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THE ROLE AND SIGNIFICANCE OF GUIDING ACTIVITIES IN THE DEVELOPMENT OF TOURISM IN UZBEKISTAN

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Abstract

This article highlights the role and importance of guiding activities in the development of tourism in the Republic of Uzbekistan. It analyzes the tasks of guides in conveying national culture, historical heritage and traditions to tourists in a correct and understandable manner. It also considers the contribution of the guiding service to the formation of the country's tourism image, increasing the flow of foreign and domestic tourists, and the economic development of the tourism sector. The article also pays special attention to the issues of the system of training guides, their professional qualifications and adaptation to the requirements of modern tourism.

Keywords: guiding activities, tourism development, tourism services, cultural heritage, historical monuments, tourism image, professional qualifications of guides.

O'ZBEKISTONNING TURIZMNI RIVOJLANTIRISHDA GIDLIK FAOLIYATINING ROLI VA AHAMIYATI

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Annotatsiya

Ushbu maqolada O‘zbekiston Respublikasida turizmni rivojlantirishda gidlik faoliyatning o‘rni va ahamiyati yoritilgan. Unda milliy madaniyat, tarixiy meros va an‘analarni turistlarga to‘g‘ri va tushunarli yetkazishda gidlarning vazifalari tahlil qilingan. Shuningdek, gid xizmatining mamlakat turizm imidjini shakllantirish, xorijiy va mahalliy sayyohlar oqimini ko‘paytirish, turizm sohasini iqtisodiy rivojlantirishga qo‘shgan hissasi ham ko‘rib chiqiladi. Maqolada gidlar tayyorlash tizimi, ularning kasbiy malakasini oshirish va zamonaviy turizm talablariga moslashtirish masalalariga ham alohida e‘tibor qaratilgan.

Kalit so‘zlar: yo‘l ko‘rsatish faoliyati, turizmni rivojlantirish, turizm xizmatlari, madaniy meros, tarixiy obidalar, turistik imidj, gidlarning kasbiy malakasi.

РОЛЬ И ЗНАЧЕНИЕ ЭКСКУРСИВНОЙ ДЕЯТЕЛЬНОСТИ В РАЗВИТИИ ТУРИЗМА В УЗБЕКИСТАНЕ

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Аннотация

В данной статье освещается роль и значение экскурсионной деятельности в развитии туризма в Республике Узбекистан. Анализируются задачи гидов по донесению до туристов национальной культуры, исторического наследия и традиций в корректной и понятной форме. Также рассматривается вклад экскурсионных услуг в формирование туристического имиджа страны, увеличение потока иностранных и

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отечественных туристов и экономическое развитие туристического сектора. В статье также уделяется особое внимание вопросам системы подготовки гидов, их профессиональной квалификации и адаптации к требованиям современного туризма.

Ключевые слова: экскурсионная деятельность, развитие туризма, туристические услуги, культурное наследие, исторические памятники, туристический имидж, профессиональная квалификация гидов.

Introduction

Today, the development of tourism in the Republic of Uzbekistan is considered one of the priority directions of state policy. In particular, special attention is being paid in the decrees and resolutions adopted by the President of the Republic of Uzbekistan to the development of tourism infrastructure, improvement of service quality, and strengthening the country's image in the international tourism market. Among these measures, improving guiding activities, meeting the demand for professional guides, and enhancing their qualifications have been identified as important tasks. Guiding activity is an integral part of the tourism system and plays a crucial role in shaping tourists' first impressions of the country. Especially in presenting Uzbekistan's rich historical and cultural heritage, ancient cities, and pilgrimage sites to foreign visitors in a clear and accurate manner, the role of professional guides is invaluable.

In recent years, tourism in our country has been developing rapidly. Since the majority of visitors come for pilgrimage tourism, it is important to increase the efficiency of tourism and ensure the high-quality organization of tourism services, including guiding activities. Guides are individuals who provide tourists with information about historical monuments, historical figures, the territorial and administrative structure of the state, as well as national customs and traditions.

At the "VII International Forum of Guides of Uzbekistan – 2024," held on the occasion of World Tourist Guide Day, it was emphasized that on November 30,

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2023, an important government resolution concerning guide-interpreters was adopted. This document approved the regulation on providing state services for issuing qualification certificates to guide-interpreters. From now on, guide-interpreters have the opportunity to submit applications and take qualification exams in their respective regions to obtain certification. In most cases, guiding activities are seasonal. According to current legislation, during low seasons, guides may temporarily suspend their activities by notifying tax authorities, and during such periods, the payment of social tax is suspended. In the Development Strategy of the New Uzbekistan for 2022–2026, within the framework of the “Travel Across Uzbekistan” program, it was planned to increase the number of domestic tourists to over 12 million and the number of foreign visitors to 9 million.

As noted by the Minister of Higher Education, Science and Innovation, Qo‘ng‘iratbay Sharipov, first of all, it is necessary to study tourism potential and identify new tourist sites. Existing materials should be translated into 12 languages. In the future, high-quality services must be organized for every tourist. Guides and institutions should work in close cooperation. However, it is unfortunate that guides sometimes provide inconsistent information. Therefore, methodological manuals prepared by the Tourism Committee should be available in higher education institutions, and necessary information should also be disseminated by universities. It has been noted that the shortage of guides has been one of the biggest problems in Uzbekistan. There are specific requirements for individuals wishing to work in this field. First of all, guides must know at least two or three foreign languages. In addition to language proficiency, they must have thorough knowledge of history. Today, nearly 2,500 guides operate across Uzbekistan. However, not all of them provide high-quality services. It should be remembered that guiding services are one of the key factors determining the quality of tourism. There is always high demand for guides who can present the country’s history in foreign languages in an engaging and appealing manner.

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Furthermore, there are nearly 1,300 pilgrimage sites in the country. Considering that tourists visiting for pilgrimage purposes may belong to different denominations and traditions, it is essential to approach issues such as food preferences, accommodation, and worship facilities on a scientific basis. In this regard, qualified specialists and guides play a significant role. In order to restore and rapidly develop the tourism sector and improve the quality of tourism services in the Republic of Uzbekistan, Resolution No. 433 of the Cabinet of Ministers dated July 10, 2020, “On Measures to Create Favorable Conditions for the Restoration and Development of Tourism in the Republic of Uzbekistan,” was adopted. This resolution plays an important role in legally regulating and professionalizing guiding activities. [1]

Under this resolution, regulations were approved that define the procedure for the lawful professional activities of guides (guide-interpreters), tour leaders, and instructors. According to these regulations, such specialists must obtain a qualification certificate and badge in order to provide tourism services. The qualification certificate is issued based on an examination aimed at assessing the guide’s knowledge and professional competence. The examination is organized by the working body of the Tourism Development Institute under the Tourism

Development Committee

The qualification certificate and badge grant legal rights to provide tourism services within the territory of Uzbekistan to individuals employed by legal entities, those working under civil-law contracts, as well as individual entrepreneurs and self-employed persons. At the same time, graduates of higher, secondary, or specialized professional educational institutions in the field of guiding are exempt from taking the qualification examination during the first three years after graduation.

The regulation also details the requirements for the qualification examination, procedures for submitting documents, stages of the examination, the appeal

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process, and procedures for issuing, reissuing, suspending, or revoking qualification certificates and badges. The electronic form of the certificate and badge is entered into a unified register and is issued within five working days from the date of application. The established fee for obtaining these documents amounts to 25 percent of the base calculation amount. The resolution also approved a regulation defining the procedure for retraining and advanced training of tourism specialists. This regulation is aimed at developing the knowledge and skills of tourism professionals in accordance with modern requirements. According to it, the list of specialties subject to retraining and advanced training is approved by the Tourism Development Committee, and the main institution responsible for conducting training is the Tourism Development Institute. Tourism sector organizations act as customers for retraining and advanced training of employees. Each year, training programs are developed based on the number of specialists, their level of preparation, and work experience. Where technically feasible, online education formats are also introduced. In accordance with the regulation, tourism specialists must undergo advanced training at least once every three years, and this process is carried out on a contractual and paid basis. [2]

1-Table SWOT analysis of the role of guiding activities in the development of tourism in Uzbekistan

Strengths	Weaknesses
Rich historical, cultural, and pilgrimage heritage of Uzbekistan provides a strong foundation for guiding services.	Some guides may lack adequate knowledge and professional competence.
Guides interact directly with tourists and play a key role in shaping the country's image.	The level of foreign language proficiency is not high among all guides.
It provides an opportunity to showcase and promote local customs, traditions, and national values.	Service quality varies across regions.
Guides proficient in foreign languages facilitate effective communication with international tourists.	Insufficient modern communication and presentation skills.
Opportunities	Threats

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Increasing international interest in tourism.	Global crises and pandemics may reduce tourism flows.
Growing interest in the guiding profession among young people.	The presence of unlicensed or unqualified guides can damage the country's tourism image.
Opportunity to expand guiding services through digital technologies.	Risk of declining service quality amid increasing competition.
Opportunity to study and implement international best practices.	Potential inability to meet the demands of international tourists

In conducting the SWOT analysis, internal factors were assessed, including guides' knowledge level, professional skills, language proficiency, and service quality. External factors considered included tourism policies, infrastructure development, technological factors, and global tourism trends. Based on the collected data, the current state of guiding activities and directions for their development were analyzed.

Research Methodology

In this study, the SWOT analysis method was used to determine the role and significance of guiding activities in the development of tourism. SWOT analysis is a strategic evaluation tool that allows identification of an object's strengths and weaknesses, as well as opportunities and threats in the external environment. During the research, this method was applied to comprehensively assess the current state of guiding activities and to identify prospects for their development. The study employed a combination of general and specialized research methods. In particular, through analysis and synthesis, scientific literature, normative-legal documents, and conceptual approaches related to the tourism sector were examined. Using the comparative method, the status of guiding activities in Uzbekistan was analyzed in relation to international experience. Observation and generalization methods were used to evaluate the practical state of guiding services at tourist sites. Additionally, a systematic approach was applied, considering guiding activities as an integral component of the tourism system.

Research Results

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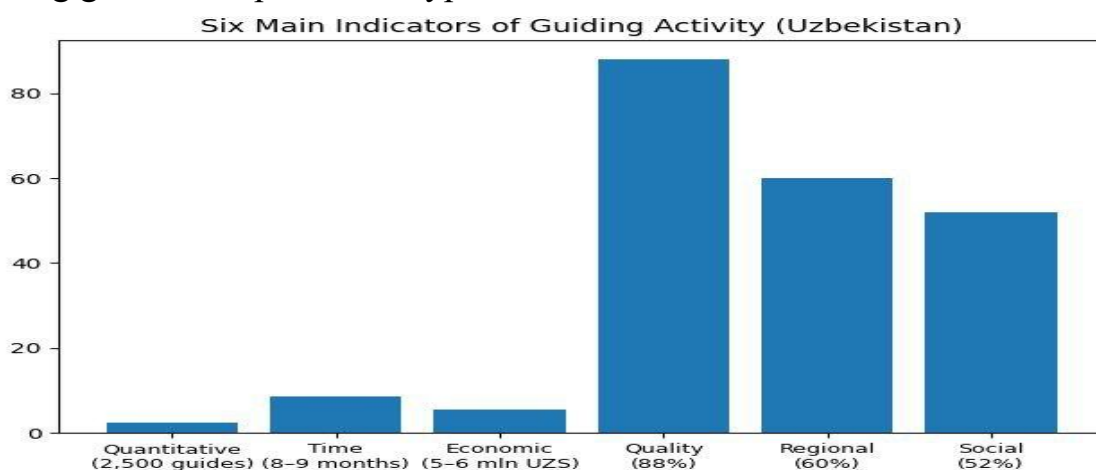
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The conducted SWOT analysis demonstrated that guiding activities in Uzbekistan have high potential. During the study, the country's rich historical and cultural heritage, the presence of UNESCO-listed tourist sites, and the direct participation of guides in shaping tourism products were identified as key strengths of guiding activities. Since guides interact directly with tourists, their professional preparation significantly impacts overall tourist satisfaction. At the same time, the research revealed certain weaknesses in guiding activities. Specifically, the quality of guiding services is not uniform across regions, some guides lack modern presentation and communication skills, and the level of foreign language proficiency varies. This situation prevents full utilization of tourism potential in certain areas. The SWOT analysis also identified opportunities that create favorable conditions for the development of guiding activities. Government attention to the tourism sector, the development of new tourism routes, and the introduction of digital technologies provides opportunities to elevate the quality of guiding services to a new level. Particularly important are prospects for training guides for specialized types of tourism.



1-figure. Key statistical indicators representing guiding activities

According to the figure above, the main statistical indicators of guiding activities are as follows:

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1. Quantitative Indicators. Currently, there are approximately 2,500 guides and tour leaders operating in the Republic of Uzbekistan. About 70–75% of them are certified and cooperate with official tourist organizations. Over the course of a year, guides serve more than 7 million domestic and international tourists. On average, each guide conducts 350–450 tours annually. [3]
2. Time Indicators. The average duration of a tour in Uzbekistan is 3–4 hours. During the high tourism season (March–October), guides work 6–8 hours per day, sometimes even longer. The average annual workload lasts 8–9 months, with guiding activities decreasing during the winter months.
3. Economic Indicators. The average price of a tour in Uzbekistan ranges from 200,000 to 350,000 UZS. The monthly average income of guides is around 4–7 million UZS, depending on seasonality. The average revenue per tourist is 100,000–150,000 UZS. Guiding services account for 10–12% of total tourism service revenue.
4. Quality Indicators. According to surveys, 85–90% of tourists are satisfied with guiding services in Uzbekistan. More than 60% of guides speak at least one foreign language, while 30% know two or more foreign languages. Annually, 35–40% of guides participate in professional development courses.
5. Regional Indicators. Over 60% of guides work in major tourist centers such as Samarkand, Bukhara, Khiva, and Tashkent. The remaining 40% are engaged in regional and rural tourism areas. In regions with a high concentration of historical and cultural heritage sites, guide density is higher, positively contributing to regional tourism development.
6. Social Indicators. Guiding activities provide employment for thousands of young people and women in Uzbekistan. About 50–55% of guides are young people, and nearly 40% are women. Through guiding activities, national culture, historical heritage, and local customs are widely promoted, contributing to increased income for the local population. [4]

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Discussion

In Uzbekistan, guiding activities represent an important institutional element of the tourism system, and their effectiveness is closely linked to the country's historical and cultural resources, human capital, and service quality. The presence of cities such as Samarkand, Bukhara, Khiva, and Shahrisabz, which are listed as UNESCO World Heritage sites, objectively increases the demand for guiding services. The ability to convey the historical, architectural, and cultural significance of these sites to tourists in a consistent and scholarly manner depends directly on the professional preparation of guides, making this factor a key strength of guiding activities. Tourists' overall satisfaction with the country is often determined by a guide's knowledge, communication skills, and professional approach, positioning guides as primary actors in shaping the quality of tourism products.

At the same time, systematic challenges exist in guiding activities. Regional disparities in service quality, insufficient depth of historical knowledge among some guides, and limited skills in modern interactive presentation methods reduce the quality of the tourist experience. In particular, the lack of qualified guides in remote areas prevents full utilization of available tourism resources. Additionally, varying levels of foreign language proficiency among guides limit opportunities for effective communication with international tourists, negatively affecting service competitiveness. [5]

Current conditions, however, create significant opportunities for developing guiding activities. Tourism is designated as a priority at the state policy level in Uzbekistan, new tourist routes are being introduced, and infrastructure development is increasing the demand for professional guides. The growth of specialized tourism sectors—such as pilgrimage, ecological, gastronomic, and ethnocultural tourism—necessitates the specialization of guides and allows the development of new competencies in the field. The rapid advancement of digital technologies, including mobile applications, audio guides, and online platforms,

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also plays an important role in diversifying guiding services and enhancing their efficiency. [6]

However, guiding activities face both external and internal threats. Global economic instability, epidemiological challenges, and declines in international tourism flows may reduce demand for guiding services. Low-quality services provided by unlicensed or unqualified guides can decrease tourist satisfaction and negatively impact the country's tourism image. Furthermore, if guides' professional development does not keep pace with rapidly changing international tourist demands, their competitiveness may decline. [7]

Conclusion

Guiding activities are a crucial and integral part of the modern tourism system. Guides are not only individuals who provide directions and assistance to tourists but also serve as key representatives promoting the country's historical, cultural, and spiritual heritage. Tourists' first impressions of a country often depend on a guide's knowledge, communication skills, professional competence, and interaction abilities. Therefore, the high-quality organization of guiding activities is essential for enhancing the effectiveness of tourism services.

In Uzbekistan, the state policy for tourism development pays special attention to guiding activities. Presidential decrees and resolutions prioritize the training of professional guides, improving their qualifications, and equipping them with modern knowledge and technologies. This supports the development of guiding activities according to international standards and the training of specialists who are proficient in foreign languages and deeply understand the country's historical and cultural heritage. Improving guiding services also positively affects tourism infrastructure, service quality, and tourist flows. Accurate, reliable, and engaging information provided by qualified guides fosters a positive perception of the country among foreign tourists, increases the likelihood of repeat visits, and strengthens Uzbekistan's competitiveness in the international tourism market.

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Overall, further development of guiding activities, enhancing the professional potential of guides, and establishing a system of continuous retraining and professional development remain pressing tasks. This not only contributes to sustainable growth in the tourism sector but also promotes economic development and the wider dissemination of national culture and historical heritage.

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