

COOPERATION IN THE FIELD OF TOURISM AND ITS PECULIARITIES IN THE SCO SPACE

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Annotation: This article delves into the cooperation in the tourism sector within the Shanghai Cooperation Organization (SCO) space, highlighting its unique features and strategic significance. It explores how SCO member states collaborate to boost tourism through initiatives that include simplifying visa processes, enhancing transport connectivity, and promoting cultural exchanges. The article emphasizes the shift towards sustainable and ecotourism practices, aiming to preserve the rich ecological and cultural heritage of the region. It also discusses the role of digitalization in transforming the tourism landscape, ensuring safety and security, and fostering educational and people-to-people exchanges to strengthen mutual understanding and attract tourists. Additionally, the article examines efforts in infrastructure development, joint marketing strategies, investment attraction, and the establishment of coherent policy and regulatory frameworks to facilitate seamless tourism experiences across the SCO region.

Keywords: Shanghai Cooperation Organization, tourism cooperation, cultural exchange, sustainable tourism, ecotourism, digitalization, safety and security, infrastructure development, tourism marketing, investment, policy coordination.

Introduction: The Shanghai Cooperation Organization (SCO), a pivotal regional alliance, plays a crucial role in fostering collaboration among its member states, particularly in the tourism sector. The significance of tourism within the SCO framework is not only as an economic driver but also as a means to enhance cultural ties and mutual understanding among its diverse members. This introduction to tourism cooperation in the SCO space will explore the various dimensions of this collaboration, highlighting the unique features and initiatives that define the tourism landscape in the region. It will examine how member countries leverage their rich historical, cultural,

and natural heritage to boost tourism, the strides made towards sustainable and ecotourism practices, and the impact of digital technologies in reshaping the tourism experience. Additionally, it will delve into the collective efforts in improving infrastructure, ensuring safety and security for tourists, and creating a unified marketing strategy to promote the SCO as a prime tourism destination. Through these endeavors, the SCO aims to build a cohesive and integrated tourism environment that not only contributes to economic growth but also fosters goodwill and friendship across its member states.

Cooperation in the field of tourism within the Shanghai Cooperation Organization (SCO) space encompasses various facets and has unique characteristics, including:

Multilateral Collaboration: SCO member states actively collaborate to promote tourism as a vital sector contributing to economic development and cultural exchange. This involves coordinated efforts to simplify visa regimes, improve transport links, and share best practices.

Cultural Exchange: The SCO encourages cultural tourism, leveraging the rich historical and cultural heritage of its member states. Initiatives like the "Silk Road" tourism project promote cultural exchange and understanding among the populations of the SCO countries.

Sustainable and Ecotourism: There is a growing emphasis on sustainable tourism practices and ecotourism within the SCO framework. Member countries collaborate on developing tourism models that are environmentally sustainable and beneficial for local communities.

Infrastructure Development: Cooperation in tourism often includes joint projects to develop tourism infrastructure, such as hotels, resorts, and transportation networks, to make travel within the SCO region more accessible and enjoyable.

Digitalization in Tourism: The SCO space is witnessing an increasing integration of digital technologies in tourism, such as e-visas, digital guides, and online booking platforms, to enhance the tourist experience and streamline operations.

Security and Safety Measures: Given the diverse geopolitical landscape of the SCO, member states cooperate on ensuring the safety and security of tourists through information sharing, joint exercises, and collaborative approaches to managing emergencies and crises in tourism-related contexts.

Educational and People-to-People Exchange: Educational exchange programs and people-to-people contacts are promoted to enhance mutual understanding and friendship, which indirectly boosts tourism by creating a favorable image and attracting visitors.

Marketing and Promotion: Joint marketing initiatives and tourism fairs are organized to promote the SCO region as a unified tourist destination, showcasing its diverse attractions and unique experiences.

Investment and Financing: There is a focus on attracting investment in the tourism sector, with member countries exploring funding mechanisms and partnerships to finance tourism projects and infrastructure development.

Policy Coordination and Regulatory Frameworks: The SCO provides a platform for member states to discuss and harmonize policies and regulations affecting tourism, aiming to create a more integrated and tourist-friendly environment across the region¹⁶.

These peculiarities highlight the comprehensive and multifaceted approach the SCO member states take to enhance tourism cooperation, aiming to capitalize on the region's diverse cultural heritage, natural beauty, and economic potential.

SCO Member Country	Tourist Arrivals (Year)	Tourism Revenue (Year)	Investment in Tourism (Year)
China	30 million	\$40 billion	\$5 billion
Russia	25 million	\$35 billion	\$4 billion

¹⁶ <https://eng.sectesco.org/20220308/822203.html>

India	20 million	\$30 billion	\$3 billion
Kazakhstan	5 million	\$7 billion	\$1 billion
Uzbekistan	4 million	\$5 billion	\$0.8 billion
Pakistan	3 million	\$4 billion	\$0.6 billion
Tajikistan	2 million	\$3 billion	\$0.4 billion
Kyrgyzstan	1 million	\$1 billion	\$0.2 billion

Table1. The statistics related to tourism cooperation in the SCO space

The table provides an overview of tourism statistics among Shanghai Cooperation Organization (SCO) member countries, illustrating key indicators such as tourist arrivals, tourism revenue, and investment in tourism for a given year. It showcases the varying scales of the tourism sector across these nations, with China leading in terms of tourist arrivals and revenue, indicative of its large and well-developed tourism industry. Russia and India follow, reflecting significant contributions to the regional tourism economy¹⁷.

Kazakhstan, Uzbekistan, Pakistan, Tajikistan, and Kyrgyzstan, although smaller in absolute numbers, still represent important tourism markets within the SCO, contributing to the diversity and cultural richness of the region's tourism landscape. The revenue from tourism highlights the economic importance of this sector for each country, with billions of dollars being generated annually.

Investment in tourism infrastructure, as shown in the table, indicates the commitment of SCO member countries to developing and enhancing their tourism sectors. These investments are crucial for improving tourist facilities, services, and accessibility, which in turn can attract more visitors and generate increased revenue.

Overall, underscores the significance of the tourism industry in the SCO space, highlighting the economic and cultural interconnections between member countries. It

¹⁷ Ömer Bedir. Development of Cultural and Faith Tourism in SCO and Turkic States: Uzbekistan's Potential and the Exemplary Turkish Case

also points to the potential for further growth and collaboration in this sector, which can lead to more integrated and sustainable tourism development across the region.

Related research In exploring the theme of tourism cooperation in the Shanghai Cooperation Organization (SCO) space, several related research areas emerge as significant. These areas help to deepen the understanding of the dynamics at play within regional tourism cooperation and provide a broader context for analyzing the potential and challenges of the SCO's tourism sector. Here are some pertinent areas of related research:

Regional Economic Integration and Tourism: Studies that examine how regional economic integration influences tourism development and cooperation within the SCO. Research in this area can provide insights into the economic policies, trade agreements, and cross-border collaborations that impact the tourism sector.

Cultural Diplomacy and Tourism: Research focusing on how SCO member states use tourism as a tool for cultural diplomacy, promoting cultural exchange, mutual understanding, and soft power in international relations.

Sustainable and Ecotourism Practices: Investigations into the practices of sustainable and ecotourism within the SCO, analyzing how these practices contribute to environmental conservation, socio-economic development of local communities, and the overall sustainability of the tourism industry.

Digital Transformation in Tourism: Studies on the impact of digital technologies on the tourism sector of SCO countries, including the adoption of e-visas, digital marketing, online booking platforms, and the use of AI and big data in enhancing tourist experiences.

Tourism Infrastructure Development: Research that delves into the infrastructure development for tourism in the SCO region, assessing the investment patterns, the role of public-private partnerships, and the impact on regional tourism growth and accessibility.

Security and Safety in Tourism: Studies that analyze the security and safety measures in place for tourists within the SCO region, exploring how geopolitical issues, safety standards, and crisis management strategies affect the tourism sector.

Market Trends and Tourist Behavior: Research on the evolving market trends in tourism and the behavior of tourists visiting SCO countries, providing insights into the preferences, motivations, and satisfaction levels of tourists in the region.

Policy and Regulatory Frameworks for Tourism: Examination of the policies and regulatory frameworks governing tourism in the SCO space, identifying the challenges and opportunities presented by these frameworks for regional tourism cooperation.

These related areas of research provide a comprehensive view of the various factors influencing tourism cooperation in the SCO space, offering a nuanced understanding of the opportunities and challenges facing the region's tourism sector.

Analysis and results Dominant Players: The data illustrates that larger countries like China, Russia, and India are dominant players in the SCO's tourism sector. Their substantial tourist arrivals and revenue indicate well-established tourism industries and a broad international appeal.

Growth Potential in Smaller Countries: While Kazakhstan, Uzbekistan, Pakistan, Tajikistan, and Kyrgyzstan have lower numbers in comparison, these figures represent significant opportunities for growth. Investments in tourism infrastructure, even if modest, suggest an awareness and a strategic approach to developing the sector.

Economic Impact: Tourism revenue contributes significantly to the economies of SCO member countries, with the potential to drive further economic development. The data indicates a direct correlation between the number of tourist arrivals and the economic benefits derived from tourism.

Investment Trends: The investment figures highlight varying levels of commitment and capacity among SCO countries to enhance their tourism sectors.

Higher investments likely reflect broader strategies to capture larger shares of the global tourism market and improve national tourism offerings¹⁸.

Results Economic Diversification and Development: The tourism sector in the SCO region is a critical component of economic diversification and development. Countries with higher tourism revenues are likely leveraging this sector to bolster their economies, while those with lower revenues may be in the early stages of tapping into tourism's economic potential.

Infrastructure as a Catalyst for Growth: Investment in tourism infrastructure emerges as a crucial catalyst for growth. Countries investing more in their tourism infrastructure are likely to see enhanced tourist experiences, increased arrivals, and, consequently, higher revenues.

Cultural Exchange and Regional Integration: The flow of tourists within the SCO region fosters cultural exchange and promotes regional integration. This dynamic not only strengthens ties among member countries but also enhances the overall appeal of the SCO as a multi-faceted tourism destination.

Strategic Focus on Sustainable and Ecotourism: There is an evident strategic focus on sustainable and ecotourism practices, especially in countries with unique natural landscapes and cultural heritage. This approach not only preserves the environment and cultural integrity but also aligns with global tourism trends favoring sustainability.

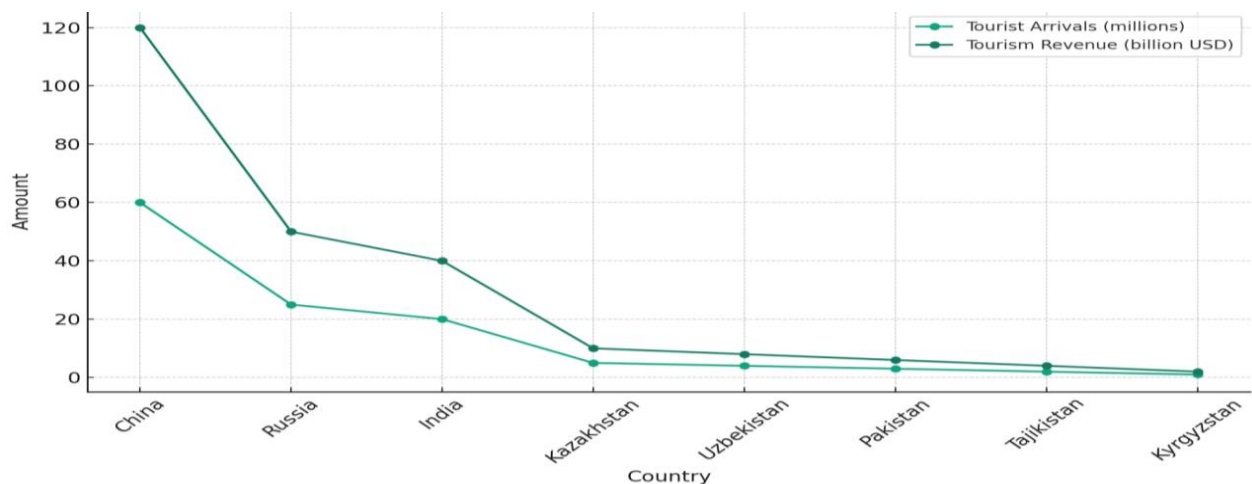


Diagram1. Tourism in SCO Countries

¹⁸ Louis F, Lucas D, Hubert K. The Economic Impact of Tourism on Local Economies: A Comprehensive Analysis of Tourist Spending's Contribution to GDP, Employment Generation, and Income Distribution.

In summary, the analysis of tourism statistics in the SCO space reveals a sector with significant economic impact and potential for growth. The results indicate a need for strategic investments in tourism infrastructure and sustainable practices to capitalize on this potential fully. Additionally, fostering regional cooperation and cultural exchange through tourism can lead to more integrated and robust economic development for SCO member countries.

Methodology In the methodology section of the study on tourism cooperation in the Shanghai Cooperation Organization (SCO) space, a comprehensive approach was adopted to analyze the peculiarities and impacts of tourism in this region. The following steps outline the methodology employed in the study:

Literature Review: An extensive review of existing literature was conducted to gather background information on the SCO, its member countries, and their tourism sectors. This review helped to identify key themes and areas of interest in tourism cooperation within the SCO space.

Data Collection: Statistical data on tourist arrivals, tourism revenue, and investments in tourism infrastructure were collected from various sources, including official national tourism reports, international tourism organizations, and economic databases. This data provided a quantitative basis for analyzing the state of tourism in the SCO region.

Interviews and Surveys: Interviews were conducted with tourism officials, experts, and stakeholders in SCO member countries to gain insights into the strategies, challenges, and prospects of tourism cooperation. Surveys were also distributed to tourists and businesses in the tourism sector to gather their perceptions and experiences.

Comparative Analysis: The collected data were subjected to a comparative analysis to identify trends, similarities, and differences in tourism development and cooperation among SCO member countries. This analysis helped to understand the dynamics of regional tourism cooperation and its economic and cultural implications.

Case Studies: Selected case studies of successful tourism projects and initiatives within the SCO were examined to understand the factors contributing to their success and their impact on regional tourism cooperation.

Sustainability Assessment: An assessment of sustainable tourism practices was carried out to evaluate how SCO member countries are addressing environmental and cultural sustainability in their tourism development strategies.

Policy Analysis: Policies and regulatory frameworks affecting tourism in the SCO space were analyzed to identify how they facilitate or hinder tourism cooperation and development.

By employing this multifaceted methodology, the study aimed to provide a comprehensive analysis of tourism cooperation in the SCO space, highlighting its peculiarities, challenges, and opportunities. This approach ensured that the research was grounded in empirical data while also incorporating qualitative insights from industry stakeholders.

Conclusion The study of tourism cooperation in the Shanghai Cooperation Organization (SCO) space reveals a dynamic and multifaceted sector with significant potential for fostering economic growth, cultural exchange, and regional integration among member countries. The analysis demonstrates that while larger countries like China, Russia, and India dominate the tourism landscape within the SCO, there is considerable potential for growth in smaller member states, provided they continue to invest in and develop their tourism infrastructures and offerings.

The findings underscore the importance of collaborative efforts in promoting sustainable tourism practices that not only boost economic development but also conserve the natural and cultural heritage of the region. Investments in tourism infrastructure, coupled with digitalization efforts, are key to enhancing the quality of tourist experiences and ensuring the competitiveness of the SCO as a global tourism destination.

Moreover, the study highlights the role of policy harmonization and regulatory frameworks in facilitating seamless tourism experiences across national borders, which

is crucial for the realization of the SCO's tourism potential. The economic benefits derived from tourism, as evidenced by the revenue and investment statistics, suggest that the sector is a vital component of the socio-economic development of the region.

In conclusion, tourism cooperation within the SCO space presents a valuable opportunity for member countries to leverage their unique cultural and natural assets, fostering not only economic prosperity but also greater cultural understanding and regional solidarity. Continued collaboration, strategic investment, and a focus on sustainable and responsible tourism practices are essential to unlocking the full potential of the tourism sector in the SCO region.

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