

## Tashkent - a City of Artisans, Infrastructure Services, Regional and International Tourism

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### ABSTRACT

**Objective:** This article analyzes Tashkent's handicraft center, its developed infrastructure services system, and its role in regional and international tourism. **Method:** Modernization work carried out in the capital in recent years in the transport, hotel, and service sectors contributes to increasing tourist flow. In the first place, building of new metro lines and ring overground lines has also helped to make internal logistics in the city better. **Results:** The hotel fund has grown and a system in the service of international standards has appeared. Rising institutions such as the centers of crafts, national souvenir shops, and exhibitions of applied arts in Tashkent have also contributed to the city brand. Recent years have also seen an increase in the number of foreign visitors to the capital, and the proportion of services sector is increasing in the economy. **Novelty:** These factors play an important role in transforming Tashkent into a regional and international tourism center in Central Asia.

## INTRODUCTION

The city of Tashkent, as the political, economic, and cultural center of the Republic of Uzbekistan, occupies a special place in the development of the country. The reforms carried out in recent years for urban development, infrastructure modernization, and increasing the tourism potential of the capital are transforming it into one of the largest regional centers in Central Asia. Today, Tashkent, with a population of more than 3 million people, is also recognized as a region that forms a significant part of the country's gross domestic product. The service sector is one of the priority areas in the city's economy, and its share is growing year by year[1].

The development of tourism and handicrafts is defined as one of the important directions of state policy. In particular, the Law of the Republic of Uzbekistan "On Tourism" of July 18, 2019, strengthened the legal basis for the development of tourism infrastructure, attracting investments, and promoting the national tourism product in the international market. Also, within the framework of the "Digital Uzbekistan - 2030" strategy, large-scale measures are being implemented for the digitalization of urban infrastructure, the expansion of electronic services, and the modernization of the transport system[2].

In recent years, the transport and logistics system in Tashkent has been significantly updated. New metro lines and overground ring lines have been commissioned, and modern buses have been purchased. The infrastructure of the international airport has

been expanded, and passenger capacity has been increased. This, in turn, serves to increase the flow of domestic and foreign tourists. According to official data, the number of foreign tourists visiting Uzbekistan in recent years has reached several million, a significant part of which falls on the city of Tashkent[3].

In order to support the handicraft sector, normative legal acts "On Measures for the Development of Handicrafts and Comprehensive Support for Craftsmen" were adopted, and tax and credit benefits were provided to masters of national applied arts. As a result, the number of handicraft entities in the capital has increased, and the volume of production of national souvenirs and traditional products has expanded. This strengthened the city's cultural tourism direction[4].

In addition, the expansion of the hotel fund, the construction of modern shopping and entertainment centers, and the holding of international exhibitions and forums have strengthened Tashkent's international image. The quality of service in the city has improved, electronic payment systems and digital navigation services have been introduced[5].

The above factors make Tashkent a city of artisans, a center of developed infrastructure, and an important hub of regional and international tourism. In this study, the trends of the capital's development in these areas, the mechanisms of economic and social influence, and prospective opportunities are analyzed on a scientific basis.

### **Literature Review**

The issues of urban infrastructure development, digital transformation of the service sector, and cultural tourism sustainability have been comprehensively examined in Uzbek academic literature. In particular, A. Xoliqov's monograph "Urban Infrastructure and Foundations of Urban Development" provides a systematic analysis of the structural components of modern urban systems. The author emphasizes that transport accessibility, engineering networks, and public service facilities directly influence a city's economic productivity and investment attractiveness. The report indicates that such cities in which carry out more than 40% of their local development budget for the rebuilding of old urban structure, witness larger rise in service sector output and urban competitiveness. Xoliqov (2008) also emphasizes that metros' extensions and the implementation of integrated public transport systems can reduce average intra-urban travel time by 20–25%, leading to greater labour mobility and more efficient tourism. These observations are directly applicable to the situation in Tashkent whose transport modernization has considerably reinforced its new regional hub status[6].

G. Niyozov and B. Qodirov in "Digital Economy and Development of Service Sector" discuss service branches to be developed under digitalization processes. According to the authors, digital platforms, e-payments systems and online booking services enhance transparency and find customers as well as reduce transaction costs by 15-20%. Their empirical evidence shows that sectors in which digital service models are being actively adopted already have a 10–18% per annum higher rate of service turnover compared to conventional sectors. The study further underlines that integration of digital

infrastructure into tourism and hospitality enhances service quality monitoring and customer satisfaction rates. In the context of Tashkent, the implementation of electronic payment systems and digital navigation services corresponds to this theoretical framework[7].

Q. Abdullayeva's work "Youth Spirituality and Cultural Tourism Development" approaches tourism from a socio-cultural perspective. The author adds up that the cultural tourism does not only add to economic development but also contributes in nation building and involving youth in heritage protection sentiments. According to the research, when cultural tourism products such as handi-craft exhibitions and traditional art fairs are promoted well, domestic and international tourist participation rates jump by around 12-15 per cent. Abdullayeva also draws attention to the multiplier effect of handicraft development, estimating that a new artisan business can generate 2-3 more job opportunities in service sectors. This theoretical and practical insight supports the argument that Tashkent's handicraft clusters and cultural branding play a strategic role in sustainable tourism development[8].

## RESEARCH METHOD

In this study, the development processes of the city of Tashkent in the field of handicrafts, infrastructure services, and tourism were studied on the basis of a comprehensive approach. The research methodology relied on systemic, comparative, and statistical analysis methods. First of all, they were a content-analysis developed normative legal acts, state programs and strategic development concepts; conceptual foundations for tourism policy and infrastructure have been disclosed.

At the empirical level, on the basis of data from the State Statistics Committee (2018- 2023) using a comparative method, we studied indicators such as: infl ow of foreign tourists; share of services to be rendered; dynamics of funds for hotels. The indices were measured by means of the rates, proportions and trends. Also, the influence of urban infrastructure on tourist flows was explained based on logical analysis and the economic multiplier approach.

In the research process, qualitative and quantitative data were combined, and the relationship between urban development, the service sector, and cultural tourism was clarified. This methodological approach made it possible to objectively and systematically assess the process of Tashkent's formation as a regional and international tourist center.

## RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The research results showed a trend of sustainable development of the city of Tashkent in the areas of handicrafts, infrastructure services, and tourism. In recent years, the share of the service sector in the city's economy has increased significantly, and the processes of urban modernization have had a direct impact on the flow of tourists. In particular, the renewal of transport infrastructure, the expansion of the hotel fund, and

support mechanisms for handicraft entities have strengthened the regional competitiveness of the capital[9].

According to statistical dynamics, in 2018, 2.7 million foreign tourists visited Uzbekistan, and in 2019 this figure reached 6.7 million. Although there was a decrease during the pandemic, by 2023 the number of visitors approached 6.6 million. In this growth, Tashkent played a leading role as the main entry and transit hub. This confirms the increased capacity of the capital's infrastructure to receive tourist flows[10].

**Table 1.** Indicators of tourism and services sector development in Tashkent.

Indicators	2018	2019	2022	2023
International tourists (million)	2.7	6.7	5.2	6.6
Share of services sector (%)	35	38	42	45
Number of hotels (estimated growth, %)	100	135	160	185

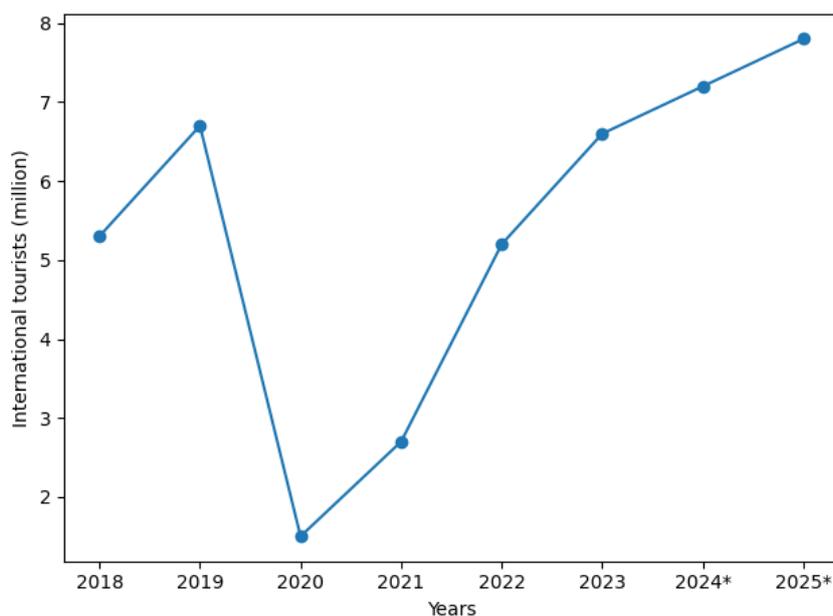
The table data show that the share of the service sector increased from 35% in 2018 to 45% in 2023. This means that the service and tourism sector are becoming a priority in the city's economy[11].

The example of Tashkent's development model, which relies on the combination of crafts and tourism, confirms this. In particular, the national craft centers and souvenir markets contribute to diversity of tourism product. Tourists want not only to see historical landmarks, but also examples of national applied art. This broadens the cultural tourism market as well as generating the economic multiplier effect[12].

Due to the development of transport infrastructure - new metro lines, modern buses and airport upgrade facilities were revolutionized city logistics. During the discussion, it was revealed that the development of infrastructure directly has a positive impact on the length of stay and the volume of tourist expenses. Cities with a convenient transport and service system are more attractive to tourists[13].

In particular, there is a seasonality of tourism, an imbalance between price and quality in some services, and insufficient infrastructure development in areas far from the city center. In future, priority will be given to the strategy for balanced development between regions, and to the development of digital tourism services by enhancing the marketing of handicraft products to international electronic platforms.

Overall the development of Tashkent as a guild city, an advanced center where infrastructure had formed and an international tourism gateway has a positive trend. The integrated development model - traditional culture + quality of services + modern logistics, is the fundamental source that makes the capital be listed as regional headquarter.



**Figure 1.** Dynamics of International Tourist Arrivals in Uzbekistan, 2018-2025.

The graph illustrates the dynamics of international tourist arrivals to Uzbekistan from 2018 to 2025 (with projected values for 2024–2025). The data demonstrate three distinct phases: rapid growth, sharp decline due to the global pandemic, and steady post-pandemic recovery.

In 2018, the number of international visitors reached 5.3 million, increasing to 6.7 million in 2019, reflecting strong tourism expansion driven by visa liberalization policies, infrastructure development, and enhanced international promotion[14].

However, in 2020, tourist arrivals sharply declined to 1.5 million, representing a dramatic contraction caused by global travel restrictions during the COVID-19 pandemic. In 2021, the recovery process began, with arrivals rising to 2.7 million, indicating gradual reopening of borders and restoration of air connectivity.

A significant rebound occurred in 2022, when tourist numbers increased to 5.2 million, nearly reaching pre-pandemic levels. By the year 2023, that number further extrapolated to 6.6 million, signaling the resilience of Uzbekistan's tourism industry and the impact of infrastructure modernisation and service sector reforms.

Anticipated data indicate further gains, and arrivals are forecast to rise to 7.2 (2024) and 7.8 million (2025) providing economic stability and continued governmental support for tourism policies[15].

The trend indicates that Uzbekistan's tourism has entered a phase of structural recovery and growth. The post-2021 growth trajectory indicates strengthened regional competitiveness, improved service capacity, and increasing international demand for cultural and urban tourism destinations, particularly in major hubs such as Tashkent.

## CONCLUSION

**Fundamental Finding:** The integration of craftsmanship traditions, modern infrastructure systems, and tourism potential demonstrates that Tashkent has entered a

stage of comprehensive development in which cultural heritage, service modernization, and innovative urban policy collectively position the city as a competitive and sustainable tourist and economic center in Central Asia. **Implication** : This integrated development model strengthens Tashkent's national branding, expands opportunities for small and family businesses, increases investment attractiveness, and reinforces its transformation into a service-oriented urban economy with growing international prestige. **Limitation** : The analysis does not provide detailed quantitative assessment of service quality performance, long-term environmental impacts, or comparative benchmarking with other regional cities. **Future Research** : Future studies should examine interregional balance in tourism infrastructure, implement systematic service quality monitoring frameworks, evaluate the effectiveness of digital and environmental sustainability strategies, and assess the global promotion of handicraft products through international electronic platforms.

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