guidance, Uzbek-language domestic information and multilingual escalation beyond English as bridge language. Operationally, priority lies in room cleanliness, bathroom equipment, breakfast consistency, staff responsiveness and a documented procedure that responds to low-score complaints on cleaning, safety, billing and maintenance rather than chiefly thanking top-score reviewers [2; 9].

The study is limited by address fields without street data, left-skewed platform scores, dictionary coding that cannot capture multilingual sentiment, and unequal review histories [4; 5; 6; 8]. Future work should obtain verified coordinates and capacity, maintain repeated cross-sections, estimate hierarchical multilingual sentiment models, test whether responses improve subsequent ratings, and compare the same hotel’s outcomes across platforms [8].

Conclusion

Booking.com presents Samarkand as a clustered but quality-diverse market with an internationally recognised rating system. Ratings show no significant spatial autocorrelation, distance gradient or spatial-lag effect; attention should therefore shift to operations — rooms and cleaning, breakfast, multilingual service and efficient complaint handling. The 24.5% response rate and its bias toward positive reviews identify clear improvement areas.

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## FROM “TRANSIT POINT” TO “DESTINATION”: MECHANISMS FOR ENHANCING SERVICE EFFICIENCY AND GEOGRAPHICAL RESTRUCTURING OF TOURISM INFRASTRUCTURE IN UZBEKISTAN

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***Abstract:*** *Focusing on Uzbekistan and adopting the “origin-corridor-destination” framework, this paper examines the mechanisms for enhancing tourism infrastructure service efficiency and the resulting spatial transformations as the country transitions from a transit zone to a tourism destination. It proposes a coupled mechanism comprising four interconnected components: accessibility efficiency, node carrying capacity efficiency, length-of-stay conversion efficiency, and governance synergy efficiency. The analysis further notes that the system is constrained by a "weakest link" effect among these components. The study further suggests that efficiency improvements will drive the transformation of the “Tashkent-Samarkand-Bukhara-Khiva” corridor*

*from a linear transit structure into a polycentric, networked destination system, while also creating conditions for peripheral areas-such as the Fergana Valley, the Aral Sea-Nukus region, and Termez in the south-to generate independent value through extended visitor stays.*

***Keywords:*** *Uzbekistan; tourism infrastructure; service efficiency; spatial restructuring; Silk Road*

**Introduction:** In the classic structure of tourism systems, source regions, transit corridors, and destinations constitute geographic units with distinct functions: corridors primarily facilitate movement, whereas destinations serve as the sites where experiences occur and value is realized [1]. This distinction holds particular significance for landlocked nations: when a country primarily functions as a transit corridor within regional tourism flows, infrastructure investment often prioritizes transport efficiency, while facilities supporting longer stays-such as accommodation, interpretation services, leisure amenities, and nightlife-tend to lag behind. The relationship between transport conditions and destination development is not one of unidirectional promotion; while improved transport can spawn new destinations, it may also diminish the necessity of stopping at intermediate nodes by reducing travel time [2]. This paper terms the tension derived from Prideaux’s argument the "corridor paradox." Destination life-cycle theory similarly suggests that the transition from the exploration stage to the development stage requires the simultaneous upgrading of local facilities and external accessibility; otherwise, a structural mismatch arises where accessibility outpaces carrying capacity [3]. Uzbekistan serves as a prime case study for examining this issue. Research by Kantarci on the perceptions of tourism investors in Central Asia indicates that the institutional environment, ease of cross-border movement, and supporting services are critical factors influencing investment entry [4]. In Uzbekistan, the tourism sector is tasked with multiple objectives, including generating foreign exchange, creating jobs, and fostering balanced regional development. Presidential Decree PF-5611 and the Law on Tourism prioritize infrastructure modernization, transport and logistics, accommodation supply, and service quality [5][6]. Since 2016, Uzbekistan has initiated reforms centered on opening up and economic liberalization, establishing tourism as a priority sector; the country recorded 11.7 million foreign tourist arrivals in 2025 [7]. However, as this figure is based on administrative entry records, it encompasses non-leisure travel-such as visiting family, employment, business, and transit-and does not equate to the definition of "international overnight visitors" used by UN Tourism. Consequently, this paper distinguishes between "attracting visitor flows" and "retaining visitor flows," focusing on how length of stay, consumption patterns, and spatial distribution transform inbound visitor volumes into destination value.

The significance of this study lies in the fact that existing discussions on the relationship between transportation and destinations have largely focused on islands, coastal areas, or established inland tourism zones; there is limited analysis of cases characterized by the convergence of three conditions: being doubly landlocked, possessing a high density of heritage sites, and undergoing economic transition. Uzbekistan offers a natural setting to examine whether improved accessibility inevitably leads to destination development.

**Research Methodology:** This study adopts a combination of theoretical literature analysis, policy text analysis and publicly available statistical data. The theoretical part refers to the theories of Leiper, Prideaux, Butler and Kantarci et al. [1][2][3][4]; the policy part is mainly based on Presidential Decree PF-5611 of Uzbekistan [5] and Tourism Law ZRU-549 [6]; the empirical facts are based on the publicly available pages of the National Statistical

Committee, UNESCO, UN Tourism, World Bank, Asian Development Bank and World Economic Forum.

**Results and Discussion:** The shift from transit point to destination manifests in three functional transformations at the infrastructure level. First, from transit efficiency to stay efficiency, the evaluation standard for facilities shifts from displacement per unit time to experience value per unit time. Second, from single-point reception to system reception, accommodation, distribution, interpretation, catering, retail and security constitute an interdependent service chain. Third, from physical supply to institutional supply, "soft infrastructure" such as visa procedures, cross-border formalities, service classification, digital guides and statistical standards gradually become the main constraints.

The accessibility and efficiency framework encompasses cross-border market access and domestic transport corridors. E-visa and visa-exemption arrangements reduce entry costs, while aviation liberalization creates the institutional conditions for expanding international connectivity at airports such as Samarkand, Bukhara, Urgench, Namangan, and Termez.

The node carrying capacity efficiency ring refers to the balance between urban-scale reception capacity, heritage protection, and information interpretation systems. Uzbekistan's World Heritage sites include cultural heritage, transnational series of heritage sites, and natural heritage sites, with heritage density constituting a significant attraction [8]. The Historic Center of Shahrisabz was listed as endangered in 2016, illustrating that capacity expansion at the expense of historical environment replacement and authenticity loss will erode the attraction itself[9]. Therefore, the standard for this ring should be increased capacity without diminishing authenticity, and improved accessibility for independent travelers through multilingual signage, digital guides, and open information. The stay duration conversion efficiency ring determines the conversion of traffic into revenue. Heritage tourism products typically have limited time consumption, and extending stays requires the addition of handicraft experiences, food culture, performances, nighttime activities, rural and nature routes. Silk Road Samarkand, which opened in 2022, combines hotel, convention, cultural entertainment, and waterfront leisure functions, essentially smoothing out peak and off-peak seasons and extending stays through conferences, events, and business activities[10]. The governance synergy efficiency loop covers accommodation and tour guide service classification, talent training, statistical standards, regional routes and facilitation agreements. PF-5611, the Tourism Law and the CARESC Tourism Strategy provide institutional basis from the perspectives of national policy, legal classification and regional cooperation, respectively [5][6][11].

The relationship between the four ring roads is one of constraint due to their shortcomings rather than a linear superposition relationship: breakthroughs in accessibility at a single point will generate transit traffic, while individual improvements in node capacity will result in idle capacity. Only when the four loops are synchronized can destination development be fully realized. (Table 1).

**Table 1 Comparison of Service Effectiveness Between “Transit-Oriented” and “Destination-Oriented” Functional Modes and Key Focus Areas for Uzbekistan’s Transformation**

| Efficiency Dimension | Transit State Characteristics | Destination State Characteristics | Key Infrastructure & Service Levers | Uzbekistan Transformation Focus |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| Accessibility | Targeting transit speed and port throughput; passenger flow concentrated on a single gateway | Direct access via multiple gateways; seamless connection between last-mile transport and the backbone network | E-visa and visa-free arrangements; international routes at secondary airports; intercity high-speed rail and last-mile connectivity | Strengthen connections to secondary airports; bridge the last-mile gap between stations and scenic spots |
| Node Carrying Capacity (incl. Info & Interpretation) | Accommodation is mainly mid-to-low end and for overnight stays; reliance on information and group tours | Complete accommodation hierarchy; coordination of heritage environment, reception capacity, and multilingual interpretation | Graded accommodation; heritage city renewal standards; distribution centers; multilingual signage; digital guides | Control construction intensity in heritage core zones; expand capacity to the periphery and improve interpretation coverage |
| Stay Conversion | Short sightseeing time; consumption concentrated on tickets and transportation | Multiple experience levels; high proportion of night-time and non-sightseeing consumption | Performances; night-time economy; handicraft & food experiences; convention and sports facilities | Use conventions and cultural activities to balance peak/off-peak seasons; extend average length of stay |
| Governance Synergy | Mixed cross-border flows in statistical scope; lack of unified standards | Statistical scope is more internationally comparable; mutual recognition of regional standards and routes | Service grading; talent training; data governance; regional route agreements | Distinguish between transit and tourism statistics; promote regional joint products |

**Source: Compiled by the author based on official statistics, policies, and project documentation.**

Geographic restructuring: from linear corridors to polycentric networks. Enhancements in service efficiency alter the hierarchical relationships and functional divisions among nodes. First, core corridors are shifting from "lines" to "areas." The Tashkent–Samarkand–Bukhara–Khiva route has long been organized as a linear sequence; however, as individual nodes acquire independent appeal—offering reasons for extended stays and access to peripheral branch-line attractions—the corridor transforms into a destination zone centered on cities and radiating outward to the surrounding areas. Second, the functions of peripheral regions are being upgraded. Areas such as the Fergana Valley (with its handicrafts and urban culture), Karakalpakstan (featuring Aral Sea landscapes and the Nukus art collection), and Termez in the south (with its Buddhist archaeological remains) can evolve from supplementary nodes into secondary centers, provided there are improvements in transportation, accommodation, and information systems. Third, the balance between hub functions and destination appeal is being recalibrated. Cross-border railways and

regional corridors simultaneously boost both transit traffic and visitor traffic; however, if governance coordination lags behind, these new routes risk reinforcing a merely "pass-through" character.

**Conclusions:** Uzbekistan’s transition from a transit zone to a destination is fundamentally a competition based on service effectiveness rather than the scale of engineering projects. First, performance evaluation should shift from aggregate visitor numbers to a three-dimensional joint assessment: average length of stay, per capita expenditure, and spatial dispersion. Second, service effectiveness is governed by the logic of "weakest-link" constraints. Accessibility, nodal capacity, conversion of transit into stays, and governance synergy form an interconnected system; improving transport conditions in isolation-by reducing travel time-might actually suppress the demand for overnight stays at intermediate nodes. Investments in accessibility will only translate into destination value if accompanied by simultaneous improvements in stay-oriented amenities and institutional support. Third, the key to geographical restructuring lies in capacity building at peripheral nodes rather than expanding the capacity of core heritage zones. The carrying capacity of heritage cores is constrained by the need to preserve authenticity; therefore, growth in the nation's overall capacity should be achieved through a polycentric network. This approach also aligns with the requirements of regional tourism cooperation regarding cross-border routes and distributed hospitality systems.

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