

IMPROVING ORGANIZATIONAL-ECONOMIC MECHANISMS FOR MICE TOURISM DEVELOPMENT IN UZBEKISTAN UNDER DIGITAL TRANSFORMATION

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Abstract: This article examines the organizational-economic mechanisms underlying the development of MICE tourism (Meetings, Incentives, Conferences, and Exhibitions) in the Republic of Uzbekistan in the context of accelerating digitalization of the national tourism sector. Despite the rapid growth of overall tourist arrivals, which exceeded ten million visitors in 2025, the MICE segment continues to face structural constraints, including fragmented coordination among convention bureaus, tour operators and venue providers, limited digital booking and analytics infrastructure, and an incomplete regulatory-fiscal framework for business-event organizers. Drawing on an analysis of recent state programs — including Presidential Decree No. UP-87 of May 2025, the planned launch of the Unified Tourism Platform in July 2026, and the value-added tax refund mechanism for MICE organizers introduced in 2026 — the study systematizes the organizational-economic instruments available to public authorities and private stakeholders.

Keywords: MICE tourism; organizational-economic mechanism; digitalization; Uzbekistan; convention and exhibition industry; tourism policy; digital platform; destination competitiveness.

Introduction: Business tourism, commonly referred to by the acronym MICE (Meetings, Incentives, Conferences, and Exhibitions), has become one of the most dynamic and economically valuable segments of the global tourism industry. Unlike leisure tourism, MICE tourism generates comparatively higher per-visitor expenditure, stimulates the development of urban infrastructure, and strengthens a country's international business and academic ties. For transition economies such as Uzbekistan, the development of MICE tourism is a strategically important direction, since it diversifies the tourism product beyond cultural and historical attractions and positions the country within global professional and scientific networks.

Over the past decade, Uzbekistan has pursued an active policy of opening its tourism sector, simplifying visa procedures, and integrating digital technologies into public administration. The number of international visitors surpassed ten million within eleven months of 2025, reflecting the cumulative effect of liberalization reforms. However, the organizational-economic mechanisms that specifically support MICE tourism — coordination between convention bureaus, venues, transport operators and tour companies; fiscal incentives for organizers; and digital infrastructure for planning and promoting business events — remain underdeveloped relative to the segment's growth potential. The purpose of this article is to analyze the current organizational-economic mechanisms of MICE tourism development in Uzbekistan and to propose directions for their improvement in light of the ongoing digital transformation of the national tourism management system.

1. Current State of MICE Tourism Governance in Uzbekistan

Uzbekistan's tourism sector has undergone substantial institutional restructuring since 2024, with tourism governance consolidated under a dedicated state committee responsible for strategy, licensing, and promotion. Presidential Decree No. UP-87 (May 2025) set targets for 2025–2026 that explicitly include the digitalization and diversification of tourism services as a distinct policy direction, alongside measures to increase regional tourist flows and support entrepreneurship in the sector. A subsequent government resolution introduced a value-added tax refund of fifty percent for business entities organizing international conferences and events that attract at least one hundred foreign participants, effective from April 2026 — a direct fiscal instrument aimed at stimulating MICE organizers.

At the international level, Uzbekistan's accession to the International Congress and Convention Association (ICCA) represents a significant step toward integrating the country into the global professional infrastructure that coordinates the international congress calendar. Membership provides access to bid-support resources, benchmarking data, and networking opportunities that are essential for attracting recurring international conferences rather than one-off events.

2. Digital Infrastructure and Its Implications for MICE Coordination

A central development is the planned launch, from July 2026, of a Unified Tourism Platform and accompanying mobile application, intended to consolidate booking, licensing and information services for the tourism sector, with artificial-intelligence and big-data analytics functions to be added by the end of 2026. For MICE tourism specifically, such a platform creates the potential for a single digital window connecting venue availability, accreditation of tour operators, transport logistics, and visitor registration — functions that are currently distributed across multiple agencies

and private operators without a unified data layer. The parallel growth of the national IT sector, reflected in a substantial increase in IT-park export services during the first quarter of 2026, further indicates that the technical capacity for such integration is expanding.

Nevertheless, the organizational-economic mechanism connecting these digital tools to the specific needs of MICE stakeholders — professional conference organizers, exhibition operators, and destination-marketing bodies — has not yet been formalized. Without an explicit MICE-oriented module within the Unified Tourism Platform, there is a risk that digitalization efforts will primarily benefit leisure tourism while leaving the business-events segment reliant on informal coordination.

3. Directions for Improving the Organizational-Economic Mechanism

Based on the analysis above, the article proposes a three-tier organizational-economic mechanism for MICE tourism development in Uzbekistan:

First, an institutional tier, in which a national convention bureau function is formally embedded within the state tourism committee, with clear responsibility for bid-support, venue accreditation, and coordination with international associations such as ICCA.

Second, a fiscal-incentive tier, which builds on the existing VAT refund mechanism by introducing graduated incentives tied to the scale and international composition of events, together with transparent eligibility criteria published through the Unified Tourism Platform.

Third, a digital-data tier, in which a dedicated MICE module of the Unified Tourism Platform aggregates venue capacity, real-time availability, and visitor-flow analytics, enabling both organizers and policymakers to measure the economic impact of business events with greater precision than is currently possible using aggregate tourism statistics alone.

Integrating these three tiers would allow Uzbekistan to move from a largely reactive, permit-based approach to MICE tourism toward a proactive, data-informed destination-management model consistent with practices observed in mature MICE markets.

Conclusion: The development of MICE tourism in Uzbekistan is occurring against the backdrop of an ambitious national digitalization agenda and a series of targeted fiscal and institutional reforms. However, the organizational-economic mechanisms that specifically support business-event organizers remain fragmented across agencies and lack a dedicated digital infrastructure layer. The three-tier mechanism proposed in this article — institutional consolidation, graduated fiscal incentives, and a dedicated MICE data module within the forthcoming Unified Tourism Platform — offers a practical pathway for strengthening Uzbekistan's competitiveness as a regional business-tourism

destination. Further empirical research, particularly quantitative assessment of the economic multiplier effects of MICE events after the platform's 2026 launch, is recommended as the digital infrastructure becomes operational.

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