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**STUDENT AND YOUTH TOURISM AS PROSPECTS FOR
SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT OF UZBEKISTAN REGIONS**

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Abstract

Today, youth tourism has become one of the fastest growing segments of international tourism accounting for more than 20% of the one billion tourists traveling around the world every year. This growth opens up huge socio-economic opportunities for local communities as young travelers contribute to greater social interaction with the host population and protect the environment. Tourism in Uzbekistan has always attracted people from all over the world. For anyone knowing the country it is easy to understand – bright colors, intricate patterns, rich fragrances and friendly people are waiting for each visitor. This landlocked country in Central Asia offers many different interesting sites that even one person will not be able to explore in his entire life. The paper provides the SWOT analysis of student and youth tourism in Uzbekistan alongside with the analysis of this tourist activity in this country since students and young people, as a rule, are full of ideas and plans, hopes for the future, but are limited by income (money). Nevertheless, it offers significant economic advantages, namely a much longer stay, a consumption pattern similar to locals and increased chances for additional visits.

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1. Introduction

Student and youth tourism is a type of tourism activity for various groups ranging from primary school to young specialists from colleges and universities. Students and young people travel quite often, and the main purposes of their travel are as follows (Babin & Kim, 2001):

- a) educational activities;
- b) leisure activities;
- c) cultural events;
- d) musical and artistic performances and/or sports events.

The sustainable development of tourism depends of economical, socio-cultural and technological strategies and of course on a more unified regional and national system. Emphasizing a subsystem implies introducing boundaries that nowadays do not exist in Uzbekistan. One system transforms into another continuously. The uniqueness of the youth tourism sector is that it is directly or indirectly related to multiple areas of the Uzbekistan economy (Figure 01).

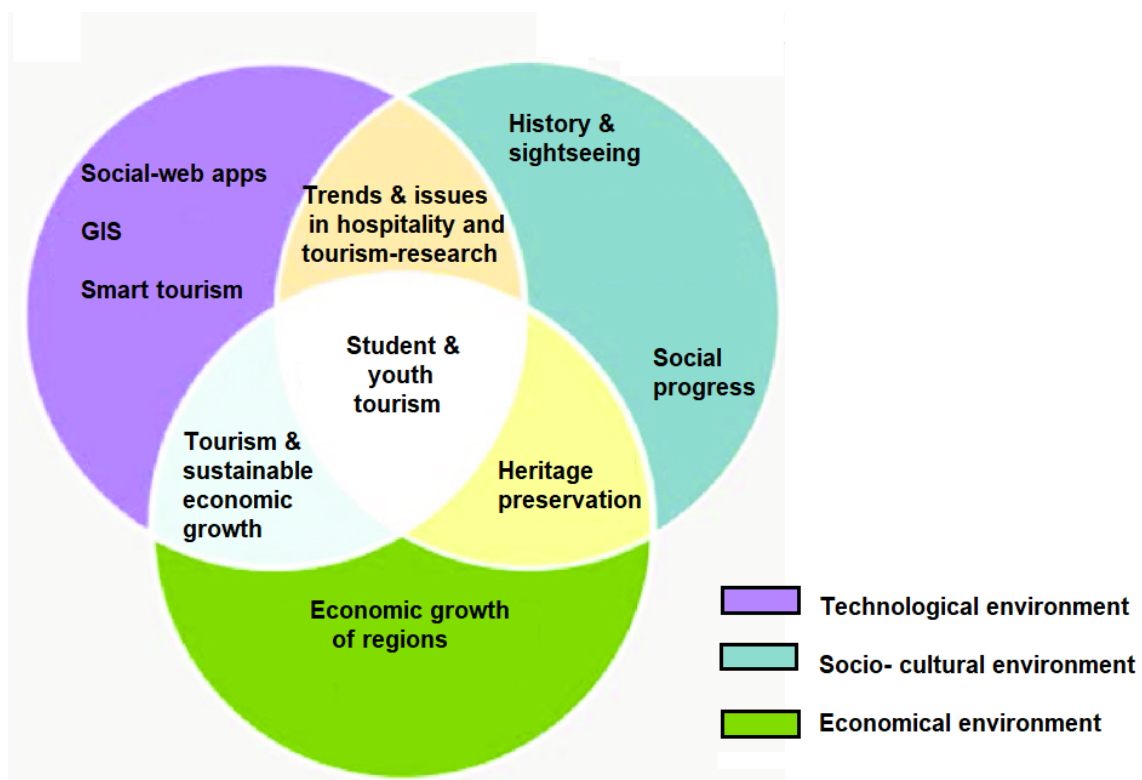


Figure 1. Student and youth tourism model based on the relationship between technological, socio-cultural and economic environments (Developed by the corresponding author)

2. Problem Statement

One of the problems impeding the analysis and policy development is the lack of clear definitions of student and youth tourism at universities in Uzbekistan.

The main task is to develop the SWOT analysis as the beginning of a business strategy for the development of youth tourism in Uzbekistan.

3. Research Questions

The analysis of development potential and prospects of student and youth tourism in Uzbekistan.

4. Purpose of the Study

The general purpose of the study is to perform a general SWOT analysis of student and youth tourism in Uzbekistan.

Today, young travelers go to various places on their own, stay for a long time and immerse themselves in other cultures in order to expand their horizons (Tregubova et al., 2018). Besides, the modern generation of traveler students is inspired to continue their educational activities in other countries in order to improve their skills studying, volunteering, doing part-time work, or learning a foreign language (Rodríguez et al., 2012).

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Tourism in Uzbekistan has always attracted people from all over the world. For anyone knowing the country it is easy to understand – bright colors, intricate patterns, rich fragrances and friendly people are waiting for each visitor. This landlocked country in Central Asia offers many different interesting sites that even one person will not be able to explore in his entire life (Gafurov, 2020).

Student and youth tourism continues to grow despite economic instability and the current global crises. Tourism in Uzbekistan is traditionally associated with cities being UNESCO World Heritage sites – Samarkand, Bukhara, and Khiva. Student (youth) tourism movements are in a safe environment that shifts and transforms the boundaries of tourism in favor of areas that guarantee security and sustainable development. Several new destinations are able to meet the requirements of student tourism (for example, Tashket, Ferghana, Samarkand, etc.), while many unstable areas have only little potential for tourism.

One of the problems impeding policy development is the lack of clear definitions of student and youth tourism at universities in Uzbekistan.

The country will further develop recreation areas, playing bases and improve infrastructure to attract young foreigners of all ages. The development of this concept will further change other types of tourism in the country, and the identification of the most important goals and targets for the active attraction of young tourists to Uzbekistan will increase the influx of young tourists in the future, as well as improve the quality of tourism services and create tourism infrastructure aimed at young tourists.

According to statistics, 6,748,500 tourists visited Uzbekistan in 2019, while in 2018 this figure was 5,346,200 people. Of these, 51.3% are people aged 31-55 years, 20.2% – 55 years and older, 19.5% – 19-30 years and 9.1% – 0-18 years (How many tourist visit Uzbekistan in 2019..., 2021). In our opinion, 28.6% of tourists aged 0-30 years can be attributed to “young” tourists, and accordingly it is possible to conclude that such tourist activity as the youth (student) tourism takes place in Uzbekistan and has perspectives for growth.

The largest number of tourists came from the Central Asian region – 5,764,500 people. 495,600 tourists arrived from CIS countries (How many tourist visit Uzbekistan in 2019..., 2021; State Committee of Tourism..., 2020). The number of visitors from foreign countries amounted to 488,400 people. Most tourists came from Kazakhstan, Tajikistan, Kyrgyzstan, Turkmenistan, Russia, Turkey, Afghanistan, China, the Republic of Korea and India (Rakhmatullaev, 2007; State Committee of Tourism..., 2020; The Thousand Year Mystery of the Attraction of the Solar Country, 2021).

5. Research Methods

The market research required a SWOT analysis (Table 1), since the analysis is a simple tool that can help to analyze and understand how Uzbekistan is moving in terms of youth (student) tourism, what are the strengths and weaknesses, determine opportunities and threats, and develop a successful strategy for the future.

Table 1. SWOT analysis of student and youth tourism in Uzbekistan

STRENGTHS	WEAKNESSES
Political stability	Limited income of young people
Relatively liberal society	Slow development of tourism infrastructure
Friendly environment	Rapid modification negatively affecting the local society
Attractions and cultural events	Staffing
OPPORTUNITIES	THREATS
Technology (promotion of agencies)	Reduction of population paying capacity
New routes	Growth of industry costs
Changes in social legislation	Increased competition between companies
Increase of tourist flow to Uzbekistan	Demand instability

6. Findings

Student tourism, which in itself is associated with other types of tourism, such as cultural and historical, educational tourism, etc., has a number of features, including the following:

- Purpose of stay, namely participation in research hosted by higher educational institutions (i.e. universities).
- Length of stay is usually much longer than in other types of tourism.
- Consumer behavior, which is more like the behavior of a local resident than a standard tourist.
- Type of accommodation, which is most often very different from the accommodation of a regular tourist. Students usually stay in shared apartments, dormitories, with families and college-run accommodation.
- Great potential for new visits given that the vast majority of these students are visited by relatives and friends.

Unlike regular holidays, youth travel is motivated by several factors, including the desire to become acquainted with other cultures, gain unique life experience and take advantage of formal and informal learning opportunities in other countries, including education or work abroad.

In 2017, the main destinations for youth tourism were the United States, Spain, France, Italy, Great Britain, Germany, the Netherlands, Australia, Thailand and Austria.

Travel for young people is the way of life in a developed social society. While traveling, young people receive new knowledge, emotions that help them form their own life principles.

Students travel in groups accompanied by a teacher or an employee of an educational institution. Sometimes students join in small groups of 4-7 people and independently make long trips around the country or abroad.

Tourism provides a unique opportunity to get acquainted with the historical and cultural heritage of any country, to arouse the desire of young people to learn new traditions and customs of other peoples. Youth tourism is one of the socio-cultural mechanisms creating opportunities to discover the abilities of young people, as well as to consolidate intercultural values in the youth environment.

The experience of different countries shows that the success of tourism development directly depends on how the state studied this industry, i.e. how much tourism enjoys state support. In order to obtain revenues from the tourism industry any state is exploring the territory to assess tourism potential, to prepare programs for the development of the tourism industry, necessary infrastructure projects for regions and tourist centers, as well as to provide information support and advertising.

The presence of tourist clubs will allow young people participating in hikes, competitions, tourist camps, lead an active, healthy lifestyle, i.e. provide the opportunity to travel. This will be fostered by equipped tourist routes, a travel privilege system on various modes of transport, i.e. the entire infrastructure.

For any country, the development of tourism is one of the key priorities since this is critical for the economy. Having invested in tourist infrastructure, the state will begin to receive considerable income from this in a few years.

An extensive tourism business system will require many new jobs and will improve the country's status at the international level.

7. Conclusion

There is a very clear relationship between the level of recognition of student and youth tourism and policy development, and the collection of market information. In other words, those countries that do not recognize the student and youth tourism market are also unlikely to develop programs for young travelers. Currently, one of the most common ways to promote student and youth tourism is to offer discounts on trips and/or attractions and events. However, there is a growing number of more complex approaches to the market, including specialized e-marketing platforms (Karimova, 2020; Rakhmatullaev, 2007).

Therefore, the growth of student and youth tourism runs counter to expectations based on demographic trends, largely because young people travel more often. The growing importance of exchange and student travel programs is also the reason for the expected growth of student and youth tourism (The last year 6.7 million people visit Uzbekistan, 2020).

There appears to be a political gap between the growing potential of student and youth tourism and the lack of action by many governments. In some cases, this gap is filled by private and non-profit activities, but this may mean that many countries are losing the long-term potential of a rapidly growing market.

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