

## Issues in the Development of Social Tourism in Uzbekistan

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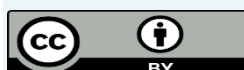
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**Abstract:** Tourism plays a vital role in the global economy, offering both economic benefits and opportunities for social development. In Uzbekistan, despite ongoing tourism reforms, the field of social tourism remains underdeveloped and inaccessible to vulnerable groups. Social tourism focuses on creating travel opportunities for marginalized populations, including low-income individuals, people with disabilities, youth, and pensioners. Although several presidential decrees and government decisions in Uzbekistan have outlined strategies to develop social tourism, practical implementation lags behind. There is a lack of infrastructure, legal frameworks, public awareness, and inclusive tourism services, which hinders equal access to tourism for all citizens. This article aims to analyze the importance, challenges, and developmental prospects of social tourism in Uzbekistan, while offering policy recommendations grounded in international best practices. The study identifies key constraints such as financial limitations, inadequate infrastructure for people with disabilities, and poor coordination among local authorities and NGOs. Despite these issues, the potential for inclusive tourism to reduce social inequality and contribute to national economic growth is substantial. By integrating international models from countries like France and Germany with local realities, the research presents a tailored roadmap for promoting inclusive tourism in Uzbekistan. Development of social tourism requires targeted subsidies, adapted infrastructure, public awareness campaigns, and inter-sectoral cooperation. Strengthening social tourism will not only improve the well-being of vulnerable populations but also enhance Uzbekistan's image as an inclusive and socially responsible tourism destination.

**Kalit soʻzlar:** social tourism, low-income population, people with disabilities, youth, pensioners, tourism policy, inclusive tourism.



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## INTRODUCTION

Tourism, as a vital sector of the global economy, plays an increasingly significant role in fostering sustainable development, cultural exchange, and economic inclusivity. In Uzbekistan, considerable reforms have been undertaken in recent years to strengthen tourism infrastructure and diversify services[1]. However, one of the underdeveloped yet crucial branches of the sector is social tourism, which aims to make travel accessible to economically disadvantaged groups, people with disabilities, youth, and the elderly. Despite the existence of presidential decrees and government strategies supporting its development, social tourism in Uzbekistan still faces structural, financial, and organizational challenges. Infrastructure remains inadequately equipped to serve individuals with limited mobility, while public awareness about social tourism opportunities is low. Legal and institutional support frameworks are in early stages of development, and targeted state subsidies are insufficient. This article explores the significance of social tourism as a means of promoting social equality and inclusive economic growth[2]. It analyzes the legal foundations, examines current challenges and barriers to implementation, and offers proposals based on international best practices, particularly from Germany, France, and Russia. By enhancing accessibility, affordability, and awareness, Uzbekistan can create an inclusive tourism model that benefits all layers of society and supports national development objectives. The development of social tourism not only contributes to social integration and improved quality of life for vulnerable groups but also serves as a strategic tool for diversifying the national tourism portfolio and strengthening community-level economic participation[3].

## METHODS

This study employed a qualitative-descriptive research approach to analyze the current state and development prospects of social tourism in Uzbekistan. The methodology is grounded in the examination of national legal documents, presidential decrees, and government decisions related to tourism policies from 2016 to 2023[4]. The authors reviewed and synthesized data from official statistics, institutional reports, and scholarly literature to identify the social, financial, infrastructural, and legal factors influencing the growth of social tourism. The study also included comparative analysis of international experiences in countries such as Germany, France, and Russia to identify successful models and practices applicable to the Uzbek context. Specific attention was given to the assessment of state subsidies, accessibility of tourism infrastructure for people with disabilities, and the availability of inclusive travel programs for youth, the elderly, and low-income groups. The research utilized policy analysis techniques to evaluate existing barriers and gaps, particularly in terms of legal frameworks, financing mechanisms, infrastructure readiness, and public awareness. The findings were derived from synthesizing both domestic challenges and foreign best practices, which allowed the authors to develop targeted policy suggestions and development strategies for inclusive and sustainable social tourism in Uzbekistan[5].

## RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Tourism is considered one of the most important sectors in the global economy. In recent years, a number of reforms have been implemented in Uzbekistan to promote the development of tourism. However, social tourism remains one of the underdeveloped areas, with limited travel opportunities for socially vulnerable groups[6]. The development of social tourism contributes to inclusivity in tourism, reduces social inequality, and positively impacts the national economy. Several Presidential decrees and decisions have been adopted in Uzbekistan to support the development of social tourism. Some of these documents include:

1. "On Measures to Ensure the Rapid Development of the Tourism Sector in the Republic of Uzbekistan" (Decree dated December 2, 2016): This decree outlines tasks for the development of various tourism directions, including social tourism. In particular, it emphasizes

strengthening the social significance of tourism through the development of tourism for children, adolescents, youth, families, and the elderly[7].

2. "On the Organization of Activities of the Ministry of Tourism and Cultural Heritage" (Decision dated February 18, 2022): This decision established the Ministry of Tourism and Cultural Heritage and included the development of social tourism among its tasks. The goal is to expand travel opportunities for various segments of the population.
3. "On Measures for the Rapid Development of the Tourism Potential of the Republic" (Decision dated April 26, 2023): This decision identifies measures to support domestic tourism, including social tourism. It calls for the implementation of special tourism programs for youth, the elderly, and people with disabilities[8].
4. "On Further Deepening Reforms in the Tourism Sector" (Decision dated July 27, 2023): This decision provides measures to deepen ongoing reforms in tourism, including those aimed at developing social tourism. It highlights support for social tourism through increased tourist flows and assistance to tour operators. These documents represent significant steps toward expanding travel opportunities for different social groups in Uzbekistan[9].

**THE SIGNIFICANCE AND TASKS OF SOCIAL TOURISM** Social tourism aims to create tourism opportunities for various segments of society. Its main tasks include:

- Ensuring social equality: Every citizen, regardless of their social status, should have the right to travel[10].
- Creating opportunities for people with disabilities and low-income individuals: Tourism facilities must be accessible to people with physical limitations.
- Providing affordable tourism services for youth and pensioners: Special discounted programs should be developed for these groups.

**FACTORS AFFECTING THE DEVELOPMENT OF SOCIAL TOURISM IN UZBEKISTAN** The main factors influencing the development of social tourism in Uzbekistan include:

1. Financial and subsidy issues: The state needs to allocate grants and subsidies for social tourism[11].
2. Infrastructure challenges: There is a lack of adapted hotels and transportation services for the elderly and disabled.
3. Legal foundations: Comprehensive legal frameworks to support social tourism are still underdeveloped.
4. Need to learn from international experience: Many developed countries have effective social tourism programs that could be implemented in Uzbekistan[12].

The development of social tourism is crucial in Uzbekistan, as it aims to expand travel opportunities for all segments of society, especially low-income individuals, people with disabilities, youth, and the elderly. Below are key problems and possible solutions:

**Key problems:**

- Underdeveloped tourism infrastructure
- Limited adapted hotels, transport, and tourism sites for people with disabilities
- Inadequate public roads and transport for tourism needs
- Low public awareness about available social tourism programs
- Insufficient promotion through media and the internet

Legal and organizational issues:

- Lack of fully developed laws and programs regulating social tourism
- Weak cooperation with local authorities and NGOs
- Need to develop laws supporting social tourism
- Providing benefits to tourism companies offering services to people with disabilities

Seasonality and lack of tourism services:

- Most tourism routes are seasonal and inactive during certain periods of the year
- Not enough special excursions and programs for the elderly and people with disabilities
- Need to develop year-round tourism routes
- Promotion of tourism services based on sports, culture, and nature

DEVELOPMENT STRATEGIES:

- Introduce financial support systems
- Allocate state subsidies and grants for vulnerable social groups
- Involve businesses and charitable organizations in developing social tourism
- Improve tourism infrastructure
- Establish convenient transport, hotels, and routes for the disabled and elderly
- Increase the number of budget hotels and tourism centers
- Strengthen promotion and information campaigns
- Provide information on social tourism through media and social networks
- Organize seminars and training on social tourism in schools, universities, and community assemblies

**INTERNATIONAL EXPERIENCE AND RECOMMENDATIONS** Countries such as Germany, France, and Russia support social tourism at the state level. For example, in France, there are special travel funds for low-income families and people with disabilities[13]. Implementing similar mechanisms in Uzbekistan could contribute to inclusive tourism development[14].

Proposals for the development of social tourism include:

- Allocating special subsidies and grants from the state
- Adapting hotels and transport infrastructure for the elderly and people with disabilities
- Developing social tourism programs and providing benefits to citizens
- Improving the quality of tourism services based on international experience[15].

## CONCLUSION

The development of social tourism enables wider segments of the population to access tourism services. Although this sector is still insufficiently developed in Uzbekistan, it is possible to create effective programs through cooperation between the public and private sectors. Studying international practices and developing tourism policies tailored to local conditions is of great importance.