



PROSPECTS FOR THE DEVELOPMENT OF GASTRONOMIC TOURISM IN UZBEKISTAN: POLITICAL REFORMS, DEMOGRAPHIC REQUIREMENTS AND EXPERIENCE OF "KARIMBEK" RESTAURANT

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Abstract

This article analyzes the factors of development of gastronomic orientation in tourism of Uzbekistan, the existing opportunities and prospects. The study highlights the political reforms being carried out in the country to transform tourism into an important sector of the national economy, the need for demographic changes, the need to organize tourism services for the elderly, as well as ways to improve gastronomic services based on the practical activities of the Karimbek restaurant. The article considers international experience, HACCP and Halal standards, digital service, herodietic menus, TOWS analysis, and integration mechanisms of tourism and catering.

Keywords: Gastronomic tourism, national cuisine, digital service, elderly tourism, gerodiet, "Karimbek", quality of service, TOWS analysis, infrastructure, experience design.

Introduction

In recent years, tourism sector in Uzbekistan has become one of the strategic directions of the country's economy. The "New Uzbekistan Development Strategy" for 2022-2026 signed by President Sh. M. Mirziyoyev (Decree No. UP-60, January 28, 2022) defines the important task as diversifying the tourism industry, improving the quality of services and expanding the flow of foreign tourists. This strategy aims



to increase the number of local tourists to 12 million and foreign tourists to 9 million based on the Travel in Uzbekistan program.

One of the fastest growing types of tourism is gastronomic tourism, which is manifesting itself not only as a consumption of food, but as an important element of the national identity, culture of hospitality and economic activity. Catering services are an integral part of the tourist infrastructure today, which determines the overall impression of tourists and the likelihood of revisiting.

Key Section

1. The role of gastronomic orientation in the tourism policy of Uzbekistan

In recent years, a number of comprehensive reforms in the field of tourism in Uzbekistan have been implemented. The quality of tourism services is progressively improved through creation of the "barrier-free tourism" infrastructure, introduction of multilingual navigation systems, modernization of transport and service delivery networks. Also, the choice of Samarkand as the "Gateway of Tourism" opens up great opportunities for gastronomic tourism, as the region has great potential for national cuisine, festivals and gastro routes.

According to statistics, the share of the catering sector in tourism services is 19%. This figure ranks second only to transport services (40%). Thus, in Uzbekistan gastronomic tourism is recognized as an economically important sector.

2. Concept of Elderly Tourism and Geriatric Nutrition

Demographically, the demand for travel from the population over the age of 60–65 is increasing worldwide. This category has not only leisure time and a stable income, but also needs healthy and comfortable eating conditions. In Uzbekistan, this segment is not yet fully formed. Therefore, it is necessary to introduce a herodietic menu, that is, offer low-fat, low-salt, balanced protein and vitamin rich meals.

For example, a gastro package for seniors may refer to:

- low-calorie Swedish tableware;
- light national dishes (chalop, yogurt noodles, vegetable dimlama);
- an easy-to-digest breakfast menu;
- A balanced nutrition program under the sign of "healthy heart".

Introduction of such services as integrated with health tourism and sanatorium-resort areas will be beneficial not only for tourists, but also for the domestic market.



3. The experience and SWOT analysis of the restaurant "Karimbek"

The restaurant "Karimbek" (LLC "Free Sweet Food") located in Samarkand is a practical example of gastronomic tourism in Uzbekistan. The restaurant attracts tourists with its convenient location in the city center, offering such dishes as "pilaf", "shashlik", "lag'man", "jiz".

Results of SWOT analysis:

Strengths	Weaknesses
- Original menyu;	- High price;
- Mashhur oshpaz;	- Dependence on ingredients;
- Qualified personnel;	- Limited number of guests;
- Convenient location.	- Insufficient investment resources.
Options	Threats
- Closure of close competitors;	- Fluctuations in the exchange rate;
- Possibility to open a branch;	- A change in supplier policies;
- Tax benefits;	- Competitors PR activism.

Based on this analysis, the following recommendations were developed:

- Menu optimization: expansion of audience by highlighting "Signature" (premium) and "Bistro" (popularized) lines;
- Product chain: conclusion of long-term contracts with local suppliers;
- Digital service: full introduction of QR menu, online booking and electronic payment systems;
- Gastro events: "Master and Apprentice" nights, pilaf festival, bakery master classes;
- Marketing: Brand promotion in partnership with local bloggers and travel agencies.

4. Seasonal management and service strategy

If in 2023 the restaurant received 2,870 guests, in 2024 this figure reached 3,540 (+23.3%). Average revenue increased by 1,657 billion soums from 1,114 billion soums (+48.7%). The employment rate rose from 50,3% to 62,1%.

The seasonal breakdown is as follows:

- I quarter – 30%;
- II chorak – 20%;



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- III chorak – 35% (pik davr);
 - IV chorak – 15%.

During this period, a resource management strategy has been developed: in summer, it is desirable to expand the menu of frequent services, and in the winter to fill the "gap" with corporate events and dietary gastro packages.

Conclusion

The development of gastronomic tourism in Uzbekistan is an important factor contributing to the growth of economic growth, increase employment and strengthen the national brand. Political stability, the rich heritage of the national cuisine and tourist-oriented digital services will accelerate this process.

The experience of the Karimbek restaurant shows that thanks to modern management, menu balance, digital transformation and innovative services, gastronomic business can approach international criteria. Also, geriatric menus, gastro festivals and marketing strategies based on "experiential design" for the elderly segment will take the gastronomic tourism of Uzbekistan to a new level.

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