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THE FORMATION AND DEVELOPMENT STAGES OF SAFE TOURISM IN UZBEKISTAN

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Abstract:
This article examines the formation and development of safe tourism in Uzbekistan in close connection with state policies implemented during the years of independence, the improvement of tourism legislation, and institutional reforms aimed at ensuring tourist safety. In particular, the study provides a chronological analysis of the establishment of the initial organizational and legal foundations of tourism, the growing need to develop safe tourism as a distinct area of governance, the establishment of specialized security structures, and the transformation of the sector in response to emerging risks and challenges. Based on the research findings, a five-stage historical periodization of safe tourism development in Uzbekistan is proposed, and conclusions are drawn regarding the institutional and organizational prospects for further improvement of the sector.

Keywords: safe tourism, history of tourism, Uzbekistan, tourism safety, historical stages, tourism policy, institutional reforms, tourists' rights, tourism infrastructure, sanitary and epidemiological safety.

INTRODUCTION

The globalization of the world economy, the expansion of cultural and economic relations between countries, and the development of transportation and communication networks have significantly increased the role of international tourism in socioeconomic life. Tourism is no longer regarded merely as a means

of recreation, sightseeing, or exploring the cultures of different nations. Instead, it has evolved into a complex socioeconomic phenomenon that contributes to strengthening the economic potential of regions, creating new employment opportunities, developing service industries, and enhancing a country's attractiveness in the international arena. However, the sustainable development of tourism depends not only on the availability of tourism resources and the condition of existing infrastructure but also on the safety environment provided for travelers, the effectiveness of mechanisms protecting their rights and interests, and the reliability of systems designed to prevent potential risks and threats.

This issue is of particular scientific and practical importance for Uzbekistan. The country's historical heritage associated with the Great Silk Road, its ancient cities such as Samarkand, Bukhara, Khiva, and Shahrisabz, its rich architectural monuments, and its distinctive cultural traditions provide significant opportunities for the development of international tourism. At the same time, the expansion of tourism activities increases the importance of tasks related to accommodating visitors, ensuring their free and safe movement along tourist routes, maintaining public order around historical and cultural sites, and providing prompt assistance in emergency situations.

MATERIALS AND METHODS

This study is based on a historical and substantive analysis of regulatory and legal documents governing tourism activities, ensuring tourist safety, and establishing appropriate management mechanisms in tourist destinations in the Republic of Uzbekistan. The principal sources of the study include the initial Law “On Tourism” adopted on August 20, 1999, Resolution No. 939 of the Cabinet of Ministers dated November 23, 2017, Presidential Resolution No. PQ-4229 dated March 6, 2019, the Law of the Republic of Uzbekistan No. ZRU-549 “On

Tourism" dated July 18, 2019, and Presidential Resolution No. PQ-4755 dated June 19, 2020. These documents provide a basis for examining the transition from general regulatory principles concerning tourism safety to specialized institutional mechanisms and sanitary and epidemiological protection measures [1–5].

Based on the principle of historicism, the study examines changes in the field of safe tourism in relation to the periods in which they emerged, the prevailing socioeconomic conditions, and the priorities of state policy. In this context, safe tourism is interpreted not as a fully established contemporary governance model but as a historical process that has evolved through various stages since Uzbekistan gained independence and has been continuously improved in response to emerging needs. The comparative-historical method was employed to identify the similarities and differences between the protection mechanisms established in the initial tourism legislation and the specialized safety systems developed in subsequent periods.

Furthermore, institutional analysis was applied to examine the legal responsibilities and mechanisms of cooperation among government authorities, internal affairs agencies, local administrations, and tourism service providers in ensuring safe tourism. The systematic approach made it possible to consider tourism safety as an integrated framework of interconnected components, including public order, transportation, healthcare, tourism services, and information provision.

RESULTS

The formation of safe tourism in Uzbekistan cannot be examined separately from the processes associated with establishing the national tourism system during the early years of independence. Before a specialized system aimed at protecting the

rights and interests of tourists could emerge, it was necessary to establish general legal regulations governing tourism activities, management mechanisms for the sector, and organizational foundations for providing services to travelers. From this perspective, the period from 1991 to 2016 should be regarded not as a stage in which safe tourism had fully developed into an independent institutional field, but rather as a historical period during which the initial conditions for its subsequent development were established.

One of the most significant legal developments of this period was the adoption of Law No. 830-I "On Tourism" on August 20, 1999. This law defined the fundamental concepts of tourism activities and established a legal framework regulating the provision of tourism services, the activities of tourism stakeholders, tourists' rights, and their protection. In particular, the provisions concerning tourist safety and insurance played an important role in bringing potential travel-related risks within the scope of state-regulated legal relations [1].

A distinctive characteristic of this historical stage was that tourism development was primarily approached from economic and organizational perspectives, while tourist safety was recognized as an essential legal prerequisite for the uninterrupted functioning of the sector. Subsequently, the expansion of tourism services and the intensification of policies aimed at developing international tourism increased the need to establish more specialized safety mechanisms based on this initial legal foundation.

The next stage in the development of safe tourism in Uzbekistan was directly associated with the tourism reforms initiated in 2017. During this period, ensuring tourist safety became a distinct area of attention within public administration. Efforts to develop tourism as a sector capable of enhancing the country's international attractiveness and contributing to regional economic growth

required not only the creation of favorable conditions for visitors but also the improvement of mechanisms for ensuring their safety.

An important legal milestone in this process was the adoption of Resolution No. 939 of the Cabinet of Ministers of the Republic of Uzbekistan, "On Measures to Ensure Safe Tourism in the Cities of Bukhara, Samarkand, Khiva and Shahrisabz," on November 23, 2017. The resolution approved the Safe Tourism Concept for these cities and provided for cooperation among relevant government agencies and local authorities in its implementation. The adoption of this resolution specifically for historical cities demonstrates the emergence of a targeted approach to organizing safety in areas characterized by concentrated tourist flows, cultural heritage sites, and tourism infrastructure [2].

Particular attention was paid to recruiting qualified specialists with foreign language proficiency for the institutions responsible for ensuring safe tourism. This was especially important because the responsibilities of security personnel working with international tourists extend beyond maintaining public order to providing information in a language understandable to visitors, receiving complaints and requests for assistance, and directing tourists to appropriate services when necessary. The resolution also provided for the use of modern technical equipment, electronic information systems, and translation software, reflecting the growing importance of technological approaches to tourism safety management [2].

From a historical perspective, the most significant outcome of the reforms initiated in 2017–2018 was the establishment of a legal foundation for developing tourism safety not as a system detached from general law enforcement activities, but as a specialized area adapted to the specific requirements of the tourism sector. Within this framework, improving the effectiveness of safety measures increasingly came to be associated with interagency cooperation, consideration

of the characteristics of individual tourist destinations, and the capacity to identify potential risks in advance.

The year 2019 occupies a particularly important place in the development of Uzbekistan's safe tourism system, as the institutional reforms initiated in previous years were reinforced by a broader legal framework. In particular, Presidential Resolution No. PQ-4229, "On Additional Measures to Introduce an Effective System for Ensuring Public Safety at Transport and Tourism Facilities," adopted on March 6, 2019, established measures for extending the Safe Tourism Concept to Tashkent City, Tashkent Region, and Surkhandarya Region, as well as for establishing relevant security departments in these territories [3].

The content of this document indicates that the approach to ensuring safe tourism was no longer limited to the historical cities initially selected for implementation but was gradually being extended to other tourist destinations across the country. In this process, ensuring public safety at transportation facilities, along tourist routes, and at cultural heritage sites began to be considered interconnected areas of activity. Consequently, broader organizational opportunities emerged for coordinating safety measures related to tourists' arrival in the country, use of transportation services, visits to tourist attractions, and movement between different regions during their journeys.

Another important development in strengthening the legal foundations of safe tourism was the adoption of the revised Law No. ZRU-549 "On Tourism" on July 18, 2019. Chapter Nine of this law is specifically devoted to ensuring safe tourism and establishes provisions concerning guarantees for the safety of tourists and excursionists, the responsibilities of relevant government authorities, and the obligations of entities operating in the tourism sector. In particular, Article 35 explicitly establishes that the safety of tourists and excursionists within the territory of the Republic of Uzbekistan is guaranteed by the state [4].



The significance of this legal provision lies in the recognition of tourist safety as a distinct interest protected by state policy, with responsibility for its implementation extending beyond the activities of a single authorized institution. Instead, the law provides for the participation of relevant ministries and agencies, local executive authorities, and tourism stakeholders. Accordingly, the legal scope of safe tourism expanded to encompass an integrated system of responsibilities involving the protection of tourists' personal security, property, health, and access to assistance in emergency situations.

The global spread of the COVID-19 pandemic in 2020 had a profound impact on the development of the tourism sector, creating a need to reconsider previously established approaches to ensuring traveler safety. Before the pandemic, discussions concerning tourism safety primarily focused on public order, transportation security, the protection of tourists' property, and personal safety. However, the deterioration of the epidemiological situation made the protection of travelers' health and the prevention of infectious diseases central priorities of tourism policy.

In Uzbekistan, this global situation also required significant adjustments to the principles governing tourism activities. In particular, the adoption of Presidential Resolution No. PQ-4755, “On Additional Measures for the Development of Tourism in Strict Compliance with the Requirements of an Enhanced Sanitary and Epidemiological Safety Regime,” on June 19, 2020, demonstrated the increased attention given to safety issues in maintaining and restoring tourism activities during the pandemic. The resolution provided for measures related to the “Uzbekistan. Safe Travel GUARANTEED” system, including the organization of preventive anti-epidemic measures at tourism infrastructure facilities [5].



The historical significance of the pandemic period cannot be explained solely by temporary restrictions or stricter sanitary regulations. This period demonstrated the vulnerability of the tourism system to external threats and highlighted the need for a broader understanding of safety management. The continuity of tourism activities, reliability of service provision, and ability to make prompt management decisions during emergencies emerged as essential components of tourism safety.

Thus, the period from 2020 to 2021 can be characterized as a stage in which the concept of safe tourism in Uzbekistan was expanded to incorporate sanitary and epidemiological considerations, while the need to address emergency risks became significantly more urgent. The experience gained during this period demonstrated that tourism safety should be ensured not merely through responses to individual types of threats but through comprehensive preparedness and coordinated management.

The post-pandemic period has been characterized by the recovery of tourism activities in Uzbekistan, the revitalization of international travel, and the emergence of new demands in the tourism services market. Under these conditions, ensuring safe tourism has involved not only preserving the legal and organizational mechanisms established in previous periods but also adapting them to changing tourism needs. In particular, greater importance has been attached to coordinating the interconnected components of tourism safety, including public order, sanitary protection, transportation, information exchange, and emergency assistance.

According to preliminary data from the National Statistics Committee of the Republic of Uzbekistan, the number of foreign citizens visiting Uzbekistan for tourism purposes reached 11.7 million in 2025, representing an increase of 46.8 percent compared with 2024 [6]. Although these statistics indicate an expansion

of inbound tourist flows, they should not be interpreted as direct evidence of the effectiveness of the tourism safety system. Other factors, including transportation connectivity, the relaxation of international travel restrictions, economic conditions, and demand for tourism services, may also influence the growth in visitor numbers.

A distinctive feature of this stage is the increasing need to integrate previously developed safety practices within a unified management approach. Since tourist destinations differ in geographical location, infrastructure conditions, and potential sources of risk, applying identical safety measures across all regions may not always produce the expected results. For example, historical city centers primarily face challenges related to tourist congestion, traffic movement, and the protection of cultural heritage sites, whereas tourism activities in mountainous or natural areas require particular attention to weather conditions, natural disasters, and access to emergency medical assistance.

DISCUSSION

An overview of the formation and development of safe tourism in Uzbekistan demonstrates that the evolution of this sector has been influenced by the state's approach to tourism, the expansion of international travel, and changing safety requirements. Each historical stage did not replace the organizational and legal foundations established during the preceding period but rather supplemented them with new responsibilities and management mechanisms. Therefore, the history of safe tourism should not be understood as a collection of completely separate periods, but as a continuous process of development, progressing from legal regulation to specialized institutional governance and subsequently toward a comprehensive approach to safety management.



One of the key findings of the study is the gradual transformation of the concept of safe tourism. During the early years of independence, the protection of tourists was regulated within the framework of general tourism legislation and state law enforcement activities. However, beginning in 2017, the development of specialized safety mechanisms adapted to tourist destinations became a distinct area of institutional reform. This transformation broadened the understanding of safety beyond responding to violations that had already occurred, emphasizing preventive measures aimed at reducing potential risks and enhancing the reliability of the tourism environment.

The incorporation of provisions concerning safe tourism into a separate chapter of the Law “On Tourism” in 2019 demonstrates the growing legal significance of this field. In particular, the establishment of state guarantees for tourist safety and the definition of responsibilities for entities involved in tourism activities highlight the multidimensional nature of ensuring safety. This requires not only effective cooperation among government authorities but also a stronger role for tourism enterprises, hotels, transportation organizations, and other service providers in developing a comprehensive culture of safety.

Taking regional characteristics into account is another important consideration in the further development of safe tourism in Uzbekistan. Although the country's historical cities, mountainous regions, natural recreational areas, and pilgrimage destinations offer opportunities for developing different forms of tourism, their safety requirements vary considerably. Therefore, while maintaining a unified legal and institutional framework for safe tourism, it is advisable to develop risk assessment mechanisms adapted to the natural, geographical, social, and infrastructural characteristics of each region.



CONCLUSION

The historical, legal, and institutional examination of the formation and development of safe tourism in Uzbekistan reveals that this sector has evolved gradually throughout the years of independence. Its scope and implementation mechanisms have consistently expanded in response to changing priorities in tourism policy and emerging risks and challenges. The historical development of safe tourism in Uzbekistan reflects a progressive institutional process that emerged as an integral component of the country's tourism development policy and has continued to evolve through successive stages. A comprehensive examination of this historical experience may contribute not only to a deeper understanding of the nature and significance of reforms implemented in the tourism sector but also to the development of scientific and practical approaches aimed at creating a more reliable, sustainable, and secure tourism environment for visitors in the future.

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