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Buxoro davlat universiteti
“Yashil iqtisodiyot va agrobiznes” kafedrası**

**"O‘ZBEKISTONDA BARQAROR RIVOJLANISH
MAQSADLARIGA ERISHISH VA YASHIL IQTISODIYOTNI
RIVOJLANTIRISHNING ISTIQBOLLI YO‘NALISHLARI"**

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мақсадларга эришида ҳалқаро ҳамжамиятнинг диққат марказида	220
Саматова Эльвира Эскендеровна, Козленко Алла Васильевна, Рузиева Севарахон Умаровна, Толонова Айзатгул Каныбековна, Авазов Ооматбек Алтынбекович. ПЕРСПЕКТИВЫ ДОСТИЖЕНИЯ ЦЕЛЕЙ УСТОЙЧИВОГО РАЗВИТИЯ - СПРАВЕДЛИВОЕ КАЧЕСТВЕННОЕ ОБРАЗОВАНИЕ И ВОЗМОЖНОСТЬ ОБУЧЕНИЯ НА ПРОТЯЖЕНИИ ВСЕЙ ЖИЗНИ ДЛЯ ВСЕХ.....	223
Шоахмедов Шохрух Шорахимович. Оценка устойчивого развития сельских территорий путем социологических обследований	230
Шоахмедов Шохрух Шорахимович. МЕТОДОЛОГИЧЕСКИЕ ОСНОВЫ УСТОЙЧИВОГО РАЗВИТИЯ УЗБЕКИСТАНА	233
Якубов Нурбек Алишерович, Жамолов Мирзабек Миржалил угли. ПРАКТИКА И РЕКОМЕНДАЦИИ ПО РАЗВИТИЮ АГРОТУРИЗМА С ЦЕЛЬЮ ИХ АДАПТАЦИИ В УЗБЕКИСТАНЕ	237
Abdumutalibov Islombek. Mamlakatning xalqaro va milliy maqsadlariga erishishda innovatsion menejmentning roli	243
Abdusoatova Marjona Xayrulla qiz. BARQAROR RIVOJLANISHNING XALQARO VA MILLIY MAQSADLARIGA ERISHISHNING AMALIYOTI VA ISTIQBOL YO'LLARI.....	248
Akramboyev Azizbek Rustamjon o'g'li. KORXONALARNING INNOVATSION FAOLIYATINI BOSHQARISH TIZIMINI RIVOJLANTIRISHNING HOZIRGI HOLATINI TAHLIL QILISH	250
Azimov Olimjon Orifovich. HUDUDLARNING BARQAROR RIVOJLANISHI VA INVESTITSION JOZIBADORLIKNI OSHIRISHDA "YASHIL" IQTISODIYOT MODELINING AHAMIYATI	252
Azimova Maxfuza Rashidovna. FORMATION OF THE LABOR POTENTIAL OF RURAL TERRITORIES AND WAYS OF ITS EFFECTIVE USE	259
Azimova Maxfuza Rashidovna. O'zbekistonda yashil infratuzilma xizmatlari ko'rsatishning samaradorligini oshirish yo'llari va xorij tajribasi.	264
Navruz-Zoda Baxtiyor Negmatovich. IQTISODIYOTNING "YASHIL RIVOJLANISH" MODEL: YARATISH BOSQICHLARI VA ORGANIK TUZILISHI	268
Bekzod Sherzodovich Sharipov. Barqaror rivojlanishning milliy maqsadlari: Buxoro viloyatida inklyuziv turizm infratuzilmasining moddiy-texnik bazasini yaxshilashga qaratilgan chora-tadbirlar natijadorligining umumiy tahlili	275
Boltayeva Mohichehra Sharipovna, Eshbekov Murodjon Uktamovich. Ways to utilize risk management opportunities in the Green Economy	283
Dadabayeva Mamlakat Uralovna. Yashil iqtisodiyotga o'tish bosqichlari.....	287
Istamkhuja Olimovich Davronov. SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT OF COMPETITIVENESS OF HOTEL SERVICES (ON THE EXAMPLE OF BUKHARA REGION).....	291
Dehkanova Nargiza Sharifovna. PROSPECTS FOR DEVELOPING GREEN ECONOMY FOR SUSTAINABLE ECONOMIC GROWTH.....	295
Djonizaqov Ulug'bek Abdug'aniyevich. O'ZBEKISTON SHAROITIDA IQLIM O'ZGARISHI: TAHDID, TA'SIR VA MATEMATIK TAHLIL	298
Mahmatrayimov Shahzod. MINTAQA IQTISODIY TIZIMINI BARQAROR RIVOJLANTIRISH OMILLARI.....	302
Djurayeva Iroda Bahrom qizi. Maxsus iqtisodiy zonalar investitsion faolligi doirasida munosib ish o'rinlari va iqtisodiy o'sishni ta'minlash	305
Razzaqov Muhammadqodir, M-A.H. Eshonov. THE ROLE OF FOREIGN INVESTMENTS IN THE DEVELOPMENT OF THE NATIONAL ECONOMY	308
Raupov Gayrat Soyibovich. Buxoro viloyatini barqaror rivojlantirishda madaniy meros obyektlaridan turistik xizmatlarni diversifikatsiya qilish uchun foydalanishning istiqbolli yo'nalishlari.....	312
Inamov Farxodjon. Mintaqada investitsiya faoliyatini faollashtirishning konseptual tamoyillari	321
Khalimova Nigina Jafarbekovna, Likov Samuil, Xoshimov Faroxiddin, Aliuseynov Imron.	

Foydalanilgan adabiyotlar ro'yxati

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SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT OF COMPETITIVENESS OF HOTEL SERVICES (ON THE EXAMPLE OF BUKHARA REGION)

Annotation: *Hotel services are a crucial component of the tourism sector; and their competitiveness is a decisive factor in ensuring sustainable development. This study analyzes strategies for enhancing the competitiveness of hotel services, using the Bukhara region as a case study. The research examines the impact of service quality on sustainable development, environmental and innovative aspects of the hotel business, as well as the application of modern technologies. Based on the analysis results, practical recommendations are developed to increase the competitiveness of hotels in the Bukhara region. This article is further enriched by the insights of hotel business specialists, researchers, and tourism industry leaders.*

Key words: *hotel services, competitiveness, sustainable development, tourism, basic and additional services, seasonality*

INTRODUCTION

The need for first-rate hotel services is rising as a result of the tourism industry's explosive growth. Experience from around the world shows that hotel services' competitiveness and sustainable development are closely related (Porter, 1990). The World Tourism Organization (UNWTO) reports that in 2023, there were 1.3 billion foreign visitors, which is close to pre-pandemic levels (UNWTO, 2023). At the same time, the sustainable growth of the hotel industry is being significantly impacted by innovations, environmental factors, and enhancements in service quality (Smith & Lewis, 2021).

Hotel services are the primary component of the tourist business, which is one of the areas of the global economy with the quickest rate of growth (UNWTO, 2023). Specifically, Uzbekistan's tourism potential is increasing annually. The State Statistics Committee reports that 6.6 million international visitors visited Uzbekistan in 2023, a 22.3% increase over 2022 (State Statistics Committee of the Republic of Uzbekistan, 2024). In light of this expansion, it is becoming increasingly important to improve hotel services sustainably and make them more competitive.

The rich cultural legacy and popular tourist destinations in the Bukhara region make it stand out. Over 4.8 million domestic and foreign visitors visited the region in 2023, a 13% increase over 2022 (Bukhara Regional Tourism Department, 2024). Nonetheless, there are some concerns about the quality and level of competition of local hotel services. In terms of service quality, environmental standards compliance, and the adoption of cutting-edge technologies, local hotels rank behind global hotel companies.

The Bukhara region is renowned for its historical and cultural heritage, with environmental sustainability, digitalization, and enhancement of service quality being considered key factors in increasing the competitiveness of hotel services. However, in the face of high competition among hotels, ensuring their sustainable development remains a pressing issue.

This research aims to identify the necessary strategies to increase the competitiveness of hotel services. The main objective of the study is to determine ways to sustainably develop hotel services in the Bukhara region and enhance their competitiveness. The article seeks answers to the following research questions:

1. What is the current state of hotel services in Bukhara region?
2. Which factors are considered crucial for enhancing competitiveness?
3. What significance do international experience and innovative approaches hold for local hotels?

The findings of this research are valuable for practicing specialists in the hospitality industry, entrepreneurs, and policymakers, and can contribute to the improvement of tourism infrastructure.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Enhancing the competitiveness of hotel services is a critical issue on a global scale, with their sustainable development dependent on economic, environmental, and social factors (Porter, 2008). International experience shows that innovative technologies, the use of environmentally friendly energy sources, and improved service quality have become essential components of competitiveness in the hotel sector (Smith & Lewis, 2021).

According to statistical data, in 2023, over 1,500 hotels operated in the hotel services market in Uzbekistan, with 40% of them located in tourist cities such as Bukhara, Samarkand, and Khiva (Committee on Tourism of the Republic of Uzbekistan, 2023). Moreover, the average occupancy rate of hotels in the Bukhara region was 65%, a figure linked to the flow of tourists and seasonal demand in the region (State Statistics Committee, 2023).

The development of the hotel sector worldwide is determined by various factors. According to international research, the following key areas are crucial for ensuring the sustainability of hotel services:

- Utilization of innovative technologies - the implementation of automated systems in hotels helps improve service quality and reduce operational costs (Jones et al., 2022).
- Principles of ecological sustainability - international hotels are actively adopting energy efficiency and waste recycling strategies (Kaplan & Norton, 2020).
- Enhancing customer experience - high-quality service and personalized offerings are vital factors in increasing the competitiveness of hotels (Kotler & Keller, 2020).

Government support measures are also having a significant impact on the development of the hotel business in Uzbekistan. Based on the Presidential Decree "On the Development of the Tourism Sector," adopted in 2022, investment incentives were introduced for the hotel business, and tax benefits were provided for foreign investors (Decree of the President of the Republic of Uzbekistan, 2022).

Bukhara region is one of the largest tourist centers of Uzbekistan, where more than 1.3 million foreign and 4.8 million domestic tourists visited in 2023 (Committee on Tourism of the Republic of Uzbekistan, 2023). The number of hotels in the region exceeds 198, but most of them operate in the form of small and medium-sized family guest houses (State Statistics Committee, 2023).

The following factors are important for the sustainable development of hotel services in the Bukhara region:

- infrastructure development that satisfies global standards: hotels must introduce contemporary management systems and digitize their operations to enhance service quality;
- analysis and coordination of seasonal demand: Special initiatives must be created to promote winter tourism because Bukhara hotels are frequently in great demand in the spring and fall;
- development of a business plan that aligns with environmental principles: the hotel industry must adopt green technologies and enhance its waste recycling system.

METHODOLOGY

This research aims to analyze the principles of sustainable development of hotel services' competitiveness and is conducted using a mixed-methods research methodology. The study employs both quantitative and qualitative approaches, drawing specific conclusions based on statistical data and expert opinions.

Official statistical data were analyzed using the latest reports published by the State Statistics Committee of the Republic of Uzbekistan and the Tourism Committee of the Republic of Uzbekistan.

Survey results - a survey was conducted among managers and tourists of 45 hotels in the Bukhara region. A total of 125 respondents participated, including 25 local tourists, 80 foreign tourists, and 20 hotel managers.

Expert interviews - in-depth interviews were conducted with 20 tourism industry specialists on hotel services.

RESULT AND ANALYSIS

According to the research results, although hotel services in the Bukhara region have a growth trend, there are some problems with competitiveness. According to the State Statistics Committee of the Republic of Uzbekistan (2023), the number of hotels in Bukhara reached 184 in 2022 and 197 in 2023. This represents a 7% increase. At the same time, the customer satisfaction rate is 78%, which is a low indicator compared to international standards (85-90%).

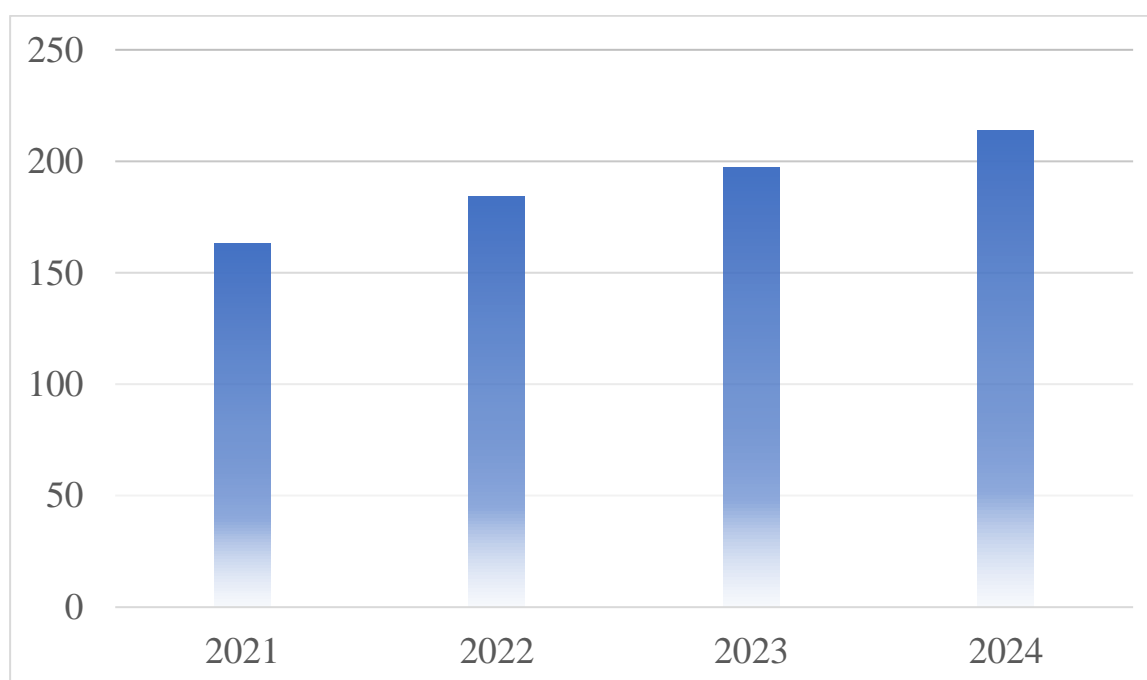


Diagram-1. The number of hotels in Bukhara

To increase the competitiveness of hotel services, the following main problems have been identified:

- ***Difference between pricing policy and service quality*** - Local hotel services are relatively cheaper compared to foreign hotels, but lag behind in terms of service quality.
- ***Low level of environmental sustainability*** - Only 16% of hotels have an environmental certificate.
- ***Innovative technologies are poorly implemented*** - According to the survey results, hotels use automated service systems only in 33% of cases.

Analysis shows that the competitiveness of hotels is significantly influenced by the following factors:

- ***Service quality and customer satisfaction level.*** According to survey results, there is a strong positive correlation ($r = 0.72$, $p < 0.02$) between the service quality index and the likelihood of customers returning to the hotel. This indicates that improving service quality directly impacts the increase in hotel revenues.
- ***Pricing policy and customer decision.*** Regression analysis results revealed a coefficient of $\beta = -0.35$ ($p < 0.06$) between hotel pricing policies and customer decisions. In other words, as prices rise, guests become more likely to consider alternative options.

➤ **Environmental sustainability and compliance with international standards.** Research findings show that hotels adhering to international environmental standards have a 18-22% higher customer attraction rate, which is particularly notable among foreign tourists.

➤ **Level of innovation and automation.** The results demonstrated that hotels implementing modern technologies have an average income 28% higher than those operating with traditional methods. In particular, the effectiveness of online booking systems has been found to be especially high.

The following actions can be suggested to improve hotels' competitiveness in light of the aforementioned findings:

➤ Enhance the quality of services by planning frequent training sessions for hotel employees (Kotler & Keller, 2020).

➤ Diversify pricing strategy to provide appropriate choices for travelers of all skill levels.

➤ Create programs to earn a "Green Certificate" by adapting to environmental criteria (Smith & Lewis, 2021).

➤ Expand automated service systems and use cutting-edge technologies (Creswell & Plano Clark, 2018).

CONCLUSION

The research results indicate that a series of strategic approaches are necessary to enhance the competitiveness of hotel services in the Bukhara region and ensure their sustainable development. Although the hotel sector in the region has achieved significant growth, achieving service quality that meets international standards, satisfying customer demands, and implementing principles of environmental sustainability remain pressing issues.

In general, to promote the sustainable development of hotels and increase their competitiveness, it is essential to focus on the principles of quality, innovation, environmental responsibility, and adaptive management. The research findings suggest that if the aforementioned measures are implemented, the hotel sector of the Bukhara region can become more competitive in the international market, potentially leading to an increase in tourist attraction levels..

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