

THE STRATEGIC ROLE OF MEGA EVENTS AND SPECIALIZED FORUMS IN SUSTAINABLE TOURISM

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Abstract: The global travel and hospitality industry undergoes continuous academic and structural evolution. This research paper investigates the strategic execution of event tourism and its capacity to generate socioeconomic growth for host destinations. By conducting a comparative analysis of three distinct event typologies namely International Expos specialized HoReCa exhibitions and intellectually driven Hotel Business Forums this study delineates their specific contributions to regional infrastructure and technological modernization in the Republic of Uzbekistan. Utilizing empirical observations from the 2026 hospitality landscape in Central Asia the paper examines how these platforms facilitate the integration of Artificial Intelligence and optimize the hospitality supply chain. The findings indicate that while macro scale events establish long term destination branding specialized professional forums catalyze immediate operational upgrades and intellectual capital accumulation.

Keywords: Event tourism, sustainable hospitality, artificial intelligence, destination branding, foreign investment, smart tourism, regional development

The contemporary tourism and hospitality sector relies fundamentally upon systematic innovation and international institutional collaboration. Globally competitive destinations seek not only to attract baseline leisure travelers but also to position themselves as foundational commercial hubs within the international economy. In this strategic context event tourism functions as a primary mechanism for regional repositioning. Hosting high level international gatherings obligates a host destination to accelerate its development parameters by upgrading public infrastructure refining institutional service standards and adopting advanced technological frameworks. However critical analysis demonstrates that different event models serve divergent structural purposes. To fully evaluate the mechanism of destination evolution it is scientifically necessary to analyze the distinct functions of macro scale International Expos supply chain focused HoReCa exhibitions and strategically oriented Hotel Business Forums. This paper presents a rigorous comparative framework utilizing verified data from the 2026 industry cycle in Uzbekistan to demonstrate how these platforms synergistically secure sustainable tourism expansion.

An International Expo represents the most expansive and transformative mega event that a sovereign destination can register. These extensive undertakings require multiple years of strategic planning and substantial macroeconomic capital allocation primarily aimed at elevating the global destination branding of the host city. The academic literature confirms that when a municipality hosts an event of this magnitude it accelerates its urban development trajectory by multiple decades. The rapid construction of advanced airports smart city zones and high capacity mass transit networks establishes a permanent physical legacy that serves the tourism infrastructure long after the operational closure of the event pavilions. Furthermore an Expo functions as a universal platform for international asset visualization attracting millions of foreign consumers and inducing direct capital injection

into the domestic marketplace. Within the context of Uzbekistan the government strategy explicitly targets making Tashkent and Samarkand centers for mega events which directly correlates with the statistical achievement of welcoming over eleven million foreign citizens for tourism purposes throughout the previous operational year. The ultimate efficacy of an Expo relies upon sustainable post event planning paradigms. The built environment must be systematically converted into permanent technology parks cultural centers or commercial districts to ensure these structures remain productive assets rather than turning into projects that burden public resources.

While macro scale Expos address global public audiences and sovereign infrastructure HoReCa exhibitions operate directly within the operational core of the hospitality supply chain. Representing the interconnected Hotel Restaurant and Cafe sectors these specialized trade exhibitions organize interactions exclusively for business to business entities connecting domestic operators with international equipment manufacturers. Verified empirical data from the HoReCa Uzbekistan 2026 exhibition hosted at the Uzexpocentre in Tashkent illustrates how these specialized forums induce immediate modernization within regional tourism infrastructure. Industrial participants demonstrate contemporary advancements in commercial refrigeration automated food processing technology and systemic hospitality franchises. By providing regional hoteliers and culinary executives with unmediated access to global manufacturing networks these exhibitions remove logistical friction points and elevate the standard of local gastronomy and service delivery. This continuous iteration of operational upgrading is crucial for sustaining a competitive destination posture ensuring the local market complies with the rigorous quality expectations of international corporate and leisure tourists who increasingly demand smart integration and automated inventory accounting across all food and beverage sectors. Complementing physical infrastructure and material supply chains the Hotel Business Forum serves as the primary intellectual matrix of the hospitality discipline. Whereas an International Expo engages the broader public and a HoReCa exhibition modernizes

mechanical assets a professional business forum targets human capital development and macroeconomic management strategy. This dynamic is highly visible in the proceedings of the VII Hotel Business Forum conducted at Hilton Tashkent City in February 2026 which gathered over one thousand participants and representatives from seventeen countries. The overarching scientific discourse of the forum focused on Artificial Intelligence as the new trend in tourism and hospitality. These specialized assemblies gather executive leadership from prominent global hotel networks including Hilton Wyndham Banyan Group Radisson InterContinental and Marriott International to establish the future operational parameters of the industry. The academic dialogues prioritize the transfer of knowledge regarding digital transformation ecologically sustainable management systems and advanced workforce training. By evaluating the capacity of automated algorithms to optimize property management systems and personalize consumer experiences while minimizing environmental degradation these forums guarantee that a destination expands its strategic intelligence rather than merely its physical volume.

To systematically differentiate the structural operations of these three event classifications within the context of the Uzbek hospitality market the following outlines a comparative breakdown highlighting their core dimensions targeted demographics and structural outcomes based on the 2026 event cycle.

Fig.1. Comparative Matrix of Event Tourism Models in Uzbekistan

Event Category	Primary Audience	Core Strategic Focus in Uzbekistan	Long Term Tourism Impact
International Expo	Global public and national governments	Destination branding and cultural exchange showcasing national heritage	Macro infrastructure expansion and global visibility enhancement

HoReCa Exhibition	Business owners and equipment suppliers	Operational modernization and supply chain integration at Uzexpocentre	Upgraded physical quality of regional hospitality and gastronomy
Hotel Business Forum	Global investors and hotel management	Artificial intelligence integration and strategic leadership training	Enhanced service standards and intellectual growth across properties

Source: UzDaily (2026), Uzexpocentre Official Report (2026), Tourism Committee of the Republic of Uzbekistan (2025), Buhalis & Amaranggana (2013), Getz (as cited in Hall, 2008)

The structural analysis presented in this paper demonstrates that the realization of sustainable tourism development in the Republic of Uzbekistan requires the maintenance of a highly balanced, interconnected institutional ecosystem of international events. Rather than operating in isolation, macro-scale International Expos, supply chain-focused HoReCa exhibitions, and intellectually driven Hotel Business Forums function as a unified framework that accelerates destination modernization. International Expos provide the necessary macro-infrastructure, urban transit upgrades, and global visibility required to capture international market attention and position cities like Tashkent and Samarkand as primary commercial hubs. Simultaneously, specialized B2B platforms such as the annual HoReCa exhibitions supply local commercial enterprises with the physical mechanisms, technical tools, and advanced equipment necessary to effectively manage and serve these incoming visitor flows at global quality standards. Concurrently, high-level Hotel Business Forums generate the strategic blueprints, management methodologies, and international partnerships necessary to govern the macro-industry efficiently, steering the sector toward digital transformation through the integration of breakthrough tools like Artificial Intelligence.

Ultimately, for Uzbekistan to sustain its current momentum and achieve long-term economic resilience in its hospitality sector, policy makers and industry stakeholders must continue to actively support this diverse matrix of events. By ensuring that physical infrastructure upgrades are systematically matched by supply chain modernization and intellectual capital accumulation, the nation can transform temporary event-based spikes into a permanent, high-yielding tourism legacy. Future research within the scope of tourism sciences should focus on measuring the post-event adaptive reuse of exhibition spaces in Central Asia and tracking the quantitative impact of automated guest-management systems on overall service efficiency. Through this comprehensive approach, Uzbekistan is well-positioned to enhance its standing within the international tourism economy, establishing a resilient model where cutting-edge technology and traditional hospitality coexist to deliver an exceptional, world-class experience for every global traveler.

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