



Article

Employment in Uzbekistan's Tourism Sector: Development Indicators, Structural Challenges and Prospective Directions

Zokirjonova Feruza¹

1. Independent Researcher at Tashkent State University of Oriental Studies

* Correspondence: -

Abstract: The article analyses employment trends in Uzbekistan's tourism sector using official statistics for 2019–2025. It assesses the impact of changes in tourist flows, the number of tourism firms and organizations, employees working in tourism enterprises, accommodation facilities, and service infrastructure on employment. The methodological differences between the narrow industry approach to measuring tourism employment and the Tourism Satellite Account (TSA) methodology are substantiated. The analysis shows that the recovery of tourist flows and the expansion of accommodation infrastructure have increased demand for new jobs; however, regional imbalances, seasonality, informality, and skills mismatches in employment remain. Proposals have been developed to introduce a "Smart Tourism Labour Market" information system, forecast regional workforce needs, formalize platform employment, and comprehensively assess employment quality.

Keywords: tourism, employment, tourism labour market, tourist arrivals, hospitality, services sector, informal employment, seasonal employment, digital skills, Tourism Satellite Account, decent work

Citation: Feruza, Z.
Employment in Uzbekistan's
Tourism Sector: Development
Indicators, Structural Challenges
and Prospective Directions.
Central Asian Journal of
Innovations on Tourism
Management and Finance 2026,
7(4), 294-302.

Received: 13th Jun 2026

Revised: 28th Jul 2026

Accepted: 15th Aug 2026

Published: 05th Sep 2026



Copyright: © 2026 by the
authors. Submitted for open
access publication under the
terms and conditions of the
Creative Commons Attribution
(CC BY) license
(<https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by/4.0/>)

1. Introduction

Tourism is a complex sector that connects numerous areas of the economy, including transport, accommodation, food services, trade, culture, entertainment services, and handicrafts. Therefore, its impact on employment is not limited to jobs created directly in tourism enterprises. Increased tourist expenditure also stimulates demand for goods and services in related sectors, generating indirect and induced employment. In Uzbekistan, the legal framework for these labour relationships is established by the Law on Employment of the Population [1].

The availability of historical and cultural heritage sites, Silk Road cities, pilgrimage tourism, ecological and gastronomic resources is turning tourism in Uzbekistan into a strategic area for economic growth and employment generation. The sector is regulated by the Law on Tourism [2], while presidential measures have supported its accelerated development through visa facilitation, infrastructure expansion, and institutional reform [3].

Official statistical sources document the activities of tourism organizations in 2023 [4], changes in collective accommodation facilities during 2019–2024 [5], and the arrival of 11.7 million foreign tourists in 2025 [6]. The latter figure was 3.7 million, or 46.8%, higher than in 2024. However, growth in tourist visits does not automatically mean that high-quality and stable employment has been created. The duration of tourists' stays, their

expenditure, the services they use, and the purpose of their visits also affect the employment effect.

Therefore, assessment of employment in tourism should take into account not only the number of employees, but also job stability, labour productivity, seasonality, wages, social protection, and employees' professional qualifications.

1.1 Research Aim and Objectives

The aim of the study is to assess the characteristics of employment formation in Uzbekistan's tourism sector based on official statistical indicators, identify existing structural problems, and develop scientific proposals for promoting effective employment.

To achieve this aim, the following objectives were set:

1. To systematize the theoretical and methodological foundations of tourism employment;
2. To analyse the dynamics of tourist flows and tourism infrastructure;
3. To assess employment indicators in tourism organizations;
4. To identify regional, seasonal, and qualification-related problems in tourism employment;
5. To substantiate the impact of digital technologies on tourism occupations;
6. To develop proposals for ensuring effective and decent employment in tourism.

1.2 Literature Review

International tourism statistics are conceptually grounded in the United Nations recommendations, which define visitors, tourism trips, expenditure, and tourism industries [7]. The Tourism Satellite Account framework extends this foundation by linking visitor demand to production and employment across tourism-related activities [8]. Comparable tourism indicators are also disseminated through the UN Tourism Statistics Database [9]. In parallel, the International Labour Organization has highlighted how digital labour platforms reshape work organization, employment status, and social protection, issues that are increasingly relevant to platform-mediated tourism services [10].

Baum characterizes tourism employment as being marked by recurring problems in job quality, skills development, wages, and career structures [11]. Research on workforce sustainability further emphasizes that organizational practices and employment conditions influence the sector's capacity to retain capable workers [12].

Ladkin presents tourism labour as a distinct field shaped by occupational mobility, identity, and changing employment relations [13]. Riley, Ladkin, and Szivas show that flexibility may facilitate labour-market entry for young people and women while also expanding temporary and weakly protected work [14]. Robinson et al. similarly warn that persistent precarity can undermine the sustainability of tourism employment [15].

According to Becker's human capital theory, investment in education, professional training, and qualifications increases labour productivity and income. In tourism, this perspective explains the importance of foreign languages, service culture, digital marketing, and customer-service skills [16].

North's institutional approach explains how labour-market outcomes depend on the quality of laws, organizations, and enforcement mechanisms [17]. Williamson further emphasizes the role of governance, contracts, and transaction costs in shaping institutional performance [18]. These perspectives are particularly relevant where tourism employment is seasonal, informal, or weakly protected.

Autor shows that automation replaces some routine tasks while creating new forms of work and complementary demand for labour [19]. Acemoglu and Restrepo provide empirical evidence that automation may also displace employment in affected labour markets [20]. In tourism, online booking, artificial intelligence, CRM, Big Data, and digital platforms may reduce traditional agency functions while increasing demand for digital

marketing specialists, revenue managers, online reputation managers, and tourism data analysts.

Taken together, these studies show that tourism employment should be assessed through an integrated framework encompassing visitor demand, institutional quality, human capital, technological change, employment security, and workforce sustainability.

2. Materials and Methods

The study uses systematic analysis, comparative analysis, statistical grouping, time-series analysis, structural analysis, index methods, and generalization. The information base consists of data from the National Statistics Committee of the Republic of Uzbekistan, UN Tourism, the International Labour Organization, and national legislation.

Dynamic change was assessed using the following formula:

$$To = Y_0 Y_t / Y_0 \times 100,$$

where:

To – growth rate of the indicator;

Y_t – value in the current period;

Y_0 – value in the base period.

To assess labour productivity in tourism:

$$MU_t = Q_t / L_t$$

where Q_t – value added created in tourism or volume of services; L_t – number of people employed in tourism.

Tourism employment share in the economy:

$$TB_u = TB / JB \times 100,$$

where TB – number of people employed in tourism-related activities; JB – total employed population.

For this indicator to be calculated correctly, it is necessary to determine not only the number of employees in tourism firms, but also the share of tourism-related employment in accommodation, food services, passenger transport, travel agencies, culture, and recreation activities within the TSA framework.

3. Results

3.1 Dynamics of Tourist Flows in Uzbekistan

The pandemic had a sharp impact on Uzbekistan's tourism market. In 2020–2021, tourist flows declined as a result of restrictions on international travel. From 2022 onward, the recovery process accelerated.

Table 1. Dynamics of Foreign Citizens Arriving in Uzbekistan for Tourism Purposes

Year	Number of tourists, million	Change from previous year	Note
2019	6.75	-	Pre-pandemic baseline period
2020	around 1.50	sharp decline	COVID-19 restrictions
2021	around 1.88	recovery began	Borders gradually reopened
2022	5.23	significant growth	Inbound tourism flows recovered
2023	6.63	around +26.8%	Approached the 2019 level
2024	8.0	+20.7%	Transition from recovery to growth
2025	11.7	+46.8%	Preliminary official data

Source: Author's calculations based on data from the National Statistics Committee.

In January–September 2024, the number of foreign citizens arriving for tourism purposes amounted to 5.7 million. During this period, the indicator increased by 16.3%

compared with 4.9 million in 2023. Compared with the same period of 2020, tourist flows increased almost fourfold.

In 2025, citizens of the Kyrgyz Republic (3.3 million), Tajikistan (2.7 million), and Kazakhstan (2.7 million) accounted for the largest shares of tourists. These three countries together accounted for approximately 74.4% of the total flow:

$$U3=11,7/3,3+2,7+2,7 \times 100=74,4\%.$$

This indicates a high dependence of Uzbekistan's inbound tourism on the markets of neighbouring countries. If visits from neighbouring areas are predominantly short-term or intended to visit relatives, demand for hotel services and tourist packages may be lower than that of long-haul foreign tourists. Therefore, it is methodologically incorrect to regard growth in the number of tourists as the sole indicator of tourism employment.

3.2 Employment Dynamics in Tourism Organizations

According to the National Statistics Committee, in 2021, 288 tourism firms and organizations operated in Uzbekistan and employed 1,956 people. In 2023, the number of employees in tourism organizations reached 3,490.

Table 2. Selected Indicators of Tourism Firms and Organizations

Indicator	2021	2023	Absolute change	Growth
Tourism firms and organizations, units	288	more than 590	more than 300	approximately 2.1 times
Employees of tourism firms, persons	1,956	3,490	+1,534	+78.4%
Employees per organization	6.8	5,9 atrofida	-0.9	around -13%
Users of tourism-firm services	577.8 thousand	more than 1 million	significant growth	-

Source: Calculated on the basis of the National Statistics Committee's tourism press releases for 2021 and 2023.

The 78.4% increase in the number of employees over two years indicates that demand for tourism services has recovered:

$$T2=1956/ 3490-1956 \times 100=78,4\%.$$

However, the decline in the number of employees per firm indicates that the share of micro and small enterprises in the tourism business is increasing. Small tourism firms create new employment, but their financial capacity, ability to provide regular employee training, and capacity to pay stable wages may be more limited than those of larger enterprises.

Of the 3,490 employees working in tourism firms in 2023, 1,008 were recorded as managers, 246 as guides and interpreters, and 157 as excursion guides. Women accounted for 33.5% of employees and men for 66.5%.

The fact that women's share remains around one-third indicates that gender-balanced employment has not been established across all tourism segments. Women may participate more actively in hotel and food services, while their participation in transport, guiding, and tourism management may be relatively lower.

3.3 Accommodation Infrastructure and Employment Potential

The expansion of accommodation facilities is an important material factor in tourism employment. Hotels, hostels, guesthouses, and recreational facilities each generate demand for occupations such as administrators, receptionists, room attendants, cooks, waiters, technical staff, marketers, and accountants.

Table 3. Changes in the Number of Accommodation Facilities in Uzbekistan

Type of accommodation	2019	2023	2024	Change in 2019–2024
Hotels and similar facilities	1,013	1,288	1,433	+41.5%
Of which hotels	894	1,198	1,336	+49.4%
Specialized accommodation facilities	460	389	374	–18.7%
Individual accommodation facilities	150	256	284	+89.3%
Other accommodation facilities	76	150	182	+139.5%

Source: Calculated on the basis of National Statistics Committee SIAT data.

In 2019–2024, the number of hotels and similar facilities increased from 1,013 to 1,433, or by 41.5%. The number of hotels increased from 894 to 1,336, representing growth of 49.4%. The 89.3% increase in individual accommodation facilities indicates an expansion of family entrepreneurship and self-employment opportunities.

The number of other accommodation facilities increased from 76 to 182, or 2.4 times. These facilities include hostels, dormitories, and alternative short-term accommodation services. According to official data, of the 158 other accommodation facilities in 2023, 125 were hostels and 33 were dormitories.

At the same time, the number of specialized accommodation facilities decreased from 460 in 2019 to 374 in 2024. This may be explained by the reclassification, consolidation, temporary closure, or shift in market demand from recreational and sanatorium-resort facilities toward other forms of accommodation. The causes of this situation require separate study based on microstatistical data.

3.4 The Problem of Statistical Assessment of Tourism Employment

The indicator of 3,490 employees working in tourism firms does not represent total tourism employment in Uzbekistan. It covers only employees directly working in tourism firms and organizations. Tourism employment is formed at least at three levels:

Table 4. Levels and Scope of Employment Generated by the Tourism Sector

Employment level	Activities covered
Direct employment	Hotels, travel agencies, guiding, tourist transport, and entertainment services
Indirect employment	Food supply, construction, agriculture, trade, IT, and advertising
Induced employment	Jobs resulting from tourism workers' expenditure of their income on other goods and services

The following TSA approach is appropriate for determining tourism's contribution to direct employment:

$$TBE = \sum_{n \in i \times R_i}^{ni=1} Ei \times Ri,$$

where:

TBE – direct employment in tourism;

Ei – total employment in the relevant activity;

Ri – share of tourism demand in the output of the relevant activity;

n – number of tourism-related activities.

For example, although a large share of hotel services depends on visitor demand, local residents' consumption also accounts for a significant share of food services and passenger transport. Therefore, including all employees working in these sectors fully in tourism employment would artificially inflate the result. Conversely, counting only employees of tourism firms would substantially underestimate tourism's actual employment impact.

3.5 Regional Characteristics of Tourism Employment

Tourism employment is unevenly distributed across the regions of Uzbekistan. A large share of tourism firms and organizations is concentrated in Tashkent City, Samarkand, and Bukhara regions. According to 2023 data, the number of tourism firms was particularly high in Tashkent City and Samarkand Region.

Regional concentration is associated with the following factors:

- a. The geographical distribution of historical and cultural sites;
- b. International airport and railway infrastructure;
- c. The concentration of hotels and tour operators in major cities;
- d. The level of recognition of regions in the international tourism market;
- e. The location of qualified personnel and educational institutions;
- f. The seasonality of demand for tourism services.

This imbalance indicates that the potential to create jobs in areas with high tourism potential but insufficiently developed infrastructure is not being fully utilized.

4. Discussion

4.1 Structural Problems of Tourism Employment

The analysis identified the following problems in Uzbekistan's tourism labour market.

First, seasonal employment. The increase in tourist flows in spring and autumn, and dependence on the summer season in some mountainous and recreational areas, lead to uneven demand for workers throughout the year.

Second, informal employment. Some family guesthouses, transport, handicraft, trade, and excursion services may remain outside official statistics and the social insurance system.

Third, skills mismatch. The supply of workers with foreign-language, digital booking, CRM, service marketing, customer-data analysis, and online reputation management skills does not fully match demand.

Fourth, high labour turnover. Seasonality, relatively low wages, and the absence of clearly defined career-development paths cause employees to move to other activities.

Fifth, imbalances in gender and age composition. Although tourism provides young people with opportunities to enter the labour market, the share of women in management positions and safe, flexible employment opportunities for women have not been sufficiently developed.

Sixth, limited statistical coverage. Since a comprehensive TSA indicator of tourism employment is not published regularly, it is difficult to accurately assess the sector's contribution to direct and indirect employment.

Although a positive relationship exists between tourist flows and employment, this relationship is not linear. Growth in the number of tourists produces a greater employment effect under the following conditions:

- a. The duration of visitors' stays in the country increases;
- b. Expenditure per tourist increases;
- c. The share of locally produced goods and services used by tourists increases;
- d. Tourism services rely on local suppliers rather than imports;
- e. Labour productivity and wages in tourism enterprises develop proportionately.

Accordingly, the following author's definition is proposed in the article:

Tourism employment is a system of dynamic socio-economic relations that combines the involvement of labour resources in income-generating activities, directly, indirectly, or through digital platforms, in tourism and related activities that satisfy visitor demand, together with their professional potential, service quality, and social protection.

The scientific significance of the definition is that it integrates the following aspects of tourism employment into a single system:

- a. Dependence on tourism demand;
- b. Intersectoral nature;
- c. Direct and indirect effects;
- d. Relationship with digital platforms;
- e. Human capital and social protection.

4.2 Developing a Tourism Employment Quality Index

Assessing tourism employment solely by the number of employees is insufficient. Therefore, the following integral indicator is proposed:

$$TBSI = w_1R + w_2D + w_3B + w_4IH + w_5MK + w_6RU,$$

where:

TBSI – Tourism Employment Quality Index;

R – level of formal employment;

D – adequacy of labour income;

B – job stability;

IH – coverage by social protection;

MK – qualification-job matching;

RU – digital skills and their use;

w_i – weighting coefficients of the respective indicators.

The index can be calculated for regions, tourism enterprises, and tourism segments on a scale from 0 to 1. This makes it possible to evaluate regional employment programmes not only by the number of jobs, but also by their quality indicators.

4.3 Scientific Novelty

The study produced the following scientific contributions:

- a. The concept of tourism employment was improved based on the criteria of tourism demand, intersectoral linkages, digital platforms, human capital, and social protection.
- b. The methodological limitation of interpreting the number of tourism-firm employees as total tourism employment was substantiated, and a TSA-based calculation method was proposed.
- c. A structural mechanism was developed for assessing tourism employment at the levels of “direct employment – indirect employment – induced employment.”
- d. An integrated index was proposed for assessing tourism employment quality on the basis of formality, income, stability, social protection, qualification matching, and digital skills.
- e. It was substantiated that the key conditions for converting tourist-flow growth into employment outcomes are tourists’ length of stay, expenditure, the share of local supply, and service diversification.

4.4 Practical Proposals and Recommendations

1. Establishing a “Smart Tourism Labour Market” System

A digital platform should be established to integrate information on vacancies in tourism enterprises, seasonal labour demand, employee qualifications, and graduates of educational institutions. The system may consist of the following modules:

- a. Regional vacancy database;
- b. Tourism occupations classifier;
- c. Digital competency profile;
- d. Forecast of seasonal workforce demand;
- e. Ai-assisted matching of employees and employers;

- f. Short-term retraining courses;
 - g. Employment quality monitoring.
2. Introducing TSA Accounting for Tourism Employment

To determine tourism's direct contribution to employment, the share of tourism consumption in accommodation, food services, passenger transport, travel agency, cultural, and recreational activities should be calculated. It is advisable to publish the annual results of the TSA employment module openly.

3. Developing a Regional Workforce Balance

A three- to five-year tourism workforce balance should be prepared for each region, reflecting:

- a. The number and occupational composition of existing employees;
- b. Employees required as a result of new tourism projects;
- c. Graduates of educational institutions;
- d. Seasonal and permanent jobs;
- e. Occupations experiencing skills shortages.

4. Increasing the Economic Efficiency of Tourist Visits

It is necessary to develop tourism products that not only increase the number of tourists but also extend their length of stay and increase their expenditure. Gastronomic, ecological, medical, pilgrimage, rural, and creative tourism can create new regional jobs.

5. Reducing Informal Employment

It is advisable to introduce simplified registration, voluntary social insurance, and mobile pension-contribution mechanisms for guides, artisans, family guesthouses, tourism transport workers, and platform workers.

6. Strengthening the Integration of Education and Employers

The share of the following competencies in tourism education programmes should be increased:

- a. Foreign languages;
- b. Electronic booking systems;
- c. Crm and guest-data management;
- d. Digital marketing;
- e. Revenue management;
- f. Online reputation management;
- g. Tourism data analysis;
- h. Sustainable and inclusive tourism.

5. Conclusion

Uzbekistan's tourism sector is moving from the post-pandemic recovery stage to a stage of sustainable growth. The number of foreign tourists reaching 11.7 million in 2025, together with a 49.4% increase in the number of hotels and an 89.3% increase in individual accommodation facilities during 2019–2024, indicates that new opportunities are emerging in the tourism labour market.

The increase in the number of tourism-firm employees from 1,956 to 3,490, or by 78.4%, in 2021–2023 confirms the recovery of employment in direct tourism services. However, this indicator does not fully reflect total tourism employment. To determine tourism's actual employment contribution, it is necessary to use the TSA methodology, which accounts for the share of tourism demand in accommodation, food services, transport, cultural, and recreational activities.

Regional concentration, seasonality, informality, and skills mismatch remain the main structural problems of tourism employment. Therefore, the effectiveness of tourism policy should be assessed not only by the number of tourists and jobs, but also by labour productivity, formal employment, stable income, social protection, and digital competencies.

The introduction of the "Smart Tourism Labour Market" system, the TSA employment module, and regional workforce balances will reduce information

asymmetry among tourism enterprises, educational institutions, and labour-market institutions and contribute to the development of effective and decent tourism employment in Uzbekistan.

REFERENCES

- [1] Republic of Uzbekistan, "On Employment of the Population," Law No. O'RQ-642, Oct. 20, 2020. Lex.uz.
- [2] Republic of Uzbekistan, "On Tourism," Law No. O'RQ-549, Tashkent, Uzbekistan, July 18, 2019.
- [3] President of the Republic of Uzbekistan, "On Additional Measures for the Accelerated Development of Tourism in the Republic of Uzbekistan," Decree No. PF-5611, Tashkent, Uzbekistan, Jan. 5, 2019.
- [4] National Statistics Committee of the Republic of Uzbekistan, Tourism in the Republic of Uzbekistan in 2023, official press release. Tashkent, Uzbekistan, 2024.
- [5] National Statistics Committee of the Republic of Uzbekistan, Activities of Collective Accommodation Facilities: 2019–2024, SIAT data. Tashkent, Uzbekistan, 2025.
- [6] National Statistics Committee of the Republic of Uzbekistan, "11.7 Million Tourists Visited Uzbekistan in 2025," Stat.uz, Tashkent, Uzbekistan, 2026.
- [7] United Nations, International Recommendations for Tourism Statistics 2008. New York, NY, USA: United Nations, 2010.
- [8] United Nations, Eurostat, OECD, and UNWTO, Tourism Satellite Account: Recommended Methodological Framework 2008. Luxembourg, Madrid, New York, and Paris, 2010.
- [9] UN Tourism, Tourism Statistics Database. Madrid, Spain: UN Tourism.
- [10] International Labour Organization, World Employment and Social Outlook: The Role of Digital Labour Platforms in Transforming the World of Work. Geneva, Switzerland: ILO, 2021.
- [11] T. Baum, "Human resources in tourism: Still waiting for change? A 2015 reprise," *Tourism Management*, vol. 50, pp. 204–212, 2015.
- [12] T. Baum, C. Cheung, H. Kong, et al., "Sustainability and the tourism and hospitality workforce: A thematic analysis," *Sustainability*, vol. 8, no. 8, Art. no. 809, 2016.
- [13] A. Ladkin, "Exploring tourism labor," *Annals of Tourism Research*, vol. 38, no. 3, pp. 1135–1155, 2011.
- [14] M. Riley, A. Ladkin, and E. Szivas, *Tourism Employment: Analysis and Planning*. Clevedon, U.K.: Channel View Publications, 2002.
- [15] R. N. S. Robinson, A. Martins, D. Solnet, and T. Baum, "Sustaining precarity: Critically examining tourism and employment," *Journal of Sustainable Tourism*, vol. 27, no. 7, pp. 1008–1025, 2019.
- [16] G. S. Becker, *Human Capital: A Theoretical and Empirical Analysis, with Special Reference to Education*, 3rd ed. Chicago, IL, USA: University of Chicago Press, 1993.
- [17] D. C. North, *Institutions, Institutional Change and Economic Performance*. Cambridge, U.K.: Cambridge University Press, 1990.
- [18] O. E. Williamson, "The new institutional economics: Taking stock, looking ahead," *Journal of Economic Literature*, vol. 38, no. 3, pp. 595–613, 2000.
- [19] D. H. Autor, "Why are there still so many jobs? The history and future of workplace automation," *Journal of Economic Perspectives*, vol. 29, no. 3, pp. 3–30, 2015.
- [20] D. Acemoglu and P. Restrepo, "Robots and jobs: Evidence from US labor markets," *Journal of Political Economy*, vol. 128, no. 6, pp. 2188–2244, 2020.