RURAL MOUNTAIN DESTINATIONS AS PLATFORMS FOR FAMILY TOURISM ENTREPRENEURSHIP: A CAPACITY ASSESSMENT AND DEVELOPMENT MODEL FOR THE OMONQO‘TON VILLAGE CLUSTER, SAMARKAND REGION

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Annotatsiya. *Mazkur maqolada Samarqand viloyati Urgut tumanidagi Omonqo‘ton qishlog‘i misolida tog‘li qishloq destinatsiyalarida oilaviy turizm tadbirkorligini rivojlantirish salohiyati baholangan. Qishloqning demografik, infratuzilmaviy va tadbirkorlik resurslari inventarizatsiyasi o‘tkazilib, 1723 nafar respondent ishtirokidagi so‘rovnoma natijalari asosida turistik talab tuzilmasi aniqlangan. Mavjud oilaviy mehmonxona sig‘imi va prognoz qilinayotgan turistlar oqimi o‘rtasidagi nomutanosiblik aniqlanib, samarasiz foydalanilayotgan 1,6 gektar tomorqa maydonlarida ekologik toza materiallardan yangi mehmon uylari qurish bo‘yicha investitsion model asoslangan. Mahalliy aholi bandligini ta‘minlash va daromadlarni adolatli taqsimlashga yo‘naltirilgan integratsiyalashgan rivojlantirish modeli taklif etilgan.*

Kalit so‘zlar: *tog‘li qishloq turizmi, oilaviy mehmonxona, destinatsiya sig‘imi, Omonqo‘ton, ekoturizm, qishloq bandligi, Samarqand viloyati.*

Аннотация. *В статье оценивается потенциал развития семейного туристического предпринимательства в горных сельских дестинациях на примере села Омонкутан Ургутского района Самаркандской области. Проведена инвентаризация демографических, инфраструктурных и предпринимательских ресурсов села, определена структура туристического спроса на основе опроса 1723 респондентов. Предложена интегрированная модель развития дестинации.*

Ключевые слова: *горный сельский туризм, семейный гостевой дом, ёмкость дестинации, экотуризм, Самаркандская область.*

Abstract. *This article assesses the development potential of family tourism entrepreneurship in rural mountain destinations through a comprehensive case study of Omonqo‘ton village in the Urgut district of Samarkand region, Uzbekistan. The research conducts a systematic inventory of the village’s demographic, infrastructural, and entrepreneurial resources, encompassing 689 households, 1,013 families, and 39 operating business entities. Tourist demand structure is established through survey analysis of 1,723 respondents, revealing a pronounced preference for family-oriented accommodation among visitors. A critical capacity gap is identified between projected tourist flows and existing family guesthouse supply, with 628 family-vacation respondents exceeding the receiving capacity of 293 multi-family households. The study substantiates an investment model for constructing new eco-friendly guesthouses on 1.6 hectares of currently underutilized homestead land, complemented by an integrated destination development framework addressing infrastructure modernization, equitable income distribution, environmental protection protocols, and local community engagement. Implementation projections indicate substantial employment generation potential for the village’s 28 registered unemployed residents and broader*

welfare improvements across the destination cluster encompassing Omonqo'ton, Qoratepa, and the Tersak village group.

Keywords: *rural mountain tourism, family guesthouse, destination capacity, ecotourism, Omonqo'ton, rural employment, Samarkand region, community-based tourism.*

Introduction

Mountain villages occupy a paradoxical position within national tourism development strategies. While their natural endowments, including forests, gorges, caves, waterways, and distinctive architectural traditions, constitute primary attractions for the rapidly expanding ecotourism and rural tourism segments, these same settlements frequently exhibit the weakest entrepreneurial infrastructure, the most constrained accommodation capacity, and the highest rates of labor outmigration within their respective regions [1]. Resolving this tension between attraction potential and service capacity represents a central challenge for tourism-led rural development policy.

Uzbekistan's national tourism strategy explicitly recognizes mountain village development as a priority direction. The government has pursued a deliberate policy of conferring tourist village status upon mountainous settlements, supported by Presidential Resolution PQ-3514 and subsequent regulatory instruments establishing preferential conditions for tourism-specialized rural communities [2]. The strategic objective of expanding tourism service exports to 4 billion USD necessitates substantial enlargement of the accommodation and catering base in precisely these underserved rural destinations [3].

The Samarkand region presents particularly compelling conditions for mountain village tourism development. The Urgut district, encompassing the villages of Omonqo'ton, Qoratepa, and the Tersak cluster (Yuqori Tersak, O'rta Tersak, and Tersak), combines exceptional natural resources, established although informal hospitality traditions, and proximity to Samarkand city's international tourist flows [4]. Yet systematic capacity assessments quantifying these villages' readiness to absorb projected tourist demand remain absent from the academic literature, leaving investment planning to proceed without rigorous empirical foundations.

This study addresses this analytical gap through a comprehensive capacity assessment of the Omonqo'ton village destination, integrating demographic inventory, infrastructure audit, entrepreneurship census, and tourist demand survey methodologies. The research objectives encompass: quantifying the village's existing accommodation and service capacity; establishing the structure and volume of prospective tourist demand; identifying the capacity gap between demand and supply; and formulating an evidence-based investment and development model for closing the identified gap while safeguarding environmental integrity and ensuring equitable distribution of tourism-generated income [5].

Literature Review

The conceptual foundations for rural mountain tourism analysis derive from several intersecting research traditions. The community-based tourism (CBT) paradigm, extensively developed through Central Asian applications, positions local households as the primary unit of tourism service production, with the Kyrgyz CBT network demonstrating that over 85 percent of visitor expenditure can be retained within host families when appropriate organizational structures

exist [6]. This evidence base directly informs the family guesthouse development model examined in the present study.

Destination capacity theory, originating in the carrying capacity literature and refined through the destination life cycle framework, provides analytical instruments for assessing the sustainable absorption limits of rural settlements [7]. The classification of tourist complexes by visitor capacity, distinguishing mini-complexes accommodating up to 0.5 thousand visitors, standard complexes of 0.5 to 2 thousand, macro-complexes of 2 to 5 thousand, and mega-complexes exceeding 5 thousand, offers a standardized typology for positioning village destinations within regional tourism systems [8].

Research conducted at the University of Exeter's Centre for Rural Policy Research established that tourism diversification in rural areas can simultaneously advance community interests and sustainable development objectives when local participation mechanisms are institutionalized from the planning stage [9]. Getz's analysis of family business in rural, agricultural, ecological, and extreme tourism contexts identified the innovation life cycle characteristics specific to family enterprises operating in remote destinations [10].

Within the Uzbekistan context, Ostonov's monographic research on rural tourism development characterized family entrepreneurship in village settings as property-based small business activity oriented toward defined income generation, while identifying the organizational-economic mechanisms requiring improvement for sector expansion [11]. Pardayeva's doctoral research established the integrated analytical category combining tourism, family, entrepreneurship, and innovative economy dimensions, providing the conceptual architecture within which the present destination-level analysis is situated [12]. Despite these contributions, village-level capacity assessments integrating demographic, infrastructural, and demand-side data remain exceptional in the Central Asian literature, constituting the specific gap this study addresses.

Research Methodology

2.1 Case Selection Rationale

Omonqo'ton village was selected as the focal case through a two-stage screening procedure. First, comparative assessment of tourist-geographic taxonomy across Samarkand region's mountainous settlements identified Omonqo'ton (Urgut district) and Ohalik (Samarkand district) as possessing the highest concentrations of proximate tourist objects, with five and six attractions respectively within accessible radius [13]. Second, regulatory analysis confirmed that 400 hectares of Omonqo'ton territory hold legally designated recreation zone status, with the village formally included in the family entrepreneurship tourist object registry and 25 hectares of mountainous terrain approved for recreation facility development by the Ministry of Ecology, Environmental Protection and Climate Change [14].

2.2 Data Collection Instruments

The empirical foundation integrates four complementary data streams. The demographic and infrastructure inventory draws upon mahalla administrative records covering household composition, employment status, utility provision, and land use patterns. The entrepreneurship census documents all registered business entities by organizational form and activity direction. The tourist demand survey administered a structured questionnaire to 1,723 respondents, comprising 874 men and 849 women, capturing travel companionship preferences, accommodation type selection,

duration patterns, and trip motivations [15]. Geospatial verification employed satellite cartography to confirm the ecotourism zone designation according to location-based taxonomic criteria.

2.3 Analytical Framework

The capacity gap analysis compares survey-derived demand projections against inventoried supply, applying the improved three-method integrated approach for determining tourist territory effectiveness in mountainous contexts. This methodology combines tourist-geographic taxon analysis, attraction concentration assessment, and demand-supply reconciliation to generate investment requirement estimates [16].

Analysis and Results

3.1 Village Resource Inventory

Table 1 presents the consolidated demographic and entrepreneurial profile of Omonqo‘ton village, establishing the baseline resource endowment available for tourism development.

Table 1. Omonqo‘ton Village: Demographic and Entrepreneurial Resource Profile

Indicator	Value	Tourism development implication
Households	689	Potential guesthouse conversion base
Families	1,013	Family labor supply for enterprises
Multi-family households (2+)	293	Priority accommodation candidates
Population	3,582	Local service workforce
Employed residents	1,665	Existing economic activity base
Working abroad	52	Potential return migration on job creation
Registered unemployed	28	Immediate employment absorption target
Business entities (total)	39	Entrepreneurial foundation
— Small business entities	14	Scalable enterprise core
— Individual entrepreneurs	25	Family enterprise candidates
Service entities (incl. catering)	17	Hospitality service nucleus
Homestead land	22 ha	Productive asset base
Underutilized homestead land	1.6 ha / 45 households	Guesthouse construction reserve

Source: Compiled from mahalla administrative records and field inventory [17].

The inventory reveals a village specialized primarily in tourism development and juniper sapling cultivation, with livestock breeding as the supplementary direction. Notably, 585 households, representing 85 percent of the total, are engaged in activities aligned with the mahalla’s

designated specialization, indicating strong baseline alignment between local economic structure and tourism development objectives [17]. The entrepreneurial base of 39 entities, while modest, is dominated by service-oriented activity, with 17 of the total operating in services including public catering, providing an embryonic hospitality nucleus.

3.2 Infrastructure Constraints

Table 2. Infrastructure Provision Assessment

Infrastructure component	Provision level	Investment priority
Electricity supply	100%	Adequate — maintenance only
Liquefied gas supply	100%	Adequate (no natural gas: 0%)
Drinking water supply	70%	High — 30% coverage gap
Sewerage system	Absent	Critical — full system required
Internal road surfacing	0%	Critical — complete construction

Source: Field infrastructure audit [18].

The infrastructure assessment exposes a sharply bifurcated provision profile. Energy supply is fully adequate, with universal electricity coverage and complete liquefied gas access. However, the complete absence of sewerage infrastructure and unsurfaced internal roads, combined with a 30 percent drinking water coverage gap, constitute binding constraints on accommodation quality standards required for international visitor segments [18]. These deficits define the priority allocation for the state investment component of the proposed development model.

3.3 Tourist Demand Structure

The survey of 1,723 respondents establishes the demand-side parameters for capacity planning. The dominant finding concerns travel companionship structure: respondents overwhelmingly selected family-accompanied vacation formats, with 628 respondents explicitly preferring family-based recreation requiring family guesthouse accommodation [19]. Educational composition skewed toward bachelor degree holders among the predominantly employed respondent base, indicating a demand segment with moderate-to-high service quality expectations and corresponding willingness to pay.

Annual travel periodicity analysis enables tourist flow forecasting for capacity dimensioning, while preference distributions across accommodation alternatives, including camping formats for respondents selecting independent or group travel with outdoor recreation orientations, inform the product portfolio composition for the destination [19]. The demand evidence directly supports prioritizing family guesthouse development as the principal accommodation investment direction, with supplementary camping capacity calibrated to the gender-balanced independent traveler segment.

3.4 Capacity Gap Identification

Reconciling demand projections against supply inventory reveals the central quantitative finding of this study. The 628 family-vacation respondents represent demand pressure that the existing stock of 293 multi-family households cannot absorb, even under the optimistic assumption that all such households convert to guesthouse operation [20]. This structural capacity deficit necessitates new construction rather than conversion-only strategies.

Table 3. Development Reserves and Investment Opportunities

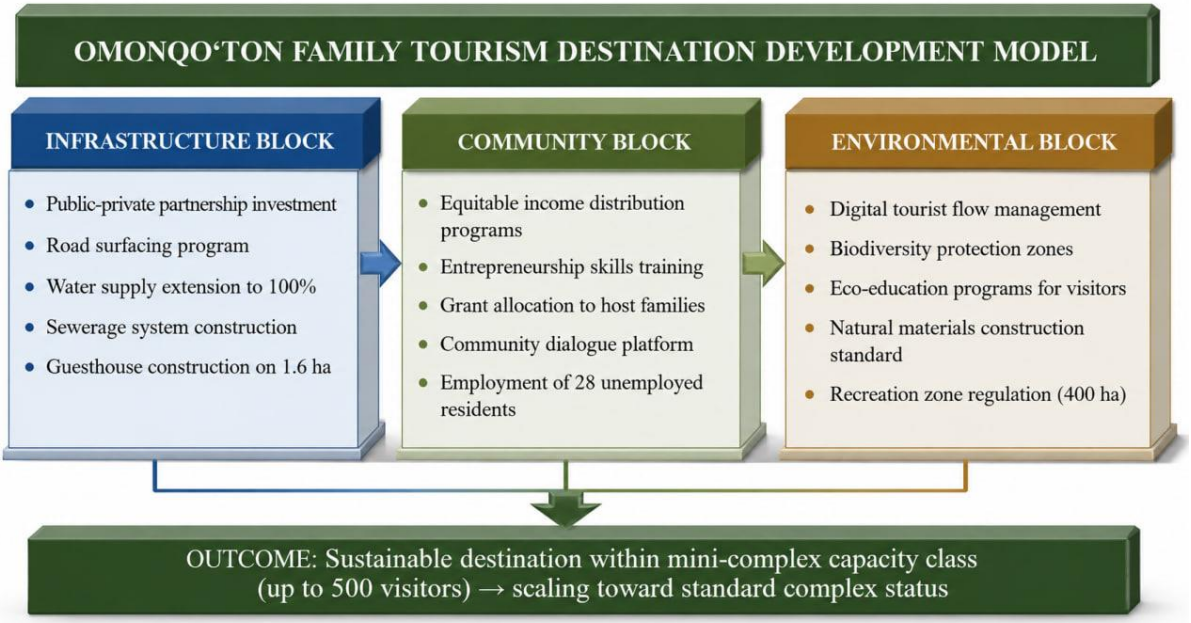
Reserve category	Quantity	Unit
Vacant state property objects	2	units
Vacant non-residential private property	1 / 2,500	units / sq.m
Vacant land for production/service facilities (E-auction)	1 / 6	units / sq.m
Unfinished non-residential private construction	1 / 150	units / sq.m
Suspended family enterprise entities	1	units
Under-capacity operating enterprises	1	units
Underutilized homestead land	1.6	hectares

Source: Compiled from E-auction registry and mahalla records [21].

The reserve inventory identifies 1.6 hectares of underutilized homestead land distributed across 45 households as the principal construction resource. The proposed investment model directs state-allocated funding toward erecting new family guesthouses on these parcels using natural, environmentally clean construction materials, simultaneously addressing the capacity deficit, activating idle land assets, and generating construction-phase and operations-phase employment [21].

3.5 Integrated Destination Development Model

Figure 1. Integrated Development Model for the Omonqo‘ton Family Tourism Destination



Source: Developed by the author based on field research [22].

The integrated model addresses the documented tendency, confirmed through longitudinal observation in the destination, whereby initially positive local attitudes toward tourism deteriorate as visitor volumes intensify pressure on environmental and natural resources [22]. By embedding environmental protection protocols and equitable benefit distribution mechanisms within the

development architecture from inception, the model aims to sustain community support through the destination growth trajectory.

Within the standard tourist complex capacity typology, the Omonqo‘ton destination initially positions as a mini-complex accommodating up to 500 visitors, with the medium-term development pathway targeting graduation to standard complex status of 500 to 2,000 visitors as infrastructure investments mature and the guesthouse stock expands [23]. This phased scaling approach prevents the premature volume expansion that the destination life cycle literature associates with environmental degradation and community alienation.

3.6 Cluster Extension Pathway

The Omonqo‘ton model is designed for replication across the broader village cluster encompassing Qoratepa, Yuqori Tersak, O‘rta Tersak, and Tersak. Within this cluster, qualified porter service complexes at family enterprise facilities and family-operated public catering points introducing new tourist catering services constitute the priority service innovations, directly supporting the national objective of expanding tourism service exports toward the 4 billion USD program target [24]. Pilot implementation evidence from the cluster, including the Tersak Waterfalls family tourism enterprise, demonstrates the practical viability of the methodological recommendations within operating business contexts [25].

Conclusions and Recommendations

This study has produced the first comprehensive capacity assessment of a mountain village family tourism destination in the Samarkand region, generating empirically grounded foundations for investment planning. The principal findings and their policy implications are summarized as follows.

First, Omonqo‘ton village possesses a strong but incomplete resource foundation for family tourism development. The alignment of 85 percent of households with the tourism-oriented mahalla specialization, the existing nucleus of 17 service enterprises, and the legally designated 400-hectare recreation zone constitute substantial assets. However, the complete absence of sewerage and surfaced roads, alongside the 30 percent drinking water gap, presently constrains the destination below international accommodation standards [26].

Second, demand-supply reconciliation identifies a structural accommodation deficit: 628 surveyed family-vacation preferences exceed the conversion capacity of 293 multi-family households, mandating new construction. The 1.6 hectares of underutilized homestead land across 45 households provides the construction resource for closing this gap through eco-material guesthouse development [27].

Third, the integrated three-block development model, coordinating infrastructure, community, and environmental interventions, offers a transferable template for the broader village cluster and analogous mountain destinations nationally [28].

Based on these findings, the following recommendations are advanced:

Recommendation 1: Allocate state investment, structured through public-private partnership, to the priority infrastructure sequence of internal road surfacing, sewerage system construction, and drinking water extension, as preconditions for guesthouse quality certification [29].

Recommendation 2: Implement the homestead guesthouse construction program on the identified 1.6 hectares, applying natural clean-material construction standards and prioritizing the 45 households holding underutilized parcels as enterprise owners [30].

Recommendation 3: Establish the community dialogue platform and equitable income distribution program before visitor volume scaling, institutionalizing local participation to sustain community support through destination growth [31].

Recommendation 4: Deploy digital tourist flow management within the 400-hectare recreation zone, with biodiversity protection sub-zones, to maintain the destination within sustainable carrying capacity as it scales from mini-complex toward standard complex classification [32].

Recommendation 5: Extend the validated model to the Qoratepa and Tersak village cluster, introducing porter service complexes and family catering points as the service innovation vector supporting national tourism export objectives [33].

Future research should establish longitudinal monitoring of community attitudes and environmental indicators as visitor volumes grow, enabling adaptive recalibration of the carrying capacity thresholds, and should extend the capacity assessment methodology to comparative application across Uzbekistan's designated tourist villages for national prioritization of investment allocation.

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