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Article

Digital Platform Governance for Sustainable Tourism: A Transferability Framework from Chinese Practices to Uzbekistan

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Abstract: Digital platforms organise much of tourism demand, yet their sustainability record is uneven. This paper asks what travels when a governance mechanism moves from a Chinese tourism setting to Uzbekistan. Technology acts as a carrier, while governance arrangements generate sustainable value. Recent literature reveals three defects when platform growth outpaces oversight: concentrated agenda-setting power, weak conversion of data into regulatory use, and thin participation by small firms. The paper proposes an institutional fit framework built on authority alignment, data capability and enterprise inclusion. Applied to Uzbekistan, the framework identifies data access as the binding constraint.

Keywords: Platform governance; sustainable tourism; institutional fit; technology transfer; Uzbekistan.

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1. Introduction

Digital platforms are now the main place where tourists search, compare and book trips. Their governance covers strategic, ethical, political and international relations concerns [1]. The sustainability record is mixed. Platforms widen access and cut search costs, yet concentrate agenda-setting power in firms that rank primarily by growth.

China is a tangible case. In Shenzhen and Jiangmen, crowdsourced information from Dianping was integrated into a governance system for resource management, promotion and regional coordination [2]. Provincial panel evidence links digital transformation to tourism efficiency [3]. This explains why policymakers elsewhere look to Chinese practice as a model.

The situation is different in Uzbekistan. Destination image still diverges between residents and non-visitors, a gap that can shape digital promotion [4]. Ecotourism in rural Samarkand has already produced local impacts on employment and income [5]. The country has a heritage base and a green transition agenda, yet its platform governance capacity remains thin.

The paper asks what has to move when a digital tourism mechanism travels from China to Uzbekistan. The answer identifies sustainable value in governance arrangements, with technology acting as their vehicle. Value lies in how authority, data and participation are organised. The paper separates the transferable mechanism from its institutional conditions and sets them out for an Uzbek setting.

Literature Review

Platform governance and its limits

Early work framed platform governance as an issue of ownership and voice. Martin and colleagues [6] showed that a democratic model could accommodate social and environmental values alongside instrumental ones, while regulation remained necessary. Municipal research extended this into a framework for city regulation of platforms [7]. Work on short-term rentals identified six regulatory components whose effect depends on enforcement capacity, platform cooperation and multilevel coordination [8].

Sustainable tourism as a governance problem

Sustainability in tourism carries a political dimension that market-led platform narratives set aside [9]. Behavioural research adds a practical difficulty. Tourist behaviour change remains hard to achieve [10], and a persistent gap separates pro-sustainable intentions from actual choices [11]. Digital tools offer a remedy, though their effect depends on design and incentives.

Chinese digital practice and its paradoxes

Chinese platform practice offers both a model and a warning. In Wanghong cities, algorithms and administrative power jointly create urban visibility, and the attention economy generates spatial injustice [12]. The carbon generalized system of preferences shows a different side. Digital measurability turns scattered consumption emissions into tradable units, with green finance and digitalisation as enabling conditions [13]. The same capacity also amplifies growth pressures.

The receiver context

Central Asia is where digital and green agendas advance together. Research on fintech, renewable energy and financial inclusion links these to emissions outcomes [14]. Rural tourism studies show that collaborative governance coordinates stakeholders, though tourists remain least involved [15], and mediates the relation between tourism initiatives and sustainable development [16]. Transfer frameworks specifying institutional preconditions remain thin.

2. Research Methodology

This study is conceptual and draws on published secondary sources in platform governance, sustainable tourism and Central Asian development from the last decade. Selection followed three checks. Records were cross-checked with Crossref for valid DOIs, abstracts for topical relevance, and each source against the specific claim it supports. No primary data were collected and no unpublished statistics are reported.

Mechanisms were taken from studies of Chinese digital tourism governance and general platform governance research, then matched with the institutional conditions the literature treats as necessary. The result is a framework with three fit dimensions. Its application to Uzbekistan is offered as a proposition for field testing.

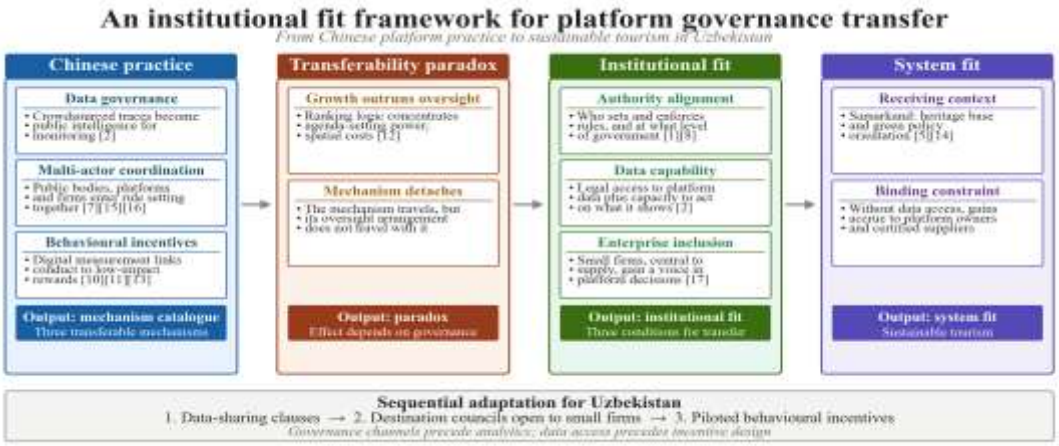


Figure 1. An institutional fit framework for platform governance transfer.

Source: Authors' construction based on [1], [2], [5], [7], [8], [10], [11], [12], [13], [14], [15], [16], [17].

Figure 1 shows the transfer logic in four stages. Chinese practice supplies three mechanisms, each effective at source. The paradox intervenes at movement: the mechanism travels, but its oversight arrangement does not. Institutional fit filters it through authority alignment, data capability and enterprise inclusion. Where these hold, the mechanism contributes to system fit. The lower band gives the Uzbekistan sequence: governance channels before analytics, data access before incentives.

3. Analysis and Results

The transferability paradox

Transfer fails where a mechanism is detached from its oversight arrangement. Chinese platform data became a governance resource because municipal authorities could act on what it showed [2]. Without analytical capacity or legal access, the same data remain a private asset. Rules depend on enforcement capacity and cooperation [8], while platform attention produces spatial costs when public authority does not shape it [12]. Strong coordination can turn into distributional conflict under weak coordination.

Three governance mechanisms

Data governance turns platform traces into public intelligence, as the Shenzhen and Jiangmen framework shows [2]. The carbon incentive case shows how measurement creates new policy instruments [13]. Multi-actor coordination brings public bodies, platforms and firms into rule setting [7][15][16]. Behavioural incentives address the intention-behaviour gap [11] and the difficulty of changing tourist behaviour [10]. Each mechanism has a documented effect and a precondition.

Institutional fit conditions

Authority alignment concerns who can set and enforce platform rules. Platform governance theory treats this as a core dimension [1], and regulatory studies link it to multilevel coordination [8]. Data capability concerns the ability to obtain, read and act on platform data, as the Shenzhen case shows [2]. Enterprise inclusion concerns small firms, central to tourism supply yet under-represented in platform decisions [17].

Governance mechanism	Transferable element	Institutional fit condition	Uzbek proposition
Platform data for monitoring	Analytical functions applied to crowdsourced traces	Legal access plus analytical capacity	Data-sharing clauses absent from most partnerships
Multi-actor rule setting	Structured voice for public bodies and firms	Convening authority with enforcement	Destination councils lack platform seats
Behavioural incentives	Measurable units of low-impact conduct	Credible reward and verification	Green agenda present, pilot scale absent
Inclusive digital access	Accessibility standards for platform interfaces	Technical and regulatory capacity	Heritage sites offer a controlled pilot

Source: Authors' compilation based on [1], [2], [7], [8], [13], [16].

Note: The framework is conceptual. Uzbek propositions are hypotheses for field verification, not observed results.

Each mechanism is listed next to the condition that makes it work. Two rows turn on data access, one on convening authority and one on technical capacity. Samarkand appears to meet the third condition and part of the second. The first remains unresolved.

Applying the framework in Uzbekistan

Samarkand is the concrete entry point. Rural ecotourism provides locals with income [5], while destination image is both an asset and a problem [4]. A national green policy adds momentum [14]. These support authority alignment and enterprise inclusion at a basic level. Data capability is the weaker link. Without an access agreement, promotion benefits accrue to platform owners and a few certified suppliers. Digital accessibility standards show what inclusive design achieves [18], metaverse tourism a new channel [19], and smart hospitality how firms can join [20]. Each widens the governance gap.

4. Conclusions and Proposals

The paper asked what happens when a digital tourism mechanism crosses borders. Governance arrangements lie at the heart of transfer, carried by technology. Authority alignment, data capability and enterprise inclusion decide whether a mechanism produces sustainable outcomes in a new setting.

Three proposals follow. Tourism authorities should attach data-sharing clauses to platform partnerships before procuring analytics. Destination councils in Samarkand and Bukhara should give small firms and community representatives a defined role in platform rule setting. Behavioural incentives should be piloted at a limited number of heritage sites, with measurement built in from the start.

The framework draws on secondary sources and has not been field-tested with stakeholders in Uzbekistan. Further research should interview platform operators, municipalities and tourism firms to verify whether the three fit dimensions hold in practice.

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