

EFFECTS OF SUSTAINABLE ENVIRONMENT ON TOURIST DESTINATION CHOICE

Ermekbaeva Indira Pulatbek qizi

Toshkent davlat iqtisodiyot universiteti tayanch doktoranti

Abstract: *This article investigates the influence of sustainable environment on the decision-making process of tourists when selecting their travel destinations. It examines the role of natural beauty, climate, environmental quality, biodiversity, and the growing importance of sustainability in shaping tourist preferences. The research aims to provide a comprehensive understanding of how the environment affects tourism trends and offers recommendations for stakeholders in the tourism industry to align their strategies with the evolving preferences of environmentally conscious travelers.*

Key words: *tourism, destination choice, the environment, sustainability*

Introduction

Tourism is a major driver of economic growth, yet it can contribute significantly to environmental degradation if not managed responsibly. Recently, there has been a change towards eco-friendly tourism trends, with sustainability becoming a key factor for travelers. Sustainable destinations not only preserve their natural and cultural assets but also attract tourists who seek ethical travel options. This article aims to explore how a destination's sustainable environment influences tourist choice and behavior. Today, the travel and tourism sector are a significant one that affects how a nation's economy develops. Building and upgrading local infrastructure and improving the environment is one of the tourism industry's biggest advantages. Uzbekistan has enormous potential to attract local tourists and tourists from around the world. To attract and keep current consumers as well as entice new ones, marketers specializing in travel and destination marketing ought to employ distinct strategies. The purpose of the study was to investigate, within

the context of Uzbekistan, the effects of the environment on tourists' choice of destination.

Literature review

Several studies highlight that tourists are increasingly motivated by environmental concerns. Eco-tourism, green certifications, and responsible resource management are seen as factors that enhance destination attractiveness. Tourists perceive destinations with sustainability initiatives as more authentic, healthier, and socially responsible, which influences both first-time and repeat visits. The majority of researchers attempted to measure the effects of destination familiarity, destination image, safety and security, travel motivations, social media, and reference groups on satisfaction, revisit intention, loyalty, purchase decision, and choice of accommodation in destinations across the globe, after reviewing the majority of related literature on factors influencing tourists' destination choice. However, this study attempts to focus on examining the influence of environmental factors on tourists' destination choice in the context of Uzbekistan.

Tourism is a significant global industry that is profoundly affected by various environmental factors. As awareness of environmental issues grows, tourists are increasingly considering environmental conditions and sustainability in their destination choices. This article introduces the context and significance of understanding how environmental factors influence tourism behavior. The environment of a place is crucial in influencing tourists' decisions in an increasingly globalized world with an unlimited number of options. This article explores the ways in which environmental considerations affect tourists' choice of locations, emphasizing the attraction of untouched natural settings as well as the growing concern over environmental sustainability. This article makes the assumption that travelers are fully aware of the local climate where they will be traveling. This assumption makes sense because travelers are using the internet and talking to friends who have visited the places they want to visit to gain more knowledge about the destinations they are interested in visiting. The process of

selecting a destination is complex, with the only visible outcome being the flow of tourists from a source market to a destination. A destination must effectively complete several stages of the destination choice (DC) process before a tourist ultimately selects it.

The environment influences traveler decisions in a variety of ways. Environmental elements are playing an increasingly important role in shaping people's travel decisions, impacting everything from a destination's natural beauty and climate to its sustainability policies and health implications. Travel locations that put an emphasis on environmental sustainability and quality are expected to experience long-term success in drawing and keeping tourists as environmental awareness throughout the world continues to develop.

Destination choice is the process by which prospective visitors select a final location from a limited list. People research options and consider the benefits and drawbacks of each before selecting an area to visit. Both internal and external elements (personality, motivation, travel expenses, accessibility, and the surrounding environment) influence the choice of destination. Destination marketers have to take visitor motives into account when proposing places because every site has a different kind of demand. In addition to current visitors' goals and wants, marketers also need to take into account the motivations of potential new tourists. Destination selection has been studied in relation to aspects such as basic tourist personality qualities, cost or distance from a place, and climate information.

Methodology

A qualitative case study approach was used to explore Uzbekistan's environmental and tourism dynamics:

- Analyzed Uzbekistan's environmental challenges and their influence on tourists' destination choices;
- Reviewed official policy documents, government reports, and tourism strategies related to Uzbekistan's environmental management and tourism development;
- Secondary data sources, such as statistical reports, were reviewed to evaluate

tourism trends in Uzbekistan.

Analysis and Results

Environmental challenges in Uzbekistan

Central Asian nation of Uzbekistan is well-known for its dynamic culture, historical sites, and distinctive landscapes. The excessive use of agrochemicals, the scarcity of water for plant treatment, and irrigation from the two rivers all had a negative impact on the environment in Uzbekistan. The Aral Sea, which was once the fourth-largest inland sea in the world, has evaporated or shrunk, leaving more than half of its basin as a barren, salty waste land that can be seen on tours of Uzbekistan. The population's health was severely impacted by the salt storms and dusts, which also devastated ecosystems and agriculture. The environment of Uzbekistan is negatively impacted by the salt and dust storms produced by the Aral Sea's bottom, particularly in Nukus City and the Karakalpakstan region. This also has a significant negative impact on the health of rural residents and agricultural products. The spring and autumn seasons are when dust storms primarily occur in Uzbekistan. The application of pesticides and other agricultural chemicals, particularly in rural regions, to the cotton crop is another factor contributing to environmental damage in Uzbekistan. The air in metropolitan regions is becoming more contaminated due to manufacturing and pollution.

Uzbekistan Geography Nature is heavily affected when Aral Sea began to shrink and lead to the salty soil. The State Committee for Environmental Protection was founded in 1992, but non-governmental organizations (NGOs) placed more emphasis on safeguarding water resources, such as the Amu Darya and Syr Dar Rivers, since the removal of irrigation from these rivers in order to increase cotton yields is the main cause of the Aral Sea's shrinkage. Due to the lack of law enforcement, inconsistent government economic and environmental planning, and the overwhelming power centralization, makes the implementation of policies weaker. As Uzbekistan Scenery is one of the Uzbekistan Highlights, the threats to the environment and health can be minimized while all the political parties together rise to save the environment from the root level.

Impact on Tourist Preferences

Tourists' choices of destinations are significantly influenced by natural landscapes, climate, and environmental sustainability. Travelers are beginning to give top priority to locations with untouched natural settings, pleasant weather, and active conservation initiatives. Travelers' preferences for destinations are significantly influenced by their perceptions of environmental quality, including what constitutes clean air and water, scenic beauty, and noise pollution. Furthermore, travelers' decisions are becoming more and more influenced by knowledge of environmental sustainability practices, such as environmentally friendly hotels and responsible tourism programs. The degradation of natural environments in Uzbekistan impacts tourists' perceptions, but the country's focus on eco-tourism and sustainable tourism strategies can improve its attractiveness.

Recent Developments

Taking into account the potential of our country's tourism industry, the President of Uzbekistan has developed a strategy to promote the tourism brand of Uzbekistan aimed at attracting foreign and local tourists and creating a special tourism experience. Statistics show that over the last 8 months our country has been visited by 4 300 000 tourists from abroad, the proceeds of which amounted to \$1 billion 400 million. Owing to the introduction of additional weekends and discounts, the number of internal tourists has doubled compared to last year and totalled 15 million people. This year, 15 000 new guest places were created, raising the total number to 137 000. Also, 540 recreational facilities were built and 70 new tourist routes were opened. All of this indicates the consistent development of tourism infrastructure in our republic. A video conference meeting has recently been held under the guidance of the President on the wide use of the tourism and cultural sites' capacity, the organization of the autumn season of the nationwide project "Green Space".

Next recent trend is sustainable Tourism Development in the Republic of Karakalpakstan. In this regard, the German Society for International Cooperation (GIZ) and the Tourism Committee have developed the strategy "Sustainable

Tourism Development in Karakalpakstan for 2023-2026". The strategy is being implemented within the framework of the project "Support for Economic Reforms and Sustainable Economic Development in the Regions of Uzbekistan".

Uzbekistan's Tourism Strategy

It is important to pay attention to a sustainable approach and environmental conservation when developing tourism at the local level. It is necessary to take measures for energy saving, waste management, limiting the negative impact of tourism on the environment and its preservation. Sustainable tourism will help to preserve natural and cultural resources for future generations. Evaluating and analyzing the results of tourism activities at the local level will help to assess the effectiveness of the activities undertaken and make necessary adjustments. Data gathering, analyzing tourism feedback and tourism statistics can help to better understand the needs and preferences of tourists and identify areas for improvement and development. It is important to remember that local tourism development should be based on the characteristics and resources of each specific place. Approaches and strategies may differ according to local conditions and opportunities.

One of the important aspects of the strategy of tourism development in Uzbekistan is sustainable development and preservation of nature and cultural heritage of the country. The Government of Uzbekistan is actively working to protect nature reserves, national parks and historical monuments. Measures are taken to reduce the negative impact of tourism on the environment, environmentally friendly technologies are introduced, and educational programs for tourists and local residents are conducted.

Conclusion

In conclusion, environmental factors play a pivotal role in determining tourist destination choices. As environmental concerns continue to gain prominence, both tourists and tourism stakeholders must adapt to align with evolving expectations and practices. By prioritizing environmental quality and sustainability, destinations can enhance their appeal, improve tourist satisfaction, and contribute to a more

sustainable future for the tourism industry. Addressing these factors not only meets the growing demand for responsible travel but also ensures the preservation of natural resources and cultural heritage for future generations. The development of tourist destinations in Uzbekistan has great prospects for economic growth, preservation of cultural heritage and development of intercultural exchange. The strategy of tourism development in Uzbekistan is aimed at creating a unique tourist experience, attracting foreign and local tourists, and increasing the economic well-being of the country. Developing infrastructure, promoting the tourism brand, developing new destinations, strengthening the local tourism sector, encouraging foreign investment and sustainable tourism - all this will serve to strengthen Uzbekistan's tourism industry and transform the country into an attractive tourism destination.

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