylkum, Orolqum and Ustyurt plateaus have the greatest influence on the emergence of hot air masses and drying of the air. Precipitation in Uzbekistan falls mainly in the cold season, and, as a rule, most of it falls on mountainous areas.

Discussion

Seasonal fluctuations in the number of tourists are observed in our country. Consequently, there is a real opportunity to influence the seasonality of demand in tourism. The seasonality of tourism leads to the seasonal nature of employment of workers in the tourism industry. And of course this has its pros and cons. For this purpose, tourism organizations and enterprises carry out seasonal fluctuations of prices (increased prices in the high season, average prices in the off-season and lower prices in the "off-season"). Depending on the season, the difference in hotel rates can reach 50% [6].

There is a certain pattern of seasonality in modern tourism based on long-term observations. Its essence is as follows: the farther a certain country is from the main tourist centers of Europe and North America, the less seasonality is manifested there. This can be explained, first of all, by the relative stability of natural and recreational conditions, as well as by the relatively low level of tourism development in the countries of the

southern hemisphere.

The seasonal nature of consumer preferences plays a major role in choosing a vacation spot. In countries with less annual fluctuations in temperature and other climate elements, the seasonality of tourism is less noticeable (for example, **Morocco** has a tourist season throughout the year) [7]. **Turkey's** Mediterranean resorts are also booming, with a long tourist season. In addition, the developing policy of Turkey favors tourists, as a result of which it is possible to combine high-quality and cheap holidays [8]. As for **Egypt**, the peak of tourist activity here occurs in winter and spring, because the temperature in summer and autumn is much higher than +40. However, beach vacations, which are the country's main tourist attraction, are available year-round. **Finland** is one of the few countries in Europe where there is no seasonality in tourism. Of the Southern Hemisphere countries, only the **Commonwealth of Australia** has significant seasonality [9]. A third of all foreign tourists visiting the country in October-December come here. It is during this period that the decline of the tourism system is observed in the countries of the northern hemisphere, which is the most favorable for recreation in terms of the complex of natural and recreational conditions.

Thus, the degree of seasonality is not the same in all countries, and in some countries it is almost non-existent. In countries with small annual fluctuations of climate elements, the seasonality of tourism is less pronounced or absent at all. In countries with significant natural and climatic differences in seasons, summer remains the main tourist season.

Studying seasonality allows exposure to uneven demand in tourism. Currently, there is a tendency to reduce the seasonal imbalance in tourism services due to the increase in supply compared to demand in the tourism market of economically developed countries [10].

In order to attract tourists in the off-season or winter season, a number of promotional activities are carried out by state organizations and tourism companies. In order to increase the tourist season and then mitigate seasonality, many countries promote off-season tourist routes through advertising and set discounts for this period. Tourism advertising shows the benefits of a winter vacation in mountain areas and opens up opportunities for winter sports, promoting various festivals and exhibitions held in the autumn, winter and spring months. Off-season tourists are offered discounts in the form of tickets and tourist services [11]. The tourism experience of Yugoslavia, Italy, Switzerland, Austria, France and other countries shows that the development of tourism in the off-season is not only possible, but also very profitable. Taking into account that the off-season does not play an important role for the development of marine tourism, the tourist organizations of Italy, France and Russia have increased the number of cruises during this period.

Recently, there has been a rapid increase in the rate of winter vacations and the number of winter vacationers. *According to UN data, every seven years the number of winter vacationers doubles.* At the same time, the mining industry and resorts play an important role, which significantly expands the possibility of spending a vacation in winter [12].

In order to reduce seasonal fluctuations based on natural-climatic and social factors in Uzbekistan, it is recommended to consider the following.

Including providing new types of services at low prices, increasing preferential trips, providing a certain amount of discounts and bonuses for purchases.

First of all, the development of congress and event tourism, as well as social tourism for target groups: tourism for pensioners and educational tourism for young people, special tourism services for people with physical disabilities. It is important to attract poor people to tourism by encouraging social tourism. This concept is widely used mainly in Switzerland and France.

The target audience of event tourism is affluent tourists with above average income, as well as companies consisting of several couples. There are several thematic types in event tourism (national and international holidays, festivals and demonstrations, sports events, auctions).

The study of seasonality in tourism makes it possible to determine the degree of influence of natural and climatic conditions on the formation of the flow of tourists, determine the duration of the tourist season, and determine the factors that determine seasonality in tourism. Using this information, it is possible to develop a set of measures to reduce seasonal imbalance in tourist services, determine the economic consequences of seasonality at the level of the region and tourism company. It is very important to take into account the time factor when planning promotional activities, because it is better to start them several months before the "high" season.

Conclusion

The analysis of seasonality in tourism reveals a growing tendency to balance seasonal disparities in economically developed nations' tourism markets due to a supply increase surpassing demand. Promotion of off-season tourism, as exemplified by countries like Yugoslavia, Italy, Switzerland, Austria, and France, through advertising, discounts,

and unique experiences, emerges as an effective strategy to extend the tourist season, reduce seasonality, and boost profits. There has been a significant rise in winter vacations, doubling every seven years as per UN data, with mining industries and resorts expanding winter leisure possibilities.

For Uzbekistan, reducing seasonality requires exploring new, affordable services, preferential travel offers, discounts, and development of target group-oriented tourism such as congress, event, and social tourism. Event tourism targets affluent tourists, featuring national and international holidays, festivals, sports events, and auctions. Studying seasonality helps identify the impact of natural and climatic conditions on tourist influx, duration of tourist seasons, and determinants of tourism seasonality. This knowledge allows development of interventions to lessen seasonal imbalances, determine economic consequences at regional and company levels, and facilitate timely promotional activity planning. Future research can explore the practical implementation and impacts of these strategies on tourism in Uzbekistan, offering implications for a resilient, economically prosperous sector.

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