



AN EMPIRICAL ANALYSIS OF THE FACTORS SHAPING CONSUMER BEHAVIOR THROUGH DIGITAL PLATFORMS IN UZBEKISTAN.

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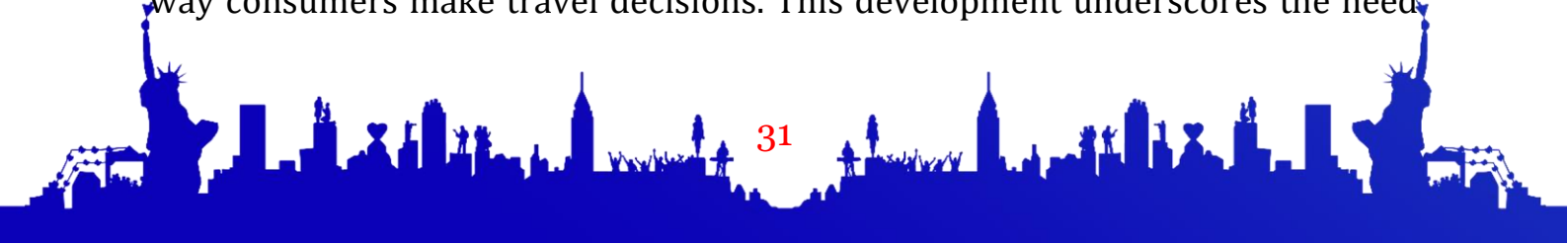
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Abstract. The rapid development of the digital economy has fundamentally transformed consumer behaviour in the tourism industry by increasing the role of digital platforms in travel planning, information search, service comparison, booking, and post-purchase interaction. This study presents an empirical analysis of the factors shaping consumer behaviour through digital platforms in Uzbekistan. The research examines the influence of platform quality, service transparency, pricing policies, electronic payment security, online reviews, and demographic characteristics on consumers' tourism-related purchasing decisions. The study is based on survey data, statistical information, and secondary sources to evaluate consumers' attitudes towards digital tourism services and their behavioural patterns before and after purchasing tourism products. The findings indicate that digital platforms have become the primary source of tourism information, while online reviews, platform credibility, and active interaction between tourism companies and consumers significantly influence purchase intentions. The results further reveal that socio-economic characteristics such as age, gender, education, income, marital status, and place of residence affect consumer behaviour at different stages of the purchasing process. The study concludes that improving digital platform functionality, strengthening consumer trust, and enhancing interactive communication can contribute to greater adoption of digital tourism services and support the sustainable digital transformation of Uzbekistan's tourism sector.

Keywords. Digital economy, digital platforms, consumer behaviour, tourism industry, online booking, electronic payments, social media, online reviews, digital tourism, tourism marketing, consumer trust, Uzbekistan.

The state policy of developing the digital economy in Uzbekistan, together with ongoing reforms in the tourism sector, has created favourable conditions for the widespread adoption of digital platforms. In recent years, the deep integration of online booking systems, mobile applications, electronic payment methods and digital information resources into tourism services has significantly changed the way consumers make travel decisions. This development underscores the need





for an empirical investigation into the factors shaping consumer behaviour through digital platforms in Uzbekistan.

Digital platforms providing tourism services offer consumers the opportunity to access information quickly, compare available services, make reservations and complete online payments, thereby simplifying the purchasing process. At the same time, the quality of the platform interface, service transparency, pricing policies, the security of electronic payment systems and user reviews have become key factors influencing consumers' trust and their willingness to purchase tourism products and services. The relative impact of these factors and their interrelationships can only be identified and evaluated through empirical research methods.

The specific characteristics of Uzbekistan's tourism market, including the balance between domestic and international tourism, consumers' digital literacy levels, internet and mobile network penetration, and the development of the national electronic payment infrastructure, play a significant role in shaping consumer behaviour. Therefore, alongside adopting internationally recognised analytical models, it is necessary to develop empirical approaches that are tailored to the characteristics of the national tourism market.

An empirical analysis of consumer behaviour, based on statistical data from digital platforms, survey results and secondary data sources, can identify the key factors influencing tourism demand. This allows researchers to evaluate consumers' attitudes towards online purchasing, how intensely digital platforms are used, and satisfaction levels with digital tourism services. This provides a solid empirical basis for scientific conclusions and practical recommendations aimed at enhancing the digital transformation of Uzbekistan's tourism sector.

This study aims to conduct an empirical analysis of the factors shaping consumer behaviour through digital platforms in Uzbekistan. It will determine the extent of their influence and develop scientific and practical recommendations for improving the effectiveness of digital platforms in the tourism sector, based on the research findings. Digital platforms are online environments that bring together users with diverse socioeconomic characteristics. Consumers typically use digital platforms to seek information about tourism products, compare available alternatives before making a purchase and subsequently share their travel experiences and opinions.

According to official statistics, around 71% of Uzbekistan's population use digital platforms, but only 5% purchase tourism-related services or hotel accommodation online. Uzbek consumers generally travel once a year, whereas





individuals residing abroad tend to travel more frequently, averaging two to three trips per year.

Responses to the survey question "How often do you travel?" indicate that 35% of respondents travel once a year, 31% travel two to three times a year, 17% travel rarely, 10% travel four to five times a year and 7% travel six or more times a year. Respondents under the age of 25 travel more frequently than other age groups, typically taking two to three trips a year, whereas individuals in the remaining age categories generally travel once a year. Those with higher education qualifications also tend to travel once a year, which may be due to work commitments. Those with secondary specialised education travel relatively infrequently, while students are the most active travel group, typically taking two to three trips a year.

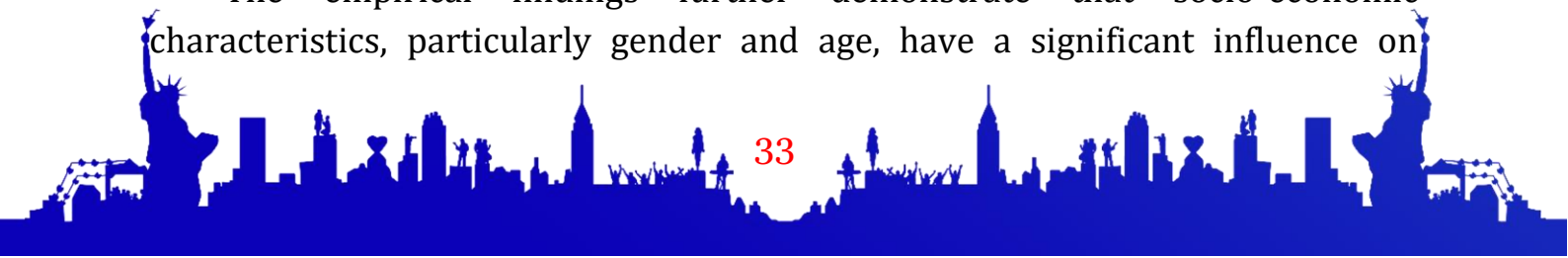
Income level also appears to influence how often people travel. Respondents with monthly incomes ranging from USD 200 to USD 1,500 generally travel once a year. Those earning below USD 200 per month, who are likely to be students, either travel very rarely or relatively frequently, depending on their circumstances. By contrast, those earning between USD 1,500 and USD 3,000 tend to travel more often, averaging two to three trips per year.

Booking.com is the most widely used and trusted online booking platform in Uzbekistan. Those who selected the 'Other' category mentioned platforms such as RentCar.com, GetYourGuide, Sayohat.uz, Ostrovok.ru and Aviasales.uz. The findings demonstrate that not only is Booking.com the leading online travel booking platform in Uzbekistan, it is also one of the most popular online travel agencies worldwide.

Analysing the frequency of digital platform usage by place of residence revealed that Instagram is the most frequently used platform among respondents living in Uzbekistan. In contrast, respondents residing abroad primarily use YouTube and Instagram. Digital platform usage frequency is also associated with respondents' employment status. As most survey participants were employed and had higher education qualifications, many reported spending between six and ten hours or up to five hours per week using digital platforms.

Responses to the question "How often do you purchase tourism services online?" indicate that 87% purchase airline, bus and railway tickets; 80% book accommodation such as hotels, apartments and campsites; 67% purchase attraction tickets; 65% book guided tours and excursions; and 45% rent vehicles.

The empirical findings further demonstrate that socio-economic characteristics, particularly gender and age, have a significant influence on





consumers' behaviour on digital platforms during the pre-purchase stage. In contrast, education level and income primarily affect behaviour after purchase on digital platforms. Other demographic characteristics, such as marital status and place of residence, influence consumer behaviour at both stages. The results of the hypothesis testing are presented in Table X.

Overall, analysing respondents' behaviour before and after purchasing tourism services leads to the following conclusions:

The majority of respondents search for tourism-related information on digital platforms before making travel decisions, with only minor differences observed between male and female respondents.

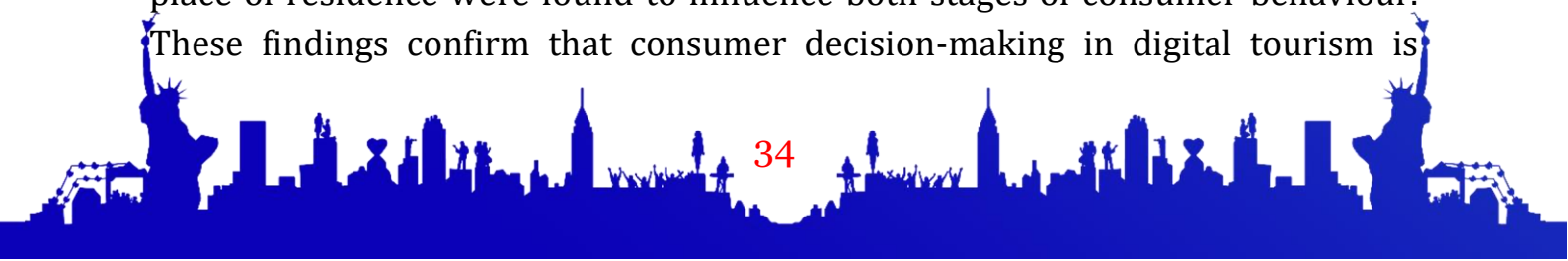
Respondents generally trust reviews posted by acquaintances and other travellers, but tend to be more neutral about reviews and recommendations from celebrities, bloggers, influencers and other public figures.

Respondents perceive digital platforms as valuable sources of tourism information and effective communication channels that facilitate interaction between tourism companies and consumers.

Consumers' purchase intentions and final purchasing decisions are positively influenced by membership of a tourism company's digital platform community, together with timely responses and active engagement from the company.

Conclusion. The empirical analysis demonstrates that digital platforms have become one of the principal factors influencing consumer behaviour in Uzbekistan's tourism sector. The findings indicate that the increasing integration of online booking systems, mobile applications, electronic payment methods and social media into tourism services has fundamentally transformed the way consumers search for information, evaluate alternatives and make purchasing decisions. Digital platforms not only simplify access to tourism products and services but also enhance transparency, convenience and consumer engagement throughout the travel decision-making process.

The study reveals that consumers' behaviour on digital platforms is significantly influenced by demographic and socioeconomic characteristics. Gender and age primarily affect pre-purchase information search and evaluation, whereas education level and income have a stronger influence on post-purchase behaviour, including online reviews and experience sharing. Marital status and place of residence were found to influence both stages of consumer behaviour. These findings confirm that consumer decision-making in digital tourism is





multidimensional and requires differentiated marketing approaches for different consumer segments.

The empirical results also show that Uzbek consumers rely heavily on digital platforms before purchasing tourism services. User-generated content, online reviews and recommendations from other travellers play a more influential role than endorsements from celebrities or social media influencers. Furthermore, consumers perceive digital platforms not only as information sources but also as interactive communication channels that strengthen relationships between tourism service providers and customers. Active engagement, prompt responses and effective customer support through digital platforms positively influence consumers' purchase intentions and final decisions.

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