



THEORETICAL FOUNDATIONS FOR DETERMINING UZBEKISTAN'S INTERNATIONAL IMAGE AND ENHANCING TOURISM ATTRACTIVENESS

O'ZBEKISTONNING XALQARO IMIJINI ANIQLASH VA TURISTIK JOZIBADORLIGINI OSHIRISHNING NAZARIY ASOSLARI

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Abstract Annotatsiya

Eng. - This article examines the theoretical foundations for determining Uzbekistan's international image and clarifies its relationship with tourism attractiveness. It distinguishes destination image from the broader concept of tourism attractiveness by decomposing attractiveness into five components: image, access, price, product availability and perceived risk. Using a conceptual and analytical approach, the study applies binding-constraint logic to identify the conditions under which image-related interventions can produce observable tourism outcomes. It further argues that international image should not be treated as a single universal measure; meaningful assessment requires explicit specification of the domain, audience and source market. The analysis shows that image-building efforts generate the greatest return when image itself is the binding constraint, whereas limitations in access, price, product or risk can prevent positive perceptions from being converted into actual travel. For Uzbekistan, the framework supports market-specific diagnosis and coordinated policy measures that align image-building with accessibility, product development, pricing conditions and institutional risk management.

Uzb. - Ushbu maqolada O'zbekistonning xalqaro imijini aniqlashning nazariy asoslari hamda uning turistik jozibadorlik bilan o'zaro bog'liqligi tahlil qilingan. Turistik destinatsiya imiji turistik jozibadorlikning kengroq tushunchasidan ajratilib, jozibadorlik besh tarkibiy qism: imij, kirish imkoniyati, narx, turistik mahsulotning mavjudligi va qabul qilinadigan xavf asosida izohlangan. Konseptual-tahliliy yondashuv asosida asosiy cheklovchi omil mantiqi qo'llanib, imijga qaratilgan chora-tadbirlar qaysi sharoitlarda kuzatiladigan turistik natijalarni yuzaga keltirishi mumkinligi aniqlashtirilgan. Shuningdek, xalqaro imijni yagona universal ko'rsatkich sifatida talqin qilishning cheklanganligi va uni mazmunli baholash uchun soha, auditoriya hamda manba bozorini aniq belgilash zarurligi asoslangan. Tahlil natijalari imijning o'zi asosiy cheklovchi omil bo'lgan holatlarda imijni shakllantirish choralari yuqori samara berishini, kirish imkoniyati, narx, mahsulot yoki xavf bilan bog'liq cheklovlar esa ijobiy tasavvurlarning real sayohatga aylanishiga to'sqinlik qilishi mumkinligini ko'rsatadi. O'zbekiston uchun mazkur yondashuv bozorlar kesimida alohida diagnostika o'tkazish hamda imij siyosatini kirish imkoniyati, mahsulot rivoji, narx sharoitlari va institutsional xavflarni boshqarish bilan uyg'unlashtirish zarurligini ko'rsatadi.

Keywords:

Kalit soʻzlar:

❖ *destination image, tourism attractiveness, binding constraint, nation branding, measurement specification, source markets.*

❖ *turistik destinatsiya imiji, turistik jozibadorlik, asosiy cheklovchi omil, milliy brending, baholash parametrlari, manba bozorlari.*

Introduction.

Two propositions organise much of the discussion on destination image. The first is that a country's international image shapes its tourism attractiveness. The second is that improving that image will consequently improve tourism attractiveness. The first proposition is plausible and widely supported, but the second does not automatically follow from it.

The gap between these propositions is the central problem addressed in this article. Tourism attractiveness has several components; image is only one of them, and an improvement in a single component changes the final outcome only when that component is currently limiting the system. This distinction is important for tourism policy because a campaign may improve awareness or perception while having little observable effect on visitor numbers if access, price, product availability or perceived risk remains the binding constraint.

A second conceptual difficulty concerns the use of the term "determining" in studies of international image. Determining an image presupposes that there is a single image to determine. In practice, the image relevant to tourism can differ from the image relevant to trade or investment; it can also differ across source markets and among prospective, first-time and repeat visitors. Without defining these dimensions, a single national image score may combine different and potentially incompatible perceptions.

Accordingly, the article has three objectives: to distinguish destination image from the broader concept of tourism attractiveness; to identify the conditions under which image-oriented interventions can generate observable tourism outcomes; and to

specify the domain, audience and source market that must be defined when determining a country's international tourism image.

Literature Review.

The literature on destination attractiveness, destination image and nation branding provides the theoretical basis for separating image from the broader set of conditions that influence travel decisions. Formica and Uysal [1] conceptualise destination attractiveness through the relationship between destination supply and market demand. This perspective implies that attractiveness is not produced by a single variable but by the interaction of multiple destination attributes and market conditions.

Research on destination image explains how beliefs and perceptions about a place are formed. Baloglu and McCleary [2] and Gartner [3] show that destination image develops through multiple information sources and accumulated perceptions. This is important to the present argument because image cannot be treated as an instrument entirely controlled by a single organisation; rather, it is formed over time within a broader information environment.

The motivational literature also helps distinguish image from the conditions that determine whether travel is feasible. Crompton [4] differentiates factors that push individuals to travel from factors that pull them towards particular destinations. Destination image belongs primarily to the pull side of this relationship, whereas access, price and the availability of a bookable product determine whether interest can be converted into an actual trip.

Nation-branding studies further demonstrate the importance of defining exactly

what is being measured. Kotler and Gertner [5] discuss the country as a brand and a marketing object, while Fan [6] questions what is actually being branded when the term "nation brand" is used. These contributions support the need to distinguish tourism image from a country's image in trade, investment or political domains.

Audience composition is another important issue. Fakeye and Crompton [7] demonstrate that prospective, first-time and repeat visitors may hold systematically different images of the same destination. Therefore, pooling these groups into a single measure can conceal meaningful differences. In addition, Echtner and Ritchie [8] draw attention to the limitations of destination-image measurement and the difficulty of capturing unique, destination-specific elements through highly standardised instruments.

Taken together, the literature supports three conclusions that guide the analysis in this article: tourism attractiveness is multidimensional; destination image is only one component of attractiveness; and any attempt to determine international image must specify the domain, audience and source market to which the measurement refers.

Research Methodology.

The study is conceptual and analytical. No primary empirical data were collected, no destination-image index was estimated, and the study does not characterise Uzbekistan using a new quantitative dataset. The figures and tables are analytical constructions intended to clarify the internal logic of the proposed framework rather than to present statistical results.

The research procedure consists of three stages. First, tourism attractiveness is decomposed into five components: image, access, price, product and risk; the institutional actor capable of influencing each component is then identified. Second, binding-constraint logic is applied to determine when an

improvement in image can reasonably be expected to change tourism attractiveness. Third, the article specifies three methodological conditions for determining international image: the domain being evaluated, the audience being studied and the source market from which respondents or observations are drawn.

The sources are organised according to the classification stated in the original study: category A consists of peer-reviewed research, category B of institutional publications and category C of industry materials. The present article relies primarily on established peer-reviewed research to support the conceptual relationships among attractiveness, destination image, motivation, nation branding and measurement.

The analysis is conducted at the destination and policy levels. The framework does not aggregate all components into a single index because such aggregation would conceal which component is limiting performance. Instead, each component is examined separately and interpreted according to its function, observability and institutional ownership.

Analysis and Discussion of Results.

Destination attractiveness can be understood as the outcome of several necessary conditions rather than as a synonym for destination image. The proposed decomposition identifies five components: image, access, price, product and risk. Image refers to what the traveller believes about the destination. Access includes visa requirements, flight connections, routing and total travel time. Price reflects the cost of the destination relative to alternatives of comparable quality. Product refers to a tourism offering that can actually be booked in advance at a stated price. Risk encompasses safety, health and the predictability of rules.

Two properties of this decomposition are especially important. First, the components are

not fully substitutable. A strong image cannot compensate for the absence of a visa, an unaffordable journey or the lack of a bookable product. The relationship therefore resembles a chain more closely than a simple additive index. Second, the components have different institutional owners. Image may be influenced by tourism authorities, access by government policy and carriers, price by macroeconomic conditions and supply, product by private operators and suppliers, and risk by

institutions whose mandates may extend beyond tourism.

This division of responsibility helps explain why tourism programmes often concentrate on image: it is the component most directly accessible to the organisation designing the programme. However, choosing an instrument because it is administratively available is different from diagnosing which component actually constrains tourism demand.



Figure 1. Five components of tourism attractiveness and the principal actor influencing each component

Table 1

Components of attractiveness

Component	Content	Primary influencing actor	Observable at low cost
<i>Image</i>	<i>What the traveller believes about the destination</i>	<i>No single actor; multiple information sources</i>	<i>No; requires primary research</i>
<i>Access</i>	<i>Visa requirements, flights, routing and travel time</i>	<i>Policy authorities and carriers</i>	<i>Yes; published rules and schedules</i>
<i>Price</i>	<i>Cost relative to alternatives of comparable quality</i>	<i>Exchange-rate conditions and supply</i>	<i>Yes; market quotations</i>
<i>Product</i>	<i>A bookable tourism offering sold in advance</i>	<i>Operators and suppliers</i>	<i>Yes; attempt to purchase</i>
<i>Risk</i>	<i>Safety, health and predictability of rules</i>	<i>Relevant institutions</i>	<i>Yes; published advisories</i>

The return on image-oriented interventions depends on which component is binding. Three common cases illustrate the distinction. In the first case, access is easy, the

destination is affordable, a bookable product exists and perceived risk is acceptable, but the country is not in the traveller's consideration set. Here, image is the binding component, and

image-related work can generate a positive return.

In the second case, the country may already be well regarded, but travel is long, costly or administratively difficult. An image campaign can raise interest, yet the decision-making process may stop when the potential visitor examines flight prices, routing or visa requirements. In the third case, interest and access may both be adequate, but there is no clearly bookable product. Again, additional image-related work increases interest without ensuring conversion into an actual booking or trip.

The practical implication is a sequencing rule: diagnose the binding component before selecting the policy instrument. Where this is not done, spending on image in the second and

third cases may produce no observable change in tourism outcomes. The absence of change may then be attributed to campaign quality rather than to the original diagnosis, creating pressure for additional spending on the same instrument.

Diagnosis is comparatively inexpensive for four of the five components. Access can be observed through published visa rules and transport schedules; price through market quotations; product by attempting to purchase a package or service; and risk through published advisories and institutional information. Image is the component that most clearly requires primary research. This provides an additional reason to distinguish diagnosis from promotion.



Figure 2. Three cases distinguished by the binding component

Table 2

Which component binds

Case	Situation	Expected return from image work	Correct instrument
1	Easy access, product exists, country not considered	Positive	Image
2	Country is well regarded, but the journey is long or costly, or the visa process is difficult	None until the access or price constraint is eased	Access or price
3	Interest exists, but nothing is clearly bookable	None; interest cannot convert into a booking	Product

The concept of international image becomes interpretable only when the object of measurement is clearly specified. Three specifications are required: domain, audience and source market.

Domain identifies the field in which image is being measured. A country's standing in tourism, trade, investment and politics can differ substantially. A destination may be trusted as a supplier of goods while remaining relatively unknown as a tourism destination. Therefore, the tourism domain must be stated explicitly when the research question concerns tourism attractiveness.

Audience identifies whose perceptions are being measured. Prospective visitors, first-time visitors and repeat visitors can hold different images because their levels of experience and exposure differ. Pooling these audiences may increase variance while

concealing the differences that are analytically important.

Source market identifies the geographical or market context from which the image is observed. Different source markets form perceptions through different media systems, travel histories and cultural contexts. An average across markets may therefore describe no specific market and may change simply because the composition of the sample changes.

A further measurement issue concerns the instrument itself. Structured scales are usually designed around items that are common to multiple destinations in order to facilitate comparison. This can underrepresent distinctive characteristics that make a destination unique. For this reason, standardised measurement should be interpreted together with destination-specific attributes rather than treated as a complete representation of international image.

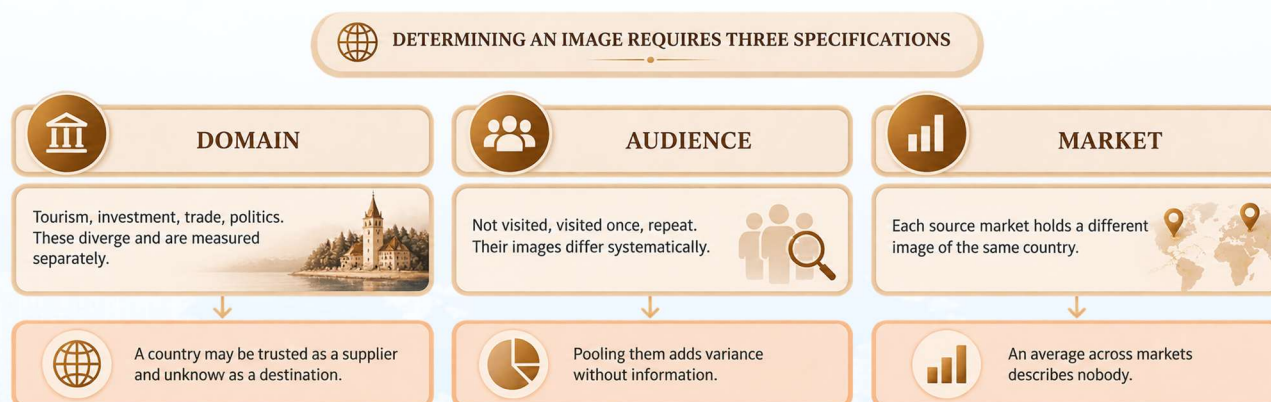


Figure 3. Domain, audience and source market, and the aggregation error prevented by each specification

Table 3

Three specifications

Specification	Question answered	Error prevented
Domain	Image in which domain: tourism, trade, investment or politics?	Treating standing in one domain as standing in another
Audience	Prospective visitor, first-time visitor or repeat visitor?	Pooling groups whose images differ systematically
Source market	Which source market is being assessed?	Reporting an average that describes no specific market

For research, the framework implies that the domain, audience and source market

should be stated before an international-image measure is reported. The components of

tourism attractiveness should also be presented separately rather than compressed into a single index, because aggregation can conceal the component that actually limits tourism conversion.

For policy, the central principle is to diagnose before selecting an instrument. When the binding component lies outside the mandate of a tourism authority, the appropriate response is inter-institutional coordination rather than the assumption that additional promotion can solve the problem. This is especially important where access, product availability, price or perceived risk limits the conversion of positive interest into actual travel.

For Uzbekistan, the framework suggests that the binding component may differ by source market. In some distant markets, limited awareness or a weak destination image

may be the main constraint. In nearer or better-informed markets, the limiting factor may instead be access, price or the availability of clearly bookable tourism products. Consequently, a single national instrument applied uniformly across all markets may be less effective than market-specific diagnosis.

Uzbekistan's strong heritage assets and distinctive craft traditions can support a positive tourism image, but the economic return from image-oriented communication depends on whether the remaining components of attractiveness are sufficiently developed for interest to be converted into travel. The framework therefore links international image policy with access, product development, pricing conditions and institutional risk management rather than treating branding as an isolated activity.

Table 4

What follows for research and policy

Actor	Requirement	Reason
Researcher	Specify the domain, audience and source market	Otherwise, the resulting measure is difficult to interpret
Researcher	Report the components separately	Aggregation can conceal which component is binding
Policy maker	Diagnose before selecting an instrument	Four of the five components are relatively inexpensive to observe
Policy maker	Identify the binding component even if it lies outside the mandate	More useful than selecting a campaign solely because it is administratively available

Conclusions and Recommendations.

The analysis demonstrates that destination image and tourism attractiveness are related but distinct concepts. Tourism attractiveness contains at least five components: image, access, price, product and risk; the relationship among them is closer to a chain than to a simple sum. A stronger image cannot fully compensate for barriers that prevent the traveller from acting on positive interest.

The return on image-oriented work depends on whether image is the binding component. Where access, price or product is

the actual constraint, promotional expenditure may increase awareness without producing observable growth in visits. The key policy task is therefore not to choose between branding and other instruments in the abstract, but to identify the component that limits conversion in each source market.

The study also confirms that a country's international image cannot be interpreted as a single universal quantity. Any attempt to determine it must specify the domain, audience and source market. Without these specifications, the reported value risks

becoming an average of perceptions that refer to different objects and different groups.

1. Before launching an image campaign, tourism authorities should diagnose image, access, price, product and risk separately and identify the binding component for the target source market.

2. International tourism-image studies should explicitly state the tourism domain, audience category and source market in the methodology section before any aggregate image indicator is reported.

3. Where the binding constraint lies outside the tourism authority's direct mandate, coordinated action should be developed with the institutions responsible for visa policy,

transport connectivity, product development, pricing conditions or risk management.

4. Uzbekistan's image-building programmes should be market-specific. Distant markets in which awareness is limited may require stronger image communication, while markets with sufficient awareness may require improvements in accessibility or the availability of bookable tourism products.

5. Evaluation of image-oriented interventions should separate communication outcomes from tourism-conversion outcomes. Growth in awareness should not automatically be interpreted as growth in attractiveness unless access, price, product and risk conditions allow the newly created interest to be converted into travel.

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