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TOURISM IN LOGISTICS: THE ROLE OF ROUTE TOURISM IN THE SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT OF LOCAL ECONOMIES IN UZBEKISTAN

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Abstract
Route tourism, which combines attractions into themed routes, is a strategic tool for stimulating economic development, especially in rural areas. This article analyzes the logistical aspects of route tourism, including planning, promotion, and institutional management, based on Lawrence's dissertation [4] and international case studies (Camino de Santiago, Queensland Heritage Trails, Hadrian's Wall). Particular attention is paid to the application of these principles in Uzbekistan, taking into account its unique cultural heritage and logistical challenges. A SWOT analysis is included to assess the potential and limitations of route tourism in Uzbekistan, and a logistical model for the sustainable development of routes is proposed. The results emphasize the importance of supply chain coordination, digital infrastructure, and stakeholder engagement to maximize economic benefits and ensure sustainability.

Keywords: Route tourism, logistics, supply chains, local economic development, Uzbekistan, SWOT analysis

1. Introduction

Tourism is one of the key sectors of the economy in developing countries, contributing significantly to GDP (up to 10% of global GDP) and creating millions of jobs [1]. In Uzbekistan, tourism became a priority sector after the 2016 reforms, including visa liberalization and infrastructure investments, which led to an increase in the number of foreign tourists to 6.7 million in 2019 [2]. Route tourism, understood as the combination of geographically distributed attractions into thematic routes to encourage travel between regions [3], represents significant potential for rural areas of Uzbekistan, such as the Fergana Valley, Khorezm, and Karakalpakstan.

However, the success of route tourism depends on effective logistics, including the management of tourist flows, infrastructure, information systems, and stakeholder coordination [4]. Lawrence's dissertation [4] emphasizes that critical success factors are planning, promotion, and institutional development. This article adapts these findings

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to the context of Uzbekistan, proposing a logistics model for the development of route tourism. It includes a SWOT analysis to assess opportunities and constraints, as well as recommendations for the sustainable development of routes such as the "Golden Ring of Uzbekistan," linking Samarkand, Bukhara, Khiva, and rural craft centers.
Research objective: To develop a logistics model for route tourism in Uzbekistan based on international and South African case studies, taking into account local economic and cultural characteristics.

2. Literature Review

Route tourism integrates attractions into a single product, increasing the appeal of destinations and stimulating economic activity in rural regions [3, 5]. From a logistical point of view, routes function as complex supply chains, including:

- Physical infrastructure: Roads, signs, transport hubs, ensuring accessibility [6].
- Digital platforms: Websites, mobile applications, and GIS for navigation and informing tourists [7].
- Services: Hotels, gastronomy, craft workshops, requiring coordination to ensure quality [8].
- Marketing and branding: A strong brand and targeted campaigns attract niche audiences, such as cultural or eco-tourists [9].
- Institutional management: Destination management organizations (DMOs) coordinate stakeholders, ensuring sustainability and quality [10].

The economic impact of route tourism includes increased income for local communities, job creation, and infrastructure development, which is especially important for marginalized regions [11]. In Uzbekistan, route tourism associated with the Great Silk Road has a historical basis but faces logistical challenges: inadequate infrastructure in rural areas, weak coordination between stakeholders, and limited marketing resources [12]. Lawrence's study [4] emphasizes that the success of routes depends on a structured approach to planning, institutional support, and the involvement of local communities.

3. Methodology

The study is based on an analysis of Lawrence's dissertation [4], which examined route tourism through:

- Literature review: Analysis of the theoretical foundations and practices of route tourism planning.
- Case studies: Study of international routes (Camino de Santiago, Spain; Queensland Heritage Trails, Australia; Hadrian's Wall, United Kingdom) and a local case (Midlands Meander, South Africa).
- Primary research: Surveys of 40 tourism products (hotels, craft workshops, restaurants) and 38 consumers in Midlands Meander, as well as in-depth interviews with representatives of the Midlands Meander Association (MMA). The methods included qualitative (open-ended questions) and quantitative (Likert scale surveys) approaches.

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To adapt to Uzbekistan, we supplemented the analysis with secondary data on tourism in Central Asia [2, 12] and conducted a SWOT analysis to assess the potential of route tourism. The logistics prism focuses on supply chains, stakeholder networks, and operational strategies, taking into account the cultural and economic characteristics of Uzbekistan.

4. Logistical aspects of route tourism

4.1. Case studies: logistical lessons

1. Camino de Santiago (Spain): A cultural route supported by government investment in infrastructure (signposts, hostels) and global marketing through UNESCO and the Council of Europe [13]. Logistical success is due to standardized navigation, a unified booking system, and coordination between municipalities, which ensures uninterrupted flows of pilgrims.
2. Queensland Heritage Trails (Australia): A “car tourism” route with a developed supply chain, including branded signposts, maps, and digital platforms [14]. Government funding and the involvement of local communities simplify logistics, while data analytics optimizes tourist flows.
3. Hadrian's Wall (United Kingdom): A multi-stakeholder model where a specialized trust manages logistics at the inter-municipal level [15]. Centralized marketing and visitor monitoring systems ensure efficient resource allocation.
4. Midlands Meander (South Africa): A private route coordinated by the MMA (229 members) offering diversified products (accommodation, crafts, gastronomy) [4]. Logistical advantages include local branding and digital platforms, but seasonality and skills shortages create challenges.

4.2. Key success factors

Lawrence [4] identifies three critical success factors:

- Planning: Developing routes that take into account demand, infrastructure, and accessibility. Logistically, this means creating efficient supply chains that minimize bottlenecks (e.g., lack of signage) [6].
- Promotion: Targeted marketing and branding increase route awareness. Includes digital campaigns and participation in international exhibitions [9].
- Institutional development: DMOs or associations such as the MMA act as logistics hubs, coordinating stakeholders and ensuring quality [10].

Additionally, from a logistical perspective:

- Supply chain coordination: Routes connect attractions, services, and tourists into a single system that requires optimization of flows and resources [6].
- Adaptive management: Routes evolve through stages of creation, growth, and maturity, requiring flexible strategies [4].
- Community involvement: Inclusive logistics distributes benefits among local residents, promoting pro-poor tourism [11].

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4.3. SWOT analysis of route tourism in Uzbekistan

A SWOT analysis was conducted to assess the potential of route tourism in Uzbekistan:

Table 1. SWOT analysis of route tourism in Uzbekistan

Strengths:	**Weaknesses**:
• Rich cultural heritage (the Great Silk Road, Samarkand, Bukhara, Khiva), recognized by UNESCO [2]. • Growing international interest in cultural and ecotourism following the 2016 reforms [12]. • State support, including investment in tourism infrastructure and marketing [2]. • Diversity of tourism products (historical monuments, crafts, gastronomy) [12]. •	• Inadequate infrastructure in rural areas (poor roads, lack of signage) [12]. • Shortage of qualified personnel in tourism and marketing [4]. • Poor coordination between stakeholders (government, tour operators, local communities) [12]. • Limited digital platforms for navigation and promotion of routes [7].
Opportunities	**Threats**:
• Development of new routes, such as the "Golden Ring of Uzbekistan," connecting major cities with rural craft centers [12]. • Use of digital technologies (mobile applications, GIS) to improve navigation and marketing [7]. • Public-private partnerships for financing and managing routes [13]. • Growth in demand for sustainable and cultural tourism in international markets [1]. •	• Seasonality of tourist flows, creating logistical bottlenecks [4]. • Competition with other destinations in Central Asia (Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan) [12]. • Limited funding for the creation and promotion of new routes [4]. • Risks of uneven distribution of benefits, excluding rural communities [11].

5. Logistical model for Uzbekistan

Based on the conclusions of Lawrence [4] and SWOT analysis, a three-stage logistical model for the development of route tourism in Uzbekistan is proposed:

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1. **Establishment stage (1-5 years)**:

- Create a DMO to coordinate stakeholders (government, tour operators, artisans, local communities). Example: Association "Golden Ring of Uzbekistan".
- Invest in infrastructure: standardized signage, road improvements, development of a mobile app for navigation and booking [7].
- Invest in infrastructure: standardized signage, road improvements, development of a mobile app for navigation and booking [7].
- Conduct market research to identify demand (e.g. for cultural or gastronomic tourism) and create a brand [9].

2. **Growth stage (5-20 years)**:

- Strengthen marketing through international campaigns, participation in trade fairs (ITB Berlin) and digital platforms (TripAdvisor, Google Maps) [9].
- Example: Integration of rural guesthouses and silk making workshops in the Ferghana Valley.
- Develop skills through trainings in marketing, management and hospitality, with a focus on rural communities [11].
- Diversify products: include craft workshops, gastronomic tours, ecotourism to reduce seasonality [4].

3. **Maturity stage (20+ years)**:

- Maintain quality through standards and certifications (e.g. ISO for tour operators) [10].
- Periodically update the brand to prevent stagnation (e.g., rebranding of the Golden Ring) [9].
- Optimize logistics with data analytics on tourist flows, expenditures and satisfaction [7].
- Example: Using AI applications for peak load forecasting and route optimization.

Fig. 1. Logistical model for Uzbekistan

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6. Discussion

Tourism in Uzbekistan can be a catalyst for economic development, especially in rural areas, thanks to the rich heritage of the Silk Road [12]. The Midlands Meander case study [4] demonstrates how a DMO (MMA) coordinates products and marketing to create a sustainable ecosystem. However, Uzbekistan faces logistical challenges similar to those in South Africa: a lack of infrastructure, skills, and funding [4, 12]. International examples (Camino de Santiago, Hadrian's Wall) show that public-private partnerships and digital technologies can overcome these barriers [13, 15].

A SWOT analysis identified strengths (heritage, government support) and opportunities (digitalization, new routes), but weaknesses (infrastructure, skills) require investment. Future research should explore the role of AI and big data in tourism logistics, as well as the impact of routes on social inclusion in rural communities.

7. Conclusions

Route tourism has the potential to transform rural economies in Uzbekistan, but its success depends on effective logistics systems. Supply chain coordination, digital infrastructure, and stakeholder engagement are key factors. The proposed model, which includes the stages of creation, growth, and maturity, provides a roadmap for authorities, DMOs, and tour operators. Investments in infrastructure, training, and marketing, as well as the use of digital technologies, will ensure sustainable growth and inclusive development.

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