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Enhancing the Methodological Foundations of Tourism Village Development and Their Improvement in the Context of Uzbekistan

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Abstract: This article examines the methodological foundations of tourism village development and the issues involved in improving them in the context of Uzbekistan. The study argues that tourism villages should be understood not simply as rural settlements with tourism potential, but as integrated territorial systems in which local resources, accommodation facilities, service chains, community participation, destination governance, sustainability criteria, and market access are coordinated into a coherent development model. The purpose of the article is to systematize the principal methodological approaches to tourism village development in international scholarship and policy practice, to identify their core structural elements, and to propose an improved framework applicable to Uzbekistan. The research is qualitative and conceptual, drawing on systems analysis, comparative review, document analysis, and conceptual synthesis. The results show that a viable tourism village development model requires six interrelated methodological blocks: territorial resource diagnosis, accommodation and service integration, community participation, sustainability assessment, destination governance, and digital positioning and monitoring. The article also demonstrates that Uzbekistan already possesses a meaningful institutional and infrastructural base for tourism village development. In 2024, the country recorded 7,957.2 thousand inbound tourism trips, 2,383 hotels and similar accommodation establishments, and 566 individual and other accommodation facilities.

Keywords: Tourism villages, rural tourism, sustainable tourism, destination management, methodological framework, family guest houses, territorial development, Uzbekistan.

Introduction

Rural tourism has become one of the most dynamic directions in contemporary tourism development. International tourism institutions increasingly interpret it not as a marginal or purely recreational activity, but as an instrument of territorial diversification, local employment generation, cultural preservation, and balanced development. UN Tourism explicitly links tourism in rural areas to local economic stimulation, reduction of inequalities, and support for community wellbeing. This shift is conceptually important because it places rural tourism within the broader logic of development policy rather than within a narrow market niche [1].

Within this broader field, the notion of the tourism village has gained increasing relevance. However, the concept is still frequently used in a descriptive and overly simplified way. A village with attractive scenery, heritage, or local traditions is often

assumed to be a tourism village by default. This assumption is methodologically weak. A tourism village should instead be understood as a territorial tourism system capable of converting local assets into a coherent, stay based visitor experience through accommodation, services, governance, and market positioning. In this sense, the village is not simply a place where tourism occurs. It is a destination unit in which multiple actors and services must function in a coordinated way [2].

Despite growing scholarly and institutional interest in rural tourism, the operational criteria that distinguish a functional tourism village from a merely scenic or historically interesting settlement remain undertheorized. Existing typologies tend to classify rural destinations based on physical or cultural endowments, such as architectural heritage, landscape quality, or the presence of traditional crafts, while giving comparatively little attention to the systemic conditions that determine whether a destination can actually sustain visitor flows, generate local income, and retain community participation over time. This gap between descriptive classification and functional assessment represents a persistent methodological challenge in rural tourism research.

Literature review

The literature on rural tourism confirms the complexity of this object. Rosalina, Dupre, and Wang show that rural tourism is defined in the literature through overlapping dimensions such as location, sustainability, community characteristics, and experience. This is a valuable insight because it demonstrates that tourism village development cannot be reduced to attraction inventories or infrastructure counts. It requires a multidimensional approach that combines territorial, social, economic, and managerial perspectives[3].

Sustainability literature further strengthens this argument. The GSTC Destination Criteria emphasize that a destination should be assessed not only in terms of visitor demand or tourism products, but also through sustainable management, socio economic effects, cultural continuity, and environmental performance. For tourism villages, this means that success should not be measured solely by tourist arrivals or branding visibility. It should also be measured by local benefit retention, heritage protection, service quality, pressure on local resources, and governance capacity[4].

Another key dimension is destination management. The World Bank's Destination Management Handbook stresses that tourism destinations, especially those with limited managerial experience, require coordination, stakeholder engagement, market intelligence, product development, and continuous adaptation. This is especially relevant for villages, where family guest houses, food providers, artisans, transport operators, farmers, guides, and local authorities may all operate separately unless deliberate coordinating mechanisms are created.

Hospitality infrastructure is equally central. Research on the Italian Albergo diffuso model demonstrates that village-based tourism can be organized through dispersed accommodation units under shared management, thereby preserving local architecture and strengthening place identity. The broader methodological lesson is that tourism villages require overnight stay capacity as a structural component of the destination, not as an optional add on. Without accommodation, a village may attract day visitors, but it is less likely to generate longer stays, more diverse expenditures, and stronger local value chains[5].

Community based tourism research also adds an important corrective. Recent reviews show that sustainable rural tourism performs more effectively when local residents participate as beneficiaries, co producers, and decision makers rather than serving merely as a symbolic background to externally managed tourism growth. Since tourism villages are inseparable from everyday local life, social embeddedness is not only an ethical issue but a methodological requirement.

For Uzbekistan, the topic is particularly timely. The country has already institutionalized the category of the tourism village in national policy. Presidential Decree PF-5781 provides that a territory may be granted tourism village status when at least 20 family guest houses are organized and at least five tourism related services, other than accommodation and or food, are available. Resolution No. 631 established the rules for family guest houses, and Resolution No. 433 created more favorable conditions for the recovery and development of tourism, including simplified procedures for small scale accommodation facilities. Presidential Decree PF-102 of July 18, 2024 added further measures aimed at improving tourism infrastructure and increasing foreign tourist flows. These acts suggest that Uzbekistan has already recognized the importance of accommodation and service diversity in rural tourism development[6].

Recent statistics reinforce the practical relevance of this policy direction. According to the National Statistics Committee, Uzbekistan recorded 7,957.2 thousand inbound tourism trips in 2024, which represented a 20.1 percent increase over 2023. The country also had 2,383 hotels and similar accommodation establishments with 38,075 rooms and 79,469 beds, as well as 566 individual and other accommodation facilities with 4,564 rooms and 12,511 beds. These figures indicate that Uzbekistan is not dealing with a hypothetical tourism market. It is dealing with a growing market that now requires more sophisticated territorial product design, especially beyond the major cities and established tourism circuits.

The purpose of this article is therefore to systematize the methodological foundations of tourism village development and to identify how these foundations can be improved in the context of Uzbekistan. The article asks three questions. What methodological approaches to tourism village development can be identified in international scholarship and policy practice? What structural blocks are essential for a sustainable tourism village development model? How can these blocks be adapted to Uzbekistan's institutional and territorial context?

Methods

This study is qualitative, conceptual, and policy oriented. It does not attempt to test a statistical causal model. Instead, it develops an improved framework through systems analysis, comparative review, document analysis, and conceptual synthesis. The systems approach is appropriate because tourism villages function as territorial systems rather than isolated enterprises. Their development depends on the interaction of resources, hospitality infrastructure, local actors, management mechanisms, and sustainability conditions[7].

Comparative review was used to identify the principal methodological traditions relevant to tourism villages. These include rural tourism, sustainable tourism, community-based tourism, destination management, and territorially embedded hospitality models. Document analysis was then applied to the policy and statistical environment of Uzbekistan in order to assess how these traditions can be operationalized nationally.

The analysis proceeded in four stages. First, the main conceptual categories associated with tourism villages were extracted from the literature. Second, the categories were compared to identify convergences and methodological gaps. Third, these methodological blocks were compared with the legal and statistical framework of Uzbekistan. Fourth, an integrated model for tourism village development was formulated. The study is thus interpretive and design oriented. Its goal is not to produce a ranking of villages, but to clarify the framework that should precede any scoring or composite index construction.

Results

The analysis shows that tourism village development is usually approached from five partly overlapping methodological traditions.

Table 1. Main methodological approaches to tourism village development.

Approach	Central analytical unit	Main focus	Limitation when used alone	Methodological contribution
<i>Rural tourism approach</i>	Rural territory and local assets	Landscape, heritage, local lifestyle, visitor experience	Often descriptive and attraction centered	Provides the territorial and experiential basis
<i>Sustainable tourism approach</i>	Destination sustainability profile	Economic, social, cultural, and environmental balance	Can remain normative without operational indicators	Supplies evaluation logic and development thresholds
<i>Community based tourism approach</i>	Local residents and social organization	Participation, ownership, benefit sharing	May under specify governance and market integration	Ensures local embeddedness and legitimacy
<i>Destination management approach</i>	Coordinated destination system	Governance, branding, stakeholder coordination, monitoring	Can overlook village scale specificity	Provides organizational and managerial structure
<i>Hospitality infrastructure approach</i>	Stay based tourism capacity	Accommodation, service integration, visitor retention	May narrow attention to lodging only	Establishes overnight stay as a structural core

Source: Developed by the author on the basis of .

The rural tourism approach is essential because it links tourism to place specific resources and experiences. However, it often remains overly descriptive. Sustainability based approaches contribute a more balanced evaluative perspective, but they need measurable indicators in order to guide implementation. Community based approaches strengthen social legitimacy and local ownership, yet they can remain weak on coordination and market design. Destination management literature contributes the logic of coordination, branding, stakeholder management, and adaptive monitoring. Hospitality based approaches reveal that overnight stay capacity is fundamental because it allows villages to move from short excursions toward deeper economic integration. Taken together, these approaches suggest that tourism village development must be methodologically integrated rather than sectorally fragmented [9].

International statistics support the idea that tourism villages and rural accommodation systems can become economically significant when they are properly organized. Italy provides one of the clearest examples. According to ISTAT, in 2023 there were 26,129 active agritourism enterprises in Italy, up 1.1 percent from 2022. The agritourism production value reached 1.9 billion euros, and the sector served 4.5 million agritourists, 51 percent of whom were foreigners. This is not a marginal niche. It is a mature rural hospitality segment integrated into wider tourism flows.

Spain shows a different but equally relevant pattern. The National Statistics Institute reported that in 2024 overnight stays in rural tourism accommodation increased by 0.4 percent overall, while overnight stays by non-residents rose by 10.7 percent. Castilla y León alone recorded 1.9 million overnight stays in rural accommodation. These numbers indicate that rural lodging can attract international demand when territorial positioning and service structures are in place[10].

Japan's countryside stay model demonstrates the importance of national program design. Official MAFF materials indicate that recommended countryside stays were selected from over 500 certified areas across Japan, and government policy supported the creation of 500 areas capable of implementing countryside stay business by 2020. This is significant because it shows that rural tourism development in Japan has been treated not as isolated site promotion but as a structured territorial program.

In South Korea, rural tourism policy was closely linked to widening rural urban income disparities. KREI materials show that the ratio of farm household income to urban worker household income fell from 80.5 percent in 2000 to 64.4 percent in 2015, creating strong pressure to diversify rural income sources. Rural tourism thus emerged not only as a tourism instrument but as a rural policy response.

Uzbekistan's own tourism statistics indicate that the country now has a meaningful base for stay based rural tourism development. In 2024, foreign citizens made 7,957.2 thousand tourism trips to Uzbekistan. Hotels and similar accommodation establishments numbered 2,383, while individual and other accommodation facilities reached 566. In accommodation capacity, hotels and similar establishments offered 38,075 rooms and 79,469 beds, and individual and other accommodation facilities offered 4,564 rooms and 12,511 beds. These numbers show that the national tourism sector is expanding and that accommodation growth has already reached a scale where rural product diversification is both feasible and timely[11].

Table 2. Selected statistical and institutional indicators relevant to tourism village development.

Country	Key statistic or institutional marker	What it suggests methodologically
Italy	26,129 agritourism enterprises, 4.5 million agritourists, 1.9 billion euros in production value in 2023	Rural tourism becomes economically significant when hospitality and local services are integrated
Spain	Rural accommodation overnight stays +0.4 percent in 2024, non resident overnight stays +10.7 percent, Castilla y León 1.9 million overnight stays	Rural tourism competitiveness depends on overnight stay performance and destination specialization
Japan	More than 500 certified countryside stay areas	Rural tourism can be scaled through structured territorial programs
South Korea	Farm to urban household income ratio fell from 80.5 percent to 64.4 percent between 2000 and 2015	Rural tourism policy can be linked to income diversification and territorial resilience
Uzbekistan	7,957.2 thousand inbound tourism trips in 2024; 2,383 hotels and similar accommodation facilities; 566 individual and other accommodation facilities	There is already sufficient demand and accommodation growth to justify a systematic tourism village model

Source: Developed by the author based on .

The synthesis of the literature, international cases, and Uzbek policy context suggests that tourism village development in Uzbekistan should be built around six integrated methodological blocks[12].

The first is territorial resource diagnosis. Each prospective tourism village should begin with a destination profile that includes natural landscapes, vernacular architecture, local gastronomy, crafts, agricultural practices, social events, and seasonal activities. This avoids the common planning error of equating tourism potential with a simple attraction list.

The second is accommodation and service integration. Uzbekistan's own legal framework already implies the importance of this block by requiring 20 family guest houses and at least five tourism services for tourism village status. Methodologically, however, this should go beyond formal counting. Guest houses, food services, workshops, agro-experiences, local transport, and guiding should be linked into coherent stay-based service packages[13].

The third is community participation. Tourism villages should not rely only on administrative recognition. They should include local households, farmers, artisans, women, and youth as active participants in both service provision and local planning. This is crucial for benefit retention and social legitimacy.

The fourth is sustainability assessment. Tourism villages in Uzbekistan should be monitored through a standard indicator card covering economic, social, cultural, and environmental dimensions. Possible indicators include occupancy rates, average stay length, local employment share, resident participation, use of local products, waste management capacity, and pressure on water and landscape resources .

The fifth is destination governance. Village level or cluster level coordination structures are needed to reduce fragmentation. These bodies should support quality standards, training, joint promotion, data collection, and service coordination. The World Bank's destination management logic and the GSTC sustainability approach both support the need for such coordinating arrangements[14].

The sixth is digital positioning and monitoring. Tourism villages today compete through discoverability, trust, and platform accessibility. Online presence, multilingual information, booking access, payment capacity, and review management should therefore be included in development methodology from the outset. This is consistent with UN Tourism's tourism village evaluation logic, which includes value chain integration, governance, infrastructure, and market readiness.

Discussion

The results suggest that tourism village development in Uzbekistan should move from a status-oriented approach toward a methodology-oriented approach. The legal basis is already in place. The country recognizes tourism villages, regulates family guest houses, and continues to invest in tourism infrastructure. However, legal recognition does not automatically produce coordinated destinations. A village may satisfy formal criteria and still remain fragmented in practice if accommodation, service chains, local participation, and monitoring are not integrated [15].

The statistical evidence reinforces this point. The experiences of Italy and Spain show that rural tourism becomes economically substantial when overnight stays are supported by integrated hospitality and service structures. Japan demonstrates the value of territorial programming, while South Korea illustrates the importance of linking rural tourism to broader rural development objectives. For Uzbekistan, the implication is clear: tourism village policy should not focus only on formal designation or infrastructure provision. It should focus on the organization of villages as coordinated stay-based destinations[16].

A second implication concerns measurement. Much tourism village discourse remains promotional. Villages are highlighted as authentic, traditional, or attractive, but such descriptors do not provide planning guidance. A more rigorous approach requires indicators that can be monitored over time. This would allow the government and local actors to distinguish between nominal tourism villages and operationally successful ones, and to direct support more strategically.

A third implication concerns hospitality structure. In Uzbekistan, family guest houses should be treated not merely as small businesses, but as the infrastructural backbone of village tourism. If clustered and managed collectively, they can create the overnight stay base necessary for extending visitor length of stay, increasing local

expenditure, and anchoring other services within the village economy. This is one of the most practical areas in which Uzbekistan can improve the methodological foundations of tourism village development[17].

Conclusion

This article has shown that tourism village development requires a more rigorous methodological foundation than is often found in policy and descriptive tourism discourse. A tourism village should be understood as an integrated territorial destination rather than as a rural settlement with isolated attractions. Its development depends on the interaction of resources, accommodation, services, community participation, governance, sustainability criteria, and digital visibility.

The study identified five major methodological traditions relevant to tourism village development and demonstrated that none of them is sufficient in isolation. On that basis, it proposed an improved framework for Uzbekistan built around six interdependent blocks: territorial diagnosis, accommodation and service integration, community participation, sustainability assessment, destination governance, and digital positioning.

The analysis also showed that Uzbekistan has already created an important institutional foundation for tourism village policy through Presidential Decree PF-5781, regulations on family guest houses, subsequent tourism support measures, and recent tourism infrastructure reforms. At the same time, 2024 tourism statistics confirm that the country has both rising tourism demand and an expanding accommodation base. The key challenge is therefore methodological integration rather than initial sector creation.

The principal recommendation is that Uzbekistan should shift from formal recognition of tourism villages toward system-based planning and evidence-based management. This means clustering family guest houses, linking them with local service chains, introducing sustainability indicators, establishing village level coordination mechanisms, and integrating digital readiness into rural tourism support programs. Under such conditions, tourism villages can become a real instrument of sustainable rural development rather than a primarily symbolic policy category.

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