

THE ECONOMIC EFFICIENCY OF DEVELOPING MUSEUM TOURISM IN UZBEKISTAN

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Abstract. *The article is devoted to the analysis of data substantiating the economic efficiency of organising and developing museum tourism in Uzbekistan. Recommendations are provided on the extensive implementation of experiences whereby these museums offer museum tourism services to local and foreign tourists.*

Keywords: *heritage agency, strategic plan, Louvre in the desert, museum ticket, exhibit, exhibition, innovative technology.*

Nowadays, there are more than 1,200 state and non-state museums in our country in various fields. As of January 1, 2024, 140 museums in Uzbekistan are under the management of the Ministry of Culture of the Republic of Uzbekistan. Within the system of the Agency for Cultural Heritage, a total of 104 museums and their branches are operating. Of these, 37 are main museums and 67 are branches. A total of 2,223 employees are working there.

The activities of the five strongest museums in Uzbekistan are highlighted. When determining the economic efficiency of organizing and developing museum tourism, due to the lack of long-term statistical data for some museums, we present the long-term performance results of the five strongest and internationally recognized museums in Uzbekistan (Table 1).

Table (1) presents the results of the activities of the I. V. Savitsky Karakalpakstan Art Museum over the past ten years. Americans and Europeans refer to this museum as the “Savitsky Museum – Louvre in the Desert,” and the famous British Newspaper The Guardian in 2001 called it “The most remarkable museum in the world.”

The entrance ticket for local residents is 11,000 UZS to view the exhibits in one building and 18,000 UZS to view exhibits in two buildings. For foreigners, it is 48,000 UZS for one building and 72,000 UZS for two buildings. If foreign tourists form a group of at least 20 people and request a guide service in English, the cost is 80,000 UZS for one building and 160,000 UZS for two buildings.

According to the table data, the number of museum staff increased from 93 to 159 (170.96%). The number of local tourists increased from the initial 100,652 to 188,607 in 2018 (187.38%) and to 124,542 in 2019 (123.73%) before the pandemic began. From this period, the number of local visitors decreased, reaching 47,146 in 2024 (46.84%).

This decline can be understood as a result of museum staff focusing more on working with foreign tourists. Local visitors often have to wait while foreign tourists are being served in the museum halls. The number of foreign visitors increased even during the pandemic: in 2019, there were 14,737 foreign tourists (growth 286.99%), and in 2020, the lowest figure was 383 foreign tourists (7.45%). In subsequent years, foreign visitor numbers rose, reaching 17,307 in 2024 (growth 337.03%). The interest of the museum in receiving foreign tourists can be explained by

the high ticket prices for entry. Secondly, the museum's international recognition has been rising steadily.

Table 1

Changes in museum tourism services for tourists at the I. V. Savitsky Karakalpakstan State Art Museum during 2015–2024

No	Years	Number of Museum Staff (people)	Total Museum Visits (thousands)	Number of Local Tourists (thousands)	Growth Rate (%)	Number of Foreign Tourists (thousands)	Growth Rate (%)	Total Revenue (UZS)	Growth Rate (%)
1	2015	93	105 787	100 652	100,00	5 135	100,00	287 489 300	100,00
2	2016	97	103 917	98 532	97,89	5 385	104,86	320 192 200	111,37
3	2017	97	110 684	102 780	102,11	7 904	153,92	477 047 000	165,93
4	2018	155	201 895	188 607	187,38	13 288	258,77	956 933 047	332,85
5	2019	155	139 279	124 542	123,73	14 737	286,99	1 261 009 438	438,62
6	2020	158	18 539	18 156	18,03	383	7,45	125 130 581	43,52
7	2021	157	48 287	45 812	45,51	2 475	48,19	371 353 000	129,17
8	2022	158	73 930	66 675	66,24	7 255	141,28	812 420 520	282,59
9	2023	158	78 514	65 465	65,04	13 049	254,11	1 405 666 788	488,94
10	2024	159	64 453	47 146	46,84	17 307	337,03	1 656 124 712	576,06

In recent years, the museum has been recognized as the most profitable museum among museums in Uzbekistan. Its total revenue in 2024 amounted to 1,656,124,712 UZS (growth 576.06%). The increase in foreign tourist flow is a positive factor. However, the museum administration needs to develop plans to increase the flow of local tourists and methods to serve local and foreign tourists under equal conditions.

The second most profitable museum in Uzbekistan is the State Museum of History of Uzbekistan (Table 2). Its reception of local and foreign tourists is almost identical to the previous table (I. V. Savitsky Museum). The flow of local tourists increased until 2019 (132,804 tourists in 2018, 122.92%). The lowest attendance of local tourists was observed in 2020 (18,420 tourists, - 17.04%), and in subsequent years, local tourist flows have been decreasing. In 2023, the museum increased local tourist reception to 99,714 (92.29%), but in the following year, the flow of local tourists significantly decreased (70,532 tourists, 65.28%).

According to the table data, the museum has maintained a steady flow of foreign tourists. The flow of foreign tourists was 12,194 in 2015 (100.00%) and 12,866 in 2024 (105.51%). Museum revenue only decreased in 2020–2021. Over the past ten years, the highest revenue was in 2023 – 1,666,506,900 UZS (growth 1,410.57%), while in 2024 it was 1,033,339,500 UZS (growth -874.64%).

At the initiative of the President of the Republic of Uzbekistan and based on innovative technologies, the “Victory Park” memorial complex and the “Glory and Honor” State Museum were established to immortalize the unparalleled courage of the Uzbek people during World War II. Their expositions showcase the bravery, perseverance, and high human qualities demonstrated by our people during the war years and serve to educate the younger generation in the spirit of loyalty to the Motherland.

The changes in museum tourism services for tourists at the “Victory Park” memorial complex and the “Glory and Honor” State Museum during 2020–2025 are presented in Table 3.

According to the table data, from the year the museum was established until the present, both domestic and international tourist flows in museum tourism have been steadily increasing.

Table 2

***Changes in museum tourism services for tourists at the State
Museum of History of Uzbekistan during 2015–2024***

№	Years	Number of Museum Staff (people)	Total Museum Visits (thousands)	Number of Local Tourists (thousands)	Growth Rate (%)	Number of Foreign Tourists (thousands)	Growth Rate (%)	Total Revenue (UZS)	Growth Rate (%)
1	2015	68	120 233	108 039	100,00	12 194	100,00	118 144,2	100,00
2	2016	73	125 990	117 134	108,41	8 856	72,62	125 443,1	106,17
3	2017	75	143 089	132 784	122,90	10 305	84,50	167 792,0	142,02
4	2018	72	146 526	132 804	122,92	13 722	112,53	261 121,0	221,01
5	2019	75	100 368	78 823	72,95	21 545	176,68	481 585,0	407,62
6	2020	73	20 738	18 420	17,04	2 318	19,00	67 020,8	56,72
7	2021	101	39 105	36 605	33,88	2 500	20,50	75 406,60	63,82
8	2022	105	72 267	62 656	57,99	9 611	78,81	774 512,3	655,56
9	2023	107	131 941	99 714	92,29	32 227	264,28	1 666 506,9	1410,57
10	2024	97	83 398	70 532	65,28	12 866	105,51	1 033 339,5	874,64

In the first year of operation, the museum received 126,574 local tourists (100.00%), and by 2024, 645,486 tourists visited (509.96%). The number of foreign tourists also increased, from 360 in 2020 (100.00%) to 4,637 in 2024 (1,288.05%).

A similar trend can be observed in museum revenues. Initially, in 2020, the museum's revenue amounted to 216,723,000 UZS (100.00%), and in subsequent years, the revenue steadily increased, reaching 538,231,000 UZS in 2024 (248.34%).

The consistent growth in the reception of domestic and international tourists is understandable. The designation of May 9 as Remembrance Day continues to draw relatives of those who lost their children in the war, who silently pay their respects before the names of national heroes inscribed on the museum's marble monuments.

Among museums in Uzbekistan, the “State Museum of Arts of Uzbekistan” occupies the fourth place in terms of profitability. The State Museum of Arts is a cultural, educational, and scientific institution; it was the first art museum established in Central Asia. It was founded in 1918 in Tashkent as the Museum of the People's University, later became the Central Art Museum, in 1924 the Tashkent Art Museum, and from 1935 to the present has operated under its current name. By 2005, the museum collection included over 50,000 exhibits.

The results of this museum's reception of local and international tourists over the past nine years are presented in Table 4.

Excluding the pandemic years, the flow of domestic tourists to the museum has been increasing. In 2015, 21,800 tourists visited (100.00%), and by 2023, 65,800 local tourists visited (301.83%). The highest number of foreign tourist visits was recorded in 2018 – 12,800 tourists (426.66%), while by 2023, the number of foreign tourists had significantly decreased to 2,000 (66.66%). The museum's revenues show a steady increase over all years (2023 – 346,917,000 UZS; 1,301.56%).

In the past ten years, the “State Museum in Memory of the Victims of Repression” under the Cabinet of Ministers of the Republic of Uzbekistan has ranked fifth in terms of profitability among museums in Uzbekistan. The grand opening of the “Memory of the Martyrs” memorial

complex, built on May 12, 2000, in Yunusabad district of Tashkent, was a major event in the social, cultural, and spiritual life of the country and its people. The complex has become one of the institutions that educate the younger generation in the spirit of patriotism.

Table 3

Changes in museum tourism services for tourists at the “G‘alaba bog‘i” memorial complex and the “Shon-sharaf” State Museum during 2020–2024

№	Years	Number of Museum Staff (people)	Total Museum Visits (thousands)	Number of Local Tourists (thousands)	Growth Rate (%)	Number of Foreign Tourists (thousands)	Growth Rate (%)	Total Revenue (UZS)	Growth Rate (%)
1	2020	41	126 610	126 574	100,00	0,36	100,00	216 723 000	100,00
2	2021	41	716 627	717 415	566,79	0,788	218,88	641 978 000	296,22
3	2022	42	587 607	585 886	462,88	1,721	478,05	454 067 000	209,51
4	2023	46	638 230	629 148	497,05	9,082	2 522,77	430 580 000	198,67
5	2024	44	650 123	645 486	509,96	4,637	1 288,05	538 231 000	248,34

Table 4

Changes in museum tourism services for tourists at the State Museum of Arts of Uzbekistan during 2015–2023

№	Years	Number of Museum Staff (people)	Total Museum Visits (thousands)	Number of Local Tourists (thousands)	Growth Rate (%)	Number of Foreign Tourists (thousands)	Growth Rate (%)	Total Revenue (UZS)	Growth Rate (%)
1	2015	64	24,8	21,8	100,00	3	100,00	26 653 800	100,00
2	2016	63	52	50,7	232,56	1,3	43,33	45 700 000	171,45
3	2017	60	39,9	38,8	177,98	1,1	36,66	94 202 525	353,42
4	2018	76	67,1	54,3	249,08	12,8	426,66	119 561 700	448,57
5	2019	38	28,3	25,7	117,88	2,6	86,66	99 243 000	372,34
6	2020	53	10,6	10	45,87	0,6	20,00	54 366 000	203,97
7	2021	55	0,44	0,42	1,92	0,02	0,66	56 790 000	213,06
8	2022	63	71,5	70,7	324,31	0,8	26,66	296 315 000	1111,71
9	2023	66	67,8	65,8	301,83	2	66,66	346 917 000	1301,56

The museum’s services provided to domestic and foreign tourists over the past ten years are presented in Table 5. Reviewing the table data, it is evident that the museum’s activity shows some irregularities up to 2024, which is understandable due to the sharp decline in visits during the pandemic years. In 2024, the museum achieved significantly higher results in hosting domestic and international tourists. That year, the flow of local tourists reached 83,531 (247.74%), 7,612 foreign tourists visited (338.10%), and the total revenue amounted to 314,436,200 UZS, with a growth rate of 492.50%.

Summarizing the 10-year activity of these museums in Uzbekistan, the following figures emerge:

- 1.The number of jobs increased from 301 to 417 (168.53%).
- 2.The visits of local tourists increased from 390,782 to 912,495 (233.50%).
- 3.The flow of foreign tourists increased from 20,240 to 44,422 (219.47%).
- 4.The museums’ revenue grew from 712,853,939 UZS to 3,889,048,412 UZS (545.64%).

Table 5

Changes in Museum Tourism Services for Tourists at the State Museum in Memory of the Victims of Repression under the Cabinet of Ministers of the Republic of Uzbekistan during 2015–2024

№	Years	Number of Museum Staff (people)	Total Museum Visits (thousands)	Number of Local Tourists (thousands)	Growth Rate (%)	Number of Foreign Tourists (thousands)	Growth Rate (%)	Total Revenue (UZS)	Growth Rate (%)
1	2015	35	35 968	33 717	100,00	2 251	100,00	63 843 639	100,00
2	2016	40	40 204	37 981	112,64	2 223	98,75	50 324 306	78,82
3	2017	40	47 247	44 911	133,19	2 336	103,77	68 441 738	107,20
4	2018	39	28 328	24 395	72,35	3 933	174,72	67 287 000	105,39
5	2019	40	26 061	18 716	55,50	7 345	326,29	116 353 000	182,24
6	2020	40	11 298	10 829	32,11	469	20,83	34 098 000	53,40
7	2021	41	20 567	20 031	59,40	536	23,81	73 849 000	115,67
8	2022	43	60 419	56 777	168,39	3 642	161,79	184 768 000	289,40
9	2023	46	35 762	29 009	86,03	6 753	300,00	226 147 000	354,22
10	2024	51	91 143	83 531	247,74	7 612	338,16	314 436 200	492,50

Conclusions and Recommendations:

Analyzing the procedures for admitting local and foreign tourists in the museums described above, it becomes clear that the museum administrations need to develop plans to increase the flow of local tourists and establish procedures to receive local and foreign tourists under equal conditions.

Our country's museums should establish and manage priority cooperation systems in areas such as providing museum services to local and international tourists, organizing scientific and practical conferences, exchanging experiences, and implementing new technologies. These measures will serve as targeted plans for organizing and developing museum tourism.

The historically significant exhibits and displays in these museums, which are recognized internationally, should be presented in multiple languages for the international tourism market.

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