IMPORTANCE OF TOURISM INFRASTRUCTURE DEVELOPMENT FOR REGIONS AND DESTINATIONS. TOURISM INFRASTRUCTURE DEVELOPMENT PLAN IN UZBEKISTAN

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Abstract. *Research analysis and studies shows that infrastructure is a very important area for the development of Tourism and MICE industry in any given country. Tourism Infrastructure plays a distinctive role for the promotion & development of the country particularly for the tourism industry. Study also shows that tourism development in Uzbekistan very much dependent on the range, variety and type of infrastructure available to reach destinations in Uzbekistan.*

Those world destinations & countries who want to develop tourism in their regions now understand the importance of Infrastructure in relation to tourism & MICE industry. Uzbekistan government have coordinated their activities with the tourism industry by providing tourism specific infrastructural facilities.

Our research finding shows that Infrastructure is the key to develop a successful MICE & tourism destination and attract tourists.

Our research also shows the immense need for infrastructure development in Uzbekistan, although infrastructure issues are different for different destination sites and levels of economic benefits & development as well. Failure to address infrastructure development issue can affect competitiveness which can damage the travel and tourism industry badly.

Infrastructure, including roads conditions, air service, ground facilities like gas & petrol stations, restaurants in the cities and on highways, rest rooms, mosques, and tourism services like hotels, convention centers, exhibition centers, different transport services, skilled human resource labor plays a vital role in travel and tourism competitiveness. The structuring and delivery of modern infrastructure facilities is extremely complex but important.

In few areas some actions need to be implemented on urgency basis which can improve tourist and related infrastructure in Uzbekistan: 1) Easy accessibility to and within the destination, 2) Upgradation of communal infrastructure, 3) develop hotel and relevant accommodation capacities in all cities of Uzbekistan, 4) Improve the service quality of all tourist related services, 5) establish the necessary infrastructure, 6) improve the current accommodation capacities, and 7) Continuous care & look after of destinations as well their safety and cleanliness.

Key words: *importance of infrastructure in Uzbekistan, Infrastructure development areas in Uzbekistan.*

References: Ministry of Tourism Uzbekistan, Grzini and Saftic (2012)

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Introduction

If you build it, they will come: Why infrastructure is crucial to tourism growth and competitiveness (UNWTO)

Tourism infrastructure:

Tourism Infrastructure Development **mainly** focus on creating tourism facilities, services and sites.

Tourism infrastructure development significantly affects local economies in different ways like job generation, income generation, and developments of SMEs. Up gradation of infrastructure increase number of inbound tourists, develop business activities and creating demand for goods and services. The multiplier effect of tourism expenditure further benefits sectors like agriculture, handicrafts, and transportation.(Nurul Fadhilah, Universities Sriwijaya)

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Infrastructure is one of the most important supports for a tourist attraction to have high attractiveness, so its existence needs to be well prepared because it is the main need for developing the tourism industry, where the more adequate the availability, the higher the interest of tourists in coming. According to Suwantoro in Fit

The hidden key to vigorous economic development is by rebuilding infrastructure, creating a skilled labor force, stimulating local business entrepreneurship and expansion, developing strong public/private partnerships, identifying and attracting "place compatible" companies and industries, creating distinctive local attractions, building a service-friendly culture, and promoting these advantages effectively. (Kotler, Harder, and Rein) Marketing places Free Press, 1993)

Presidential Decree "On additional measures to improve tourism infrastructure and further increase the flow of foreign tourists to the Republic of Uzbekistan" (Decree No. 102 of 18.07.2024) (APTA)

The main provisions of the Decree include:

- **Development of transportation infrastructure:**
  - By December 1, 2024, a unified online platform will be launched to obtain information and purchase tickets for air, rail and bus routes.

- Introduction of a system for selling tickets at differentiated prices and launching additional flights during holidays.

- In last UNWTO conference, which was held in Samarkand October 2023 about US$ 2 billion and 300 million MoUs were signed and most of the MoUs were for the development of tourism infrastructure in different regions of Uzbekistan
- Uz Daily)
- **Roadmap and next steps:**
  - The compositions of the Republican and local public councils for tourism development have been approved, as well as the Roadmap for increasing the flow of foreign and domestic tourists.
  - Measures have been taken to improve engineering and communication networks and to create a favorable environment for the development of business tourism.
  - This decree represents a significant step forward in the development of Uzbekistan's tourism industry, aimed at improving infrastructure, attracting investment and promoting the national tourism brand at the international level. (APTA)

About 285 million tourists travelled internationally in January, February and March in 2024, roughly about 20% more than the same months of 2023. This trend shows the strong demand of tourism activities, the opening of Asian market for tourists, visa free or easy online visa polices, more operations of airlines companies for better connectivity are the results of increased number of tourists for destinations.

Direct tourism GDP recovered in 2023 tremendously after the pandemic damaged. Tourism contributed almost 3% of the global GDP, it's about USD 3.3 trillion. (UNWTO)

<u>Uzbekistan sets tasks for improving tourism infrastructure:</u>

On 3 June 2024, President of Uzbekistan Shavkat Mirziyoyev chaired a meeting on measures to improve tourism infrastructure in the regions and increase the flow of foreign tourists (**Tashkent, Uzbekistan (UzDaily.com)**

The core points of this presidential meeting are:

1- To increase inbound tourism in Uzbekistan

2- To develop skilled and professional people for the hospitality market

3- To generate more direct jobs which ultimately will have significant impact on the creation of indirect jobs (one hospitality related job have multiplies effect to generate two more indirect jobs)

4- Tourist police operations for the safety of tourist

5- Uzbekistan took 1st place in the ranking of the safest countries in the world

The "Safety Perception Index" critically analyze the fowling five factors of the countries to place them in safety ranking

I. Food and Water

II. Violent Crime
III. Adverse Weather conditions
IV. Mental health
V. Moreover, Safety in work settings.

These factors serve as a basis for the security rating of countries.

The fact that Uzbekistan is in first place in this ranking creates the basis for the unhindered arrival and departure of foreign tourists (Safety Perception Index 2023, Uzbek tourism).

6- Tourism cluster will be created in the city of Shakhrisabz district. About 33 km long Khisorak-Gelon and Khisorak-Sarchashma roads will be expanded and repaired. The Chirakchi-Shurkuduk highway are going to be widened and reconstruct. It will reduce the distance and travel time from Samarkand to Shakhrisabz.

7- Another tourism infrastructure development master plan are being prepared with the consultancy of foreign experts for 20 districts with high tourism potential, for instance Akhangaran, Urgut, Nurata, Yangikurgan, Pap, Chartak, Baysun, Sariasiya, Bakhmal, Fergana etc.

The ministry of tourism forecasted to attract about11 million international tourists in 2025 and increase tourism exports to US$2.5 billion. (Uz daily.com)

State of Conservation Reports

State of conservation of World Heritage properties since 1979 and the threats they have faced in the past, or are currently facing.

More about State of Conservation

- Historic Centre of Shakhrisyabz 2024
- Itchan Kala 1990
- Western Tien-Shan 2023
- Historic Centre of Bukhara 2023
- Samarkand – Crossroad of Cultures 2023
- Cold winter dessert of Turan 2023
- Silk Roads: Zarafshan-Karakum Corridor 2023

Why Is Tourism Infrastructure Important and its benefits.

1 Destination
2 Development
3 Brand Image
4 Economic benefits
5 Social Benefits
6 Cultural Interaction
7 Image of the country

Well-developed infrastructure facilities attract tourists and make their access easy and comfortable to visit different places and enjoyable stay.

A well- established infrastructure is a paramount for thriving tourism. This will help to promote destination or region's USP to target market. (Westford University College)

Improved Quality of Life

Tourism and well-developed tourism infrastructure improved the quality of life for native people. For instance, good road conditions and public transport systems will also provide benefit to the locals for their daily commute to school, office, hospital or other places.

Moreover, tourism will promote development of fun recreational facilities like parks, beaches, etc. This will allow locals to enhance their overall quality of life and wellness. (Westford University College)

Taking into account the development of tourism infrastructure in Uzbekistan, the focus should be on the major tourists regions of Uzbekistan.

Although, there are many touristic regions and destination in Uzbekistan, but few regions are more popular and famous due to their historical background. For example, Samarkand, Bukhara, Khiva, Shehrasabz, Fergana valley and Tashkent.

Quite a few tourist places of these regions include archeological excavations, monuments, four beautiful weather seasons of the country, folk crafts and arts of each region, industrial and agricultural zones attract tourists towards these places.

Tairova Dilnoza (European Scholar Journal (ESJ) Available Online at: https://www.scholarzest.com Vol. 2 No.12, December 2021 ISSN: 2660-5562

Results and Discussion

Infrastructure challenges could be different for different regions; their levels of economic development are also differ from each other.

If these challenges are not being addressed and development are not taking place with the passage of time, it will affect the competitiveness of the destination and hurt the travel and tourism industry.

A catalyst for change

Tourism Infrastructure plays a very important role to become a competitive in the market. Airlines, railways, ground, port, and tourism services like hotel accommodations, transport and car rental services are the core of any tourism and travel industry, which must be upgrade continuously as per the market requirements and demand.

As we know, tourist preferences, interests and their habits change, regions & destinations should also need to change in response with innovation and creativity to attract and entertain them.

Travelers want to explore more rather just visiting a place and sitting in the hotel, enjoy the amenities offered by the hotel.

They want to know, what the particular destination offer them for the lasting of their memories.

Today, a destination should not only be a place where people want to visit, but also one in which people aspire to live in order to create an appealing vibrant ambience.

Results and Discussion

Regional tourism infrastructure if improved, it help the region to become more developed and fulfill the requirements of the customer and market. Tourism is one of the crucial and core business units, which create economic benefits and bring foreign exchange in the region as well the country (Hikmawati 2019)

All stakeholders should develop synergism to develop the region and attract visitors. Due to regional development, not only the per capita income of the region will increase but the economy of the country will also flourish.

The tourism sector provide foreign exchange to the country, more income for local governments in shape taxes and heritage fees.

Job opportunities increased which could have multiplier effect on other economic sectors, like culinary, cultural arts performances, guide and interpreter services, and verities of transport services, souvenirs and many others.

Tourism now become an industry, lot of jobs, and income of the families are attached with this industry.

1. Economic Growth and Employment:

• Increased Employment Opportunities: Case studies demonstrate that tourism infrastructure development significantly boosts local employment. For example, in Bali, the expansion of hotels, restaurants, and transportation services has created numerous jobs in both the formal and informal sectors. • Income Generation: Tourism infrastructure projects have led to higher income levels for local communities. In Costa Rica, improved tourism infrastructure has enhanced local business revenues, particularly in eco-tourism ventures, benefiting a wide range of service providers and artisans.

2. Support for Local Enterprises

Growth of SMEs: The development of tourism infrastructure has stimulated the growth of small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs). Local businesses, such as handicraft shops, tour operators, and food vendors, have thrived due to increased tourist spending. In Bhutan, the promotion of community-based tourism has empowered local entrepreneurs and facilitated the growth of SMEs.

3. Environmental Sustainability

- Eco-friendly Practices: The adoption of sustainable tourism infrastructure practices, such as the use of renewable energy, waste management systems, and eco-friendly construction materials, has been observed. Bhutan's "high value, low impact" tourism model emphasizes environmental conservation, ensuring minimal ecological footprint from tourism activities.

- Conservation Efforts: Infrastructure projects have often been coupled with conservation initiatives. In Costa Rica, infrastructure development in protected areas has been aligned with strict environmental regulations to preserve biodiversity and natural landscapes.

4. Social Well-being and Cultural Preservation

- Community Engagement: Successful tourism infrastructure projects have involved active community participation. In Bali, local communities have been engaged in the planning and management of tourism facilities, fostering a sense of ownership and responsibility.

- Cultural Heritage Protection: Efforts to integrate cultural heritage into tourism infrastructure development have been notable. For instance, Bhutan's tourism policies prioritize the preservation of cultural sites and traditional practices, ensuring that tourism does not erode cultural identity.

Today, a destination should be a place where people not only want to visit, but also one in which people aspire to live.

Developing an amenity provision that looks beyond the built product is where a destination can flourish. These amenities should include:

- **Construct and develop attractions**

These products are often created to help ignite interest of tourists and encourage people to visit the destination, for instance spas, golf courses, country clubs, theme & amusement parks and entertainment plan;

- **Natural Resources**

These are resources, which are God gifted and come 'free' with every site. They are Woodland, iconic structures, rivers, forest, sea, sand, sun, landmarks, or other features.

Look after them well and develop their potential can help to create a unique and memorable sense of place.

- **Soft programming**

To organize different musical, food and cultural events or functions. These evens attract the interest of tourist repeatedly particularly for psycho-centric tourists.

By 2037, the number of air passengers could be double to 8.2 billion
(International Air Transport Association)

Conclusions and suggestions

❖ **Conclusions**

1. Tourism industry has great impact in generating regional income, creating more job opportunities.

2. It also develop tourism infrastructure around tourist areas, which is important for smooth tourism operations. Tourism sector also help to generate economical activities for all community segments for example, hotels, transports companies, museums, guides, souvenir shops and restaurants.

3. Many factors influence tourism demands and attract tourist for that particular area. Infrastructure is one of the important factor to attract tourists for the region.

4. Tourism makes a big contribution for economy of the country; government should be dedicated to provide attention and support for tourism sector, solid and permanent action in building necessary infrastructure so that it can contribute more optimally.

5. Necessary & appropriate tourism facilities and infrastructure with among others includes:

A. Appropriate planning of the required space
B. Required equipment & supplies
C. Lighting and color scheme that make vision comfortable
D. Water, gas supply & smooth electricity
E. Comfortable communications services, roads, easy access to destinations either by road, railways or by air.
F. High quality airports in all-important regions of the country, terminals and ports, which must be linked with public transport, trains or metro. These facilities & services can help tremendously to increase the arrival of both domestic and international tourists.

❖ **Suggestion**

1. To develop the region for tourism purpose and to generate income for the region, to create positive impact on employment, all stakeholders should have to work together with harmony and should establish strong synergy to support each other.

2. Ready to support each other, day & night to implement their plans and ideas, provide the best so that the tourism sector industry continues to develop. The existence of good infrastructure will be appreciate and known in domestic and in international level.

3. Government and concern authorities should take serious steps to monitor the progress of tourism sectors.

4. Government should pay proper attention and provide assistance in supporting the development and progress of the tourism sector. In this case, the economical contribution can be more than the expectation; one of them is by establishing tourism infrastructure to meet the needs of the tourism sector.

5. Government or regional authorities should hire professional academician for consultancy and guidance. With concern authorities these academician can implement a more effective strategy in prioritizing which plan or idea should be prioritized in developing and advancing the existing tourism sector.

6. Professional and experienced consultant can be more effective in preparing marketing plan, brand establishment, promotional mix strategy and to carry out social media marketing in both product promotion and target marketing.

7. Government, private sector and local community should strongly cooperate with each other to present the tourism sector distinctiveness, attractiveness and competitiveness in order to attract domestic and international tourists.

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