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“DIGITAL DIVIDE” AS A FACTOR OF DESTINATION COMPETITIVENESS OF UZBEKISTAN’S TOURISM SPHERE

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Abstract: This study explains the concept of the "digital divide" as factor of competitiveness of the tourist regions of Uzbekistan, developed a map of the country's macro information space, and on the basis of the matrix of the tourist macro-information space, the directions of improving the tourist information space of the country are determined.

Key words: tourist area, competitiveness, incompatibility in the digital economy, information space, digital sphere of macro information space.

Introduction

Decree of the President of the Republic of Uzbekistan No. PF-5953 "On the State Program for the implementation of the Action Strategy for the five priority areas of development of the Republic of Uzbekistan in 2017-2021 in the “Year of Science, Enlightenment and Digital Economy” was adopted on March 2, 2020. With a view to doubling the share of the digital economy in the country's GDP by 2023, including the introduction of a set of information systems in production management, the widespread use of software products in financial and economic reporting, as well as its rapid formation through the automation of technological processes.

Sustainable development of tourism in the country, firstly, cooperation with organized tourist markets, i.e. mutually beneficial economic relations of the receptive and enterprising tour operator, and secondly, the availability of booking systems, the inclusion of service organizations in the databases of geo information systems, etc.



depends on the introduction of marketing tools based on information technology. That is, there is a concept of “Digital Divide” [1] between the tourist-generating and travel destinations, and the larger it is; the more difficult it is to capture the tourist-generating markets. This research work is dedicated to the problem of developing mechanisms to achieve sustainable competitiveness of the tourism industry in Uzbekistan, free from inconsistencies in the digital economy, and is an urgent issue that needs to be addressed.

In our opinion, when a systematic approach is taken to tourism, it has the places where travel needs arise, the places where travel takes place, and the information space that unites them. The purpose of this study is to identify ways to increase the competitiveness of Uzbekistan based on the study of the digital sphere of macro-tourist information space.

Literature review

The issues of marketing of basic services in the field of tourism, management of service processes, commercialization, organization of advocacy using digital tools are the subject of research of various foreign and domestic scholars.

In particular, V. Mingetti and D. Buhalis developed the concept of "digital divide", Della Corte [2] studied the problem of smart tourist areas and tourist cities, U. Gretzel, L. Yuan, D. Fesenmaer [3] studied tourist areas, conducted research on the use of information technology in the organization of marketing.

Local researchers have studied digital marketing in the field of tourism [4], G.H.Kudratov, M.Hoshimov, issues of implementation of tourist services on the Great Silk Road [5], M.K.Pardaev, R.Atabaev, B.R.Pardaev development opportunities [6], B.N. Navruz-Zoda tourist area competitiveness [7], D.H. Aslanova creation of tourist clusters [8], O.H. Hamidov Development of ecotourism in Uzbekistan [9], A.A. Eshtaev globalization examining issues such as the marketing strategy of tourism industry management in the context of [10], the issue of digital divide of economy is the subject of insufficiently studied research.



Analysis

The article uses the method of classification of tourist areas in terms of "incompatibility in the digital economy", the methodology for assessing the country's tourism competitiveness on the basis of "Digital sphere of macro-information space of the tourist area" and the matrix of tourist macro-information space. Based on statistical and econometric analysis, the relationship between the growth of tourist flows and the number of Internet users, i.e. the coefficient of elasticity, was determined and used in the development of relevant conclusions.

The development of digital media in tourist areas, the interaction of government agencies with entrepreneurs and citizens, the use of information by entrepreneurs in the process of working with consumers and partners are divided into 4 categories [1] and have their own characteristics. Table 1 shows the classification of tourist areas in terms of "incompatibility in the digital economy".

Table № 1

Classification of tourist areas in terms of "incompatibility in the digital economy."

Level of use of digital tools	Feature
Very high level	Located in economically highly developed regions; entrepreneurs and consumers have developed the ability to use ICT and are highly motivated; infrastructure is highly developed, prices are affordable, institutionally and politically supported by the government; tourist services and products are procured on an individualized basis with centralized digital means; digital means of employment and shopping are widely used by the population.

High level	The use of ICT is advanced, the use of digital media is high, prices are not affordable, busy and shopping facilities are developed only for basic services (hotels), the interest rate on brokerage is high, digital media is more informative.
Intermediate level	ICT skills are underdeveloped, infrastructure is underdeveloped, prices are high, and digital tools created by governmental and non-governmental organizations are mainly focused on information about the tourist area and marketing activities.
Low level	Infrastructure is limited, the cost of using the Internet is very high, the use of ICT is not supported by the government, the population and entrepreneurs lack skills, there are no digital tools

Low level Infrastructure is limited, Internet access costs are very high, the use of ICTs is not supported by the government, the population and entrepreneurs lack skills, digital tools are not available. According to Internet World Stats in January 2020 [12], there were 4 billion Internet users worldwide, hence 2 billion 304 mln. It was true of the Asian population. According to the source, the number of Internet users in Uzbekistan in 2000 was 7.5 thousand people, and in January 2020 the number of users was 17.161 million, which is half of the total population.

Table 2

The share of Internet users in the population and the number of foreign tourists in 2010-2019

Years	Proportion of Internet users to the population (%)	Number of foreign tourists (thousand)
2010	16	974,6



2011	19	1374,8
2012	24	1895,0
2013	27	1968,7
2014	36	1862,0
2015	43	1917,7
2016	47	2027,0
2017	48	2690,2
2018	49	5346,0
2019	50	6748,0

An important condition for the sustainable development of tourism at the national level in the modern digital age, the tourism supply system requires the introduction of mechanisms to avoid "inconsistencies in the digital economy" in the information space. That is, tourism should increase the number of legal entities and individuals using the Internet, as in developed countries, by 85-90% of the population.

In order to substantiate this hypothesis using econometric models, we decided to determine the relationship between the share of Internet users in Uzbekistan in 2010-2019 and the dynamics of the number of foreign tourists, as shown in Table 2.

The effect of the factor on the result was found to be 0.68 when calculated from 0 to 1.

Expressing the effect of the result and the factor with a straight-line linear regression equation, we determined the coefficient of elasticity based on the following formulas.

$$y_x = a_0 + a_1x \quad (1)$$

$$y_x = -730,24 + 95,0x$$

In formula 1, a_0 represents the sum of the effects of all unstudied factors on the outcome, except for the X factor we studied, and is -730.24, indicating that the total

effect of factors other than X is inverse. Also, a_1 reflects the effect of the studied X factor on Y, and it has a value of 95.0.

$$E_{las} = a_1 \frac{\bar{x}}{\bar{y}} = 95,0 \frac{35,9}{2680,4} = 1,27$$

The coefficient of elasticity shows that the level of Internet use should increase by 1.27% in order to attract an additional 1 million foreign tourists to our country. In terms of inconsistencies in the digital economy, another factor in the competitiveness of tourist areas is the availability of regional information in macro-level digital information spaces. According to foreign scholars, on a macro scale, tourist areas can carry out marketing activities through 3 types of digital tools. They are [13]:

1. Official macro information spaces. Official information spaces where the process of marketing activities related to the tourist area is fully controlled. Examples of these information spaces are the official websites of tourist areas, regional or national tourism portals. These resources are fully controlled by the governing bodies of the tourist area, such as the State Committee for Tourism Development, and the information and data on the websites are constantly entered and updated by the officials of this body and have V2V (entrepreneur-entrepreneur) and V2S (entrepreneur-consumer) forms will be.

2. Partial official macro information spaces. Semi-formal information spaces where the process of marketing activities related to the tourist area is partially controlled. Partially official digital media include blogs, social media profiles (FaceBook, Twitter, LinkedIn) and pages. Social networks themselves are 1) divided into "general-purpose" with a large audience and "specialized" with a specific purpose, such as WikiTravel, GoogleTravel.

3. Informal macro information spaces. Informal information spaces where the process of conducting marketing activities related to the tourist area is not controlled at all. This information space serves the most important and comprehensive function.



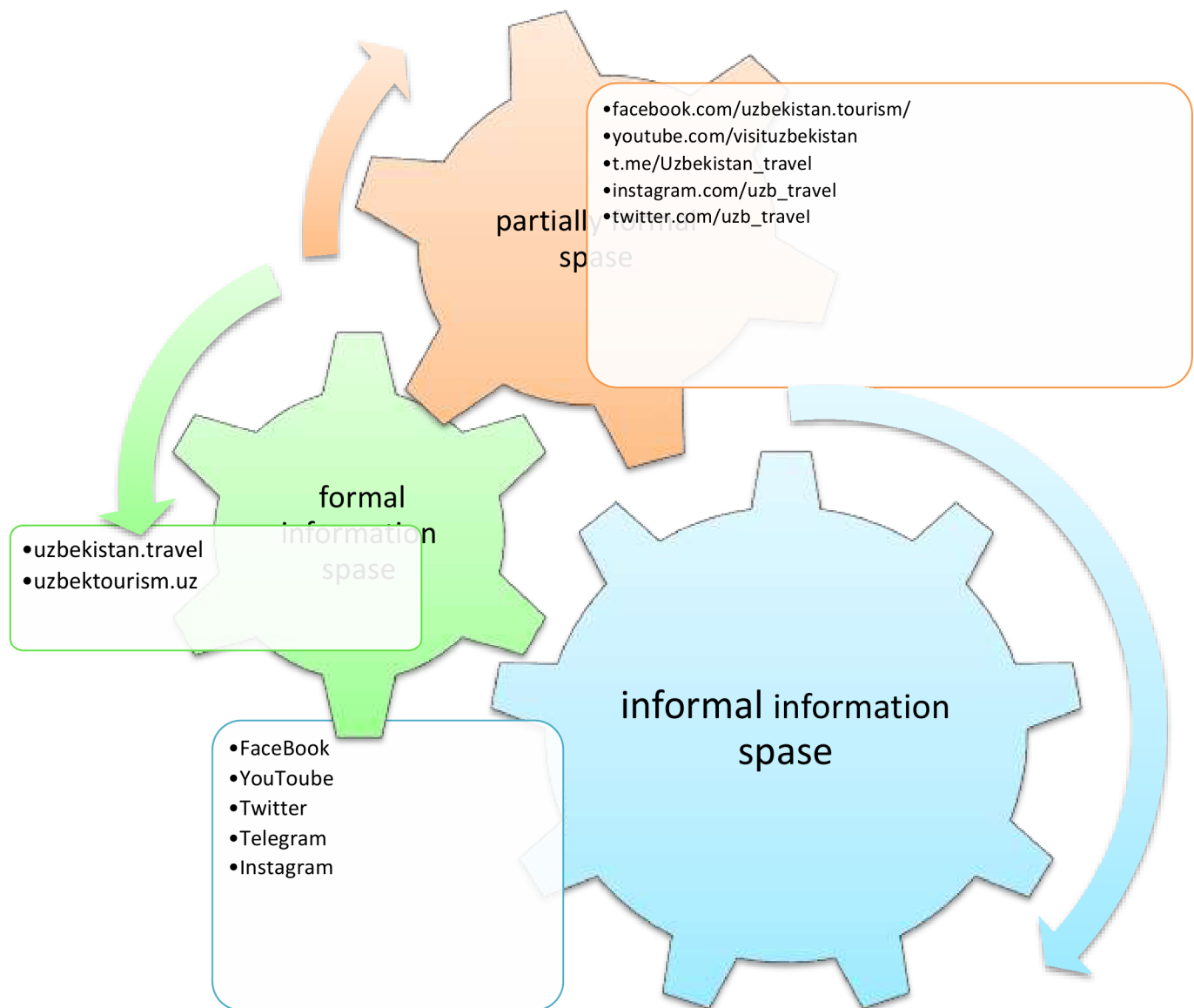
Because on the same digital means there are tourist portals, access to the official websites of the country, and access to them through search sites around the world.

Informal information spaces are beyond the control of organizations involved in the management and promotion of tourist areas. In fact, the image of the tourist area is formed in this information space and plays a decisive role in the establishment of effective marketing activities. Informal information spaces include blogs, online communities, social networks, as well as all websites (Facebook, Twitter, YouTube, Flickr) that allow the formation of information, recommendations, suggestions, videos, photos, and similar content.

In general, this factor of the competitiveness of the tourist area - the level of development of the information space, in our opinion, we can assess the tourist competitiveness of the country on the basis of the **"digital sphere of the tourist area macro information space"**

In order to form the digital sphere of the tourist information space of Uzbekistan, the official tourist websites of the republic (uzbekistan.travel, uzbektourism.uz) were analyzed. As a result, the digital sphere of the tourist macro-information space of the Republic of Uzbekistan, represented in the form of three interlocking wheels, was developed (see Picture 2).

The picture shows social networks such as Facebook, Twitter, YouTube, Telegram and Instagram as the unofficial information space, and it is this space that is the driving force behind the remaining official and partly official information spaces. The official information space of Uzbekistan is available on its official websites (uzbekistan.travel, uzbektourism.uz).



Picture 2. Digital sphere of tourist macro-information space of the Republic of Uzbekistan

Partial official information sites (facebook.com/uzbekistan.tourism/, youtube.com/visituzbekistan, t.me/Uzbekistan_travel, instagram.com/uzb_travel, twitter.com/uzb_travel) are available on official websites, social media pages, business profiles and channels. reflected and have links to them from official sites. As a result of the analysis of tourist information spaces, a matrix of tourist macro information spaces of the Republic of Uzbekistan was developed (see Table 3).



Uzbekistan	Official information space	Facebook	Twitter	YouTube	Telegram	Instagram
	uzbekistan.travel Uzbek, Russian, English, German, Arabic	The number of likes - Number of subscribers - 27 729 – 29643	Number of students - 128 people	Number of subscribers – 603 number of views - 74 878	Number of subscribers - - 3432	Number of subscribers - 17500
	Official information space	Link available	Link available	Link available	Link available	Link available
	Facebook	Link available	Not available	Not available	Not available	Not available
	Twitter	Link available	Not available	Not available	Not available	Not available
	YouTube	Link available	Not available	Not available	Not available	Not available
	Telegram	Link available	Not available	Not available	Not available	Not available
	Instagram	Official information space	Not available	Not available	Not available	Not available

As of 31.05.2020, the tourist portal of Uzbekistan is available in Uzbek, Russian, English, German, Arabic versions and is directly linked to social networks Facebook, Twitter, YouTube, Telegram and Instagram (partially official information sites) through links on the website. However, due in part to the lack of interconnection of official information venues, the number of subscribers, students, likes and views on social networks is only 154,000, which is a very low figure for a resource-rich country with great tourism potential.

Conclusion

So, there is an information space that combines the places where travel needs arise and travel takes place, and the more it is improved based on the principles of the digital economy, the easier it will be to increase the flow of tourists by attracting



potential tourists to the country. Moreover, the greater the mismatch in

the digital economy, the more disproportionately the value added created in the tourism sector will be distributed. So, in order to increase the competitiveness of Uzbekistan at the international level, to occupy the global information space and create value added through local digital marketing tools, we need to pay attention to the following:

During the analysis of the tourist portal of Uzbekistan, it was found that it has options in English, Russian, German and Arabic, and in order to dramatically increase the capacity and audience of the website, it is advisable to develop a version in Spanish, Italian, Japanese and Chinese;

As a result of the analysis of the integration between the tourist portal and social networks within the information space matrix, it became necessary to take measures to divert the process of inter-social integration, i.e. from the tourist profile of Uzbekistan in one social network to another;

It is necessary to study the official information space of tourism in Uzbekistan, to identify the extremely small number of users of the tourist portal and to continuously implement measures aimed at steadily increasing the number of subscribers, readers and viewers (contests, updated pages, consumer-generated content);

In order to ensure a balanced distribution of value added created by digital marketing tools in the field of tourism, it is recommended to introduce and support local digital marketing tools;

In order to increase the attractiveness of Uzbekistan in the eyes of tourists who plan and travel independently, it is advisable to introduce appropriate infrastructure, i.e. geolocation systems, info kiosks, local digital systems for busy and shopping, as well as digital museum and guide services;

In the modern digital age, an important condition for the sustainable development of tourism at the national level is the need to increase the number of legal entities and individuals using the Internet to 85-90% of the population, requiring the introduction of mechanisms to eliminate "incompatibility in the digital economy".



As a result of the inconsistencies in the digital economy,

Uzbekistan will be able to increase its attractiveness and competitiveness by shaping its image as a tourist destination in the eyes of potential tourists.

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