PECULIAR CHARACTERISTICS OF SERVICE PROVISION IN THE TOURISM SECTOR OF NAVOI REGION.

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Abstract: This article analyzes the specific features of service provision in ***the tourism sector of Navoiy Region during the period of 2026-2026. The region's*** unique nature, ancient historical and cultural heritage, and tourist sites such as the Sarmishsoy petroglyphs, Nurata mountains, Aydarkul Lake, and the Kyzylkum Desert have directly influenced the development of tourism services. The main purpose of the article is to determine the state of the service sector during this period, identify its specific characteristics, and reveal existing problems. The research employs analytical, statistical, comparative, and descriptive methods. The results show that although tourism services in the region developed gradually, serious problems remained, including poor transport infrastructure, a lack of qualified personnel, the absence of information centers, and low service quality. Compared to other regions, the service sector in Navoiy Region developed more slowly. However, the establishment of the Sarmishsoy State Museum-Reserve was noted as a positive change. In conclusion, service provision in the tourism sector of Navoiy Region is distinguished by its historical, geographical, and socio-economic characteristics.

Keywords: Navoiy Region, tourism, service provision, Sarmishsoy, Aydarkul, Nurata, infrastructure.

Introduction: Tourism is one of the fastest-growing sectors of the international economy, serving as an important factor in increasing gross domestic product, ensuring employment, developing infrastructure, and preserving cultural heritage. Following its independence, the Republic of Uzbekistan has designated tourism as one of the priority directions of state policy, paying special attention to improving the legislative framework for the sector, attracting foreign investment, and shaping the country's image in the international tourism market. Navoiy Region stands out as one of the most promising tourist areas of the country due to its geographical location, the Sarmishsoy petroglyphs dating back to the Paleolithic period, the pre-Islamic Nurata fortresses, medieval caravanserais (such as Raboti Malik), Lake Aydarkul, and the natural conditions of the Kyzylkum Desert favorable for extreme tourism. However, despite the region's tourism potential, the level of effective utilization of these resources during the period of 2000–2010, particularly the state of the service sector and its regional specific features, has remained almost completely unstudied from a scientific perspective. This period represents a distinctive "formative stage" for Uzbek tourism, characterized by the strengthening of market mechanisms in the economy, increased activity of the private sector, and the gradual emergence of a system of tourism services. Therefore, understanding how tourist services were formed in Navoiy Region during 2000–2010, their spatial distribution, the state of their material and technical base, the availability of qualified personnel, as well as the level of service provision for domestic and international tourist flows, is of crucial importance for scientifically substantiating strategic decisions regarding the development of tourism in the region today. An analysis of the scientific literature on the topic shows that the tourism potential of Navoiy Region has been studied to date only in general geographical, historical, and ecological terms (Rahimov, 2005; Karimova, 2008). Information is available on certain historical sites and natural monuments in the region. Furthermore, the annual reports of the State Statistics Committee of the Republic of Uzbekistan and the regional tourism department partially reflect some quantitative indicators of the

sector (number of hotels, bed capacity, visitor dynamics). However, none of the existing studies have systematically analyzed tourism services in Navoiy Region during the period 2000–2010, nor have they specifically investigated the following key components of the service sector – hotel industry, transport services, excursion and cultural services, catering system, and information services for tourists – along with their interconnections and stages of development. Consequently, there are no clear scientific conclusions regarding the systemic shortcomings in service provision, regional imbalances, or the reasons for their emergence during this period. Based on the scientific gap identified above, the main purpose of this research is to conduct a comprehensive scientific-theoretical and practical analysis of the specific features of service provision in the tourism sector of Navoiy Region during the period of 2000–2010, to systematize existing problems, and to identify the delayed stages of the sector's development. To achieve this goal, the following specific tasks have been set: first, to study the quantitative and qualitative dynamics of change in the hotel industry and accommodation services in the region during 2000–2010; second, to analyze transport infrastructure and the degree of its connectivity with tourist sites; third, to assess the scope and quality of excursion, cultural, and catering services; fourth, to identify trends in the flow of foreign and domestic tourists to the region; fifth, to provide scientific substantiation of the main systemic problems in the service sector; and sixth, to distinguish the stages of development of tourism services in the region and describe the characteristics of each stage.

Literature Review: Issues of service provision in the tourism sector have been studied from various perspectives by both Uzbek and foreign scholars. To fully understand the extent to which the topic has been researched, it is appropriate to analyze the literature in several directions: first, studies dedicated to the general development of tourism services in Uzbekistan; second, works specifically focused on the tourism potential and service sector of Navoiy Region; and third, statistical and analytical sources covering the period of 2000–2010.

The general development issues of tourism in Uzbekistan have been reflected in the scientific works of a number of scholars. In particular, A. Saidov, in his monograph “Tourism Development in Uzbekistan: Problems and Prospects,” analyzes the stages of formation of tourism infrastructure in the country and examines the impact of service quality on economic growth1. According to the author, at the beginning of the 2000s, tourism services in Uzbekistan were not systematically developed, which limited the possibility of fully utilizing existing potential. Similarly, M. Karimova, in her research, highlights the organizational and economic mechanisms of developing tourism services, emphasizing in particular the interconnection between the hotel industry and transport services2. Karimova concludes that the level of development of regional tourism services directly depends on the attention paid to the sector by local authorities and the volume of investments.

There are relatively few specialized studies on the tourism potential of Navoiy Region. T. Rahimov described the historical and natural monuments of the region and highlighted their touristic significance3. The author evaluates the Sarmishsoy petroglyphs, Nurata fortresses, and Lake Aydarkul as the region’s main tourism brands. The earliest scientific information about the Sarmishsoy rock carvings is also presented in the National Encyclopedia of Uzbekistan, which describes images related to the life of ancient people, tools, and ritual ceremonies4. However, Rahimov’s work barely addresses issues such as service infrastructure, the state of hotels, or transport possibilities. Similarly, N. Ergashev, while studying the ecotourism potential of the region, primarily focused on the attractiveness of natural

1 Saidov A. Tourism Development in Uzbekistan: Problems and Prospects. – Tashkent: Fan Publishing House, 2005. – 184 p.
2 Karimova M. Organizational and Economic Mechanisms of Tourism Service Development. – Tashkent: Economics Publishing House, 2008. – 156 p.
3 Rahimov T. Tourism Potential of Navoiy Region. – Navoiy: Navoiy University Press, 2005. – 112 p.
4 National Encyclopedia of Uzbekistan. Volume 1. – Tashkent: "National Encyclopedia of Uzbekistan" State Scientific Publishing House, 2000. – 672 p

resources but did not analyze the system of services necessary for utilizing these resources (guide services, information centers, road signs, etc.)5.

Another shortcoming of the existing literature is that most of it is dedicated to the period after 2010 or to general future prospects. The specific situation during 2000–2010 and the gradual development dynamics of the service sector have been almost completely unstudied. Although the annual reports of the State Statistics Committee of the Republic of Uzbekistan contain quantitative indicators such as the number of hotels in the region and tourist flows, these figures have not been analyzed, and their cause-and-effect relationships have not been revealed6. In foreign literature, works dedicated to tourism in Uzbekistan focus mainly on major centers such as Samarkand, Bukhara, and Khiva, while information on Navoiy Region is scarce. For example, the reports of the World Tourism Organization (WTO) for 2005 and 2010 present general tourism indicators for Uzbekistan, but Navoiy Region is not separately distinguished in the regional breakdown7.

Nevertheless, some scientific articles and conference materials contain brief information about the service capabilities of individual tourism sites in Navoiy Region (Sarmishsoy, Aydarkul, Nurata). For instance, Sh. Turg‘unov, based on a survey of tourists visiting Sarmishsoy, found that low service quality, a shortage of guides, and transport problems negatively affected tourist satisfaction8. Although valuable, this study was conducted within the framework of a single site and does not cover systemic problems at the regional level. Another problem related to the development of tourism services in Navoiy Region concerns the insufficient system

5 Ergashev N. Ecotourism Opportunities in Uzbekistan: Problems and Prospects. – Samarkand: Zarafshon Publishing House, 2007. – 98 p.
6 State Statistics Committee of the Republic of Uzbekistan. Annual Reports on Tourism and Travel (2000–2010). – Tashkent: Uzstat Publishing House, 2000–2010.
7 World Tourism Organization (WTO). Uzbekistan Tourism Market Report. – Madrid: UNWTO, 2005, 2010. – 112 p.
8 Turg‘unov Sh. Issues of improving service quality at the Sarmishsoy tourist site // Tourism and Cultural Heritage: Problems and Solutions. Materials of the Republican Scientific-Practical Conference. – Samarkand, 2009. – pp. 123-126.

of qualified personnel training. The 2008 report of the Ministry of Tourism and Cultural Heritage of Uzbekistan also noted that specialists working in the tourism sector in the region were not adequately trained9.

In conclusion, while the existing literature contains general information about the tourism potential and historical sites of Navoiy Region, a systematic analysis of tourism services in the region during the period 2000–2010, including the components of the service sector (hotel, transport, excursion, catering, and information services) and their interconnections, has not been scientifically studied. Therefore, this research aims to fill the identified scientific gap.

Research Methodology: This research is aimed at identifying and systematically analyzing the specific features of service provision in the tourism sector of Navoiy Region during the period of 2000–2010.

The object of the research is the tourism service system (hotels, transport, excursion, catering, and information services) operating in Navoiy Region during 2000–2010. The subject of the research is the spatial distribution, quality indicators, and stages of development of these services.

The research covers Navoiy Region and all its districts. The chronological boundaries are set from 2000 to 2010.

Data sources include annual reports of the State Statistics Committee of the Republic of Uzbekistan, archival documents of the Navoiy Regional Department of Tourism, scientific monographs, articles, and open data from reports of international organizations (WTO).

The following methods were applied: historical method (distinguishing stages of development), statistical analysis (processing quantitative indicators),

9 Ministry of Tourism and Cultural Heritage of Uzbekistan. Activity Report for 2008. – Tashkent, 2009. – 45 p.

comparative analysis (comparison with other regions), systematic analysis (studying interconnections between services), and descriptive method (detailing individual objects). Travelogues and surveys from that period were analyzed to identify problems.

Results and Discussion: The results obtained during the research show that the development of tourism services in Navoiy Region during the period 2000-2010 can be divided into several stages. While the region experienced the initial stage of tourism infrastructure formation in the early years of independence, qualitative changes in the service system began to be observed from the second half of the 2000s. In his study analyzing the tourism potential of Navoiy Region, Rahimov (2005) notes that at the beginning of the 2000s, tourism infrastructure in the region was almost non-existent, and the majority of existing hotels served only local residents and businesspeople[10].

During the period 2000-2004, the initial system of tourism services began to emerge in the region. During this period, the number of hotels did not exceed five and they were mainly located in the city of Navoiy, the material and technical base of the hotels did not meet modern requirements, most rooms lacked air conditioning and communication facilities, the qualifications of service personnel, especially their knowledge of foreign languages, were low, structures engaged in excursion services hardly operated, and in 2000 only 1,200 foreign and 4,500 domestic tourists visited the region. The average occupancy rate of hotels was 28 percent, indicating the low efficiency of hotel operations in the region[11].

During the period 2005-2007, significant changes occurred in the service system. The number of hotels reached eight, hotels also began to open in the city of Zarafshon, and the average occupancy rate of hotels rose to 35 percent. The number

10 Rahimov, T. (2005). Tourism potential of Navoiy Region. Navoiy: Navoiy University Press.
11 State Statistics Committee of the Republic of Uzbekistan. (2000-2010). Annual reports on tourism and travel (for Navoiy Region). Tashkent.

of agencies engaged in excursion services increased to two, and they mainly organized one-day trips to Sarmishsoy and Nurata. During this period, the number of foreign tourists visiting the region reached 1,900, while the number of domestic tourists reached 7,200. The growth in tourist flow, especially due to domestic tourists, indicates that domestic tourism in the region developed faster than international tourism[1]. In their study conducted at the national level in Uzbekistan, Astanakulov and Goyipnazarov (2023) emphasize that tourism acts as a catalyst for regional development, but this process directly depends on the level of development of infrastructure and the service system[12].

The period 2008-2010 is characterized as the stage of institutional development of the service system. The establishment of the "Sarmishsoy" State Museum-Reserve in 2008 was an important stage for the region's tourism, and in 2009 Sarmishsoy was included in the UNESCO World Heritage List. The number of hotels reached twelve, and the average occupancy rate of hotels was 42 percent. Family guest houses began operating in the Nurata district. The number of excursion agencies reached three, and they began organizing not only one-day but also two or three-day trips. In 2010, 3,100 foreign and 11,200 domestic tourists visited the region, and the total tourist flow increased 2.5 times compared to 2000. By the end of the decade, the number of foreign tourists increased almost 2.5 times, while the number of domestic tourists increased more than 2.5 times[11].

In a survey conducted by Turg'unov (2009) at the Sarmishsoy tourist site, it was found that 68 percent of tourists rated service quality as "unsatisfactory," 54 percent could not use guide services, and 72 percent cited transport problems as the main obstacle, revealing serious shortcomings in the region's service system. Although the majority of foreign tourists participating in the survey highly appreciated the unique nature and ancient petroglyphs of Sarmishsoy, problems such

12 Astanakulov, O., & Goyipnazarov, S. (2023). Tourism as a catalyst for regional development: Uzbekistan's experience and economic prospects. Economic Annals-XXI, 204(7-8), 33-44.

as difficulties in accessing the site, limited accommodation and dining options, and the lack of qualified guides negatively affected their overall impression[13].

Compared to traditional tourism centers such as Samarkand and Bukhara, the level of tourism service development in Navoiy Region was significantly lower. While more than 40 hotels operated in Samarkand Region by 2010, this figure was only 12 in Navoiy Region. The main reasons for this difference include the geographical distance of Navoiy Region from these centers, the fact that it was not one of the main centers of the Great Silk Road historically, and its name not being sufficiently known internationally.

According to the National Encyclopedia of Uzbekistan, more than 10,000 petroglyphs exist in the Sarmishsoy gorge, dating from the 4th-1st millennia BC and the 1st-7th centuries AD, and the carvings are engraved on rocks over a distance of 22.5 km in the middle part of the gorge. Among the rock carvings are depictions of wild animals (wild bull, mountain goat, arkhar), hunting scenes, ritual ceremonies, and astronomical symbols. Some of these petroglyphs have not yet been fully studied and have potential for new archaeological discoveries[14]. Archaeologist Muhammadjonov (2002) particularly emphasizes the importance of these petroglyphs in studying the religious and social life of ancient times, along with their artistic value. In his opinion, the Sarmishsoy petroglyphs are considered one of the oldest and richest collections not only in Uzbekistan but throughout Central Asia[15].

In studying the organizational-economic mechanisms of developing tourism services, Karimova (2008) pays special attention to the relationship between transport infrastructure and the hotel industry. According to her, the unbalanced development of these two sectors negatively affects the efficiency of the entire tourism system. In areas where transport services are poorly developed, the

13 Turg'unov, Sh. (2009). Issues of improving service quality at the Sarmishsoy tourist site. Tourism and Cultural Heritage: Problems and Solutions. Materials of the Republican Scientific-Practical Conference. Samarkand.
14 National Encyclopedia of Uzbekistan. (2000). Volume 7. Tashkent: "National Encyclopedia of Uzbekistan" State Scientific Publishing House.
15 Muhammadjonov, A. (2002). Petroglyphs of Uzbekistan and their historical significance. Scientific collection of the Institute of Archaeology and Ethnography. Tashkent

development of the hotel industry is also limited, because tourists do not want to stay at sites they cannot easily access[16]. This situation was observed in the case of Navoiy Region – the lack of paved roads to Sarmishsoy, Nurata, and Aydarkul, and the absence of special bus services hindered the development of the hotel industry.

Saidov (2005) notes that the restoration of historical and cultural heritage sites and their integration into tourism circulation was identified as one of the main directions for developing tourism services in all regions of Uzbekistan. According to him, issues of restoring historical monuments, protecting them, and using them for tourism purposes occupied a special place in the programs adopted by the government in the early years of independence[17]. In Navoiy Region, the renovation of the Qosim Shaykh complex in 1999-2000, the establishment of the Navoiy Regional State Museum of History and Culture in 1992, and the subsequent expansion of its network of branches in the districts were practical steps in this direction.

The formation of new tourism potential in the region was mainly carried out through the restoration of existing historical and cultural heritage sites and the expansion of the museum network. In the Angidon village of Khatirchi district, there are opportunities to develop ecotourism, gastronomic tourism, and ethnographic tourism. The village is known for its goat milk and almond oil. The Sangijumon natural stone monuments can also attract tourists as a unique geological site. Scientists have put forward different views on the formation history of this massif. The Qiziltepa district museum preserves collections of ceramic items, copperware, clothing, and household items dating from the 19th to early 20th centuries.

Analysis and discussion show that although tourism services in Navoiy Region developed gradually during 2000-2010, the number of hotels increased from five to twelve, and the tourist flow grew from 5,700 to 14,300 people, problems such

16 Karimova, M. (2008). Organizational-economic mechanisms of tourism service development. Tashkent: Economics Publishing House.
17 Saidov, A. (2005). Tourism development in Uzbekistan: problems and prospects. Tashkent: Fan Publishing House.

as poor transport infrastructure, lack of qualified personnel, and uneven geographical distribution of the hotel base remained. Issues such as the scope and systematic nature of restoration work, the attractiveness of tourist sites, and the dynamics of visitor flow require further study. In future research, it would be appropriate to pay special attention to these issues and develop ways to fully utilize the region's tourism potential.

Conclusion: The analysis of the specific features of tourism service development in Navoiy Region during the period 2000-2010 shows that the region experienced the initial stages of tourism infrastructure formation in the early years of independence. However, during this period, systemic problems such as unpaved roads, the almost complete absence of guides with foreign language skills, and the lack of accommodation facilities near tourist sites hindered the effective use of the region's tourism potential. Although the presence of internationally significant sites like Sarmishsoy presented a great opportunity for the region, the expected results were not achieved due to shortcomings in service provision. Data indicate that domestic tourists were relatively more satisfied with the level of service compared to foreign tourists, and their flow remained more stable.

To develop the tourism sector in the region and address existing problems, the following recommendations are proposed.

First, combined tour routes connecting Navoiy Region's tourist sites with the cities of Tashkent, Samarkand, and Bukhara should be developed and offered to international travel companies.

Second, modern road infrastructure should be built to Sarmishsoy, Nurata, and Aydarkul by attracting foreign investment, and regular bus services with electronic ticketing should be established.

Third, small business development around tourist sites should be encouraged by providing preferential loans to local residents to establish family guest houses, national cuisine restaurants, and souvenir shops.

Fourth, short-term intensive courses for training guides with foreign language skills should be organized at Navoiy State University, and a mechanism for employing graduates with special certificates should be created.

Fifth, the regional administration should organize an annual international tourism forum under the slogan "Navoiy Region – a Tourist Destination" and invite representatives of foreign travel companies, bloggers, and media outlets to this forum.

Sixth, 3D virtual tours of sites such as Qosim Shaykh, Sarmishsoy, and Sangijumon should be created and placed on international platforms to remotely promote the region's tourism potential.

The implementation of these recommendations will lead to significant improvements in the quality of tourism services in Navoiy Region, increase the flow of foreign tourists, and create an additional source of income for the region's economy.

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