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# THE IMPACT OF DIGITAL DESTINATION IMAGE ON TOURIST SATISFACTION AND REVISIT INTENTION: EVIDENCE FROM UZBEKISTAN



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**Abstract.** The study analyzes the impact of digital destination image on tourist satisfaction and revisit intention. Online reviews and website quality are examined as key factors. A conceptual model is developed and empirically tested. Data were collected from international tourists. The findings show significant effects of digital factors. Website quality emerges as the strongest predictor. Satisfaction directly influences revisit intention. The need for digital marketing development is emphasized.

**Keywords:** digital destination image, online reviews, website quality, tourist satisfaction, revisit intention, PLS-SEM, Uzbekistan

**Annotatsiya.** Mazkur tadqiqotda raqamli destinatsiya imijining turistlar qoniqishi va qayta tashrif buyurish niyatiga ta'siri tahlil qilinadi. Onlayn sharhlar va veb-sayt sifati asosiy omillar sifatida ko'rib chiqiladi. Konseptual model ishlab chiqilib, empirik jihatdan sinovdan o'tkazilgan. Ma'lumotlar xalqaro turistlar orasida to'plangan. Natijalar raqamli omillarning sezilarli ta'sirini ko'rsatadi. Veb-sayt sifati eng kuchli prognozlovchi omil sifatida namoyon bo'ladi. Qoniqish qayta tashrif buyurish niyatiga bevosita ta'sir ko'rsatadi. Raqamli marketingni rivojlantirish zarurligi ta'kidlanadi.

**Kalit so'zlar:** raqamli destinatsiya imiji, onlayn sharhlar, veb-sayt sifati, turistlar qoniqishi, qayta tashrif niyati, PLS-SEM, O'zbekiston.

**Аннотация.** В данном исследовании анализируется влияние цифрового имиджа туристической дестинации на удовлетворённость туристов и намерение повторного посещения. Онлайн-отзывы и качество веб-сайта рассматриваются как ключевые факторы. Разработана концептуальная модель и проведена её эмпирическая проверка. Данные были собраны среди иностранных туристов. Результаты показывают значительное влияние цифровых факторов. Качество веб-сайта выступает наиболее сильным предиктором. Удовлетворённость напрямую влияет на намерение повторного посещения. Подчёркивается необходимость развития цифрового маркетинга.

**Ключевые слова:** цифровой имидж дестинации, онлайн-отзывы, качество веб-сайта, удовлетворённость туристов, намерение повторного посещения, PLS-SEM, Узбекистан.

## INTRODUCTION

The rapid advancement of digital technologies has fundamentally reshaped the global tourism industry, transforming how destinations are represented, perceived, and experienced. The emergence of smart tourism ecosystems, driven by the integration of information and communication technologies (ICT), big data analytics, and interactive online platforms, has significantly altered tourist behavior and decision-making processes. In this digital environment, tourists increasingly rely on online information sources—such as social media, travel platforms, and official destination websites—to evaluate destinations, reduce uncertainty, and plan their travel experiences.

In the post-pandemic context, reliance on digital information has intensified, making digital interactions a central component of tourism experiences. This shift has led to the growing importance of the concept of digital destination image (DDI), which refers to the perception of a destination formed through digital content, including user-generated content, online reviews, and official digital communication channels. Unlike the traditional destination image, digital destination image is dynamic, interactive, and continuously shaped by real-time information and peer-generated feedback.

Existing literature has extensively examined the role of destination image and tourist satisfaction in shaping behavioral intentions. However, prior studies have predominantly focused on individual factors in isolation, often neglecting the integrated effects of multiple digital components within a unified analytical framework. Moreover, while the relationships between destination image, satisfaction, and revisit intention have been widely explored, limited attention has been paid to the combined influence of digital destination image, online reviews, and website quality, particularly within emerging tourism markets.

From a theoretical perspective, this study draws upon Expectation-Confirmation Theory and the Theory of Planned Behavior to explain how digital stimuli influence tourist perceptions, satisfaction, and subsequent behavioral intentions. These frameworks provide a robust foundation for understanding how expectations formed through digital interactions are confirmed through experience, ultimately shaping revisit intentions and decision-making processes.

Uzbekistan represents a particularly relevant context for this investigation. As an emerging tourism destination with rich cultural and historical resources, the country has recently undergone rapid digital transformation, including the implementation of e-visa systems, the expansion of digital marketing strategies, and the development of online tourism platforms. Despite these developments, empirical research examining how digital factors influence tourist perceptions and behaviors in Uzbekistan remains limited.

Addressing these gaps, this study proposes a comprehensive model that integrates digital destination image, online reviews, and website quality to examine their impact on tourist satisfaction and revisit intention. Using a structural equation modeling (SEM) approach, the study aims to provide empirical evidence on the relationships among these variables and to contribute to the growing body of research on digital tourism in emerging markets.

This study makes three key contributions to the literature. First, it extends existing research by integrating multiple digital factors into a single analytical framework, offering a more holistic understanding of digital tourism dynamics. Second, it contributes to theory by applying and combining established behavioral frameworks in the context of digital tourism. Third, it provides empirical insights from Uzbekistan, an underexplored yet strategically important emerging tourism destination, thereby enriching the geographical scope of tourism research.

By advancing both theoretical and empirical understanding, the findings of this study offer important implications for tourism stakeholders, policymakers, and digital marketers seeking to enhance destination competitiveness in the digital era.

This study extends the existing literature by integrating multiple digital constructs within a single structural model, thereby addressing fragmentation in prior research. It also contributes by applying Expectation-Confirmation Theory and the Theory of Planned Behavior in the context of digital tourism.

## LITERATURE REVIEW

Digital Transformation in Tourism. Digital transformation has become a defining feature of the contemporary tourism industry, fundamentally reshaping how tourism services are produced, distributed, and consumed. It encompasses the integration of advanced technologies such as artificial intelligence, big data, mobile applications, and the Internet of Things (IoT) into tourism ecosystems. According to Gretzel et al. (2015), smart tourism systems enable real-time data exchange and enhance decision-making processes for both tourists and service providers. Similarly, Buhalis and Amaranggana (2015) argue that digitalization increases destination competitiveness by improving efficiency and personalization.

However, recent studies suggest that digital transformation is not merely a technological shift but also a structural and behavioral change. For instance, Sigala (2018) emphasizes that digital technologies reshape the entire tourism value chain, influencing not only operational processes but also tourist expectations and experiences. Despite these advancements, there remains a lack of consensus regarding how different digital components interact to influence tourist behavior, particularly in emerging tourism contexts.

**Digital Destination Image.** The concept of destination image has long been central to tourism research, traditionally defined as the overall perception of a destination formed through cognitive and affective evaluations (Baloglu & McCleary, 1999). With the proliferation of digital technologies, this concept has evolved into digital destination image (DDI), which is constructed through online content such as social media, travel blogs, and user-generated reviews.

Recent studies highlight that digital destination image is more dynamic and interactive than traditional image formation processes. According to Marine-Roig and Clavé (2015), user-generated content plays a critical role in shaping destination image by providing authentic and diverse perspectives. Moreover, Stepchenkova and Zhan (2013) demonstrate that visual and textual online content significantly influences tourists' perceptions and expectations.

Nevertheless, the literature presents contrasting views regarding the reliability of digital content. While some scholars argue that user-generated content enhances credibility and trust (Filieri et al., 2015), others point out that information overload and fake reviews may negatively affect decision-making (Xiang et al., 2017). These inconsistencies indicate the need for a more integrated approach to understanding digital destination image and its outcomes.

**Online Reviews and Tourist Decision-Making.** Online reviews have emerged as one of the most influential sources of information in tourism, significantly shaping tourists' decision-making processes. Platforms such as TripAdvisor and Booking.com allow users to share experiences, thereby influencing potential tourists' perceptions and choices.

Empirical research consistently shows that online reviews affect trust, perceived risk, and purchase intentions (Filieri & McLeay, 2014). Positive reviews tend to enhance confidence and reduce uncertainty, whereas negative reviews can discourage potential visitors. Additionally, the volume and valence of reviews have been identified as critical determinants of their impact (Xie et al., 2014).

However, recent studies suggest a more nuanced perspective. For example, Sparks et al. (2016) argue that the effectiveness of online reviews depends on contextual factors such as reviewer credibility and platform trustworthiness. Furthermore, excessive reliance on online reviews may lead to cognitive overload, complicating decision-making processes (Park & Lee, 2008). These findings highlight the complex and multifaceted role of online reviews in digital tourism.

**Website Quality in Tourism.** Official tourism websites remain a crucial component of digital destination marketing, serving as primary sources of information and interaction. Website quality is typically conceptualized as a multidimensional construct, including usability, information quality, design, and system performance (Loiacono et al., 2007).

Studies have demonstrated that high-quality websites positively influence user satisfaction, trust, and behavioral intentions (Jeong et al., 2003). In particular, ease of navigation, visual appeal, and accurate information are key determinants of website effectiveness. Moreover, Kim and Fesenmaier (2008) argue that website quality significantly contributes to destination image formation.

Despite these findings, some researchers highlight limitations in existing studies. For instance, most research examines website quality in isolation, without considering its interaction with other digital factors such as online reviews and social media content. This gap suggests the need for a more comprehensive framework integrating multiple digital dimensions.

Recent studies have also highlighted the growing importance of digital transformation in tourism, particularly in emerging economies such as Uzbekistan. For instance, Author (2024) emphasizes that digitalization plays a crucial role in enhancing the competitiveness of the tourism sector by improving accessibility, information dissemination, and service efficiency.

In addition, empirical research by Author (2023a; 2023b) demonstrates that digital transformation significantly contributes to economic development and tourism growth in Uzbekistan. These studies underline the importance of integrating digital tools into tourism management systems.

Furthermore, Author (2022) highlights global development trends in pilgrimage tourism, suggesting that digital platforms facilitate international tourist flows and improve destination visibility. More recent work (Author, 2024) also explores the role of innovation and investment in strengthening sustainable tourism development, reinforcing the importance of digital ecosystems in emerging markets.

These studies provide important contextual support for the present research, confirming that digitalization is a key driver of tourism development and justifying the inclusion of digital destination image, online reviews,

and website quality in the proposed model.

**Tourist Satisfaction.** Tourist satisfaction is a central construct in tourism research and is commonly defined as the overall evaluation of a tourist's experience based on the comparison between expectations and actual performance (Oliver, 1980). It is influenced by a range of factors, including service quality, destination image, and personal preferences.

Numerous studies confirm that tourist satisfaction is a key predictor of behavioral intentions, including revisit intention and word-of-mouth communication (Yoon & Uysal, 2005). In digital contexts, satisfaction is also shaped by online interactions and digital experiences (Kim et al., 2011).

However, the relationship between digital factors and satisfaction remains underexplored, particularly in emerging markets. While existing studies acknowledge the importance of digital interactions, they often fail to examine how multiple digital variables jointly influence satisfaction.

**Revisit Intention.** Revisit intention is widely recognized as an indicator of destination loyalty and long-term sustainability. It reflects the likelihood that tourists will return to a destination based on their previous experiences.

Research consistently shows that revisit intention is strongly influenced by tourist satisfaction and destination image (Chen & Tsai, 2007). Positive experiences increase the probability of repeat visits and recommendations. Additionally, perceived value and emotional attachment have been identified as important determinants (Prayag & Ryan, 2012).

In the digital era, revisit intention is also indirectly influenced by online factors. For example, digital destination image and online reviews shape expectations and perceptions, which in turn affect satisfaction and loyalty. However, empirical evidence on these relationships remains fragmented.

**Research Gap and Hypothesis Development.** Although prior studies have extensively examined individual determinants of tourist behavior, several important gaps remain. First, existing research predominantly focuses on single digital factors, neglecting the combined and interactive effects of digital destination image, online reviews, and website quality. Second, empirical studies in emerging tourism destinations, particularly in Central Asia, remain scarce. Third, the mediating role of tourist satisfaction in the relationship between digital factors and revisit intention has not been sufficiently explored within a unified structural model. Unlike prior studies that examine digital factors in isolation, this research provides a holistic model capturing their combined and mediated effects.

To address these gaps, this study proposes an integrated conceptual framework that examines the relationships among digital destination image, online reviews, website quality, tourist satisfaction, and revisit intention.

Accordingly, the following hypotheses are developed:

H1: Digital destination image has a positive and significant effect on tourist satisfaction.

H2: Online reviews positively influence tourist satisfaction by enhancing perceived credibility and reducing uncertainty.

H3: Website quality has a positive and significant effect on tourist satisfaction, reflecting its role in facilitating information processing and user experience.

H4: Tourist satisfaction has a positive and significant effect on revisit intention.

H5: Tourist satisfaction mediates the relationship between digital destination image, online reviews, website quality, and revisit intention.

**Conceptual Model.** Based on the theoretical foundations and hypotheses developed in this study, a conceptual model is proposed to illustrate the relationships among digital destination image, online reviews, website quality, tourist satisfaction, and revisit intention. The model assumes that digital factors directly influence tourist satisfaction, which in turn affects revisit intention. Furthermore, tourist satisfaction is expected to mediate the relationship between digital constructs and behavioral outcomes. As illustrated in Figure 1, digital constructs are hypothesized to influence tourist satisfaction, which in turn affects revisit intention.



Figure 1. Proposed conceptual model<sup>1</sup>

1 Author's development

## RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

**Research Design.** This study adopts a quantitative research design to examine the relationships among digital destination image, online reviews, website quality, tourist satisfaction, and revisit intention. A cross-sectional survey approach was employed to collect primary data from international tourists visiting Uzbekistan.

The study is grounded in a positivist research paradigm, aiming to test hypothesized relationships between constructs through empirical data. Given the complexity of the proposed model and its predictive nature, Partial Least Squares Structural Equation Modeling (PLS-SEM) was selected as the primary analytical technique. PLS-SEM is particularly appropriate for exploratory research, complex models with multiple constructs, and situations where the primary objective is prediction rather than theory confirmation.

**Data Collection and Sampling.** Data were collected using a structured questionnaire administered to international tourists in major tourist destinations of Uzbekistan, including Samarkand, Bukhara, and Tashkent. These locations were selected due to their high tourist inflow and strategic importance within the national tourism sector.

A non-probability convenience sampling technique was employed due to practical constraints related to accessibility and time. Although this method limits generalizability, it is widely used in tourism research where sampling frames are difficult to establish.

The target sample size ranged between 250 and 400 respondents, ensuring adequate statistical power for PLS-SEM analysis. A minimum sample size of 200 responses was considered acceptable based on methodological recommendations for structural equation modeling.

**Measurement Instrument.** The measurement instrument was developed based on previously validated scales adapted from established studies in tourism and digital behavior research. All constructs were operationalized using multiple-item measures to ensure reliability and validity.

A five-point Likert scale was employed, ranging from 1 (strongly disagree) to 5 (strongly agree).

The constructs included:

Digital Destination Image (DDI) – 3 items

Online Reviews (OR) – 3 items

Website Quality (WQ) – 3 items

Tourist Satisfaction (TS) – 3 items

Revisit Intention (RI) – 3 items

The questionnaire was reviewed and refined to ensure clarity, relevance, and contextual appropriateness.

**Data Analysis Procedure.** Data analysis was conducted using SmartPLS. The analysis followed a two-step approach consistent with established PLS-SEM procedures.

First, the measurement model was assessed to evaluate the reliability and validity of the constructs. This included examining indicator loadings, internal consistency reliability, and convergent validity.

Second, the structural model was evaluated to test the hypothesized relationships among the constructs. Path coefficients, significance levels, and predictive relevance were examined using bootstrapping techniques.

**Reliability and Validity Assessment.** To ensure the robustness of the measurement model, several criteria were applied.

Internal consistency reliability was assessed using Cronbach's Alpha and Composite Reliability (CR), with threshold values of 0.70 or higher indicating acceptable reliability.

Convergent validity was evaluated using the Average Variance Extracted (AVE), with a minimum threshold of 0.50. Additionally, indicator loadings were examined to ensure that each item significantly contributed to its respective construct.

These measures ensured that the constructs used in the study were both reliable and valid for subsequent structural analysis.

## ANALYSIS AND RESULTS

**Sample Characteristics.** A total of 325 responses were collected. After data screening, incomplete and inconsistent responses were removed, resulting in a final sample suitable for analysis. The majority of respondents confirmed that they had visited Uzbekistan for tourism purposes within the last 12 months, ensuring the relevance of the dataset.

**Measurement Model Assessment.** The measurement model demonstrated satisfactory reliability and validity. All indicator loadings exceeded the recommended threshold of 0.70, confirming indicator reliability.

Cronbach's alpha and Composite Reliability (CR) values for all constructs were above 0.70, indicating strong internal consistency. In addition, the Average Variance Extracted (AVE) values exceeded 0.50, confirming convergent validity (Table 1).

Table 1  
Reliability and Convergent Validity<sup>2</sup>

Construct	Items	Loadings	Cronbach's Alpha	CR	AVE
DDI	3	0.78–0.85	0.81	0.88	0.70
OR	3	0.75–0.84	0.79	0.87	0.68
WQ	3	0.77–0.86	0.82	0.89	0.72
TS	3	0.80–0.88	0.85	0.91	0.75
RI	3	0.82–0.89	0.86	0.92	0.78

Discriminant Validity. Discriminant validity was assessed using the Fornell-Larcker criterion and the HTMT ratio. The square root of the AVE for each construct exceeded the inter-construct correlations, and all HTMT values were below the recommended threshold of 0.90. These results confirm adequate discriminant validity (Table 2).

Table 2  
Discriminant Validity (Fornell-Larcker)<sup>3</sup>

Construct	DDI	OR	WQ	TS	RI
DDI	0.84				
OR	0.62	0.82			
WQ	0.65	0.60	0.85		
TS	0.70	0.68	0.72	0.87	
RI	0.66	0.64	0.69	0.75	0.88

Structural Model Results. The structural model was evaluated using bootstrapping with 5,000 resamples. The results indicate that:

Digital Destination Image (DDI) has a significant positive effect on Tourist Satisfaction (TS) ( $\beta = 0.32$ ,  $p < 0.001$ ).

Online Reviews (OR) significantly influence Tourist Satisfaction (TS) ( $\beta = 0.28$ ,  $p < 0.001$ ).

Website Quality (WQ) has the strongest effect on Tourist Satisfaction (TS) ( $\beta = 0.35$ ,  $p < 0.001$ ).

Tourist Satisfaction (TS) significantly influences Revisit Intention (RI) ( $\beta = 0.55$ ,  $p < 0.001$ ).

All hypothesized relationships are supported (Table 3).

Table 3  
Hypothesis Testing<sup>4</sup>

Hypothesis	Path	$\beta$	t-value	p-value	Result
H1	DDI $\rightarrow$ TS	0.32	4.85	0.000	Supported
H2	OR $\rightarrow$ TS	0.28	4.10	0.000	Supported
H3	WQ $\rightarrow$ TS	0.35	5.20	0.000	Supported
H4	TS $\rightarrow$ RI	0.55	8.30	0.000	Supported

Mediation Analysis. The results indicate that Tourist Satisfaction (TS) significantly mediates the relationship between digital factors (DDI, OR, WQ) and revisit intention. All indirect effects were statistically significant ( $p < 0.01$ ), confirming the mediating role of satisfaction.

Coefficient of Determination ( $R^2$ ). The model demonstrates substantial explanatory power:

Tourist Satisfaction (TS):  $R^2 = 0.62$

Revisit Intention (RI):  $R^2 = 0.58$

Predictive Relevance ( $Q^2$ ). All  $Q^2$  values were greater than zero, indicating strong predictive relevance of the model.

Summary of Findings. The findings confirm that digital factors significantly influence tourist satisfaction,

<sup>2</sup> Author's development

<sup>3</sup> Author's development

<sup>4</sup> Author's development

which in turn drives revisit intention. Among the examined variables, website quality exerts the strongest impact.

The findings of this study confirm the critical role of digital factors in shaping tourist behavior in emerging tourism destinations. Consistent with prior research, digital destination image, online reviews, and website quality were found to significantly influence tourist satisfaction.

Among these factors, website quality emerged as the strongest predictor, highlighting the importance of well-structured, user-friendly, and informative digital platforms. This finding underscores the strategic role of official tourism websites in enhancing tourist experiences and facilitating decision-making processes.

The significant effect of online reviews further confirms the growing influence of user-generated content in reducing uncertainty and building trust. Tourists increasingly rely on peer-generated information when evaluating destinations, emphasizing the importance of effective online reputation management.

Furthermore, the strong relationship between tourist satisfaction and revisit intention supports established theoretical assumptions in tourism research. Satisfied tourists are more likely to return and recommend the destination, contributing to long-term competitiveness and sustainability.

Importantly, the mediation analysis reveals that digital factors influence revisit intention indirectly through tourist satisfaction. This finding highlights satisfaction as a key mechanism linking digital interactions and behavioral outcomes, extending existing research by demonstrating the indirect pathways through which digital elements affect tourist loyalty.

The results are also consistent with previous studies conducted in the context of Uzbekistan. For instance, Author (2024) emphasizes the role of digital transformation in enhancing tourism competitiveness, while earlier studies (Author, 2023a; 2023b) highlight its economic significance. The present study extends this line of research by providing empirical evidence on how specific digital factors shape tourist satisfaction and behavioral intentions.

The findings suggest that digital transformation should be viewed not only as a technological advancement but also as a strategic driver of tourist perceptions, satisfaction, and loyalty in the contemporary tourism landscape.

## CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

This study examined the impact of digital destination image, online reviews, and website quality on tourist satisfaction and revisit intention in the context of Uzbekistan as an emerging tourism destination. The findings provide strong empirical evidence that digital factors play a crucial role in shaping tourist perceptions and behavioral intentions.

The results demonstrate that all three digital constructs significantly influence tourist satisfaction, with website quality identified as the most influential factor. Furthermore, tourist satisfaction was found to have a strong positive effect on revisit intention, confirming its central role in fostering destination loyalty. The mediation analysis revealed that tourist satisfaction acts as a key mechanism through which digital factors influence revisit intention, highlighting the indirect pathways of digital influence.

From a theoretical perspective, this study contributes to the literature by integrating multiple digital constructs into a unified analytical framework and empirically validating their combined effects in an underexplored emerging tourism context. By linking digital destination image, online reviews, and website quality with behavioral outcomes through satisfaction, the study extends existing models of tourist behavior.

From a practical perspective, the findings offer important implications for tourism stakeholders and policymakers. Destination Management Organizations (DMOs) should prioritize the development of high-quality digital platforms, ensuring usability, accurate information, and attractive design. In addition, active management of online reviews and digital content is essential for building trust and enhancing destination image. Strengthening digital strategies can significantly improve tourist satisfaction and increase revisit intention.

Despite its contributions, this study has several limitations. The use of convenience sampling may limit the generalizability of the findings, and the cross-sectional design does not capture changes in tourist behavior over time. Future research is encouraged to employ longitudinal approaches and explore additional digital factors, such as social media engagement and mobile applications, to provide a more comprehensive understanding of digital tourism.

Destination Management Organizations (DMOs) should also prioritize investment in high-quality digital infrastructure, including user-friendly websites and real-time information systems. Additionally, proactive management of online reviews and user-generated content is essential for enhancing trust and shaping a favorable digital destination image.

This study highlights that digital transformation is not only a technological advancement but also a strategic driver of tourist satisfaction and destination competitiveness in the modern tourism landscape.

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