

**AN INTEGRATED CENH-CII MODEL FOR MANAGING UZBEKISTAN'S
INTERNATIONAL IMAGE THROUGH CULTURAL EVENTS AND NATIONAL
HERITAGE**

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Abstract. Fragmented cultural promotion limits the ability of tourism policy to convert strong heritage resources into a coherent international image. This thesis presents the management logic of the CENH-CII framework developed in the dissertation, which connects Cultural Events (CE) and National Heritage (NH) with Tourist Experience (TE), Destination Image (DI) and Country International Image (CII), while Media/Digital Communication (MED) acts as an amplifying layer. The paper focuses on the model as a practical management architecture rather than on provisional numerical coefficients. It explains the distinction between destination image and country image, the need for a dedicated multi-item image measure, the role of monitoring and feedback, and the sequencing of implementation from baseline measurement to coordination, experience curation, digital diffusion and long-term evaluation. Because the dissertation explicitly notes that the current Appendix B numerical dataset is a methodological demonstration to be replaced by real field-survey data before defence, this thesis does not present those provisional values as final empirical evidence.

Keywords: CENH-CII model, cultural events, national heritage, tourist experience, destination image, country international image, monitoring, PLS-SEM, Uzbekistan.

1. Introduction

Countries with rich cultural resources often face a paradox: they possess highly distinctive heritage yet struggle to convert it into a stable international image. The reason is frequently institutional fragmentation. Cultural institutions preserve assets, event organizers manage festivals, tourism bodies promote destinations, and digital teams produce content, but these activities may not be linked by a common model of how image is formed or by a common measurement system.

The dissertation addresses this problem through the integrated CENH-CII model. Its core logic is that cultural events and national heritage influence the broader international image of Uzbekistan through intermediary processes rather than by direct exposure alone. Tourist experience and destination image provide the central pathway, while media and digital communication strengthen the diffusion of the image created through travel and cultural contact. This structure transforms image formation from a collection of promotional activities into a system that can be conceptualized, measured and managed.

The present thesis explains the practical value of that system. It focuses on four issues: the architecture of the model, the distinction between the constructs, the measurement and monitoring framework, and the sequence by which tourism and cultural authorities can implement an evidence-based image strategy. The goal is not to reproduce the dissertation's provisional numerical demonstration, but to show how the model can guide real policy once field data are available.

2. Literature Review

The CENH-CII framework integrates research streams that have generally developed separately. Country-image and nation-branding literature explains the final outcome. Anholt [1], Kotler and Gertner [2], Dinnie [3] and Kavaratzis and Ashworth [4] debate the extent to which national image can be deliberately managed. The integrated model adopts a middle position: image cannot be invented through communication, but it can be influenced by managing real assets, experiences and associations coherently.

Destination-image literature explains the intermediate perceptual layer. Baloglu and McCleary [5], Echtner and Ritchie [6], and Gartner [7] show that destinations are evaluated through cognitive and affective impressions shaped by both information and direct experience. This is different from country international image, which is broader and includes overall favourability, cultural reputation and willingness to recommend or advocate for the country.

Event and heritage tourism provide the antecedent layer. Getz [8] establishes events as strategic tourism instruments, while Timothy [9] and Poria, Butler and Airey [10] explain how heritage becomes tourism value through interpretation and personal meaning. Experience-economy scholarship, especially Pine and Gilmore [11] and Volo [12], provides the logic for the tourist-experience mediator. Digital-tourism research, including Buhalis [13], Xiang and Gretzel [14] and Munar and Jacobsen [15], explains the communication layer through which destination perceptions are extended to wider audiences.

The methodological literature provides tools for testing such a multi-construct system. Hair and colleagues [16] describe PLS-SEM as suitable for prediction-oriented models with latent variables, mediation and moderation. Fornell and Larcker [17] provide classic criteria for convergent and discriminant validity, while Henseler, Ringle and Sarstedt [18] develop the HTMT approach to discriminant validity. These methods are relevant once a real field survey is implemented.

3. Research Methodology

This thesis uses a model-based analytical methodology. The dissertation defines six constructs: Cultural Events (CE), National Heritage (NH), Tourist Experience (TE), Destination Image (DI), Country International Image (CII), and Media/Digital Communication (MED). The relationships are organized as a mediated and moderated structure in which cultural resources shape experience and destination perception, which in turn contribute to broader country image.

The dissertation also proposes a survey design in which each construct is measured with multiple reflective indicators on a five-point scale and analysed with PLS-SEM. The intended empirical sequence is to evaluate the measurement model for reliability and validity, assess the structural paths and explained variance, test mediation using bootstrap confidence intervals, examine moderation, and conduct multigroup comparisons where appropriate. Importantly, the dissertation's Appendix B states that the current N=380 numerical estimation is based on a modelled dataset generated for methodological demonstration and must be replaced by a real field survey before defence. Accordingly, the present thesis uses the model architecture and measurement logic but does not treat the provisional coefficients as final empirical findings.

The management analysis is organized around a closed-loop principle: define the image objective, measure a baseline, select interventions linked to model constructs, monitor intermediate indicators and the final image measure, and then adjust strategy. This converts the model from an academic diagram into an operating framework for policy.

4. Analysis and Discussion

The first value of the CENH-CII model is conceptual clarity. Cultural events and national heritage are antecedents, not outcomes. Tourist experience is a mediator that captures how visitors learn, feel and engage. Destination image is a perceptual mediator that organizes impressions of Uzbekistan as a place to visit. Country international image is the broader downstream outcome. Media and digital communication operate as an amplifier that can strengthen the transfer from destination perception to country-level evaluation.

This separation matters because adjacent concepts are often merged in policy. Tourism competitiveness, for example, concerns infrastructure, price, access, capacity and the ability to compete for visitors. Destination image concerns how the place is perceived as a tourism destination. Country international image concerns a wider judgement of Uzbekistan as a country. Improving one does not automatically mean that the others have improved. A measurement system must therefore report them separately.

The second value of the model is that it makes indirect effects visible. Cultural assets do not need to influence country image directly in order to be strategically important. Their role may be stronger when they improve the tourist experience and destination image, which then affect broader perceptions. This changes the policy question from “How many heritage objects or events do we have?” to “How effectively do these assets create experiences and perceptions that support the desired international image?”

The third value is prioritisation. A model linked to observable indicators allows authorities to distinguish between strong assets and weak mechanisms. The dissertation argues that Uzbekistan already possesses world-class heritage resources, while experience management, destination positioning and digital diffusion remain areas where improvement can produce significant returns. This suggests that resources should not be spread evenly across all activities. Existing heritage should be protected and narrated; visitor experience should be curated; destination image should be broadened and coordinated; and digital communication should be strengthened as a relatively fast and scalable amplifier.

The fourth value is measurement. Uzbekistan is not comprehensively covered by leading perception-based international image indices. The dissertation therefore proposes a bespoke multi-item country-image measure capturing overall favourability, cultural reputation and willingness to recommend and advocate. Such a measure can establish a baseline. Without a baseline, authorities can report activity but cannot demonstrate change in the final image outcome. A monitoring system should link each construct to intermediate indicators. Cultural events can be tracked through number, reach and media coverage. National heritage can be monitored through visitor numbers, satisfaction and conservation/interpretation indicators. Tourist experience can be measured through experience-quality scores. Destination image can be measured through perception surveys. Media and digital communication can be tracked through reach, engagement and sentiment. Country international image can then be measured through the dedicated multi-item instrument alongside objective contextual indicators such as arrivals and receipts.

CENH-CII construct	Management question	Possible intermediate indicators	Primary source data
Cultural Events (CE)	Are signature events coherent, distinctive and internationally visible?	Event reach, international attendance, media coverage, repeatability	Event and media reports
National Heritage (NH)	Are heritage assets protected, interpreted and accessible?	Visitor satisfaction, interpretation quality, site use, conservation status	Site records and visitor surveys
Tourist Experience (TE)	Do visitors learn, feel engaged and consider the experience memorable?	Experience-quality score, authenticity, learning, emotional satisfaction	Visitor survey
Destination Image (DI)	How is Uzbekistan perceived as a place to visit?	Cognitive and affective image scores, cultural associations, appeal	Visitor and market surveys
Media/Digital (MED)	How effectively is the image amplified?	Reach, engagement, sentiment, share of voice, user-generated content	Digital analytics and media monitoring

Country International Image (CII)	Has the broader perception of Uzbekistan improved?	Overall favourability, cultural reputation, recommendation and advocacy	Dedicated image survey
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Implementation should be sequenced. The short-term stage should establish a common narrative, build the measurement baseline and strengthen digital content operations. These steps are comparatively low-cost and create the information required for later investment. The medium-term stage should focus on a portfolio of signature events, experience upgrades at heritage sites and targeted international campaigns. The long-term stage should institutionalize monitoring, compare results across source markets and extend the framework to secondary heritage cities and intangible heritage.

A closed-loop structure is essential. If monitoring is conducted only after campaigns for reporting purposes, it does not influence management. Data must feed back into decisions. If experience scores are weak, resources should shift toward interpretation and service. If destination image is narrow, narrative and product development should broaden associations. If digital reach is high but country-image scores do not move, communication content or market targeting should be reassessed. If certain source markets respond differently, multigroup analysis can help refine strategy.

Institutional coordination is therefore as important as statistical technique. No single organisation owns all constructs. Cultural institutions manage heritage; event bodies organize programmes; tourism authorities coordinate destinations; private operators shape visitor experience; and communication teams manage digital diffusion. The model provides a shared language through which these actors can understand how their separate activities contribute to a common image objective.

5. Conclusions and Recommendations

The CENH-CII model offers a practical architecture for moving Uzbekistan's international image policy from fragmented promotion toward evidence-based management. Its principal contribution is not the claim that culture matters, which is already widely accepted, but the specification of how cultural events and national heritage are converted into broader image through tourist experience, destination perception and communication.

Implementation should begin with measurement. A baseline country-image instrument is necessary before the effectiveness of later actions can be evaluated. The second priority is coordination around a unified cultural narrative linked to the Third Renaissance and to Uzbekistan's living Silk Road heritage. The third priority is experience curation at heritage sites and events, because cultural assets create image only when they are encountered meaningfully. The fourth priority is systematic digital diffusion, with market-specific content and visitor advocacy extending the reach of positive experiences. Finally, the monitoring system should be institutionalized so that strategy becomes self-correcting rather than campaign-based.

Future empirical work should replace the dissertation's methodological demonstration dataset with a real survey of foreign visitors and, ideally, include non-visitors in major source markets. This would allow the model to compare experienced image with pre-visit image and to test whether the same pathways operate across audiences. With such field validation, the CENH-CII framework can become not only a theoretical contribution but a durable instrument for managing Uzbekistan's international image in the context of the Third Renaissance.

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