



**“ZAMONAVIY ILMIY YONDASHUVLAR VA TEXNOLOGIK
TARAQQIYOTNING USTUVOR YO‘NALISHLARI” nomli Respublika
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ASSESSING THE ESG STATUS OF TOURIST DESTINATIONS IN UZBEKISTAN: A COMPOSITE-INDEX APPROACH

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Annotation

The thesis examines the assessment of the ESG (environmental, social and governance) status of tourist destinations in Uzbekistan. Using the author’s “DESI model” (Destination ESG Status Index), the ESG status of leading destinations is evaluated, territorial differences are identified, and practical proposals for sustainable tourism development are formulated.

Keywords

sustainable tourism, ESG, tourist destination, assessment index, DESI model, Uzbekistan.

Annotatsiya. Tezisdagi O‘zbekiston turistik destinatsiyalarida ESG (ekologik, ijtimoiy va boshqaruv) holatini baholash masalalari ko‘rib chiqilgan. Muallif tomonidan taklif etilgan “DESI modeli” (Destination ESG Status Index) asosida yetakchi destinatsiyalarning ESG holati baholangan, hududiy farqlar aniqlangan va barqaror turizmni rivojlantirish bo‘yicha amaliy takliflar berilgan.

Kalit so‘zlar: barqaror turizm, ESG, turistik destinatsiya, baholash indeksi, DESI modeli, O‘zbekiston.

Аннотация. В тезисах рассматриваются вопросы оценки ESG-состояния (экологического, социального и управленческого) туристических направлений Узбекистана. На основе авторской модели «DESI» (Destination ESG Status Index) оценено ESG-состояние ведущих направлений, выявлены территориальные различия и предложены практические меры по развитию устойчивого туризма.



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Ключевые слова: устойчивый туризм, ESG, туристическая дестинация, индекс оценки, модель DESI, Узбекистан.

Across the world, tourist destinations are increasingly judged not only by their attractions but by how responsibly they manage their environment, their communities and their institutions. The Environmental, Social and Governance (ESG) framework, first developed in finance, has become the common language for this judgement, and on a full supply-chain accounting tourism produces roughly 8 per cent of global greenhouse-gas emissions, which keeps the environmental dimension in sharp focus. Uzbekistan has become one of the region’s fastest-growing destinations: international arrivals rose from 2.7 million in 2017 to more than 6.7 million in 2019, and after the pandemic recovered to over 8 million by 2024. With the “Uzbekistan – 2030” strategy placing sustainable tourism and the conservation of UNESCO World Heritage cities among its priorities, the country now needs a clear, comparable way to gauge the ESG status of its destinations rather than relying on impressions. Samarkand, Bukhara, Khiva, Tashkent, the Fergana Valley and the Aral Sea zone differ sharply in heritage, ecology and institutional capacity, and a single national figure hides more than it shows.

To meet this need, the author proposes the “DESI model” (Destination ESG Status Index) as a systematic tool for measuring destination-level ESG status. It is built from the following components: 1) Environmental status (E) – resource and energy efficiency, water-saving, waste management and climate response; 2) Social status (S) – cultural-heritage preservation, local employment, community participation and inclusivity; 3) Governance status (G) – policy transparency, certification, tourist safety and inter-agency coordination; 4) Composite index – the three sub-indices, each scored on auditable indicators, normalised by the min–max method and combined into a single 0–



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1 score read against five interpretation bands. The design lets destinations be compared on one scale and tracked over time.

Applying the DESI model to the country’s leading destinations produced a moderate national picture with wide internal differences. Samarkand and Bukhara scored highest, near 0.66 and 0.63, helped by dense heritage stewardship, active certification and concentrated managerial capacity, while Khiva and Tashkent followed within the moderate band. The Fergana Valley and the Aral Sea zone of Karakalpakstan scored lowest, around 0.52 and 0.47, the latter held back by the environmental legacy of the Aral crisis and thin tourism infrastructure. In every destination the social sub-index was the strongest, a reflection of the country’s exceptional cultural heritage, whereas the environmental sub-index was consistently the weakest, constrained by limited resource-efficiency measures, immature waste handling and water stress in a sharply continental, semi-arid climate.

The national mean DESI stood at about 0.58, placing Uzbekistan’s destinations in the upper part of the moderate band but short of the high-status threshold of 0.70. Analysis of the destination-level data showed governance and certification readiness to be the strongest correlate of overall ESG status, which points to institutional and standards-based action as the quickest route to improvement. International experience supports this reading: destinations certified under the GSTC Destination Criteria and monitored through the European Tourism Indicator System have lifted measurable sustainability within 5–10 years by combining certification, transparent reporting and green-infrastructure investment. Benchmarking Uzbek destinations against these systems shows both the gap to close and the policy levers available.

The study yields the following conclusions. First, the ESG status of tourist destinations should be assessed with a transparent, comparable instrument rather than



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judged by impression, and the DESI model offers such an instrument. Second, the environmental dimension is the binding constraint nationwide, so investment in resource efficiency, water-saving and waste management promises the clearest gains. Third, because governance and certification most strongly drive overall status, expanding sustainability certification and transparent reporting should be a policy priority. Fourth, with coordinated public-private action the national mean DESI can be raised from the moderate to the high-status band within the 2025–2030 period, strengthening the international competitiveness of Uzbekistan’s destinations.

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