

**IMPROVING A COMPLEX ASSESSMENT METHODOLOGY FOR THE
COMPETITIVENESS OF UZBEKISTAN’S TOURISM SECTOR BASED ON
TÜRKİYE’S EXPERIENCE**

Хуршид Тошпўлатов

INTRODUCTION

Tourism competitiveness has become a central concept in tourism policy and academic research. A competitive tourism destination is not only one that attracts large numbers of visitors, but also one that provides high-quality experiences, manages resources responsibly, adapts to changing conditions, and generates sustainable economic and social benefits. In an era of rapid global change, destinations face challenges related to climate change, digital transformation, geopolitical instability, and shifting consumer preferences. Therefore, assessing tourism competitiveness requires a comprehensive methodology that captures multiple dimensions of performance and potential. Uzbekistan has experienced rapid tourism growth in recent years. The country’s Silk Road heritage, distinctive culture, improving infrastructure, and visa liberalisation have contributed to increasing visitor numbers and tourism revenues. However, rapid growth also creates challenges related to overcrowding at key heritage sites, uneven regional development, service quality variation, and environmental pressure. Policymakers need a robust assessment framework to guide investment, policy design, and destination management decisions. Türkiye offers a relevant comparative reference for Uzbekistan. According to the Travel and Tourism Development Index 2024 published by the World Economic Forum, Türkiye ranks 29th out of 119 countries with a score of 4.39, surpassing the global average by 10.6 per cent and the European average by 3 per cent (TRT World, 2024). Türkiye has emerged as the best developing country in southern Europe for travel and tourism, reflecting strong performance in infrastructure, natural and cultural resources, and policy environment (TRT World, 2024). In contrast, Uzbekistan’s position in the same index is lower, with reported ranks of 78th to 90th and scores around 3.7 to 3.76 (World Bank, 2024; TSUE, 2024; Ideas RePEc, 2026). This gap indicates significant potential for improvement. The contribution of this article is twofold. Conceptually, it integrates the Ritchie and Crouch destination competitiveness model, the Dwyer and Kim integrated model, and the World Economic Forum’s Travel and Tourism Development Index into a coherent framework for Uzbekistan. Methodologically, it proposes a weighted composite index with six core dimensions tailored to Uzbekistan’s institutional and economic context. This approach supports evidence-based policy design and monitoring of tourism competitiveness over time.

Literature Review

Theoretical models of tourism destination competitiveness provide the conceptual foundation for assessment methodologies. Porter’s diamond model of national competitiveness has been highly influential in this field. Porter argues that national competitiveness is determined by factor conditions, demand conditions, related and supporting industries, and firm strategy, structure, and rivalry, all influenced by government

and chance (Porter, 1990). This model has been adapted to tourism by Crouch and Ritchie, who developed a conceptual model of destination competitiveness based on Porter's framework. The Crouch and Ritchie model distinguishes four major components: qualifying determinants such as location, safety, and cost; destination management including resource stewardship, marketing, organisation, information, and service; core resources and attractors including physiography, culture and history, market ties, mix of activities, special events, and tourism superstructure; and supporting factors and resources including infrastructure, accessibility, facilitating resources, and enterprise (ScholarWorks UMass, n.d.). This model emphasises that competitiveness is not determined by resources alone but also by management capacity and supporting conditions. Dwyer and Kim (2003) translated the Ritchie and Crouch model into specific indicators and proposed an integrated model that combines national and firm competitiveness with destination competitiveness factors. Their model includes inherited resources, created resources, supporting factors and resources, destination management, situational conditions, and demand conditions (Redalyc, n.d.). This model explicitly identifies demand conditions as a key factor, recognising that competitiveness depends not only on supply-side factors but also on market dynamics and visitor preferences. The Ritchie and Crouch model is considered the most well-known conceptual model of destination competitiveness in tourism literature and has been the starting point for many other research studies (Redalyc, n.d.). The model identifies 36 attributes of competitiveness classified into five key factors, which Dwyer and Kim (2003) translated into specific indicators (Redalyc, n.d.). The World Economic Forum's Travel and Tourism Development Index 2024 provides a comprehensive evaluation of global tourism competitiveness, covering 119 economies and 140 indicators (World Bank, 2024). The index evolved from the Travel and Tourism Competitiveness Index series and measures the set of factors and policies that enable the sustainable and resilient development of travel and tourism (World Bank, 2024). The index structure includes indicators grouped into pillars such as business environment, safety, health, human capital, ICT readiness, international openness, price competitiveness, environmental sustainability, natural and cultural resources, and infrastructure (MDPI, 2021). Türkiye's performance in the TTDI 2024 is strong, ranking 29th out of 119 countries with a score of 4.39 (TRT World, 2024). Although Türkiye ranks in the top 5 in terms of visitor numbers both in Europe and globally, it stands 29th in terms of the world's strongest travel and tourism economies, reflecting the index's focus on comprehensive competitiveness rather than visitor volume alone (Turizm Ekonomi, 2024). Türkiye has emerged as the best developing country in southern Europe for travel and tourism, according to the TTDI 2024 report (Haberler, 2024).

3. Methodology

This study employs a conceptual and methodological approach to develop an improved complex assessment methodology for Uzbekistan's tourism competitiveness. The research design consists of four stages: theoretical framework development, comparative analysis of Türkiye and Uzbekistan, indicator selection and weighting, and construction of a composite index. In the first stage, the theoretical framework was developed by integrating the Ritchie and Crouch destination competitiveness model, the Dwyer and Kim integrated model, and the

World Economic Forum’s Travel and Tourism Development Index structure. These models provide complementary perspectives on competitiveness, emphasising resources, management, policy, infrastructure, and sustainability. In the second stage, a comparative analysis of Türkiye and Uzbekistan was conducted using TTDI 2024 data and policy documents. Türkiye’s rank of 29th with a score of 4.39 and Uzbekistan’s rank of 78th to 90th with scores around 3.7 to 3.76 provide a benchmark for identifying gaps and priorities (TRT World, 2024; World Bank, 2024; TSUE, 2024; Ideas RePEc, 2026). In the third stage, six core dimensions were selected for the proposed Uzbekistan Tourism Competitiveness Index: inherited and created resources, supporting factors and infrastructure, destination management and governance, policy and regulatory environment, sustainability and resilience, and digital transformation. These dimensions reflect the theoretical models and are tailored to Uzbekistan’s conditions. In the fourth stage, a weighted composite index was constructed. Each dimension is assigned a weight reflecting its relative importance. The weights are as follows: inherited and created resources (0.15), supporting factors and infrastructure (0.20), destination management and governance (0.20), policy and regulatory environment (0.15), sustainability and resilience (0.15), and digital transformation (0.15). The sum of all weights equals one. Each dimension is normalised to a 0–1 scale, and the composite index is calculated by multiplying each dimension score by its weight and summing the results. The empirical basis includes TTDI 2024 data, policy documents from Türkiye and Uzbekistan, and academic literature on tourism competitiveness. The methodology is designed to be operationalised once detailed national and regional data become available.

Results

Türkiye’s performance in the Travel and Tourism Development Index 2024 is strong, ranking 29th out of 119 countries with a score of 4.39 (TRT World, 2024). Türkiye has emerged as the best developing country in southern Europe for travel and tourism, reflecting strong performance in multiple pillars of the index (Haberler, 2024). Although Türkiye ranks in the top 5 in terms of visitor numbers both in Europe and globally, it stands 29th in terms of the world’s strongest travel and tourism economies, indicating that the index captures comprehensive competitiveness beyond visitor volume (Turizm Ekonomi, 2024). Türkiye’s strengths include infrastructure, natural and cultural resources, and policy environment. The country has invested heavily in transport infrastructure, including airports, highways, and railways, which support accessibility and connectivity. Türkiye’s natural resources include diverse landscapes, coastal areas, and national parks, while its cultural resources include historical sites, museums, and intangible heritage. The policy environment includes visa facilitation, investment incentives, and destination marketing. Uzbekistan’s performance in the Travel and Tourism Development Index 2024 is lower, with reported ranks of 78th to 90th and scores around 3.7 to 3.76 (World Bank, 2024; TSUE, 2024; Ideas RePEc, 2026). One study reports that Uzbekistan attains an overall index of 3.76 with a global rank of 78, but pillar-level diagnosis reveals that its largest absolute distances from the frontier are in specific areas (Ideas RePEc, 2026). Another source reports Uzbekistan’s rank as 90th with a score of 3.7 (TSUE, 2024). Uzbekistan’s strengths include inherited resources such as Silk Road heritage, historical cities, and cultural traditions. The country has made progress in created

resources such as hotels, museums, and tourism infrastructure. However, gaps remain in supporting factors and infrastructure, destination management and governance, policy and regulatory environment, sustainability and resilience, and digital transformation. The proposed Uzbekistan Tourism Competitiveness Index consists of six core dimensions. Each dimension encompasses specific elements that collectively determine tourism competitiveness. This dimension measures the quantity and quality of natural and cultural resources, including historical sites, museums, national parks, landscapes, and intangible heritage. It also measures created resources such as hotels, resorts, cultural facilities, and tourism superstructure. Uzbekistan’s inherited resources are strong, but created resources need further development to support high-quality tourism experiences.

Discussion

The main contribution of this study is the integration of theoretical models and international indices into a coherent framework for assessing Uzbekistan’s tourism competitiveness. The Ritchie and Crouch model provides a conceptual foundation, emphasising resources, management, and supporting factors. The Dwyer and Kim model translates these concepts into specific indicators, adding demand conditions. The World Economic Forum’s Travel and Tourism Development Index provides a comprehensive set of indicators and a global benchmark. Türkiye’s experience is relevant for Uzbekistan because it demonstrates how a country can achieve high competitiveness through investment in infrastructure, policy coordination, and destination management. Türkiye’s rank of 29th with a score of 4.39 in the TTDI 2024 reflects strong performance in multiple pillars (TRT World, 2024). Uzbekistan’s lower rank of 78th to 90th with scores around 3.7 to 3.76 indicates significant potential for improvement (World Bank, 2024; TSUE, 2024; Ideas RePEc, 2026). For Uzbekistan, the first policy implication is the need to strengthen supporting factors and infrastructure. Transport infrastructure, utilities, and financial services are essential for tourism competitiveness. Türkiye’s investment in airports, highways, and railways provides a reference for Uzbekistan.

Dimension	Example statistical indicators
Tourism demand	International arrivals, tourism receipts, average length of stay
Tourism infrastructure	Hotel rooms, accommodation capacity, occupancy rate
Accessibility	International flights, border crossings, transport connectivity
Economic contribution	Tourism GDP share, tourism employment, receipts per tourist
Service quality	Tourist satisfaction, trained tourism workers, hospitality capacity
Digitalisation	Online booking penetration, digital payment use, tourism websites/apps
Cultural resources	UNESCO sites, museums, cultural attractions, heritage visitors
Natural resources	Protected areas, ecological attractions, biodiversity indicators
Sustainability	CO ₂ emissions, waste management, water consumption, overcrowding

CONCLUSION

This article has proposed an improved complex methodology for assessing the competitiveness of Uzbekistan’s tourism sector, drawing on Türkiye’s experience and international competitiveness frameworks. The proposed Uzbekistan Tourism

Competitiveness Index integrates the Ritchie and Crouch destination competitiveness model, the Dwyer and Kim integrated model, and the World Economic Forum’s Travel and Tourism Development Index structure. It includes six core dimensions: inherited and created resources, supporting factors and infrastructure, destination management and governance, policy and regulatory environment, sustainability and resilience, and digital transformation. The analysis shows that Türkiye’s relevance for Uzbekistan lies in its strong performance in the TTDI 2024, ranking 29th out of 119 countries with a score of 4.39 (TRT World, 2024). Uzbekistan’s lower rank of 78th to 90th with scores around 3.7 to 3.76 indicates significant potential for improvement (World Bank, 2024; TSUE, 2024; Ideas RePEc, 2026). The proposed methodology provides a practical framework for measuring progress and designing targeted policy interventions at national and regional levels. Future research should apply the proposed index to Uzbekistan’s regions using primary survey data, administrative records, and TTDI indicators. Such research would allow policymakers to identify regional gaps, monitor the effects of reforms, and develop evidence-based strategies for building a competitive, sustainable, and inclusive tourism sector.

REFERENCES:

1. Dwyer, L. and Kim, C. (2003) ‘Destination competitiveness: determinants and indicators’, *Current Issues in Tourism*, 6(5), pp. 369–414.
2. Haberler (2024) ‘Türkiye named best developing country in southern Europe for travel and tourism’, 22 May. Available at: <https://en.haberler.com/turkiye-named-best-developing-country-in-southern-1953458/>
3. Ideas RePEc (2026) ‘Global competitive positioning of Uzbekistan’s tourism sector’, *Tashkent State University of Economics*, 4(5). Available at: <https://ideas.repec.org/a/teu/ged000/v4y2026i5id11421.html>
4. MDPI (2021) ‘Study of the tourism competitiveness model of the World Economic Forum’, *Sustainability*, 13(13), p. 7169. Available at: <https://www.mdpi.com/2071-1050/13/13/7169>
5. Porter, M. E. (1990) *The Competitive Advantage of Nations*. New York: Free Press.
6. Redalyc (n.d.) ‘A model of tourism destination competitiveness’. Available at: <https://www.redalyc.org/pdf/5762/576261184008.pdf>
7. Ritchie, J. R. B. and Crouch, G. I. (2003) *The Competitive Destination: A Sustainable Tourism Perspective*. Wallingford: CABI Publishing.