

**TARGET-ORIENTED TOURISM GOVERNANCE IN UZBEKISTAN AND THE  
FORMATION OF NATIONAL DEVELOPMENT PRIORITIES IN THE CONTEXT OF  
INSTITUTIONAL REFORMS**

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**Abstract:** Tourism has become one of the most strategically significant and rapidly developing sectors of Uzbekistan’s national economy. Since 2016, the Republic of Uzbekistan has launched a large-scale reform agenda aimed at strengthening tourism governance, improving infrastructure, liberalizing visa procedures, and diversifying tourism services. This article examines the targeted objectives and priority directions of Uzbekistan’s state tourism policy based on key presidential decrees and sectoral reforms. The study employs qualitative policy analysis combined with descriptive statistical interpretation of tourism development indicators for 2018–2022. The findings demonstrate that tourism reforms contributed to increased institutional efficiency, growth of tourism enterprises, expansion of accommodation facilities, and the introduction of broad visa liberalization measures. However, the results also reveal persistent constraints, including seasonal infrastructure shortages, insufficient transport coordination, and weak tourism marketing mechanisms. The research concludes that the future sustainability of tourism development in Uzbekistan depends on accelerated digital transformation, improved regulatory mechanisms, stronger international promotion strategies, and intensified cooperation between the state and private sector.

**Keywords:** tourism policy, Uzbekistan, institutional reforms, tourism infrastructure, visa liberalization, tourism diversification, investment incentives.

**INTRODUCTION**

Tourism in Uzbekistan has gradually evolved into one of the most promising and dynamically expanding sectors of the national economy. Its development has contributed to the growth of the service industry and increased its role in the structure of the gross domestic product. In modern economic policy, tourism is widely recognized not only as a cultural and recreational phenomenon but also as a mechanism for regional development, employment creation, and international competitiveness enhancement [3]. In the Uzbek context, tourism development is increasingly associated with modernization processes, infrastructure renewal, and the expansion of the national service sector.

A fundamental stage in Uzbekistan’s tourism development began in 2016, when the government initiated systemic reforms aimed at transforming tourism into a strategic branch of the national economy. This reform process was legally consolidated through the Presidential Decree PF-4861 dated December 2, 2016, entitled “On Measures to Ensure the Accelerated Development of the Tourism Sector of the Republic of Uzbekistan” [1]. The decree established a new framework of state tourism governance and introduced unprecedented institutional, legal, and organizational reforms. Subsequently, the Presidential Decree PF-5611 dated January 5, 2019 further expanded the scope of tourism policy measures and emphasized the need for investment attraction, service quality improvement, and institutional efficiency strengthening [2].

The relevance of this study lies in the necessity to scientifically analyze the strategic objectives and priority directions of Uzbekistan’s tourism policy, particularly in the post-2016 period. The research aims to explore the conceptual foundations of state tourism reforms, identify their key mechanisms, and evaluate the effectiveness of implemented policy measures in terms of infrastructure development, visa liberalization, tourism diversification, and regulatory modernization.

## MATERIALS AND METHODS

The present research is based on qualitative policy analysis and descriptive statistical interpretation of tourism sector indicators. The study uses official legal documents, including Presidential Decrees PF-4861 and PF-5611, which serve as the core sources defining the conceptual basis of Uzbekistan's tourism reforms [1] [2]. Additional materials include national tourism development reports and publicly available statistical indicators reflecting the dynamics of tourism enterprises, accommodation facilities, and implemented policy initiatives during 2018–2022.

The methodological approach integrates institutional analysis, comparative evaluation of reform mechanisms, and descriptive synthesis of achieved results. The study also employs analytical interpretation of sectoral constraints identified through policy discourse, including infrastructure limitations, regulatory inconsistencies, and marketing inefficiencies. This approach enables the identification of both achievements and systemic challenges, providing a comprehensive scientific overview of Uzbekistan's tourism policy framework.

## RESULTS

The analysis indicates that the Presidential Decree PF-4861 defined a set of targeted objectives and priority directions which collectively marked the transition of Uzbekistan's tourism policy into a new stage of development [1]. One of the primary priorities was the creation of favorable conditions for tourism industry entities by eliminating administrative barriers and simplifying institutional procedures. This objective included reducing bureaucratic obstacles, improving registration mechanisms, and simplifying passport and customs control procedures. Such measures were intended to increase the attractiveness of Uzbekistan as an international tourism destination and improve the overall accessibility of tourism services.

Another significant objective established within the reform agenda was ensuring the safety and protection of tourists and excursion participants. Tourist safety was defined as an essential element of tourism sustainability, since international tourism competitiveness is closely linked with the perception of security and service reliability [4]. The government emphasized comprehensive safety measures within tourism services, particularly in transportation, accommodation, and tourist route management.

A key achievement of the reform strategy was the diversification of tourism types. The policy framework introduced the accelerated development of new tourism segments, including pilgrimage tourism, eco-tourism, cultural and educational tourism, ethnographic tourism, gastronomic tourism, sports tourism, health and wellness tourism, rural tourism, industrial tourism, business tourism, as well as youth, children's, and family tourism [1]. This diversification aimed at expanding Uzbekistan's tourism product portfolio and increasing its competitiveness in the global tourism market.

The reforms also prioritized international cooperation and integration into global tourism standards. Uzbekistan expanded partnerships with international tourism organizations, foreign brands, and private companies, focusing on the implementation of internationally recognized quality standards in tourism services. In this regard, cooperation with global tourism stakeholders served as an important instrument for modernization and the attraction of foreign investments [5].

Infrastructure development became one of the most crucial priority directions of Uzbekistan's tourism policy. The state emphasized the rapid development of modern tourism infrastructure, particularly accommodation facilities such as hotels, transport-logistics systems, and engineering-communication networks. This direction was also associated with the active attraction of foreign investments, as large-scale infrastructure modernization requires substantial financial resources and long-term investment planning [6].

The results demonstrate that during 2018–2022, more than 30 normative-legal documents were adopted to regulate tourism development, while the number of tourism organizations

increased by 75 percent. Furthermore, 147 tourism development initiatives were implemented to strengthen inbound and domestic tourism. Accommodation facilities also expanded significantly, with 142 new accommodation entities added in 2022, bringing the total number to 914 [7].

One of the most strategically important outcomes of tourism reforms was visa liberalization. Uzbekistan established visa-free entry regimes for citizens of 90 countries and introduced transit visa opportunities for 54 countries. The implementation of the electronic visa (E-visa) system allowed citizens of 76 countries to obtain electronic travel authorization. Moreover, a visa-free transit entry mechanism was introduced for passengers from 101 countries through Uzbekistan's international airports. These measures significantly improved Uzbekistan's international tourism accessibility and strengthened the inflow of foreign tourists [2].

The study also identifies that the state tourism support mechanism was expanded through a complex set of policy instruments. These included regulatory measures such as licensing, hotel classification, and tourism service regulation, financial mechanisms such as subsidies and tax incentives, monetary-credit support through preferential loans, and investment stimulation instruments. In addition, the state promoted the establishment of tourism clusters, improved training and retraining systems for tourism professionals, and supported the development of road infrastructure and engineering systems connected to tourism routes [1] [2].

#### DISCUSSION

Although Uzbekistan has achieved significant progress in tourism development, the analysis reveals a number of systemic challenges that continue to constrain the sector's full potential. One of the major issues is the incomplete regulatory framework. Despite the adoption of numerous legal documents, the tourism policy environment still lacks specific regulations for certain tourism services and differentiated visa regimes based on traveler categories, travel duration, and purpose of visit. International tourism practice demonstrates that differentiated visa regimes enhance tourism flows by providing flexible travel opportunities for different segments of tourists [8].

Another serious challenge is the insufficiency of accommodation facilities and tourism infrastructure, especially during peak tourism seasons. This issue reduces service quality, creates logistical difficulties, and negatively influences tourist satisfaction. Furthermore, the transport system remains insufficiently coordinated, limiting the efficiency of domestic and regional tourism mobility. Modern tourism development requires integrated transport-logistics systems, particularly in countries aiming to diversify tourism routes and expand regional tourism destinations [9].

The analysis also highlights weaknesses in tourism information and marketing mechanisms. The insufficient dissemination of information about Uzbekistan's tourism potential, weak international branding, and ineffective marketing campaigns for domestic tourism and cultural heritage promotion continue to hinder Uzbekistan's competitiveness in the global tourism market. Research in global tourism economics confirms that strong branding strategies and digital marketing are essential for attracting tourists, improving destination visibility, and increasing tourism revenue [10].

Therefore, the results suggest that Uzbekistan's tourism policy should increasingly focus on innovative and digital solutions, including smart tourism platforms, digital service systems, and international promotion strategies. The development of agro-tourism and ethno-tourism is also identified as a promising direction, as these segments represent underutilized potential for regional economic growth and cultural identity promotion.

#### CONCLUSION

Tourism reforms in Uzbekistan since 2016 have significantly transformed the sector into one of the key strategic directions of national economic development. The Presidential Decree PF-4861 established a new conceptual foundation for tourism governance by defining targeted

objectives and priority directions aimed at eliminating administrative barriers, diversifying tourism types, improving infrastructure, and strengthening international cooperation [1]. The subsequent Decree PF-5611 further reinforced these reforms by emphasizing investment attraction, institutional modernization, and tourism service quality improvement [2].

The findings demonstrate that tourism reforms resulted in measurable progress, including the growth of tourism enterprises, expansion of accommodation facilities, and large-scale visa liberalization measures. However, the study also identifies persistent challenges, including infrastructure shortages during tourism seasons, insufficient transport coordination, incomplete regulatory mechanisms, and weak tourism marketing strategies.

The research concludes that Uzbekistan's future tourism sustainability depends on accelerated digital transformation, stronger tourism product diversification, improved marketing and branding strategies, enhanced regulatory modernization, and the development of innovative tourism segments such as agro-tourism and ethno-tourism. A coordinated approach involving both state institutions and private sector stakeholders remains essential for transforming Uzbekistan's tourism industry into a globally competitive and high-income sector.

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