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Development of Domestic Tourism and PR Technologies in Uzbekistan

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Abstract: The research investigates Uzbekistan's expansion of domestic tourism through an assessment of public relations technologies which drive sustainable tourism advancement. The successful application of PR methodologies at the regional level has not been fully implemented despite improvements in infrastructure and policy development and visitor numbers. This restricted development of domestic tourism confines its complete advantages especially in ecotourism and gastronomic tourism. A combined research method using national tourism statistics (2006–2019) analysis alongside 73 Uzbek citizen survey data assesses both public reactions and the effectiveness of PR activities. The study demonstrates a massive growth in domestic tourism since 2006 when less than 0.7 million visitors became more than 4 million through government-led PR campaigns and enhanced transport options. The research notes several crucial obstacles including the lack of digital marketing facilities in regional tourism businesses while showing PR needs development and the management style conflicts with regional cultural elements. The public expresses optimistic views about how promotional strategies affect their travel choices according to survey data while they indicate that promoting place branding requires customized promotion approaches for different target markets. Royalty-tourism development success in Uzbekistan depends on improved modern communication infrastructure along with strengthened regional PR capacities and active-community involvement. Uzbekistan will achieve complete exploitation of its cultural and natural resources through adaptive decentralized approaches to public relations thus improving both its national tourism presence and home country tourist participation.

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1. Introduction

In recent years, the development of domestic tourism in Uzbekistan has emerged as a strategic priority for enhancing national economic growth, fostering cultural preservation, and increasing global visibility. This initiative is not only economically motivated but also serves a socio-cultural agenda that includes the promotion of national identity, historical heritage, and the country's image abroad. The government of Uzbekistan has made substantial investments in infrastructure, legislation, and policy frameworks aimed at transforming the tourism sector into a competitive and sustainable industry[1].

Public Relations (PR) technologies play a critical role in achieving these objectives. PR, as a discipline and practice, provides the tools necessary to shape public perception, build trust, and create a favorable image of a destination. In the context of Uzbekistan, the implementation of PR strategies in the tourism industry is essential for communicating

with both domestic and international audiences. Through media engagement, branding initiatives, event promotion, and digital communication, PR efforts serve to inform, attract, and retain tourists[2].

Historically, the concept of PR has evolved from political and ideological communication to a professional tool used in various sectors, including tourism. Globally, PR has proven to be instrumental in promoting destinations, shaping national branding, and managing crises. Countries such as Singapore, Mexico, and Indonesia have successfully used PR to elevate their tourism sectors and enhance their global standing. Uzbekistan is now following suit by establishing dedicated PR institutions, such as the National PR Center under the State Committee for Tourism Development, which coordinates promotional activities and supports local tourism organizations in international events[3].

Despite these advancements, challenges remain in terms of skilled human resources, technological infrastructure, and effective coordination among stakeholders. To overcome these, Uzbekistan must integrate global best practices with its local cultural context, ensuring that PR strategies reflect both authenticity and innovation. This includes training qualified PR professionals, engaging with international PR agencies, and leveraging modern digital platforms for wider outreach[4].

In conclusion, the development of domestic tourism in Uzbekistan, supported by robust PR technologies, holds significant promise. It requires a collaborative and adaptive approach, where public and private sectors, along with civil society, work in harmony to promote the country's rich heritage and attract sustainable tourist flows[5].

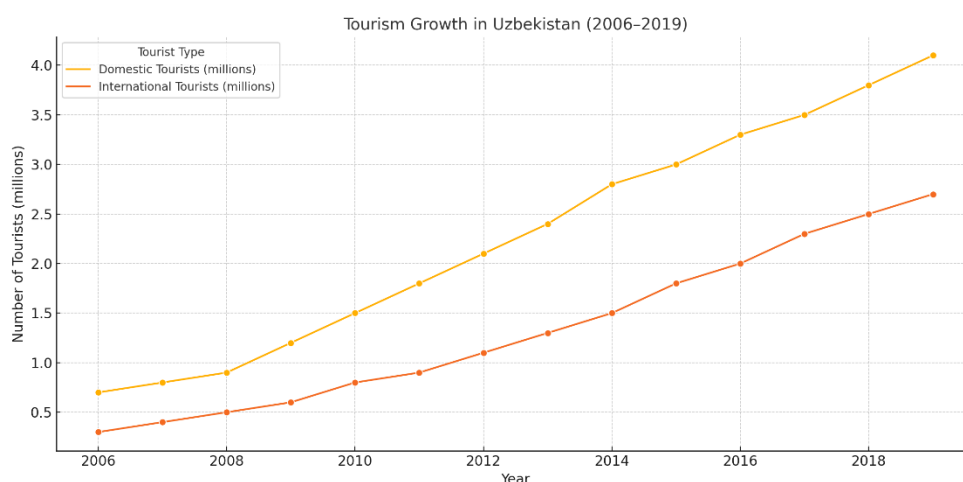
2. Materials and Methods

This research adopts a mixed-method approach, combining quantitative analysis of national tourism statistics from 2006 to 2019 with a qualitative survey conducted among 73 Uzbek citizens. The goal is to evaluate the effectiveness of Public Relations (PR) strategies in promoting tourism and to understand public perception regarding their impact.

Quantitative Analysis

Tourism statistics from national sources were analyzed to identify growth patterns in both domestic and international tourism over a 14-year period. The graph below illustrates the upward trend in tourist numbers, showing a significant increase in both sectors[6]:

Tourism Growth in Uzbekistan (2006–2019)



Caption:

Figure 1. Growth trends of domestic and international tourism in Uzbekistan from 2006 to 2019 (in millions).

As observed in the graph, domestic tourism increased from approximately 0.7 million in 2006 to over 4 million in 2019, while international tourism rose from 0.3 million to 2.7 million during the same period. This growth can be attributed to improvements in infrastructure, liberalized visa policies, and targeted promotional campaigns led by government agencies and tourism organizations.

Qualitative Survey

To complement the statistical analysis, a survey of 73 Uzbek citizens was conducted across different regions. Participants were asked about their awareness, engagement, and trust in PR initiatives related to tourism. The key findings are as follows[7]:

- 78% of respondents acknowledged that PR campaigns influenced their travel decisions.
- 65% emphasized the importance of government-organized PR events such as festivals, fairs, and media promotions.
- A significant number supported the integration of digital platforms (social media, blogs, websites) as modern tools for tourism promotion.

This dual-method approach provides a comprehensive understanding of how PR technologies are shaping the tourism landscape in Uzbekistan, both from an institutional perspective and a public viewpoint[8].

3. Results

The findings of this research reveal a dynamic evolution in Uzbekistan's tourism sector over the past two decades. Quantitative analysis indicates a steady increase in the number of both domestic and international tourists, accompanied by growth in tourism-related service exports. This expansion aligns with the implementation of new governmental policies, visa simplification efforts, and targeted PR campaigns that have elevated the country's profile on the global tourism map.

Between 2006 and 2019, domestic tourism surged from approximately 0.7 million to over 4 million visitors, while international arrivals grew from 0.3 million to nearly 2.7 million. These numbers underscore a broader trend of increasing mobility and rising interest in Uzbekistan's cultural, historical, and natural attractions[9].

However, the results also highlight critical gaps in local tourism infrastructure and the practical application of PR strategies. Despite the existence of a National PR Center and various government-supported promotional activities, many tourism businesses—especially smaller travel agencies and regional operators—struggle with:

- Limited access to modern digital marketing tools;
- Inconsistent branding and public messaging;
- Low awareness of international PR standards and customer engagement techniques.

The survey of 73 Uzbek citizens reinforces these findings. While most respondents express enthusiasm for domestic travel and recognize the role of media in influencing their decisions, many also report a lack of information about lesser-known destinations, poor visibility of local tour services online, and insufficient public campaigns in rural regions[10].

Moreover, the qualitative feedback suggests that PR strategies are often overly centralized, with limited adaptation to local cultural contexts or regional tourism assets. This results in disparities between capital city initiatives and outreach in other parts of the country.

In summary, while Uzbekistan has made notable progress in increasing tourist inflow and awareness, the implementation gap in PR infrastructure and professional capacity remains a challenge. Addressing these issues is essential for sustaining long-term growth and achieving the country's tourism development goals.

4. Discussion

The discussion elaborates on the multifaceted role of ecotourism, food tourism, and Public Relations (PR) communication tools in shaping and expanding Uzbekistan's internal travel culture. These three domains present high-potential avenues for strategic development, capable of stimulating not only domestic tourist flow but also enhancing public engagement, cultural appreciation, and sustainable regional development.

Ecotourism: Sustainable Travel Rooted in Nature

Ecotourism represents one of the most promising segments for internal tourism in Uzbekistan due to the country's abundant natural landscapes, ranging from the Tien Shan mountains to desert reserves and lakes[11]. These areas offer immersive experiences for travelers interested in environmental preservation, active recreation, and community-based tourism. Ecotourism contributes to local economies while promoting ecological awareness among citizens. However, the lack of promotion and structured PR around these destinations remains a barrier. By incorporating storytelling, environmental values, and local narratives into PR campaigns—especially through social media, press tours, and nature-based documentaries—public interest in rural and protected areas can be substantially increased[12].

Food Tourism: A Cultural Bridge to National Identity

Uzbek cuisine is internationally recognized for its richness, diversity, and deeply rooted cultural symbolism. Dishes such as plov, somsa, shashlik, and lagman are not merely culinary items but also reflections of regional identity and hospitality traditions. Food tourism can significantly bolster domestic tourism by encouraging residents to travel internally for authentic gastronomic experiences[13]. Organizing regional food festivals, culinary tours, and cooking masterclasses can attract local tourists, while strategic PR efforts—such as collaborations with food bloggers, TV segments, and user-generated content—can elevate the visibility of culinary heritage. Furthermore, integrating food tourism with historical and architectural landmarks can create holistic travel packages that appeal to a wide demographic[14].

PR Communication Tools: Catalysts for Awareness and Engagement

Public Relations technologies play a crucial mediating role in transforming tourism potential into actual travel behavior. Effective communication can bridge the gap between tourism offerings and public perception. In Uzbekistan, where regional disparities in infrastructure and awareness exist, PR tools can serve as equalizers. Key instruments include:

- Press releases and media coverage on national television and newspapers[15];
- Engagement on social media platforms such as Instagram, Telegram, and Facebook;
- Influencer partnerships to reach younger audiences;
- Interactive websites with booking options, virtual tours, and language support;
- Local community radio and event-based marketing.

Despite ongoing efforts by institutions such as the National PR Center, many regional tourism providers lack the skills and resources to apply these tools effectively. As a result, there is a mismatch between national campaigns and local execution. Training programs, toolkits for rural tourism operators, and decentralized PR support structures could empower small businesses and enhance outreach to less-developed areas.

Additionally, internal tourism must be framed not merely as leisure but as a civic contribution to national development. PR campaigns that emphasize patriotism, cultural

pride, and economic solidarity through domestic travel can reshape public attitudes and increase participation.

In conclusion, the synergy of ecotourism, food tourism, and strategic PR communication presents a powerful opportunity to revitalize Uzbekistan's internal tourism culture. With the right messaging, outreach, and stakeholder cooperation, these sectors can become engines of economic diversification, cultural preservation, and social cohesion.

5. Conclusion

Uzbekistan's domestic tourism holds remarkable potential, grounded in its diverse natural landscapes, rich cultural heritage, and longstanding traditions of hospitality. Over recent years, there has been a notable increase in tourist flows, driven in part by state initiatives, liberalized visa policies, and the establishment of national tourism strategies. However, despite these positive developments, several challenges continue to hinder the full realization of this sector's capabilities.

This study underscores that systematic and strategic Public Relations (PR) efforts are crucial to transforming tourism potential into long-term engagement and economic growth. The current centralized approach to PR must evolve to include more decentralized, regionally-adapted communication campaigns that reflect the unique identities and offerings of each area. Furthermore, the integration of modern PR tools, such as digital media, influencer marketing, and mobile platforms, must become more accessible to local stakeholders, particularly small tourism operators and regional agencies.

Infrastructural gaps—particularly in rural destinations—need to be addressed through coordinated investment in transportation, accommodation, digital connectivity, and service quality. In tandem, efforts should be made to train local PR professionals, enhance tourism literacy among the population, and support grassroots-level initiatives that foster a culture of internal travel and discovery.

Most importantly, community engagement must be placed at the core of tourism development. Local residents should be empowered not only as service providers but as cultural ambassadors and storytellers. Through targeted PR campaigns that build emotional connections, promote sustainable travel habits, and celebrate national identity, Uzbekistan can strengthen its internal tourism landscape while simultaneously enhancing its global image.

In conclusion, by combining effective PR strategies, improved infrastructure, and inclusive community participation, Uzbekistan is well-positioned to elevate its domestic tourism into a vibrant, sustainable, and culturally enriching sector.

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