



Cultural Diplomacy And Tourism Growth: The Case Of Uzbekistan And Germany

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ABSTRACT

This article analyzes the development of public diplomacy and tourism cooperation between Uzbekistan and Germany. It reveals the role of public diplomacy in strengthening mutual trust between nations. Tourism sector reforms and their economic effectiveness are examined. The impact of the pandemic on tourism and its recovery stages are discussed. Uzbekistan's position in the global tourism market is justified with statistical data. The paper also proposes перспективные directions for further tourism development.

Keywords:

Public diplomacy, tourism, Uzbekistan, Germany, cooperation, cultural heritage, ecotourism, globalization, economy, travel

Аннотация. Mazkur maqolada O'zbekiston va Germaniya o'rtasidagi xalq diplomatiyasi hamda turizm sohasidagi hamkorlikning rivojlanish jarayonlari tahlil qilinadi. Xalq diplomatiyasining davlatlar o'rtasidagi o'zaro ishonchni mustahkamlashdagi o'rni ochib beriladi. Turizm sohasidagi islohotlar va ularning iqtisodiy samaradorligi ko'rib chiqiladi. Pandemiya davrining turizmga ta'siri va tiklanish bosqichlari yoritiladi. O'zbekistonning xalqaro turizm bozorida o'rni statistik ma'lumotlar asosida asoslanadi. Shuningdek, turizmni rivojlantirishning istiqbolli yo'nalishlari bo'yicha takliflar ilgari suriladi.

Калит so'zlar: xalq diplomatiyasi, turizm, O'zbekiston, Germaniya, hamkorlik, madaniy meros, ekoturizm, globalizatsiya, iqtisodiyot, sayyohlik.

Аннотация: В статье анализируются процессы развития народной дипломатии и туристического сотрудничества между Узбекистаном и Германией. Раскрывается роль народной дипломатии в укреплении взаимного доверия между государствами. Рассматриваются реформы в сфере туризма и их экономическая эффективность. Освещается влияние пандемии на туристическую отрасль и этапы её восстановления. Определяется место Узбекистана на мировом туристическом рынке на основе статистических данных. Также предлагаются перспективные направления дальнейшего развития туризма.

Ключевые слова: народная дипломатия, туризм, Узбекистан, Германия, сотрудничество, культурное наследие, экотуризм, глобализация, экономика, путешествия.

In the current era of globalization, the issue of developing cooperation between states and peoples is becoming increasingly relevant compared to any previous period. In such

conditions, public diplomacy plays a crucial role in ensuring mutual understanding among nations, facilitating the exchange of ideas, and strengthening cooperative ties. Through public

diplomacy, it becomes possible to find solutions even to complex political and economic issues[1].

Uzbekistan is paying particular attention to developing active cooperation with leading European countries in the field of public diplomacy. In this regard, relations with Germany have been progressing effectively, demonstrating steady development across various sectors. One of the primary directions of this cooperation is the promotion of culture, where mass media serves as an essential tool[2]. The effective use of media resources contributes significantly to the development of public diplomacy, as it allows the lifestyle, culture, art, and history of a nation to be presented to millions of people worldwide.

For instance, a video titled “Uzbekistan – A Country on the Silk Road”, dedicated to the rich history, culture, and tourism potential of Uzbekistan, was published in June 2019 on the YouTube channel of one of Germany’s largest broadcasters, Westdeutscher Rundfunk (WDR). According to the author, Hanna Perthold, the main objective of the film was to introduce German travel enthusiasts to Uzbekistan’s unique historical and cultural heritage, particularly the architectural monuments of cities such as Tashkent, Samarkand, Bukhara, and Khiva, and thereby contribute to increasing the flow of tourists from Germany to Uzbekistan[3].

Uzbekistan’s tourism potential is also effectively promoted through various cultural events and festivals held in different cities of Germany. Notably, the celebration organized on March 20, 2019, in Frankfurt am Main under the slogan “Navruz in Central Asia” holds particular importance. The event was attended by the Deputy Mayor of Frankfurt for Integration and Education, Sylvia Weber, as well as consular representatives of Central Asian countries[4]. Additionally, a representative of the State Committee for Tourism Development of Uzbekistan, O’tkur Saidov, introduced Uzbek youth in Germany to ongoing reforms in the tourism sector and encouraged them to actively participate in both public and private tourism projects. The event also featured exhibitions of traditional Uzbek handicrafts and the

distribution of brochures and books highlighting Uzbekistan’s tourism potential[5].

The global spread of the COVID-19 pandemic at the end of 2019 led to a significant slowdown in all sectors, including tourism. This also negatively affected relations with Germany, which had been one of the major sources of tourists to Uzbekistan. Prior to the pandemic, the flow of German tourists to Uzbekistan had been well established. Despite the difficulties caused by the pandemic, Uzbekistan continues to remain an attractive destination for German travelers due to its rich cultural heritage[6]. In particular, after the abolition of visa requirements for German citizens in 2019, the number of visitors from Germany increased by 52 percent. It is important to note that with the lifting of quarantine restrictions, tourist flows from Germany are expected to recover. Currently, Germany ranks among the leading European countries in terms of the number of visitors to Uzbekistan. German tourists are primarily interested in visiting world-renowned historical cities such as Samarkand, Bukhara, and Khiva[7].

At the same time, Uzbekistan’s natural beauty also attracts European, including German, tourists. A regional approach to tourism development appears to be highly beneficial. For example, the mountain ranges stretching across Central Asia and the region’s favorable climate provide excellent opportunities for tourism[8].

An analysis of global tourism development shows that before the pandemic, tourism had become one of the key drivers of national economies worldwide. However, like other sectors, tourism was severely affected by the pandemic[9]. According to the World Travel and Tourism Council, prior to the pandemic, one in four new jobs globally was created in the tourism sector, which accounted for 10.6% of total employment (334 million jobs) and 10.4% of global GDP (9.2 trillion USD). According to the World Tourism Organization, in 2020, international tourist arrivals declined by 74% compared to 2019, resulting in losses of approximately 1.3 trillion USD in tourism exports[10].

It should also be noted that Germany ranks ninth among the top ten countries whose citizens most frequently visit Uzbekistan. Statistical data indicate that in 2018 alone, the number of tourists arriving from Germany doubled. Experts predict that this figure could increase fivefold within the next five years. Currently, Germany, Italy, and France are among the leading European countries in terms of tourist arrivals to Uzbekistan[11]. According to estimates by Radio France Internationale experts in 2019, Uzbekistan has the potential to attract over 10 million tourists annually as a promising destination. These projections have materialized, as the number of visitors exceeded 10 million in 2025, reflecting the effectiveness of ongoing reforms.

To further strengthen cooperation in this field, Uzbekistan continues to host various international conferences and cultural events. For example, on July 9–10, 2019, Samarkand hosted a meeting of the CIS Tourism Council and the first tourism fair of Commonwealth countries. During these events, more than 50 agreements were signed with foreign companies to attract tourists. Moreover, in 2019, Samarkand became a member of the World Tourism Cities Federation (WTCF). Plans have been proposed to transform the city into a major tourism hub in the near future. These efforts are expected to significantly increase tourist arrivals[12]. While Uzbekistan received around 2 million tourists annually before 2016, by 2024, Samarkand alone welcomed over 2.5 million visitors[13]. These results clearly demonstrate the positive outcomes of reforms implemented in “New Uzbekistan.”

Within the framework of the Silk Road initiative, the World Tourism Organization considers Uzbekistan one of its key partners. The country is widely recognized for its rich cultural and historical heritage, including numerous UNESCO World Heritage sites. In 2023, Samarkand successfully hosted the 25th session of the UNWTO General Assembly, marking a historic milestone. This achievement reflects the success of Uzbekistan’s openness policy and its efforts to enhance its international image[14].

In recent years, visa-free regimes have been introduced for citizens of nearly 100 countries, while simplified electronic visa procedures have been implemented for 55 others[15]. As a result, Uzbekistan has ranked among the world’s top seven countries in terms of growth in attracting international tourists. According to the UNWTO World Tourism Barometer, tourist arrivals increased by 73% in the first nine months of 2025 compared to 2019.

Based on the above analysis, several recommendations can be proposed for further development of the tourism sector. First, Uzbekistan has more than 7,000 unique architectural monuments located across all regions. Expanding tourism routes would help create jobs in less-developed areas[16]. Second, the country’s natural reserves offer strong potential for developing ecotourism. Third, promoting local traditions, crafts, and cultural heritage can enhance both domestic and international tourism. Fourth, developing gastronomic tourism based on regional cuisines presents significant opportunities.

In conclusion, the experience of Uzbekistan demonstrates that public diplomacy is a powerful tool for promoting tourism and strengthening international cooperation. The country has achieved significant progress in recent years through visa liberalization, cultural promotion, and infrastructure development. The successful organization of major international events, such as the UNWTO General Assembly in Samarkand, has further enhanced Uzbekistan’s global reputation. These achievements confirm the effectiveness of ongoing reforms and the country’s openness policy. To ensure sustainable growth, it is necessary to diversify tourism направления, expand regional tourism opportunities, and strengthen public-private partnerships. Continued investment in tourism infrastructure and digital transformation will also play a key role. With its rich cultural heritage, strategic location, and consistent reforms, Uzbekistan has all the prerequisites to become one of the leading tourism destinations not only in Central Asia but also globally.

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