



## THE DEVELOPMENT OF MICE TOURISM IN UZBEKISTAN

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**Abstract:** *MICE tourism, also known as business tourism, is a growing sector of the tourism industry in Uzbekistan. The government has taken a number of steps to support the development of MICE tourism, including adopting resolutions on tourism development and supporting international events. There is still room for improvement, but the potential for MICE tourism in Uzbekistan is significant.*

**Keywords:** *MICE tourism, business tourism, Uzbekistan, tourism development*

MICE tourism is a more common term that is used in business tourism which includes meeting, incentives, conferences and exhibition. Meetings put together stakeholders in one place to share ideas and address and solve issues. The attendance of meetings can vary between 10 and thousands. Incentive travel is a tool to reward and motivate sales agents, retailers, vendors, manufacturers, service personnel, and in some cases, consumers. The corporation recognizes sales representatives who achieve sales goals through rewards with travel. Conventions are similar to assemblies, which are held to share thoughts, opinions, and knowledge of the group's mutual interest. An organization, normally an association, organizes an annual conference on the subject of the organization. For all meetings, debate, food and drinks, dinners and site tours, anyone involved in registered for the Conference will pay the organization. Exhibitions are events that provide trade shows for people who are interested, such as prospective consumers or buyers, new goods, services or facts. The organization shows its latest goods, to the exhibitor, normally leases the organizer an area and builds a stand for prospective customers. A card or a ticket is essential for the shoppers or the general public.

The potential of tourism in Uzbekistan has been estimated to be 7.4 thousand cultural and natural heritage cities (Decree of the President of the Republic of Uzbekistan, 2018). Over the past four years, a number of resolutions have been adopted with a view to developing tourism as well as business tourism in Uzbekistan:

1. President of the Republic of Uzbekistan Shavkat Mirziyoyev decreed "On measures to ensure the accelerated development of the tourism industry of the Republic of Uzbekistan" No. UP-4861 on December 2, 2016.

2. August 16, 2017, the President of the Republic of Uzbekistan, Shavkat Mirziyoyev signed a resolution "On priority measures for the development of the sphere of tourism for 2018-2019".

3. Resolution of the Cabinet of Ministers of the Republic of Uzbekistan "On measures to ensure safe tourism in the cities of Bukhara, Samarkand, Khiva and Shakhrisabz" on November 23, 2017.



In Uzbekistan, expenditure by business and professional purposes has nearly doubled in the past five years, from USD 14 million in 2014 to USD 24 million in 2019 (UNWTO, 2020).



Source: World Tourism Organization (2020), Compendium of Tourism Statistics dataset [Electronic], UNWTO, Madrid, data updated on 21/09/2020.

The Government of Uzbekistan has supported the growth of business tourism by supporting different measures at the international level. For example, the Cabinet of Ministers adopted Resolution No. 828 “On additional measures for effective use and development of tourism power of Samarkand region” on September 30, 2019. According to this resolution, the government ensured the development of separate congress hall projects consisting of several conference halls for large-scale public events at the local and international levels, as well as the registration of these facilities by the International Association of Congresses and Conferences (ICCA) till 2022 (The resolution of the Cabinet of Ministers of the Republic of Uzbekistan, 2018). Yet there are many more measurements and improvements that need to be taken to improve business tourism.

These Industry Meetings have now become widely accepted by governments around the world as a major contributor to the nation's financial and knowledge economy. However, the emphasis of this contribution is still very much at the local level recognizing this critical reality, the desire to raise market visibility and the need to have a platform for policymakers, both national and state, to share knowledge and best practices has contributed to the establishment of the IMEX Politician Forum. At the 2013 Conference, a Declaration of Support for the Meetings and Events Industry was signed, offering a focal point for expanded marketing and lobbying efforts. The goal of introducing this program and its accompanying advertising strategy is to ensure that the government officially acknowledges market conferences and meetings as a core engine for economic growth and development and to make it a focus on the global foreign and economic policy agenda (UNWTO, 2014). The idea of an International Platform continues to spread across the world through a sequence of IMEX alliances. IMEX has also launched the IMEX Policymakers Forum in Las Vegas in conjunction with the U.S. Travel Association in Sweden, Germany and Ukraine (UNWTO, 2014). This Platform is a crucial North American effort to draw together business and industry stakeholders to affect policy and legislative reform, and to have policymakers officially acknowledge the industry's meetings and activities as a core engine for economic growth and regional urban/ suburban progress.



In Uzbekistan, accelerated measurements for developing the tourism sector began with the decree of the President of Uzbekistan № PF-4861, on “On measures to ensure the accelerate development of tourism in the republic of Uzbekistan” on December 2, 2016. The aim of this decree is the creation of favorable economic and organizational-legal conditions for the rapid development of tourism as a strategic sector of the country's economy. In addition it supported more complete and effective use of the tourism potential of the regions, radical improvement in tourism management, the creation of national tourism products and their promotion of world markets to form a positive image.

As stated in this decree, accelerated development of business tourism has been defined as one of the main targets and priorities of state policy in the field of tourism in the medium term (Decree of the President of Uzbekistan, 2016). One of the main issues for the travel industry in Uzbekistan is its seasonality and this can be tackled by offering a diversity of touristic packages, including business tourism. As for continuing measurements of tourism development, on January 5, 2019 a new decree aimed at achieving increased efficiency of the ongoing reforms to create favorable economic conditions and prerequisites, developing priority goals and objectives for the accelerated development of the tourism industry, increasing its role and contribution to the economy, diversification and improving the quality of services, as well as improving tourism infrastructure.

In Chapter 3, the adoption of comprehensive measures to reduce the influence of the seasonal factor by diversifying the tourism product and services through targeting different segments of the tourism market in order to ensure: the development and implementation of program measures for the production of modern competitive craft and souvenir products. The development of “MICE-tourism” has been considered as one of the active implementation of measures that is being envisaged, with a number of events have been planned to achieve this target. The development of an action plan for MICE tourism in the Republic also includes:

- drawing up a program of events of international and local importance, taking into account the seasonality factor in tourism when determining the date of the event;
- the formation of a list of hotels that are based on the feasibility of carrying out events in these MICE objects.

Uzbekistan's cities are located along The Great Silk Road and were the centers of science, trade and culture. In terms of regions, the main cities of the country are Samarkand, Tashkent, Bukhara and Khivathat have huge potential to develop business tourism. Samarkand is mainly known for its historical places namely its madrassas, mausoleums, monuments and many others. It celebrated its 2750 anniversary with the collaboration of UNESCO in 2007. It has been estimated that 37.7% of touristic resources (2642) of the Republic are located in Samarkand: 780 architectural, 1530 archeological, 36 historical, 225 monumental-art, and 71 sculptural (The decree of the Republic of Uzbekistan, 2017).

The development of MICE tourism is a key priority for the government of Uzbekistan. The country has a number of advantages that make it a good destination for business events, including its rich history and culture, its central location in Central Asia, and its developing infrastructure. However, there is still room for improvement, such as developing



more MICE-specific facilities and services. With the support of the government and the private sector, MICE tourism has the potential to play a significant role in the development of the Uzbek economy.

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