



IQTISODIYOT & TARAQQIYOT

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Аннотация. Туристическая отрасль Узбекистана в последние годы переживает значительный рост, в первую очередь благодаря государственным инициативам и растущему международному интересу к уникальному культурному и историческому наследию страны. Однако столь стремительное развитие сопровождается рядом серьёзных вызовов — особенно в области экологической устойчивости, социального воздействия на местные сообщества и необходимости рационального управления ресурсами. В этом контексте возрастает значение туристического образования, которое обеспечивает будущих специалистов знаниями и навыками, необходимыми для устойчивого развития отрасли. Настоящее исследование направлено на комплексный анализ текущего состояния туристического образования в университетах Узбекистана. Применяя качественный подход, в исследовании проводится контент-анализ учебных программ и полуструктурированные интервью с преподавателями и академическими координаторами. Полученные результаты показывают, что концепции устойчивого развития часто освещаются поверхностно, ограничиваясь элективными курсами и не обеспечивая должной интеграции практических навыков, междисциплинарных методов и долгосрочной ориентации на экологическое и культурное сохранение. На основе международных моделей в статье предлагается рамочная структура для более глубокой интеграции устойчивого развития в туристическое образование. Ключевые рекомендации включают введение базовых тем, таких как «зелёный туризм», этичные путешествия, экологический менеджмент и туризм, ориентированный на местные сообщества, в обязательные дисциплины. Также предлагается усилить повышение квалификации преподавателей, развивать международное сотрудничество и согласовать учебные программы с Целями устойчивого развития ООН (ЦУР).

Ключевые слова: устойчивость, образование, курсы, академическая среда, экология.

INTRODUCTION

In recent decades, tourism has evolved from leisure industry into a socioeconomic development promoting force and a factor for cultural interchange. Those are the urgent issues that warrant the expeditious consideration of a change toward sustainability: environmental degradation, cultural modification, and community displacements. The global agenda having shifted toward the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), tourism education plays an even greater role—or perhaps sets-in producing an entire generation of professionals capable of implementing sustainable practices in tourism. This shift acquires further meaning in emerging economies like Uzbekistan, where tourism is not only regarded as an economic engine but also as a form of cultural diplomacy and rural development. In the last few years, Uzbekistan tourism-related industries have experienced an upswing, due to government backing and international connectivity, alongside a growing appreciation for its Silk Road legacy and different landscapes. Sustainable tourism development, however, remains uneven because of the current limitations with infrastructure, human resources, and environmental management. In the vein of a concentration of a word, universities and other higher education institutions should be leaders in sustainability through making sustainability a cornerstone of tourism curricula. The curriculum must go beyond just imparting knowledge of tourism operations and include stimulating critical thinking skills regarding ethical, environmental, and community-level issues.

Currently in Uzbekistan, tourism education programs may fail to approach sustainability in any such structured manner. Many institutions continue to maintain the traditional models of hospitality and tour management education with very less emphasis being put on ecological literacy, digital transformation, or community engagement. Research suggests the lack of interdisciplinary content, limited use of technology, and an absence of linkage between industry requirements and academic training (Azgarov, 2020; Yusupova & Turakulova, 2023). Hence, the graduates often remain unready to tackle the challenges of an ever-changing tourism sector wherein their attributes lying in sustainability, resilience, and innovation come much into play.

In a nutshell, the very alignment between tourism and sustainability education is not only a pedagogical challenge but indeed a strategic concern for the future of Uzbekistan. Universities become a cradle for nurturing a generation of tourism professionals with a consciousness to appreciate economic growth along with ecological safeguarding and cultural preservation by providing students with tools to think globally yet act locally. Yorkuolov (2024) investigates how regional tourism has shaped Uzbekistan's GDP over the period from 1995 to 2023, pinpointing key drivers such as tourist arrivals, government investment, and human capital development. The study highlights that despite tourism's potential to boost local economies, challenges related to infrastructure deficits, incoherent policies, and unsustainable resource use persist. To remedy this, Yorkuolov recommends enhancing rural competitiveness, deploying renewable energy solutions, and promoting niche offerings like agritourism—strategies that align economic growth with environmental protection and cultural heritage preservation.



LITERATURE REVIEW

Tourism education has come under scrutiny in recent times for how much it has contributed to the development, environmental, social, and cultural impacts of tourism. Now sustainability is central to the global tourism discourse, some scholars argue that academic institutions must be the principal agent for introducing future professionals to focus on sustainability-oriented competences (Fernández-Villarán et al., 2024). Hence, curriculum reform around the globe has been proposed to foster systems thinking, social ethics, community engagement, and the realization of the SDGs in tourism specific settings. In Uzbekistan, tourism is considered a strategic sector having enormous opportunities in producing economic growth steps, more particularly in cultural, eco- and rural tourism. Still, it is confronted by a series of systemic hindrances to align its tourism education with sustainability goals. According to Azgarov (2020), usually many of the universities of Uzbekistan still cling to an outdated hospitality model which offers hardly any interdisciplinary perspectives or training in environmental stewardship. This has led to graduate capabilities being misaligned with the emerging needs of a more responsible tourism sector. In addition, Yusupova and Turakulova (2023) underscore the minimal use of digital technologies such as GIS, augmented reality, and smart tourism platforms in the tourism curricula of Uzbekistan. With these technologies gaining importance in managing tourist flows and sustaining interpretations of cultural sites, most of the academic programs still have not reformed to include such innovations.

International literature attests to the idea that sustainability in tourism education should be handled on two levels: curriculum content and pedagogy. Studies in Sustainability journal regarding agritourism (2024) and culturalization strategies (2023) advocate including local cultural values, ethical tourism practices, and assessment of environmental impacts in curricula at undergraduate and graduate levels. With this argument, they emphasize a global view-that global sustainability principles should be taught, but grounded in local realities. In Uzbekistan, this may, for example, include teaching the cultural preservation of Silk Road heritage, community-based eco-tourism, and agritourism projects that complement rural development objectives (Agritourism as an emerging sustainable tourism industry in Uzbekistan, 2024; Evaluating culturalization strategies, 2023). Sustainability conceptually refers to institutional transformation. Seytniyazova (2024) stresses that the reform of tourism education requires more than mere syllabus changes; it calls for the capacity-building of academic staff and establishing collaborations with industry stakeholders while piloting some new learning approaches within the real world of tourism settings. Without such systemic changes, education reform risks remaining superficial.

Overall, it can be said that the existing literature brings out the urgency and opportunity to reform tourism education in Uzbekistan. The difficult task to work on is not only changing materials but transforming pedagogies and institutional partnerships that create a focus on sustainability. This study adds to this discourse by specifying the gaps that exist in present curricula and by suggesting a strategic model for sustainability-tourism education integration aligned with international best practices and local development goals.

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

The study proposes a mixed-method research approach to prepare tourism education in Uzbekistan for reorienting itself towards sustainable development. The methodological proposal looks at the existing tourism curricula, how key players perceive sustainable issues, and the conceptualization of a model curriculum based on global best practice and national priorities. McKercher (2015) emphasizes that tourism research often benefits from adopting frameworks and theories from other disciplines, which is particularly valuable in understanding complex issues like sustainable tourism. He argues that sustainable tourism cannot be fully grasped through a single disciplinary lens, and must instead incorporate insights from environmental science, sociology, economics, and political science to develop effective, long-term solutions.

1. Research Design and Justification

A case study design is preferred for this type of research, as it concentrates on Uzbek higher education institutions offering tourism-related programs. The said approach enables comprehensive scrutiny of curriculum building and sustainability integration in context. Mixing qualitative with quantitative techniques, the study aims to capture deep insight as well as broader trends.

For instance, in Silk Road International University of Tourism and Cultural Heritage, there is a big focus orientated to sustainable tourism related courses:



Name of Faculties	Number of courses	Name of courses
Archeology	3	Natural Resources
		Tourism Planning and Development
		Ecology and Environmental Protection and Natural Heritage
Logistics	2	Sustainability in Tourism and Transport
		Green Sustainable Transportation
Museology	3	Museums and Cultural Heritage preservation
		Ecology and Environmental protection and Natural heritage
		Preservation of Cultural Material
Tourism and Hospitality	2	Special Interest Tourism
		Sustainability in Tourism and Hospitality
International Relations	4	Sustainable Development Goals
		Sustainable Development
		Planet Earth: People and Place
		UNESCO World Heritage Sites

3. Data Collection Methods

a) Documentary Analysis. The study envisages examined curricula, syllabi, course descriptions, and mission statements of universities. The objective here is to determine how sustainability issues are treated in the curricula-design level, theoretically and practically, including environmental ethics, community-based tourism, digital innovation, and cultural preservation. b) Semi-Structured Interviews. Academic staff and industry professionals may be interviewed to achieve better knowledge of current curriculum development processes, institutional challenges, and views on sustainable tourism education. Interviews may be guided by open-ended questions to help participants describe their experiences in detail or to discuss their suggestions for sustainable tourism development.

4. Data Analysis Techniques

If implemented, qualitative data from interviews and document reviews would undergo thematic analysis facilitated with coding software such as NVivo. Emergent themes may then be placed under categories such as "curriculum gaps," "sustainability awareness," and "pedagogical strategies." Quantitative survey responses would be analyzed descriptively to look for general trends.

5. Ethical Considerations

Any implementation of this research would be undertaken on ethical grounds, which include informed consent, voluntary participation, and confidentiality. Data would also be securely stored. Ethics approval must be sought from the university research ethics committee before data collection. The proposed methodology intends to offer not only a critical review of current tourism education practices but also operational curriculum change. In doing so, with the engagement of key stakeholders and drawing on international best practice, the research shall contribute towards bringing the elements of sustainability and long-term socio-economic development into Uzbekistan's tourism education.

ANALYSIS AND RESULTS

Based on the course of actions laid out in the methodology, together with the information drawn from the literature review, several possible outcomes emerge that should be addressed simultaneously in front of Uzbekistan tourism education in regard to sustainability.

First, the curriculum review probably will establish that sustainability concepts are not covered in an integrated manner, if at all, in most tourism programs. Azgarov (2020) reports: While Uzbek universities provide a kind of basic training in hospitality and tourism, sustainability topics are rarely embedded into curricula as key themes. Emphasis is given to practical procedural knowledge such as hotel management or marketing rather than the much-needed



areas related to environmental impact, ethics, or community-based tourism. Thus, sustainability, if ever mentioned, seems more of an optional topic than something emphasized in the education process. Secondly, anticipated insights from academic staff and curriculum designers likely point towards structural and institutional barriers. Yusupova and Turakulova (2023) emphasize: a lack of pedagogical innovations, inadequate integration of smart technologies at the institutional level, and also an absence of professional development for teachers. Student surveys are to reveal a moderate level of awareness of sustainability but little confidence in applying its principles into practice (Agritourism as an emerging sustainable tourism industry in Uzbekistan, 2024). The assessment should also reveal a lack of interdisciplinary teaching linking tourism to environmental science and technology (Evaluating culturalization strategies, 2023). It is further expected that this study shall identify a gap in interdisciplinary teaching practices, where synergy between relevant fields such as environmental sciences, technology, and sociology is seldom established with tourism-oriented programs. Fernández-Villarán et al. (2024) contend that such an integration is essential in preparing students with the systems-thinking skills needed for sustainability leadership. The results being forecasted in the aggregate call for a holistic approach toward curriculum restructuring. This would mean, inter alia: aligning curricula to the targets of the SDGs; embedding sustainability issues in learning outcomes; integrating hands-on experiences (like community tourism projects) into theory; and fostering academia–industry partnerships for co-developing modules. Implementing such change would definitely guarantee that graduates are well equipped, whilst also contributing toward Uzbekistan’s targets for socio-cultural and environment development.

At the Silk Road International University of Tourism and Cultural Heritage, there are several courses that reflect a strong integration of sustainability concepts into the tourism curriculum. These include Sustainable Development, which equips students with essential knowledge of sustainable economic and environmental practices, and Sustainable Development Goals, which introduces the United Nations’ global framework for achieving sustainability across sectors, including tourism. Additionally, heritage-focused courses such as UNESCO World Heritage Sites, Cultural Heritage, and Preservation of Cultural Material emphasize the protection and responsible promotion of cultural and natural assets, a key element of sustainable tourism. Courses like Peace and Justice and Migration and Citizenship support the social dimension of sustainability, helping students understand broader global dynamics that affect tourism development. Moreover, the Special Interest Tourism course offered in the marketing curriculum allows students to explore niche tourism areas, often linked to sustainable practices such as eco-tourism and heritage tourism. These examples illustrate how sustainability is not only taught theoretically but also embedded across disciplines, ensuring that future tourism professionals are prepared to meet global sustainability challenges.

This stresses the importance of integrating sustainability into all aspects of tourism education in Uzbekistan. The curricula may need to be reformed in a way that environmental ethics, cultural preservation, and ethical tourism become part of all education, instead of just an elective (Azgarov, 2020; Seytniyazova, 2024). Faculty and institutional development is critical to reform, which also involves access to new teaching materials and utilizing industry contacts (Yusupova & Turakulova, 2023). Sustainability frameworks need to be localized. By incorporating the richness of Uzbekistan’s Silk Road history and the prospects of rural tourism in the curriculum, contextual relevance would be added and foster students’ connection to local sustainability challenges (Agritourism as an emerging sustainable tourism industry in Uzbekistan, 2024; Evaluating culturalization strategies, 2023). Experiential learning in the form of internships and community-based projects would hone their practical skills and provide them with much confidence (Seytniyazova, 2024). Furthermore, the application of smart tourism technologies into education would prepare students for the shift toward sustainable tourism (Yusupova & Turakulova, 2023). There should be formalized cooperation between universities and the tourism industry to keep the curriculum relevant and to foster innovation. These recommendations provide a means for Uzbekistan to develop a tourism education that meets sustainable development goals and prepares graduates to responsibly lead the country’s tourism activities. Khamrayev and Mukhammadmurod (2021) posit that integrating innovative teaching methods with national spiritual values can significantly uplift the quality of tourism and hospitality education in Uzbekistan. By embedding these cultural and ethical dimensions into curricula, they argue the sector is more likely to cultivate professionals who are not just technically capable, but also committed to stewardship and sustainable development of local tourism resources.

CONCLUSION AND SUGGESTIONS

Tourism education in Uzbekistan currently faces some challenges in integrating sustainability into curricula. However, these challenges present an opportunity to reform educational programs in ways that align with global sustainability frameworks and local development priorities. Universities genuinely need to rethink their approach: updating curricula, investing in faculty development, offering students practical learning experiences, and, crucially, building real bridges with industry. By doing so, higher education institutions in Uzbekistan can prepare graduates to tackle the complex demands of sustainable tourism. This shift is essential—not simply to protect Uzbekistan’s remarkable cultural and environmental assets, but also to support inclusive economic progress and community resilience. In the end, a robust focus on sustainable tourism education empowers future professionals



to find that tricky balance between development and stewardship, setting the stage for a thriving, enduring tourism sector in Uzbekistan.

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