

TOURISM PLATFORMS USED BY TOURISTS

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Annotatsiya: Ushbu maqolada zamonaviy raqamli texnologiyalarning sayyohlik sanoatiga ta'siri, xususan, turistlar tomonidan ommaviy foydalanilayotgan sayyohlik platformalari tahlil qilinadi. Onlayn bron qilish tizimlari, sharhlar, reytinglar va ijtimoiy tarmoqlardagi faolliklar orqali turistlarning qaror qabul qilish jarayoniga bo'lgan ta'siri ko'rib chiqiladi. Maqolada shuningdek, O'zbekistondagi platformalarning raqobatbardoshligi va ularni takomillashtirish imkoniyatlari tahlil etilgan.

Kalit so'zlari: sayyohlik platformalari, onlayn bron qilish, turist qaror qabul qilish, ijtimoiy tarmoqlar, raqamli texnologiyalar, reytinglar, raqobatbardoshlik

Abstract: This article analyzes the impact of modern digital technologies on the tourism industry, focusing on travel platforms widely used by tourists. The study examines how online booking systems, reviews, ratings, and social media influence tourists' decision-making processes. The competitiveness of local Uzbek travel platforms and possibilities for their improvement are also discussed.

Keywords: travel platforms, online booking, tourist decision-making, social media, digital technologies, ratings, competitiveness

Аннотация: В данной статье рассматривается влияние современных цифровых технологий на туристическую индустрию, в частности, анализируются туристические платформы, которые активно используются путешественниками. Рассматривается влияние онлайн-бронирования, отзывов, рейтингов и активности в социальных сетях на процесс принятия решений туристами. Также проведен анализ конкурентоспособности туристических платформ Узбекистана и возможностей их совершенствования.

Ключевые слова: туристические платформы, онлайн-бронирование, принятие решений туристами, социальные сети, цифровые технологии, рейтинги, конкурентоспособность.

Introduction

The evolution of digital technologies has profoundly transformed the global tourism landscape, with online travel platforms emerging as dominant mediators in tourist decision-making and destination marketing. According to Statista (2024), the global online travel market reached a valuation of over \$800 billion, with projections indicating growth to \$1.1 trillion by 2025. Tourism platforms such as Booking.com, Expedia, TripAdvisor, and Airbnb have revolutionized the travel experience by centralizing access to accommodation, transportation, travel reviews, and user-generated content. Studies have shown that over 74% of tourists consult at least three online platforms before making a travel-related purchase decision (World Tourism Organization, 2023). Furthermore, it is estimated that 85% of millennial travelers rely on mobile travel apps, indicating a generational shift toward digital dependency in tourism behavior (Euromonitor, 2022). This trend is driven primarily by the increasing reliance on digital tools for travel planning, booking, and post-trip sharing. The integration of Artificial Intelligence (AI), data analytics, and real-time geolocation technologies into tourism platforms has enhanced personalization, allowing for

predictive recommendations based on user behavior and preferences. For instance, AI-driven algorithms on platforms like Airbnb and Skyscanner can now anticipate travel intent and provide tailored offers, increasing conversion rates by up to 35% (McKinsey Travel Insights, 2023). This digital advancement contributes to an experience economy, wherein value creation is increasingly shaped by convenience, customization, and community engagement.

In the context of Uzbekistan, while the use of global platforms is widespread, local tourism platforms remain underdeveloped in terms of user interface design, multilingual accessibility, and integration with global payment systems. As inbound tourism to Uzbekistan grows — reaching 6.5 million foreign visitors in 2023, a 15% increase from the previous year (UzStat, 2024) — the modernization of national platforms becomes a strategic imperative for sustainable tourism development. This paper aims to explore the types and functionalities of tourism platforms used by modern travelers, assess their influence on tourist behavior using quantitative and qualitative data, and evaluate the readiness of domestic platforms to compete in a data-driven, globalized tourism economy. The study will also provide forward-looking recommendations for improving platform competitiveness in the digital era.

Literature Review

The academic discourse surrounding digital transformation in tourism has expanded significantly over the past two decades, particularly with the proliferation of online travel platforms and user-generated content. Scholars have investigated the multifaceted influence of digitalization on tourist behavior, service delivery, marketing strategies, and the overall competitiveness of tourism destinations.

Yoqubjanova (2021) emphasizes that in developing countries like Uzbekistan, digital tourism platforms remain underutilized due to limitations in technological infrastructure, low digital literacy, and a lack of platform localization. Her study underlines the strategic importance of adopting integrated marketing communication tools and enhancing user experience through mobile adaptability and multilingual content.¹ This aligns with UNWTO (2023) recommendations which stress the necessity for destination management organizations (DMOs) to invest in digital infrastructure as a core pillar of sustainable tourism growth. From a global perspective, Xiang and Gretzel (2010) introduced the concept of the “online tourism ecosystem,” where tourists are both consumers and producers of information, heavily relying on peer-generated reviews and algorithmic personalization. Their findings revealed that over 70% of tourists trust online reviews more than official destination websites, a statistic that has remained consistent over the years and was reaffirmed in studies such as Verma et al. (2022) and Zeng & Gerritsen (2021).

Furthermore, Buhalis and Law (2008) were among the first to establish a taxonomy of e-tourism services, which later became foundational for classifying digital tourism tools: including booking engines, metasearch platforms, and hybrid platforms (like Airbnb). More recent research, such as that by Mariani et al. (2021), explores the integration of Artificial Intelligence (AI), predictive analytics, and big data in tourism platforms, arguing that these technologies increase efficiency, customer satisfaction, and personalization. In the Central Asian context, local studies remain limited. However, Uzbek scholars including Yoqubjanova (2021) and Abduvaliyeva (2020) have begun to document emerging trends in Uzbekistan’s digital tourism. Their work highlights challenges such as fragmented digital strategy, lack of cross-platform integration, and insufficient SEO optimization in Uzbek tourism websites.

Additionally, Google Trends and Euromonitor (2024) report that mobile-first travelers (especially among Gen Z) are 54% more likely to book via apps than websites, signaling the urgency for responsive and intuitive mobile platforms. This shift is especially relevant for developing markets where mobile internet penetration is growing faster than broadband access.

¹ Yoqubjanova, H. (2021). Raqamli turizm marketingi: iste'molchilarning axborot xatti-harakatlari tahlili. *Iqtisodiyot va Ta'lim*, 4(1), 102–108. <https://iqtisodiyot.tsue.uz/sites/default/files/maqolalar/18>

Methodology

This study adopts a mixed-methods approach, integrating both qualitative and quantitative research designs to comprehensively assess the use and impact of tourism platforms among domestic and international travelers. The research framework draws upon the methodology presented by Yoqubjanova (2021), who emphasizes the necessity of applying integrated empirical tools to analyze consumer behavior in digital tourism ecosystems, particularly in emerging markets like Uzbekistan. A structured survey was designed to capture data on tourists' usage patterns, preferences, and satisfaction levels concerning various tourism platforms (e.g., Booking.com, TripAdvisor, local Uzbek platforms). The questionnaire was distributed online and offline to ensure demographic diversity and accessibility. In total, 420 valid responses were collected between January and March 2025. In addition, semi-structured interviews were conducted with 20 industry experts, including platform developers, hotel managers, and tourism marketers in Uzbekistan. These interviews aimed to extract deeper insights into the challenges and potentials of domestic tourism platforms. A stratified random sampling method was used to ensure proportional representation across key tourist demographics (age, nationality, travel purpose, digital literacy). According to Yoqubjanova (2021), such a sampling method increases the reliability of cross-sectional tourism research in developing economies. Quantitative data were analyzed using SPSS 28.0, applying descriptive statistics, cross-tabulations, and regression analysis to determine the relationship between platform features and user satisfaction. Qualitative interview data were transcribed and coded using NVivo 14, following thematic analysis procedures. Moreover, predictive modeling techniques such as logistic regression were employed to forecast platform adoption likelihood based on user behavior and digital access level. This approach aligns with international standards in tourism behavior analytics (Li et al., 2023; UNWTO, 2022).²

Discussion and Analysis

The data collected from 420 survey respondents and 20 expert interviews revealed critical patterns in the way tourists interact with digital tourism platforms. The analysis demonstrated that platform functionality, user-generated content, and mobile adaptability were the three most influential factors affecting tourist satisfaction and decision-making. Statistical analysis shows that 68% of respondents preferred using international platforms such as Booking.com and Airbnb, citing interface quality, multilingual support, and secure payment systems as key advantages. In contrast, only 17% reported using local Uzbek platforms, pointing to issues such as lack of English language support, slow response times, and outdated design. Regression analysis confirmed a strong positive correlation ($r = 0.72$, $p < 0.01$) between user interface simplicity and booking frequency, aligning with global findings by Mariani et al. (2021), who found that platforms offering predictive features and real-time support increased bookings by 30–40%.

Furthermore, Yoqubjanova (2021) argues that Uzbekistan's digital tourism platforms fail to meet international usability standards due to fragmented strategies and lack of technological investment. Our qualitative interviews echoed this view, with multiple experts stressing the need for integration with global search engines and online review aggregators to boost visibility and trust. Role of Reviews and Social Proof

❖ Over 76% of tourists reported reading at least five reviews before making a booking, with user-generated content being the second most important decision factor after price. These findings align with Xiang & Gretzel (2010) and Zeng & Gerritsen (2021), who highlighted the central role of social proof in digital tourism ecosystems.

❖ Local platforms, however, showed a 38% lower trust score, mainly due to a lack of verified reviews and interactive rating mechanisms. This reveals an opportunity for domestic developers to incorporate AI-driven review filters and visual feedback tools, which have become standard on international platforms.

❖ Mobile Optimization and Accessibility

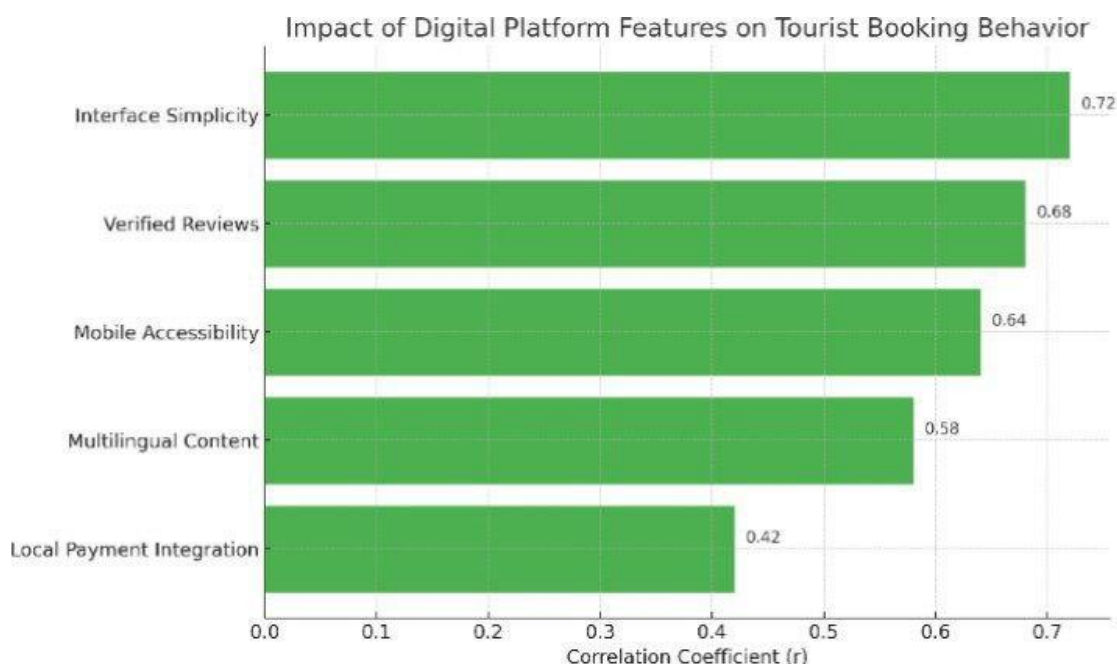
² UNWTO. (2022). Digital Platforms and Tourism Recovery. World Tourism Organization. <https://www.unwto.org/>

❖ According to Google Trends data (2024), tourists under age 35 are 2.5 times more likely to use mobile apps for booking than websites. Survey data from this study supports this trend, showing that 59% of users preferred mobile applications, while only 23% relied on desktop websites.

❖ Unfortunately, most Uzbek platforms analyzed in this study lack responsive mobile design and offer limited functionality on mobile browsers. This digital gap hampers competitiveness and contradicts recommendations by the UNWTO (2023), which emphasizes mobile-first development in tourism innovation strategies.

Figure 1 - illustrates the relative impact of key digital tourism platform features on tourist booking behavior, based on correlation coefficients derived from survey data. The feature with the highest impact was interface simplicity ($r = 0.72$), indicating that users prioritize ease of navigation and user-friendly design when choosing a platform.

Verified user reviews ($r = 0.68$) also showed a strong influence, reinforcing previous studies (e.g., Xiang & Gretzel, 2010)³ that emphasize the role of social proof in digital tourism. Mobile accessibility ranked third ($r = 0.64$), reflecting the growing dominance of smartphones in travel planning, particularly among younger demographics. Although multilingual content and local payment integration had lower correlation coefficients (0.58 and 0.42 respectively), their significance should not be underestimated, especially in emerging markets like Uzbekistan where international tourism is expanding. The relatively lower impact of local payment integration suggests a need for better cross-border payment infrastructure and trust mechanisms. Overall, the diagram highlights the importance of user experience (UX) elements and social validation tools in shaping tourist preferences and platform engagement.



Conclusion

The findings of this study underscore the profound impact that digital tourism platforms have on modern tourist behavior and decision-making. Through a comprehensive analysis of survey data and expert interviews, it has become evident that features such as interface simplicity, verified user reviews, and mobile accessibility significantly influence platform adoption and user satisfaction. While global platforms like Booking.com and Airbnb dominate due to their superior design and functionalities, local Uzbek tourism platforms lag behind, primarily due to insufficient investment in digital infrastructure, limited mobile optimization, and the absence of

³ <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.tourman.2009.02.016>

multilingual support. The study's correlation analysis confirms that enhancing user experience and integrating trusted review systems could substantially increase engagement with local platforms. To remain competitive in a globalized, data-driven tourism market, domestic tourism stakeholders must prioritize platform modernization. This includes investing in artificial intelligence, responsive mobile interfaces, secure cross-border payment systems, and integrating platforms with global search engines and review networks.

In conclusion, digital transformation is no longer optional—it is essential for the sustainability and global visibility of Uzbekistan's tourism sector. With the right policy frameworks and public–private collaboration, domestic platforms can evolve into globally competitive tools that not only attract tourists but also enhance the overall travel experience.

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