

THE IMPORTANCE OF DIGITAL MARKETING AND TECHNOLOGY IN UZBEKISTAN

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ABSTRACT

Uzbekistan may greatly benefit from obtaining Turkey's advanced technological knowledge and skills. In addition to the progress of traditional industry inside the nation, it is crucial for the Uzbek government to give priority to the development of research and technology. Furthermore, it is imperative for the government to give precedence to the establishment and enlargement of technology parks. Multiple studies on the marketing and technology of Uzbekistan have been examined in the literature. As a result of the review, literature studies in these areas were found to be very few. The aim of the study is to encourage studies in these areas in the literature. To understand Uzbekistan more deeply, it is necessary to focus on studies that use digital technologies. The technologies that require more investigation encompass the metaverse, artificial intelligence, metahumans, augmented reality, virtual reality, blockchain, and cyber security. In this research, marketing and innovation techniques in Uzbekistan were examined, an overview of the situation was presented, and the use of digital technologies in Uzbekistan was investigated. Furthermore, comprehensive research was undertaken to identify the key technologies that Uzbekistan should prioritize to expedite its progress in the digital era.

Keywords: Digital Marketing, Uzbekistan, Digital Technologies, Augmented Reality.

ÖZBEKİSTAN'DA DİJİTAL PAZARLAMA VE TEKNOLOJİNİN ÖNEMİ

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ÖZET

Özbekistan, Türkiye'nin ileri teknolojik bilgi ve becerilerini elde etmekten büyük fayda sağlayabilir. Ülke içinde geleneksel sanayinin gelişmesinin yanı sıra, Özbek hükümetinin araştırma ve teknolojinin gelişmesine öncelik vermesi de hayati önem taşıyor. Ayrıca devletin teknoloji parklarının kurulmasına ve genişletilmesine öncelik vermesi zorunludur. Literatürde Özbekistan'ın pazarlaması ve teknolojisine ilişkin çok sayıda çalışma incelenmiştir. İnceleme sonucunda bu alanlardaki literatür çalışmaları çok az bulunmuştur. Çalışmanın amacı literatürde bu alanlarda çalışma yapılmasına teşvik etmektir. Özbekistan'ı daha derinlemesine anlamak için dijital teknolojileri kullanan çalışmalara ağırlık vermek gerekiyor. Daha fazla araştırma gerektiren teknolojiler arasında metaverse, yapay zeka, meta insanlar, artırılmış gerçeklik, sanal gerçeklik, blok zinciri ve siber güvenlik yer alıyor. Bu çalışmada, Özbekistan'daki pazarlama ve inovasyon teknikleri incelenmiş, duruma ilişkin genel bir bakış sunulmuş ve Özbekistan'da dijital teknolojilerin kullanımı incelenmiştir. Bununla beraber Özbekistan'ın dijital çağdaki ilerlemesini hızlandırmak için öncelik vermesi gereken temel teknolojileri belirlemek amacıyla kapsamlı bir araştırma yapılmıştır.

Anahtar Kelimeler: Dijital Pazarlama, Özbekistan, Dijital Teknolojiler, Artırılmış Gerçeklik.

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1. INTRODUCTION

Due to growing industrialization and globalization, commercial interactions between countries have become increasingly significant. With the increasing need for resources to suit people's consumption requirements and the advancements in technology, international commerce has gained more significance. Uzbekistan, which achieved independence following the fall of the Soviet Union, became a new participant in the international trading system (Hepaktan 2016).

The main sectors of industry in Uzbekistan are agricultural machinery, chemical industry, vehicle manufacturing, metallurgy, and textile production. The textile industry is a promising sector for growth in the country. Despite substantial investments, the current capacity does not meet the intended level. The country has the capacity to process a limited quantity of cotton and cotton yarn. Uzbekistan's economy relies significantly on heavy industries. The country dominates two-thirds of the equipment sector in Central Asia. It is a trailblazer in the manufacturing of agricultural equipment. Furthermore, the nation is home to the sole aviation industrial facility in Central Asia, which manufactures airplanes, electric cranes, high-capacity transformers, and cranes (Balcioglu 2019).

Following the fall of Tsarist Russia and the establishment of the union of soviet socialist republics (USSR), Turkic governments with artificial borders established themselves in Turkestan, while Russia attempted to ethnically divide the Turkish population. Turkish states achieved independence with the collapse of the USSR but faced pressure and targeting from Russia and China. After the lengthy dominance of Tsarism and the USSR, the autonomous Turkish nations, which were fearful of Russia, were also technologically dependent on Russia. China prioritizes Turkestan as part of the New Silk Road project. Indeed, the New Silk Road Project's most essential route runs via East and West Turkestan. Uzbekistan is critical to the success of the Western Turkestan initiative. Uzbekistan plays an important geopolitical role because of its subsurface and aboveground resources, as well as its geographical location (Budulgan 2020). Following the fall of the USSR, Uzbekistan achieved political freedom and started the transition towards a free market economy. During the economic transformation of independent Uzbekistan, there was a focus on achieving political stability after gaining independence. The country pursued its own path in terms of economy, politics, and society, transitioning from authoritarianism to democracy and from communism to a market economy (Kurt 2019).

In the literature, marketing studies for Uzbekistan have been investigated. It has been established that there are few investigations on this topic in the literature. Durukan & Hamurcu (2009) employed the Herfindahl-Hirschman Index analytical approach to ascertain the topologies and concentration rates of mobile communication markets in five countries in Turkey and the Central Asian Turkish Republics. In addition, they conducted a comparative analysis of the mobile communication markets in Turkey, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan, Turkmenistan, and Uzbekistan. Mexmonov (2020) analyzed the stages of growth of the Republic of Uzbekistan's stock market and the effectiveness of this effort, as well as the president's crucial choices.

Tillyaxodjayev (2020) regarded the operations of the Republic of Uzbekistan's sports federations as the primary bodies in charge of sport development. Furthermore, he investigated the significance of marketing communications, the interrelationship of elements influencing the popularity and mass features of sports and created an adapted model of the marketing complex for use by Uzbek sports federations. Yigit et al. (2020) utilized augmented reality (AR) to create a three-dimensional representation of the Chashma-Ayub Mausoleum, located in Bukhara, Uzbekistan. They used the close-range photogrammetry method to do 3D model analyses in augmented reality and conservation or restoration studies of cultural artifacts after the study was over. Sharopova (2021) conducted a comprehensive analysis of marketing tactics and international practices to enhance the market for preschool education services in Uzbekistan. Furthermore, she conducted an analysis of the level of demand for preschool education services in Uzbekistan and examined the patterns in the evolution of the competitive landscape within this market.

Aydin & Bashimov (2022) assessed Uzbekistan's competitiveness in cherries among the chosen export nations. The study made use of the Revealed Comparative Advantage Index. Bashimov (2023) examined the time span from 2000 to 2020, utilizing data obtained from the FAO and UN Comtrade databases. He utilized the Revealed Comparative Advantages (RCA) index to assess the data. As a result, he found that Uzbekistan possessed a comparative advantage in all the fresh fruit crops under consideration. Based on his analytical findings, Uzbekistan has a significant comparative advantage in exporting apricots, cherries, peaches, and grapes, while demonstrating a very small comparative advantage in exporting apples. To enhance the country's export performance, it is essential to broaden the export market and introduce additional high-quality fruit types. Cengiz Toklu (2023) assessed the scientific and technological achievements of the member nations of the Organization of Turkic States, namely Azerbaijan, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Uzbekistan, and Turkey, based on certain parameters.

Marketing and innovative strategies in Uzbekistan are examined in Section 2. Digital technologies for Uzbekistan are the subject of the third section. Furthermore, the significance of digital technology was highlighted. The fourth section is the conclusion.

2. MARKETING AND INNOVATIVE STRATEGIES IN UZBEKISTAN

Uzbekistan has a strong potential for increasing production of ecologically friendly horticulture and animal goods, supplying them to the public, and promoting them in international markets. From 2017 to 2021, the Republic of Uzbekistan's development strategy in five main directions prioritized modernization and intense growth of the country's agriculture and processing industries, as well as their creative development. They aim to enhance the agriculture sector, boost the country's food security, increase export potential, and raise population living standards. The government places special emphasis on optimizing cultivated areas, increasing food acreage, developing intensive gardening, reclamation, animal breeding, deep conversion, and agricultural

product storage (Yuldashev et al., 2019). Since tourism is significant in terms of both marketing and innovative strategies, it is essential to investigate the tourist industry in Uzbekistan.

Presently, the growth of tourism in the country is hindered by several deficiencies, one of which is the unequal allocation of tourist resources throughout the nation's area. The primary facilities and resources of tourist enterprises are in Tashkent, Bukhara, Samarkand, and Khorezm regions, accounting for 70% of the total. However, the tourism sector's potential for generating income is limited due to the inadequate tourism infrastructure in the country. The quality and pricing of services provided to foreign tourists are imbalanced. Furthermore, there is a lack of marketing research to analyze the supply and demand in the tourism market. Uzbekistan's national tourism lacks a distinct brand, resulting in low competitiveness in global tourism markets. The flow of tourists to Uzbekistan is seasonal, and the duration of the tourist season is short. The country is also lagging in adopting international standards for tourist services. Additionally, there is a low level of advertising and information support in the field of tourism (Azimovna et al. 2022).

Markets are of utmost importance in the daily lives of Uzbek Turks. Today, just as in previous periods, the public markets continue to be obsessed. That's why there are proverbs specifically tailored for the marketplace. There are several marketplaces within the city. This list includes several cities, including Tashkent, Samarkand, Bukhara, Khiva, Andijan, Namangan, Fergana, Kokand, and Urgench. Tashkent is home to several local markets, including Arsu, Bes Agac, Alaybazar, Mirabad Market, Askiya, Ferhat Market, Parkent Market, and Kuyluk Market. Individuals who are experiencing financial difficulties are more likely to value shopping at this establishment. Individuals vend the commodities and assets they generate at their residences and vineyards at these markets. Agriculture has a crucial role in the economy of Uzbekistan. The primary commodities in the nation are cotton and grain. Agriculture employs 26% of the workforce. Marketplaces provide a diverse array of sales. Various commodities, such as household supplies, apparel, food, literature, and other stuff (Kirbasoglu 2023).

The components of a 'tourism destination' are a defining trait. Market knowledge is a crucial asset for marketing endeavors. Securing this knowledge entails a multi-step procedure: doing thorough market research, segmenting the market, and strategically placing the product inside the market (Navruz-Zoda & Navruz-Zoda 2016). Uzbekistan possesses a plethora of natural and cultural variety, which entices travelers seeking genuine and environmentally friendly encounters. This variety includes distinct habitats, fauna, cultural heritage locations, and indigenous communities. Uzbekistan's abundant cultural and natural legacy renders it a compelling ecotourism destination. The main emphasis of ecotourism in Uzbekistan is on the preservation and exploration of the country's national parks, wildlife reserves, and cultural monuments (Yuliarni et al. 2023).

Uzbekistan's labor sector faces many challenges, including ineffective employment and rising structural unemployment, inadequate worker qualifications and working conditions, low labor productivity, high income inequality, insufficient human capital investment, significant social and labor relations imbalances, and growing regional labor market disparities. In this context, the republic must protect, improve, and wisely use worker capability.

Tashkent started the global trend of creative employment, although it's fragmented, isolated, and unplanned. This tendency needs institutionalization and specific incentive mechanisms to grow. However, the employment sector has the potential to obstruct sustained socio-economic progress, particularly in the area of innovation. The future growth and worldwide economic integration of Uzbekistan cannot be guaranteed without this. The country's competitiveness depends on a competent, inventive, mobile, production-driven, and steady workforce (Abdurakhmanov & Zokirova 2019).

The extensive historical timeline of the Uzbeks has always seen the coexistence and collaboration of individuals from other nations and religions, fostering peaceful and amicable relationships among people of different nationalities and faiths. Uzbekistan's diplomatic ties have consistently been free from any conflicts arising from religious differences (Muhammadsidikov 2015). Because of its geographical location, Uzbekistan holds a significant position in the Asian area because of its geographical location. The Silk Road route and its wealth of subsurface resources further enhance Uzbekistan's significance. Furthermore, its position in the Transoxiana area is significant for both the culture of Turkey and the civilization of Islam. Within the realms of culture, religion, language, and history, it serves as a foundation (Avsar 2022). With Uzbekistan's independence, the primary goal of government policies was to initiate a restructuring process that would enable the country's transition to a market economy, as well as to make the country's economy appealing to foreign capital by creating joint investment opportunities (Abdullaeva 2007).

Sustainable tourism is now one of the fastest-growing trends in the tourist services business. In many regions, the process of introducing tourism to the market as a stagnating zone is underway, with the primary goal of satisfying the demands and requirements of the current generation while protecting the interests of future generations. Thus, a sustainable tourist complex must include both the long-term advantages and downsides (Teshabaev & Yulchiev 2022). The creation of new opportunities helps to mobilize massive domestic and international investments, which are then directed toward the development of new industries, the creation of jobs in cities and villages, the improvement of infrastructure, the creation of healthy competition in the financial markets (banking, non-banking, and capital markets), and the growth of taxes collected (Kayimova & Bakayeva, 2022).

3. DIGITAL TECHNOLOGIES FOR UZBEKISTAN

Since the early 2000s, the Republic of Uzbekistan has prioritized the digitization and growth of information-communication technologies (ICT). The digital plan outlines five key areas for development: digital infrastructure, e-government, digital economy, national IT industry, and IT education. Furthermore, the country's digital and IT infrastructure has significantly advanced, with a substantial investment of resources that has established a strong basis for an upgraded ICT environment. In a very short timeframe, Uzbekistan has made significant progress in the field of

digitalization and ICT development (Gulyamov et al., 2023). To facilitate the advancement of marketing and innovation initiatives, Uzbekistan must prioritize digital technologies.

When it comes to the execution of sustainable marketing strategies, the impact of artificial intelligence (AI) on consumer habits, company models, sales processes, and customer service alternatives is of the utmost importance. The most popular technology in this field right now is AI. In the subject of marketing, there has been a proliferation of academic research involving intelligent systems and AI. These investigations have revealed that AI has the potential to imitate human behavior and carry out tasks with "intelligent" accuracy (Aydin et al. 2023). A virtual reality (VR), AR, and mixed reality stage is necessary for the metaverse to go from an idea to a reality. Virtual environmental settings comprise the technical foundation to a certain extent. Technologies such as Metaverse will play a significant role in the development of the new internet. Users will be able to have an experience that is more realistic and unforgettable thanks to VR, which will also make the functioning of the virtual world more akin to the actual world (Nalbant & Uyanik 2021).

The availability of these opportunities offered by the metaverse has led to the emergence of several novel concepts. Metahuman, blockchain, and NFT are among the examples. Furthermore, the notion of Web 3.0 has begun to acquire substantial significance. A metahuman is essentially a computer replica of ourselves, enabling us to dwell within virtual realms. Blockchain is a highly transparent and immutable network that facilitates the recording of transactions and the tracking of assets. Being a metahuman entails transcending mental constraints and attaining an elevated level of consciousness, enabling purposeful and tangible access to extraordinary experiences that have the potential to profoundly change individuals' lives from the inside (Nalbant & Uyanik 2022). The metaverse will not supplant the internet or the "social media" structure at its core; rather, it will augment the internet and metamorphose it into a three-dimensional online social media ecosystem teeming with innovative and captivating user experiences. Within the realm of real-world businesses, the metaverse can function as a vast experimental space that offers direct access to demographic segments, notably those consisting of younger individuals. Many applications have, are, and will continue to use artificial intelligence-enabled computers. For forthcoming marketing endeavors to achieve success, it is imperative to implement and further advance artificial intelligence technology. Artificial intelligence-powered software enables businesses to optimize their daily operations. This results in cost savings, accelerated product delivery, and increased productivity (Nalbant & Aydin 2023).

Numerous studies have been conducted on digital marketing that makes use of digital technologies. Numerous digital technologies are discussed in these studies, including the metaverse, augmented reality, virtual reality, blockchain, and metahuman (Rathore 2018; Dumitriu & Popescu, 2020; Jain et al. 2021; Saura et al. 2021; Luangrath et al. 2022; Aydin & Nalbant 2023; Nalbant et al. 2023; Zaki et al. 2023; Javeed et al. 2024; Nalbant & Aydin 2024; Aydin 2024).

Augmented reality (AR) enhances the actual world by overlaying virtual material, such as text, photos, music, or 3D models, over real-world imagery. AR technology may be utilized to visually display the spatial positions and chronological connections of maps, buildings, and other three-dimensional items. The close-range photogrammetry approach, commonly employed in geomatics engineering, allows AR users to visually analyze the 3D transformations occurring in historical structures and geographical regions. Photogrammetry is a scientific method that accurately determines the position and coordinates of an item in space by analyzing at least two photographs taken from different perspectives. Photogrammetry is categorized into two branches: close-range photogrammetry and aerial photogrammetry, based on the place where the photographs are captured. Close-range photogrammetry techniques have gained significant importance in recent years, serving as a crucial and foundational step in studies related to AR and digital archiving. The use of close-range photogrammetry techniques in AR and documentation research pertaining to cultural heritage has notably contributed to the expedited progress of 3D modeling and documentation studies, owing to the enhanced accessibility of prompt and precise data. 3D models associated with cultural heritage are highly efficient at delivering intricate and lifelike visuals in AR applications (Yigit et al. 2020).

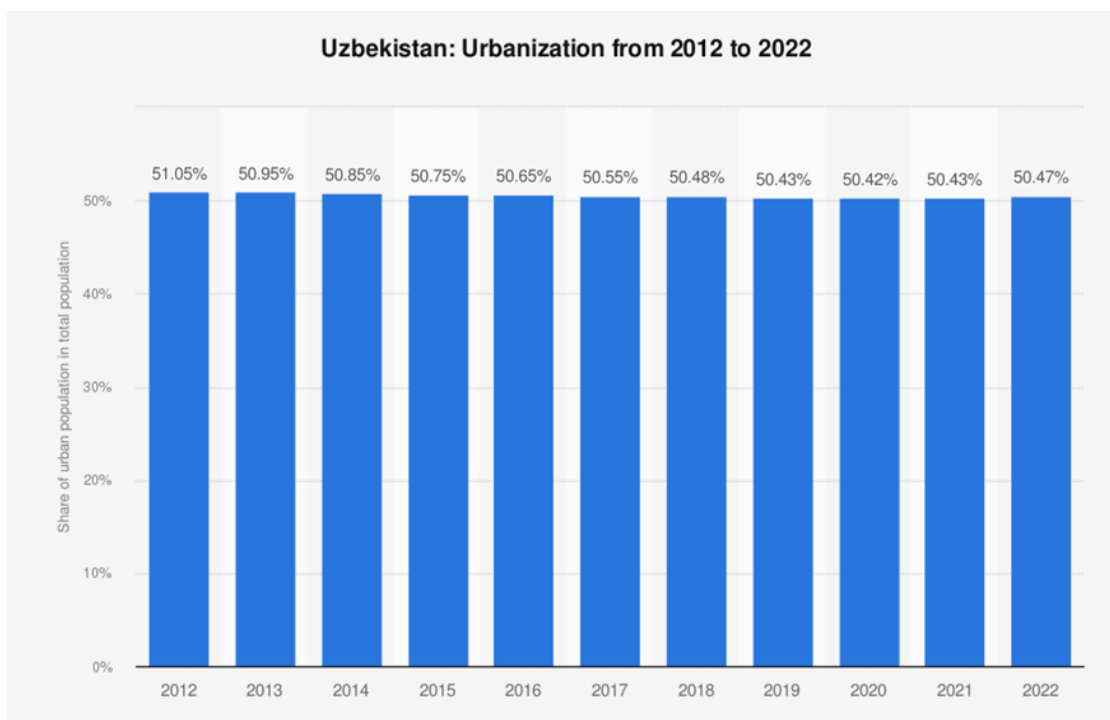


Figure 1: Uzbekistan: Urbanization from 2012 to 2022 (O'Neill, 2024)

In 2022, the urban population of Uzbekistan remained relatively stable, at around 50.47 percent (Figure 1). Nevertheless, in 2022, there was a second consecutive rise in the proportion. An urban population can be categorized based on the size (people or area) or population density of the village, town, or city.

The urbanization rate is the proportion of the entire population residing in urban areas. International comparisons may lack consistency due to differences in the characteristics used to define metropolitan centers (O'Neill, 2024).

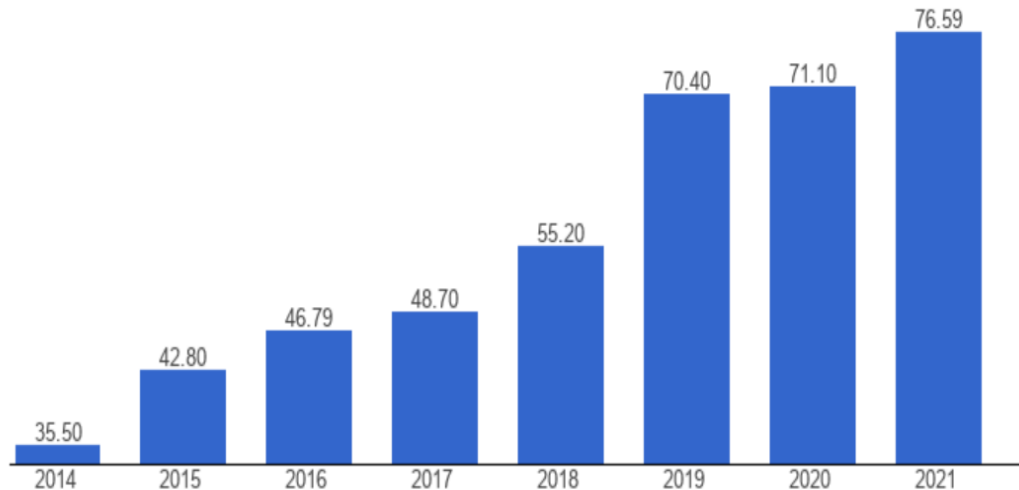


Figure 2: Internet users, percent of population (Theglobaleconomy, 2024)

The data for Uzbekistan is available for the specified indicator from 1990 to 2021 (Figure 2). Uzbekistan's average value throughout that period was 18.03 percent, reaching a minimum of 0 percent in 1990 and a top of 76.59 percent in 2021. The most recent data point from 2021 indicates a value of 76.59 percent. According to data from 178 countries, the global average in 2021 will be 69.80 percent (Theglobaleconomy, 2024). The implications of the research indicate that technology's importance has increased.

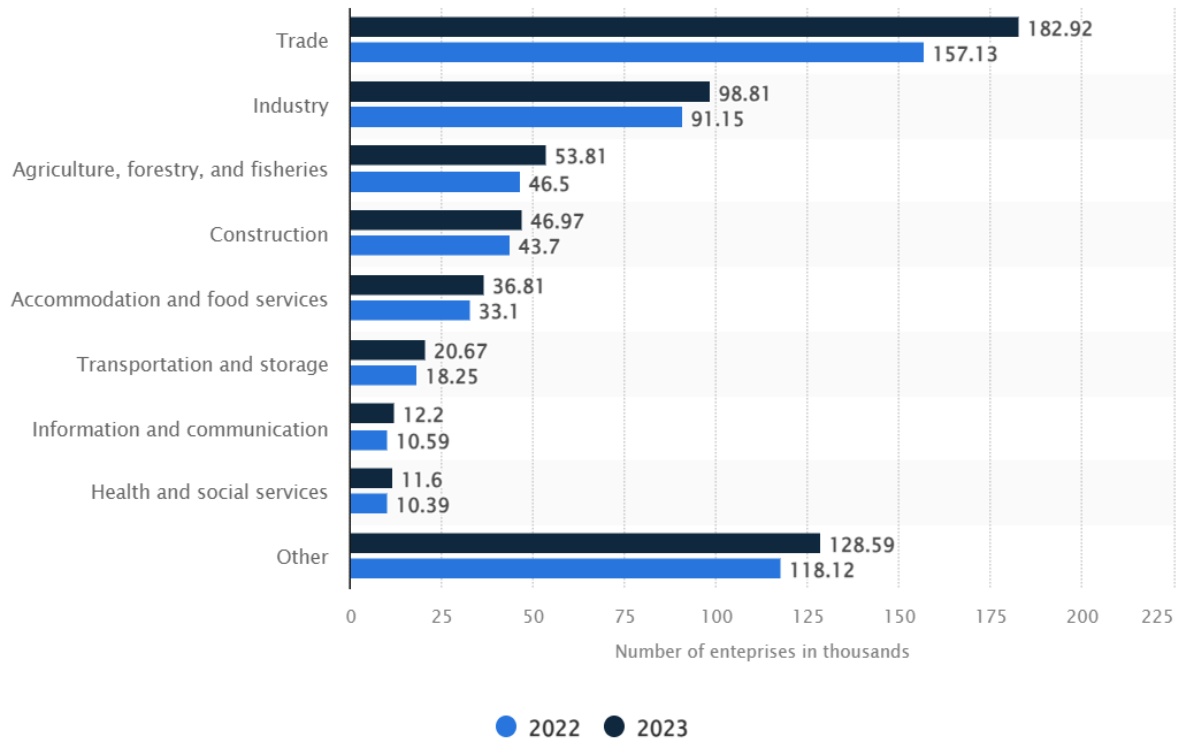


Figure 3: Sectoral breakdown of the number of enterprises in Uzbekistan in 2022-2023 (Statista Research Department, 2023a)

The commerce sector has the biggest number of registered firms in Uzbekistan, with almost 183 thousand as of January 1, 2023 (Figure 3). With around 99 thousand enterprises, the industrial sector had the second highest number. In all the industries, the number of functioning firms increased over the previous year. For example, the number of business establishments increased by 16% (Statista Research Department, 2023a).

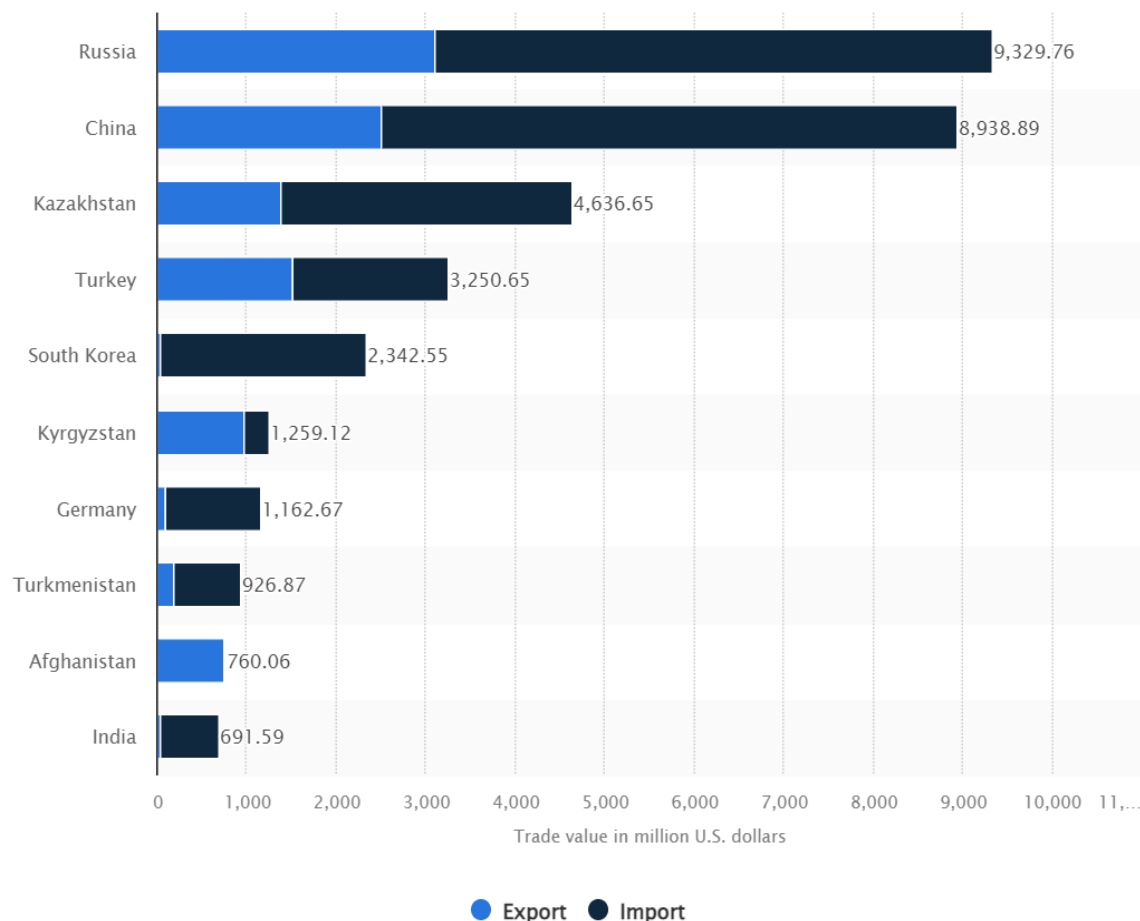


Figure 4. Uzbekistan's trade in commodities and services in 2022: value, country, and flow (Statista Research Department, 2023b)

Russia was Uzbekistan's top commercial partner, with exports and imports totaling around 9.33 billion USD (Figure 4). In addition, Russia was Uzbekistan's top export partner and second-largest import partner. Uzbekistan's other important trading ties included China, Kazakhstan, Turkey, and South Korea. (Statista Research Department, 2023b).

4. CONCLUSION

It would be beneficial for Uzbekistan to learn from Turkey's advanced technological knowledge. In addition to the development of traditional production in the nation, the Uzbek government ought to place a significant amount of weight on the production of science and technology. Furthermore, the government ought to place a significant amount of significance on the establishment and growth of technology parks.

Uzbekistan is still regarded as one of the countries with the lowest income, even though the economy is rising at a rapid rate. The most significant commodities that our country sends to Uzbekistan are things like pharmaceuticals, agricultural machinery, baby diapers, supplies for

greenhouses, machines for grinding grain, paint fixatives, construction materials, polyester, and certain chemical compounds. These are the products that are of the utmost importance. If Uzbekistan is serious about dominating a sizeable segment of the international market, it is necessary for the country to invest a large amount of focus on digital marketing.

Over the course of the published literature, several studies that have been carried out on Uzbekistan's marketing and technology have been examined. According to the conclusions of the study that has been done, there have not been very many studies that have been carried out on this subject. Putting more of a focus on studies that make use of digital technologies is essential if one wants to get a deeper comprehension of Uzbekistan. The metaverse, artificial intelligence, metahumans, augmented reality, virtual reality, blockchain, and cyber security are only a few of the technologies that require more investigation. It is required to do research on a wide variety of technologies. The digital marketing industry is anticipated to undergo a significant transformation because of the implementation of these technologies.

Applied studies on digital technologies in the realm of digital marketing are the ideas for future studies that have been made by Uzbekistan. In light of the fact that there are not many studies that have been conducted on Uzbekistan, the literature on this subject will be enriched by research findings on digital marketing. Additionally, research on digital marketing and technology may be carried out in an international setting.

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