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# CONTENTS

|                                                                                                                                                         |    |
|---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|----|
| EMPIRICAL ASSESSMENT OF INTERNAL AND EXTERNAL FACTORS AFFECTING THE COMPETITIVENESS OF THE FOOD INDUSTRY IN UZBEKISTAN .....                            | 10 |
| <b>Urolova Sevara Bekhzod qizi</b>                                                                                                                      |    |
| INTEGRAL MANAGEMENT MODELS FOR IMPROVING THE CIRCULAR ECONOMY SYSTEM IN AGRICULTURE .....                                                               | 16 |
| <b>Nazirova Zulfina Salimovna</b>                                                                                                                       |    |
| IMPROVING THE FINANCING MECHANISM OF LOCALIZATION IN THE METRO INDUSTRY AND ITS SCENARIO-BASED ASSESSMENT .....                                         | 21 |
| <b>Mansurov Khamrokul Ilkhomovich</b>                                                                                                                   |    |
| THEORETICAL FOUNDATIONS OF TEACHING METHODS IN HIGHER EDUCATION INSTITUTIONS.....                                                                       | 28 |
| <b>Berdiyeva Nilufar Axatovna</b>                                                                                                                       |    |
| INTERNATIONAL EXPERIENCE IN ROAD SECTOR FINANCING AND ROAD ASSET MANAGEMENT: IMPLICATIONS FOR SUSTAINABLE INFRASTRUCTURE DEVELOPMENT IN UZBEKISTAN..... | 34 |
| <b>Feruz Shokirov</b>                                                                                                                                   |    |
| ECONOMIC OPPORTUNITIES FOR POVERTY REDUCTION THROUGH SERVICE SECTOR DEVELOPMENT.....                                                                    | 42 |
| <b>Saparov Murod Irgashovich</b>                                                                                                                        |    |
| DIGITAL-INTEGRATION MODEL OF GREEN LENDING: INSTITUTIONAL GROUNDING IN COMMERCIAL BANK PRACTICE .....                                                   | 46 |
| <b>Melikuzieva Dilrabo Mukhitdinovna</b>                                                                                                                |    |
| CURRENT STATE OF ECONOMIC COOPERATION IN THE NAMANGAN REGION: LESSONS FROM INTERNATIONAL EXPERIENCE.....                                                | 52 |
| <b>Sattarov Ravshan Alimovich</b>                                                                                                                       |    |
| MODERN LEVELS OF INNOVATIVE DIGITAL BANKING SERVICES IN COMMERCIAL BANKS.....                                                                           | 60 |
| <b>D. M. Kallibekov</b>                                                                                                                                 |    |
| EFFECTIVENESS OF USING AUTOMATED MANAGEMENT SYSTEMS IN RESOURCE CAPACITY MANAGEMENT IN TEXTILE INDUSTRY ENTERPRISES.....                                | 64 |
| <b>Makhammadieva Izhobat Abdiganieva</b>                                                                                                                |    |
| TEXTILE INDUSTRY PRODUCTION CAPACITY GROWTH FORECAST .....                                                                                              | 75 |
| <b>Joraqulov Javakhir Asomiddin's Son</b>                                                                                                               |    |
| FORECASTING THE MECHANISM FOR ASSESSING INVESTMENTS ATTRACTED TO SMALL BUSINESS ENTITIES IN THE ANDIJAN REGION THROUGH 2030 .....                       | 80 |
| <b>Jo'rayeva Moxinur Axmadjon qizi</b>                                                                                                                  |    |
| IMPROVEMENT OF PERSONAL MANAGEMENT IN TEXTILE INDUSTRY ENTERPRISES BASED ON CHOICE OF ORGANIZATION MODELS.....                                          | 88 |
| <b>Djumaniyazova Jamila Davronovna</b>                                                                                                                  |    |
| THE ROLE OF THE INTERNAL CONTROL SYSTEM IN RISK MANAGEMENT OF SMALL BUSINESS ENTERPRISES.....                                                           | 93 |
| <b>Umarov Azizjon</b>                                                                                                                                   |    |

|                                                                                                                                                                                   |     |
|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-----|
| SPATIAL ECONOMETRIC MODELING IN THE MASS APPRAISAL OF REAL ESTATE: A GEOGRAPHICALLY WEIGHTED REGRESSION APPROACH (THE CASE OF TERMEZ CITY) .....                                  | 102 |
| <b>Khushvaktov Jasur Shukhrat ugli</b>                                                                                                                                            |     |
| НАПРАВЛЕНИЯ РАЗВИТИЯ РЫНКА ЭЛЕКТРОТЕХНИЧЕСКОГО<br>ОБОРУДОВАНИЯ В УЗБЕКИСТАНЕ .....                                                                                                | 110 |
| <b>Джураев Муротжон Сотиволдиевич</b>                                                                                                                                             |     |
| SCIENTIFIC AND PRACTICAL FOUNDATIONS FOR ASSESSING AND IMPROVING THE<br>EFFECTIVENESS OF INTERNAL AUDIT IN COMMERCIAL BANKS .....                                                 | 120 |
| <b>Yuldashev Xurshidbek Mamirjonovich</b>                                                                                                                                         |     |
| ECONOMIC EFFICIENCY OF IMPLEMENTING ARTIFICIAL INTELLIGENCE<br>TECHNOLOGIES IN BEEKEEPING AND FORECAST INDICATORS FOR 2026–2030 .....                                             | 130 |
| <b>Farmanov Jonibek Ziyadullaevich</b>                                                                                                                                            |     |
| ENSURING SUSTAINABLE ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT THROUGH THE<br>DIVERSIFICATION OF THE SECTORAL STRUCTURE OF FIXED CAPITAL<br>INVESTMENTS IN A REGION (THE CASE OF KHOREZM REGION) ..... | 137 |
| <b>Sultanova Aziza Bahtiyor qizi</b>                                                                                                                                              |     |
| PROSPECTS FOR THE DEVELOPMENT OF ENTREPRENEURIAL ENTITIES<br>PRODUCING FOOD PRODUCTS IN TASHKENT REGION .....                                                                     | 146 |
| <b>Abdulxamidova Nodira Abdura</b>                                                                                                                                                |     |
| DYNAMIC PERFORMANCE OPTIMIZATION AND WEAR REDUCTION OF THE CAM<br>SYSTEM IN CARDAN COUPLINGS FOR METRO ROLLING STOCK TRACTION DRIVES .....                                        | 153 |
| <b>Asamitdin Fayzullaev</b>                                                                                                                                                       |     |
| <b>Ziyevutdin Fayzullaev</b>                                                                                                                                                      |     |
| RECOGNISED BUT NOT MEASURED: THE SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT GOALS<br>AND THE PERFORMANCE FRAMEWORK OF UZBEKISTAN'S STRATEGY-2030<br>(PRESIDENTIAL DECREE UP-21 OF 2026) .....        | 160 |
| <b>Salakhutdinova Yulduz Golibovna</b>                                                                                                                                            |     |
| ANALYSIS OF PRODUCTION EFFICIENCY IN CONSTRUCTION MATERIALS<br>MANUFACTURING ENTERPRISES: EVIDENCE FROM ANDIJAN REGION .....                                                      | 168 |
| <b>Toshpulatov Asronbek Mutalibovich</b>                                                                                                                                          |     |
| THE IMPACT OF FREE TRADE AGREEMENTS ON UZBEKISTAN'S TEXTILE<br>INDUSTRY: A PANEL DATA ANALYSIS, 2017–2023 .....                                                                   | 176 |
| <b>Jurabek Toshbekov</b>                                                                                                                                                          |     |
| <b>Navik Istikomah</b>                                                                                                                                                            |     |
| <b>A.B. Bobojonov</b>                                                                                                                                                             |     |
| HUMAN-AI SYNERGY IN STRATEGIC DECISIONMAKING OF ENTERPRISES IN UZBEKISTAN .....                                                                                                   | 182 |
| <b>Abdullaeva Odinakhon</b>                                                                                                                                                       |     |
| ANALYSIS OF THE CURRENT STATE OF ENTREPRENEURIAL ACTIVITY IN<br>UZBEKISTAN'S TOURISM SECTOR .....                                                                                 | 186 |
| <b>Yuldashev Bekzodjon Sherzodjon ugli</b>                                                                                                                                        |     |
| A COMPREHENSIVE SYSTEM OF CRITERIA FOR ASSESSING THE FACTORS AFFECTING<br>THE EFFECTIVENESS OF INTERNAL AUDIT IN PRIVATE HIGHER EDUCATION INSTITUTIONS .....                      | 190 |
| <b>Turmanqulov Norpo'lat Sa'dullayevich</b>                                                                                                                                       |     |
| DESIGNING A THREE-LEVEL KPI FRAMEWORK FOR RANKING-ORIENTED UNIVERSITY<br>GOVERNANCE: INTEGRATING DIGITAL MONITORING AND RESOURCE OPTIMIZATION .....                               | 197 |
| <b>Mukhlisa Mamajonova</b>                                                                                                                                                        |     |
| ВЛИЯНИЕ IFRS 18 НА ПРЕДСТАВЛЕНИЕ КОНСОЛИДИРОВАННОЙ ФИНАНСОВОЙ<br>ОТЧЁТНОСТИ: СРАВНИТЕЛЬНЫЙ АНАЛИЗ С IAS 1 .....                                                                   | 208 |
| <b>Шамсиева Нозима Шермат кизи</b>                                                                                                                                                |     |

|                                                                                                                                                                                     |     |
|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-----|
| INNOVATIVE MECHANISMS FOR IMPROVING THE ENVIRONMENTAL<br>MANAGEMENT SYSTEM AT ENTERPRISES.....                                                                                      | 218 |
| <b>Uralova Sojida Anvar qizi</b>                                                                                                                                                    |     |
| IMPROVEMENT OF ECONOMIC MECHANISMS IN THE ORGANIZATION OF<br>INFORMATION AND COMMUNICATION TECHNOLOGY SERVICES.....                                                                 | 225 |
| <b>Rajaboyev Shahboz Shodi o'g'li</b>                                                                                                                                               |     |
| IMPROVEMENT OF INTERNAL CONTROL ASSESSMENT QUESTIONNAIRE IN COMMUNICATION<br>ENTERPRISES INVENTORY AUDIT BASED ON HAS 240 AND HAS 315 REQUIREMENTS.....                             | 233 |
| <b>Jamilov Jushqin Jonon ugli</b>                                                                                                                                                   |     |
| IMPROVING DIGITAL TRANSFORMATION MECHANISMS IN THE STRATEGIC<br>MANAGEMENT OF MODERN PAYMENT SYSTEMS.....                                                                           | 239 |
| <b>Iskandarov Xurshid Iskandarovich</b>                                                                                                                                             |     |
| INNOVATIVE DETERMINANTS OF POVERTY: AN ECONOMETRIC ANALYSIS<br>BASED ON REGIONAL PANEL DATA .....                                                                                   | 246 |
| <b>Amrullayev Dadaxon</b>                                                                                                                                                           |     |
| ECONOMIC MECHANISMS FOR STIMULATING ENTERPRISES' DEMAND FOR<br>TECHNOLOGY UNDER INDUSTRY 4.0 CONDITIONS.....                                                                        | 251 |
| <b>Erkayev Akrom Normukhammadovich</b>                                                                                                                                              |     |
| IMPROVING THE ORGANIZATIONAL AND ECONOMIC MECHANISM OF FAMILY BUSINESS<br>MANAGEMENT THROUGH INNOVATIVE APPROACHES: THE CASE OF ANDIJAN REGION.....                                 | 258 |
| <b>Sultonov Bobirmirzo Mavlonjon o'g'li</b>                                                                                                                                         |     |
| THE EFFICIENCY OF MARKETING COMMUNICATIONS IN LIGHT INDUSTRY ENTERPRISES<br>IN 2023–2025: EVIDENCE FROM THE TEXTILE SECTOR OF THE BUKHARA REGION.....                               | 266 |
| <b>Mukhsinov Bekzod Tokhirovich</b>                                                                                                                                                 |     |
| ENSURING TRANSPARENCY IN FOREIGN TRADE: ADVANTAGES OF PUBLICLY<br>DISCLOSING THE PRICES OF FOREIGN TRADE-RELATED SERVICES IN THE “SINGLE<br>WINDOW” CUSTOMS INFORMATION SYSTEM..... | 279 |
| <b>Muzafarov Azimjon Ashraf ugli</b>                                                                                                                                                |     |
| THE SELF-EMPLOYMENT SYSTEM IN UZBEKISTAN AND ITS ROLE IN POVERTY REDUCTION .....                                                                                                    | 282 |
| <b>Zakirov Mir Timur Zokir ugli</b>                                                                                                                                                 |     |
| PERFORMANCE IMPROVEMENT MECHANISMS FOR ACADEMIC<br>STAFF IN HIGHER EDUCATION.....                                                                                                   | 289 |
| <b>Sultonboyeva Munira Bahodirovna</b>                                                                                                                                              |     |
| <b>Sultanova Kamila Mukhtorali kizi</b>                                                                                                                                             |     |
| ECONOMETRIC ASSESSMENT OF THE SOCIO-ECONOMIC DETERMINANTS<br>OF GROSS REGIONAL PRODUCT PER CAPITA IN UZBEKISTAN .....                                                               | 298 |
| <b>Fayziyeva Nargiza Rabimovna</b>                                                                                                                                                  |     |
| IMPROVING THE METHODOLOGY OF FINANCIAL ANALYSIS BASED ON THE<br>INDICATORS OF THE STATEMENT OF FINANCIAL POSITION OF BUSINESS ENTITIES .....                                        | 305 |
| <b>Berdieva Marjona Shavkat kizi</b>                                                                                                                                                |     |
| BUDGETING IN SANATORIUM AND HEALTH RESORT ORGANIZATIONS:<br>FINANCIAL PLANNING AND COST MANAGEMENT .....                                                                            | 312 |
| <b>Tilabov Shohrukh Bahriddin o'g'li</b>                                                                                                                                            |     |
| PRINCIPLES AND ORGANIZATIONAL AND ECONOMIC MECHANISMS FOR<br>THE DEVELOPMENT OF GREEN SERVICES IN UZBEKISTAN .....                                                                  | 318 |
| <b>Y.M.Khalikov</b>                                                                                                                                                                 |     |
| ANALYSIS OF SECTOR EFFICIENCY BASED ON THE DEVELOPMENT OF<br>VEGETABLE CROP SEED PRODUCTION .....                                                                                   | 325 |
| <b>Faxriddinov Abdulhakim Ziyaiddinovich</b>                                                                                                                                        |     |

|                                                                                                                                                                       |     |
|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-----|
| USING THE OPPORTUNITIES OF THE PLATFORM ECONOMY TO DEVELOP THE<br>ACTIVITIES OF SMALL BUSINESS ENTITIES ON DIGITAL PLATFORMS.....                                     | 332 |
| <b>Tursunxo'jayeva Gulnoza Jamoliddin qizi</b>                                                                                                                        |     |
| METHODOLOGICAL APPROACHES TO IMPROVING THE EFFICIENCY<br>OF DIGITAL SERVICES FOR BUSINESS ENTITIES.....                                                               | 340 |
| <b>Yusupova Dilbar Mirabidovna</b>                                                                                                                                    |     |
| DIGITALIZATION IN THE RETAIL BANKING SYSTEM: CUSTOMER ENGAGEMENT AND<br>THE LEVEL OF FINANCIAL PRODUCT USAGE IN THE ASIAN REGION.....                                 | 345 |
| <b>Maxsadaliyeva Maftuna Toxir qizi</b>                                                                                                                               |     |
| DEVELOPMENT TRENDS AND ECONOMIC CHARACTERISTICS OF<br>THE MEDICAL SERVICES MARKET.....                                                                                | 350 |
| <b>Urokov Firdavs Ortikniyoz ugli</b>                                                                                                                                 |     |
| THE U.S. PRIVATE EQUITY MARKET MODEL: KEY DRIVERS AND<br>IMPLICATIONS FOR UZBEKISTAN.....                                                                             | 356 |
| <b>Fayziyev Umurqul Shuxratovich</b>                                                                                                                                  |     |
| <b>Tulaganova Rukhshona Farrukh qizi</b>                                                                                                                              |     |
| CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK FOR IMPROVING ACCOUNTING SYSTEMS<br>IN NON-STATE HIGHER EDUCATION INSTITUTIONS.....                                                              | 366 |
| <b>Kholikova Durdona Bunyodjon kizi</b>                                                                                                                               |     |
| ANALYSIS OF TAX REVENUE LOSSES DUE TO THE SHADOW ECONOMY:<br>THE CASE OF UZBEKISTAN AND FOREIGN COUNTRIES.....                                                        | 375 |
| <b>Abdullayev Shavkat Nasriddinovich</b>                                                                                                                              |     |
| DIRECTIONS FOR IMPROVING THE INTERNAL CONTROL AND<br>AUDIT SYSTEM IN AN ENTERPRISE.....                                                                               | 381 |
| <b>Karamatova Noiba Husnitdinovna</b>                                                                                                                                 |     |
| MATHEMATICAL MODELLING OF DATA ANALYSIS IN<br>COMBATING THE SHADOW ECONOMY.....                                                                                       | 389 |
| <b>Bobojonov Azimjon Akmal ugli</b>                                                                                                                                   |     |
| THE ECONOMIC ESSENCE, CONTENT, AND CLASSIFICATION OF RETAIL<br>TRADE AND MARKETING STRATEGIES.....                                                                    | 395 |
| <b>Ahmedov Shohjahon</b>                                                                                                                                              |     |
| METHODOLOGICAL APPROACHES TO THE ECONOMIC ASSESSMENT<br>AND FORECASTING OF REGIONAL DEVELOPMENT.....                                                                  | 400 |
| <b>Yormonqulova Nargiza</b>                                                                                                                                           |     |
| ECONOMETRIC MODELS FOR EVALUATING INVESTMENT PROJECTS AND ENSURING<br>THE DEBT SUSTAINABILITY OF RAILWAY TRANSPORT ENTERPRISES.....                                   | 408 |
| <b>Samandarov Doniyorbek Odilbekovich</b>                                                                                                                             |     |
| МЕТОДИЧЕСКИЕ ПОДХОДЫ К ФОРМИРОВАНИЮ ТЕХНИЧЕСКОГО<br>ЗАДАНИЯ В СИСТЕМЕ ГОСУДАРСТВЕННЫХ ЗАКУПОК: ИНСТРУМЕНТЫ<br>ПРЕДОТВРАЩЕНИЯ ПРАКТИК, ОГРАНИЧИВАЮЩИХ КОНКУРЕНЦИЮ..... | 414 |
| <b>Ризакулов Шерзод Шермуратович</b>                                                                                                                                  |     |
| TPOLOGY AND STANDARDIZATION OF GREEN CLAIMS IN UZBEKISTAN'S<br>RETAIL MARKET: ADDRESSING CONSUMER TERMINOLOGY CONFUSION.....                                          | 421 |
| <b>Tokhir Abdirakhmonovich Akramov</b>                                                                                                                                |     |
| <b>Zilola G'ulomovna Davronova</b>                                                                                                                                    |     |
| IMPROVING THE INTERNAL AUDIT OF FINANCIAL ERRORS AND IRREGULARITIES<br>IN BUDGET ORGANIZATIONS THROUGH A RISK-BASED APPROACH.....                                     | 428 |
| <b>Mulayev Farkhod Alisherovich</b>                                                                                                                                   |     |

|                                                                                                                                                                                   |     |
|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-----|
| DIGITAL AND INSTITUTIONAL TRANSFORMATION OF LAND MARKET INFRASTRUCTURE:<br>MECHANISMS FOR ENHANCING TRANSPARENCY AND EFFICIENCY .....                                             | 434 |
| <b>Ubaydov Mirshod Ismailovich</b>                                                                                                                                                |     |
| IMPROVING THE METHODOLOGY FOR ENSURING THE INTEROPERABILITY<br>OF INFORMATION SYSTEMS IN HEALTHCARE INSTITUTIONS .....                                                            | 440 |
| <b>Turayeva Nafisa Odiljonovna</b>                                                                                                                                                |     |
| ORGANIZATIONAL AND ECONOMIC MECHANISMS FOR THE DEVELOPMENT OF<br>THE HOUSEHOLD SERVICES SECTOR AND DIRECTIONS FOR IMPROVING ITS DYNAMICS .....                                    | 445 |
| <b>Yoldoshev Shukhratmirza Tursunboy oglu</b>                                                                                                                                     |     |
| IMPROVING ORGANIZATIONAL AND ECONOMIC MECHANISMS FOR ATTRACTING<br>INVESTMENT BASED ON REGIONAL CHARACTERISTICS IN SYRDARYA REGION .....                                          | 452 |
| <b>Kadirkulov Khumoyun Mirzo Vokid oglu</b>                                                                                                                                       |     |
| REDUCING FOOD LOSS AND WASTE IN UZBEKISTAN:<br>CHALLENGES AND POLICY SOLUTIONS.....                                                                                               | 460 |
| <b>Olimjanova Shoiri Olimjanovna</b>                                                                                                                                              |     |
| DIGITALIZATION AND SPECIALIZATION AS DRIVERS OF<br>CHANGE IN THE CONSULTING SERVICES MARKET .....                                                                                 | 470 |
| <b>Ermamatova Shohsanam Ermamat qizi</b>                                                                                                                                          |     |
| MEASURING THE ENTREPRENEURIAL CAPABILITY OF THE POPULATION: A<br>COMPOSITE INDEX AND REGIONAL TYPOLOGY FOR UZBEKISTAN.....                                                        | 480 |
| <b>Suvpulatov Ozodjon Alijon o'g'li</b>                                                                                                                                           |     |
| A DEMAND-RESPONSIVE TARIFF-SUBSIDY-CAPACITY MECHANISM FOR IMPROVING<br>ECONOMIC EFFICIENCY IN RAILWAY PASSENGER TRANSPORT ENTERPRISES:<br>MODEL DESIGN AND IMPACT ASSESSMENT..... | 486 |
| <b>Kurambayev Alisher Saburbayevich</b>                                                                                                                                           |     |
| DIRECTIONS FOR INCREASING THE EFFICIENCY OF TRADE SERVICES<br>BASED ON THE DEVELOPMENT OF E-COMMERCE INFRASTRUCTURE .....                                                         | 491 |
| <b>Raxmanov Sherzod Shuxratovich</b>                                                                                                                                              |     |
| ISSUES OF ORGANIZATION AND PLANNING OF THE AUDIT OF LONG-TERM<br>ASSETS IN JOINT-STOCK COMPANIES .....                                                                            | 497 |
| <b>Bakayev Khurshid Makhmudovich</b>                                                                                                                                              |     |
| MECHANISMS FOR INCREASING EMPLOYMENT THROUGH RECRUITMENT<br>AGENCIES IN THE DIGITAL ECONOMY .....                                                                                 | 502 |
| <b>Sherkulova Nodirabegim Bakhordin qizi</b>                                                                                                                                      |     |
| DIGITAL DOLLARISATION THROUGH REMITTANCE CHANNELS: A STABLECOIN<br>SUBSTITUTION VULNERABILITY INDEX FOR REMITTANCE-DEPENDENT ECONOMIES .....                                      | 508 |
| <b>Imamova Mukhabbat Volnazarovna</b>                                                                                                                                             |     |
| LOCALIZATION OF OPEN-SOURCE LMS PLATFORMS FOR UZBEK-MEDIUM HIGHER<br>EDUCATION: EFFECTIVENESS AND ADOPTION BARRIERS ON LEARNING<br>AND FACULTY MANAGEMENT.....                    | 514 |
| <b>Kurolov Maksud Obitovich</b>                                                                                                                                                   |     |
| ANALYSIS OF THE PROJECT ON IMPROVING THE COMPREHENSIVE MEDICAL<br>REHABILITATION SYSTEM FOR SOCIALLY VULNERABLE INDIVIDUALS.....                                                  | 524 |
| <b>Solikhova Dildora Alisher qizi</b>                                                                                                                                             |     |
| FEMALE TOP MANAGERS AND FIRM PERFORMANCE: EVIDENCE FROM UZBEKISTAN .....                                                                                                          | 532 |
| <b>Dilafroz Kuchkorova</b>                                                                                                                                                        |     |
| FEATURES OF PRICE FORMATION IN A MARKET ECONOMY: THEORETICAL<br>FOUNDATIONS AND EVIDENCE IN UZBEKISTAN.....                                                                       | 545 |
| <b>Jakhonbek Khushmurotov N.</b>                                                                                                                                                  |     |

|                                                                                                                                                         |     |
|---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-----|
| DIVERSIFICATION OF EXPORT MARKETS AND MARKETING<br>APPROACHES IN THE KHOREZM REGION.....                                                                | 553 |
| <b>Shoxida Ibadullayeva</b>                                                                                                                             |     |
| PRIVATE HIGHER EDUCATION INSTITUTIONS AS AN OBJECT OF ACCOUNTING .....                                                                                  | 561 |
| <b>Saidova Kamolat Farhodovna</b>                                                                                                                       |     |
| THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN GDP, DEPOSITS AND LOANS .....                                                                                                  | 565 |
| <b>Shodiev Odiljon Salim ugli</b>                                                                                                                       |     |
| IMPROVING MANAGEMENT DECISIONS BASED ON ARTIFICIAL INTELLIGENCE<br>IN ENTREPRENEURIAL ENTITIES AND ENHANCING BUSINESS COMPETITIVENESS.....              | 570 |
| <b>Abdullayeva Dilnoza Bakhodir qizi</b>                                                                                                                |     |
| ВЛИЯНИЕ ФОРМИРОВАНИЯ КРЕАТИВНЫХ КЛАСТЕРОВ НА РЕГИОНАЛЬНОЕ<br>ЭКОНОМИЧЕСКОЕ РАЗВИТИЕ .....                                                               | 575 |
| <b>Улугбеков Сардорбек Улугбекович</b>                                                                                                                  |     |
| DEVELOPING A SMART AND SUSTAINABLE TOURISM RESOURCE MANAGEMENT MODEL<br>FOR ENHANCING REGIONAL SERVICE SECTOR RESILIENCE: EVIDENCE FROM UZBEKISTAN..... | 583 |
| <b>Toshkhujayev Mustafokhon Abduvosi ugli</b>                                                                                                           |     |

# DEVELOPING A SMART AND SUSTAINABLE TOURISM RESOURCE MANAGEMENT MODEL FOR ENHANCING REGIONAL SERVICE SECTOR RESILIENCE: EVIDENCE FROM UZBEKISTAN

Toshkhujaev Mustafokhon Abduvosi ugli

Doctoral student at Sharof Rashidov Samarkand State University

**Abstract:** The rapid expansion of tourism in Uzbekistan creates significant opportunities for regional service-sector development while simultaneously increasing the need for efficient, sustainable and data-driven management of tourism resources. This study develops a Smart and Sustainable Tourism Resource Management Model designed to strengthen the resilience of regional service sectors in Uzbekistan. The research combines secondary statistical analysis, literature synthesis, trend analysis and conceptual modelling. Official data of the National Statistics Committee of the Republic of Uzbekistan for 2021–2025 are used as the primary empirical source. The number of foreign tourist trips increased from 1.881 million in 2021 to 11.680 million in 2025, demonstrating substantial post-pandemic recovery and growing pressure on destination infrastructure, service capacity and tourism resources. A linear baseline forecasting model is applied to estimate foreign tourist flows for 2026–2030. The results indicate that, if the observed long-term trend continues, international tourist trips may reach approximately 22.3 million by 2030. Based on the empirical and theoretical findings, the paper proposes an integrated management model connecting smart infrastructure, data-driven governance, resource efficiency, service innovation and regional resilience. The study argues that the sustainable growth of tourism in Uzbekistan should no longer be evaluated solely through tourist numbers; digital capacity, environmental efficiency, local economic benefits, service quality and destination resilience should be incorporated into regional tourism policy. The proposed model provides a practical framework for regional authorities, tourism organizations and service enterprises seeking to transform tourism-resource growth into sustainable regional development.

**Keywords:** smart tourism, sustainable tourism, tourism resources, regional service sector, resilience, digital transformation, tourism forecasting, Uzbekistan, destination management.

**Аннотация:** Стремительное развитие туризма в Узбекистане создает значительные возможности для развития регионального сектора услуг, одновременно повышая необходимость эффективного, устойчивого и основанного на данных управления туристскими ресурсами. В данном исследовании разработана модель интеллектуального и устойчивого управления туристскими ресурсами, направленная на повышение устойчивости региональных секторов услуг Узбекистана. В исследовании сочетаются вторичный статистический анализ, синтез научной литературы, анализ тенденций и концептуальное моделирование. Основным эмпирическим источником использованы официальные данные Национального комитета Республики Узбекистан по статистике за 2021–2025 годы. Количество поездок иностранных туристов увеличилось с 1,881 млн в 2021 году до 11,680 млн в 2025 году, что свидетельствует о существенном восстановлении туристического потока после пандемии и возрастающей нагрузке на туристскую инфраструктуру, сервисные мощности и туристские ресурсы. Для оценки потоков иностранных туристов на 2026–2030 годы применена линейная базовая модель прогнозирования. Результаты показывают, что при сохранении наблюдаемой долгосрочной тенденции количество международных туристских поездок к 2030 году может достичь примерно 22,3 млн. На основе эмпирических и теоретических результатов предложена интегрированная модель управления, объединяющая интеллектуальную инфраструктуру, управление на основе данных, эффективность использования ресурсов, инновации в сфере услуг и региональную устойчивость. В исследовании обосновывается, что устойчивый рост туризма в Узбекистане больше не должен оцениваться исключительно по числу туристов; в региональную туристскую политику необходимо включать цифровые возможности, экологическую эффективность, экономические выгоды для местного населения, качество услуг и устойчивость туристских дестинаций. Предлагаемая модель представляет собой практическую основу для региональных органов власти, туристских организаций и предприятий сферы услуг, стремящихся преобразовать рост туристских ресурсов в устойчивое региональное развитие.

**Ключевые слова:** интеллектуальный туризм, устойчивый туризм, туристские ресурсы, региональный сектор услуг, устойчивость, цифровая трансформация, прогнозирование туризма, Узбекистан, управление туристскими дестинациями.

## INTRODUCTION

Tourism has become an increasingly important component of regional economic development because of its ability to generate demand across accommodation, transportation, food services, retail trade, cultural industries, entertainment and other service activities. However, rapid growth in visitor flows may also create infrastructure pressure, environmental stress, seasonal congestion and uneven distribution of tourism benefits. Therefore, the contemporary challenge is not merely to increase the number of tourists but to improve the efficiency with which tourism resources are converted into sustainable regional economic and social outcomes.

According to the OECD, sustainable tourism policy increasingly requires countries to move beyond conventional measures of tourism success and develop indicators covering economic, environmental and social dimensions [1]. In particular, the OECD emphasizes the importance of “robust, timely and relevant data” [1] for designing tourism policies and managing trade-offs between economic benefits and sustainability objectives.

This issue is particularly relevant for Uzbekistan. Official statistics show that the number of foreign citizens arriving for tourism purposes increased rapidly during the post-pandemic period. The National Statistics Committee reported 1.8813 million tourist trips in 2021, 5.2328 million in 2022, 6.6263 million in 2023, 7.9572 million in 2024 and 11.6796 million in 2025 [2]. The Committee also notes that “the same person entering the republic may be counted multiple times” [2], meaning that the indicator represents tourist trips rather than unique individuals. The 2025 figure was approximately 3.7 million trips higher than in 2024, corresponding to growth of 46.8% [3]. Such rapid growth generates substantial opportunities for regional service enterprises but also creates a new management problem: whether tourism infrastructure, local service businesses, destination governance systems and environmental resources can expand efficiently enough to absorb growing demand.

Digital transformation provides new instruments for addressing this problem. Smart tourism technologies based on real-time data, mobile platforms, artificial intelligence, geographic information systems, Internet of Things technologies and integrated destination databases allow tourism authorities to monitor visitor flows, distribute tourists across locations and seasons, manage infrastructure and improve communication among stakeholders. The purpose of this study is therefore to develop a Smart and Sustainable Tourism Resource Management Model (SSTRMM) for strengthening regional service-sector resilience in Uzbekistan.

The study addresses the following research objectives:

- to analyze recent changes in international tourist flows to Uzbekistan;
- to examine the relationship between smart tourism, sustainability and destination resilience;
- to produce a baseline forecast of international tourism demand for 2026–2030;
- to develop an integrated smart and sustainable tourism-resource management model suitable for Uzbekistan;
- to formulate policy recommendations for increasing the resilience of regional service sectors.

The scientific novelty of the research lies in connecting tourism-resource management with digital governance, resource efficiency, service-sector performance and regional resilience within one integrated conceptual framework.

## REVIEW OF LITERATURE ON THE SUBJECT

Smart tourism has evolved from a narrow understanding of tourism digitalization toward an integrated destination-management concept. Modern smart destinations combine technology with infrastructure, governance, accessibility, stakeholder interaction and quality of life. Cerdá-Mansilla, Tussyadiah, Campo and Rubio “identify smart destinations through the interaction between space, local stakeholders, infrastructure, technology and quality of life”<sup>1</sup>. Their research also shows that sustainability and technology represent two particularly important characteristics of smart destination development. The authors emphasize that tourists and local residents may perceive smart-destination priorities differently, making stakeholder-sensitive governance necessary.

This perspective is highly relevant for Uzbekistan because tourism-resource management should not be limited to digitizing visitor services. Digital systems should also support regional authorities, local residents, service enterprises and destination managers in jointly managing tourism pressure. “A systematic review of smart tourism practices in emerging markets concludes that smart technologies can contribute to sustainable tourism when technological adoption is connected to broader economic, social and environmental objectives”<sup>2</sup>. The authors describe the relationship between smart tourism and sustainability as particularly important for emerging destinations where digital infrastructure and institutional capacity are developing simultaneously.

1 Cerdá-Mansilla, E., Tussyadiah, I., Campo, S., & Rubio, N. (2024). Smart destinations: A holistic view from researchers and managers to tourists and locals. *Tourism Management Perspectives*, 51

2 Azis, Y. et al. (2024). Smart tourism practice in the scope of sustainable tourism in emerging markets: a systematic literature review. *Cogent Business & Management*.

Destination resilience refers to the ability of a tourism system to absorb shocks, adapt to structural changes and maintain the functioning of key economic and social services. Abdelmalak finds that “information and communication technologies may reinforce tourism-destination resilience when technological systems are supported by adaptive governance and strategic planning”<sup>3</sup>. The research identifies governance capacity as a central mechanism connecting smart initiatives to destination resilience. This finding suggests that simply installing digital applications is insufficient. Regional tourism governance must be capable of converting data into management decisions concerning tourist flows, infrastructure investments, service quality and resource protection. The importance of resilience also extends to environmental shocks. Research on tourism and drought resilience shows that “resource-intensive tourism activities can become economically vulnerable when critical resources such as water are constrained”. This provides an additional argument for incorporating resource efficiency into smart destination management.

Recent academic studies indicate growing interest in smart tourism development in Uzbekistan. Karimov et al. examine smart and sustainable tourism strategies in Uzbekistan and conclude that “digital integration remains uneven across regions”<sup>5</sup>. Their assessment indicates stronger digital potential in large destinations such as Tashkent and Samarkand, while several other destinations remain at earlier stages of digital transition. The study argues for investment in digital infrastructure, institutional coordination and evidence-based destination management. Recent research on heritage destinations in Uzbekistan also considers the integration of environmental, social and governance principles with digital technologies. It notes that artificial intelligence, big-data analytics, blockchain, IoT and related technologies can facilitate “evidence-based management”<sup>6</sup> of tourism destinations.

Nevertheless, a research gap remains. Existing studies largely focus either on digitalization, smart tourism strategy or sustainability. Less attention has been paid to how tourism-resource management, smart technologies and service-sector resilience can be integrated into one regional management mechanism. The present study attempts to address this gap.

## RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

The study applies four complementary methodological approaches:

- secondary statistical analysis;
- trend analysis and forecasting;
- comparative literature analysis;
- conceptual modelling.

The main empirical dataset consists of official statistics published by the National Statistics Committee of the Republic of Uzbekistan. This source was selected because it represents the national authority responsible for official tourism-flow statistics and provides a consistent methodological series for 2021–2025. For international comparison and methodological interpretation, information from the OECD, World Bank and peer-reviewed scientific publications was also used. The World Bank tourism database identifies UN Tourism’s Yearbook of Tourism Statistics and Compendium of Tourism Statistics as the underlying international sources for the international tourism arrival indicator (Table 1) [10].

Table 1  
Foreign tourist trips to Uzbekistan<sup>7</sup>, 2021–2025

| Year | Foreign tourist trips, million | Annual change, % |
|------|--------------------------------|------------------|
| 2021 | 1.8813                         | -                |
| 2022 | 5.2328                         | 178.1            |
| 2023 | 6.6263                         | 26.6             |
| 2024 | 7.9572                         | 20.1             |
| 2025 | 11.6796                        | 46.8             |

3 Abdelmalak, F. (2024). Smart Tourism Destinations: Governance and Resilience – The Use of ICTs in Destination Governance and its Impact on Resilience. *Journal of Smart Tourism*, 4(2), 35–45

4 Research published in *Annals of Tourism Research Empirical Insights* (2024), DOI: 10.1016/j.annale.2024

5 Karimov, M., Omonov, O., Dekhkonov, B., et al. (2026). Smart and sustainable tourism strategies for Uzbekistan in the digital era. *Discover Sustainability*, 7, 1239

6 Karimov, M., Omonov, O., Dekhkonov, B., et al. (2026). Smart and sustainable tourism strategies for Uzbekistan in the digital era. *Discover Sustainability*, 7, 1239

7 Integrating ESG dimensions through digital technologies for sustainable tourism development: evidence from heritage destinations in Uzbekistan. *Frontiers in Sustainability*, 2026.

8 Compiled by the authors based on the National Statistics Committee of the Republic of Uzbekistan

Because the available consistent official series contains five annual observations, this article employs a linear trend as a baseline forecasting instrument, rather than presenting a short-series ARIMA specification that could imply an unjustified degree of statistical precision.

The estimated forecasting relationship is:

$$\hat{Y}_t = -0.02086 + 2.2321t, R^2 = 0.963$$

**where:**

$\hat{Y}_t$  = forecast number of foreign tourist trips, million;

$t$  = time index:  $t = 1$  corresponds to 2021,  $t = 2$  to 2022, ...,  $t = 5$  to 2025;

$R^2$  = coefficient of determination.

The relatively high  $R^2$  indicates that the linear trend explains approximately 96.3% of the variation in the five-year series. However, the estimate should be interpreted cautiously because 2021 represented a pandemic-recovery period and subsequent growth partly reflects normalization of international mobility. Therefore, the resulting estimates are treated as a baseline scenario, not as unconditional predictions.

## ANALYSIS AND RESULTS

The official data reveal a strong recovery and expansion of tourism demand in Uzbekistan.

Foreign tourist trips increased by more than six times between 2021 and 2025. Particularly rapid growth occurred in 2022 as international mobility recovered. Growth then moderated in 2023 and 2024 before accelerating again in 2025.

In 2025, Uzbekistan recorded approximately 11.7 million foreign tourist trips, an increase of around 3.7 million compared with the previous year. Tourism-sector growth was accompanied by expansion in service infrastructure. According to the Tourism Committee, during January–November 2025, the country recorded 10.7 million foreign tourists and tourism-service exports of USD 4.4 billion. During the same period, 954 new accommodation facilities began operating, bringing the total number to 6,861, while the total number of tourism organizations and travel agencies reached 4,348.

These developments confirm the increasing importance of tourism for the regional service economy. At the same time, they indicate the need for more sophisticated resource-management systems capable of coordinating accommodation capacity, transport, visitor movement, heritage sites, environmental resources and local service enterprises.

Using the trend equation estimated from official 2021–2025 data, a baseline forecast was calculated for 2026–2030 (Table 2).

Table 2

Baseline forecast of foreign tourist trips to Uzbekistan<sup>8</sup>

| Year | Forecast tourist trips, million | Status   |
|------|---------------------------------|----------|
| 2025 | 11.68                           | Actual   |
| 2026 | 13.37                           | Forecast |
| 2027 | 15.60                           | Forecast |
| 2028 | 17.84                           | Forecast |
| 2029 | 20.07                           | Forecast |
| 2030 | 22.30                           | Forecast |

The baseline projection suggests that foreign tourist trips could increase to approximately 13.4 million in 2026, exceed 17.8 million in 2028, and reach approximately 22.3 million by 2030, assuming that the underlying trend continues and no major external shock significantly changes tourism demand.

The forecast has several policy implications.

First, a doubling of visitor volumes from the 2025 level would require corresponding development of accommodation, transportation, public utilities, sanitation, digital information infrastructure and visitor-management systems.

Second, growth in tourism demand does not automatically create sustainable economic value. If tourist activity is concentrated in a limited number of destinations, rapid growth may generate congestion while peripheral regions receive fewer benefits.

8 Authors' calculations based on official National Statistics Committee data for 2021–2025

Third, regional tourism policy should therefore move from a strategy of tourist-volume maximization toward tourism-value and resource-efficiency maximization.

Fourth, the forecast strengthens the need for real-time tourism intelligence. By 2030, conventional administrative reporting alone may be insufficient for managing visitor volumes of the projected scale.

Based on the literature review and empirical results, this study proposes the Smart and Sustainable Tourism Resource Management Model (SSTRMM).

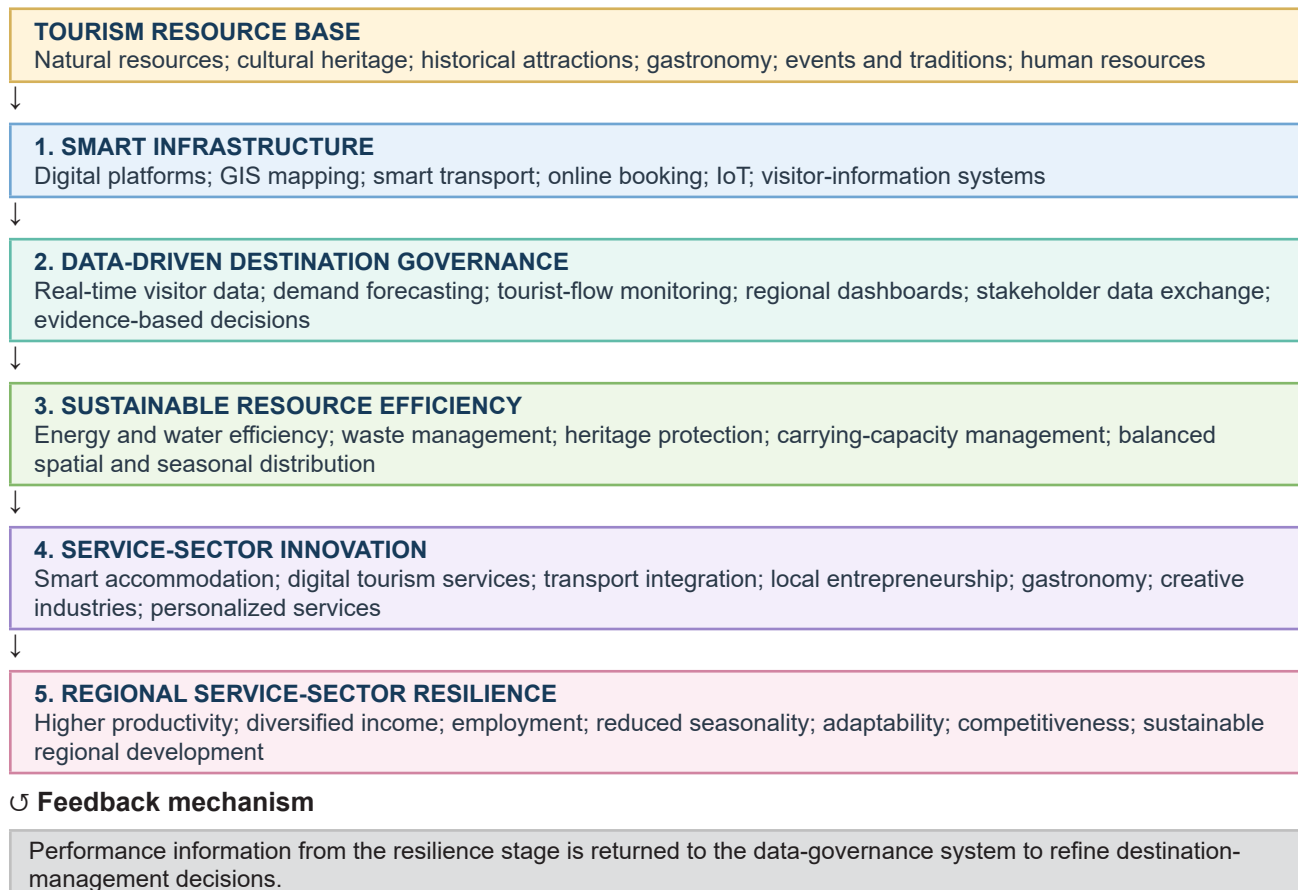
The proposed model differs from a purely technology-oriented smart-tourism model. Technology represents an enabling mechanism rather than the final objective.

**Smart infrastructure** - The first component establishes the technological foundation necessary for collecting and exchanging tourism information. Regional destinations require interoperable digital systems linking accommodation providers, attractions, transport services and tourism authorities.

**Data-driven destination governance** - The second component transforms raw tourism data into management information. Tourism authorities should monitor tourist density, demand patterns, accommodation occupancy, visitor mobility and seasonal pressure.

**Sustainable resource efficiency** - The third component links digitalization to sustainability outcomes. Smart tourism should help reduce resource consumption and protect tourism assets rather than simply improve tourist convenience.

**Service-sector innovation** - The fourth component converts improved tourism-resource management into economic value. Digital platforms can provide market access for hotels, guesthouses, restaurants, guides, handicraft producers, transport providers and local entrepreneurs (Figure 1).



**Resources → Intelligence → Efficiency → Innovation → Resilience**  
**Figure 1. Smart and Sustainable Tourism Resource Management Model<sup>9</sup>**

**Regional resilience**- The final component measures whether tourism development strengthens the regional economy's ability to withstand demand shocks, environmental pressures and changes in consumer behaviour.

<sup>9</sup> Developed by the author

The results indicate that Uzbekistan is entering a stage where the principal tourism-development challenge is changing.

During the earlier phase of tourism development, policy priorities understandably focused on market opening, destination promotion, infrastructure development and increasing international arrivals. The sharp increase to 11.68 million foreign tourist trips in 2025 indicates that these policies have substantially expanded demand.

The next stage requires a stronger focus on management quality.

This conclusion corresponds with international tourism-policy trends. OECD research argues that tourism success should increasingly be evaluated through economic, social and environmental measures rather than visitor growth alone. The proposed model also supports the conclusions of Cerdá-Mansilla et al. , who conceptualize smart destinations as systems combining technology, infrastructure, stakeholders and quality of life, rather than as purely digital tourist-service environments. For Uzbekistan, this distinction is critical. A mobile tourism application, QR code or online booking system can improve visitor convenience, but it does not independently guarantee sustainable regional development. A destination becomes smart when data generated through such tools improve actual management decisions.

The study also complements Karimov et al. [8], who identify differences in digital maturity among Uzbekistan's tourism destinations. This regional heterogeneity implies that a single digitalization strategy may not be appropriate for all regions. For destinations such as Samarkand, Bukhara and Khiva, smart-tourism development may prioritize congestion management, heritage preservation, visitor-flow distribution and advanced digital services. For emerging destinations, priority may instead be given to basic tourism infrastructure, digital visibility, online market access, workforce skills and integration of local entrepreneurs into tourism supply chains.

Consequently, smart-tourism policy should be region-specific rather than technology-uniform.

The forecast results further strengthen this argument. If foreign tourist trips approach 22 million by 2030, managing visitor flows through conventional administrative systems could become increasingly difficult. Digital monitoring and forecasting tools would allow authorities to anticipate capacity constraints before they translate into deterioration of visitor experience or resident quality of life.

## CONCLUSIONS AND SUGGESTIONS

The rapid development of tourism in Uzbekistan offers substantial opportunities for regional service-sector growth. Official statistics demonstrate that foreign tourist trips increased from 1.881 million in 2021 to 11.680 million in 2025. The baseline trend forecast developed in this study indicates that foreign tourist trips could reach approximately 22.3 million by 2030 if the underlying growth trajectory continues.

However, growth in tourist numbers alone cannot guarantee sustainable regional development. The principal conclusion of this research is that tourism resources should be managed through an integrated system combining smart infrastructure, data-driven destination governance, sustainable resource efficiency, service-sector innovation and regional resilience. The Smart and Sustainable Tourism Resource Management Model proposed in this paper provides a conceptual framework for achieving this integration. The model suggests a transition from conventional tourism management based mainly on promotion and visitor numbers toward a management system based on:

- real-time data;
- resource efficiency;
- destination carrying capacity;
- local economic value;
- digital innovation;
- service quality;
- resilience.

For Uzbekistan, such a transition is particularly important as tourist flows continue to increase and tourism becomes more deeply integrated with regional service economies. The study has several limitations. The forecasting exercise is based on a relatively short annual time series and includes the exceptional post-pandemic recovery period. Therefore, the 2026–2030 estimates should be interpreted as a baseline scenario rather than deterministic forecasts. Future research should expand the dataset with monthly or quarterly observations and employ alternative forecasting techniques such as ARIMA, exponential smoothing or machine-learning models. Regional-level studies should also test the proposed SSTRMM empirically using data from Samarkand, Bukhara, Khorezm and other tourism-intensive regions.

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