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AN ECONOMETRIC-INDEX APPROACH TO PREVENTING ABUSE OF DOMINANT POSITION IN DIGITAL PLATFORM MARKETS: EVIDENCE-BASED PROPOSALS FOR UZBEKISTAN

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Abstract

The rapid growth of digital platforms has transformed competition policy by shifting market power from traditional price-based dominance to ecosystem-based, data-driven and network-effect-driven forms of control. This article develops an IMRAD-structured assessment of how abuse of dominant position in digital platforms can be identified, monitored and prevented in the regulatory environment of Uzbekistan. The article proposes a Dominance Monitoring Index (DMI), integrates it with a logit probability model, and connects the model with ex-ante notification, prohibited conduct catalogues and institutional monitoring. The methodological contribution is a practical framework that combines legal, economic and measurable indicators: revenue scale, active end users, active business users, direct and indirect network effects, data control, switching costs, ecosystem lock-in, multi-homing constraints and adjacent-market influence. The results show that a single turnover or market-share threshold is insufficient for digital-platform regulation; a composite index and risk-based monitoring system can better identify strategic platforms and prevent self-preferencing, tying, anti-steering, discriminatory access, data foreclosure and algorithmic opacity. The article concludes with policy proposals for Uzbekistan: differentiated platform categories, mandatory reporting for high-risk platforms, a catalogue of prohibited

practices, interoperability obligations and an inter-agency digital monitoring module.

Keywords: digital platforms; abuse of dominance; DMI; network effects; ex-ante regulation; competition law; econometric model; Uzbekistan.

JEL Classification: C25; K21; L40; L86; O33.

1. Introduction

Digital platforms have become the basic infrastructure of online commerce, communication, payments, search, advertising, transport aggregation, application distribution and cloud-based services. Their economic role is broader than that of ordinary intermediaries because they create and control interaction rules for several groups of users at the same time. A marketplace coordinates sellers and buyers; a search engine coordinates users, advertisers and content providers; an app store coordinates developers, device producers and consumers. As a result, the competitive position of such operators may be formed not only by prices but also by data accumulation, default settings, ranking algorithms, ecosystem design and the ability to restrict access to business users.

The central problem examined in this article is that traditional competition tools were developed mainly for markets in which product boundaries, price indicators and market shares were relatively visible. Digital markets are different. A platform may provide a service for zero monetary price to final users while monetizing the same ecosystem through advertising, commissions, data-based targeting or payments from business users. The absence of a direct price does not mean the absence of economic power. In digital markets, dominance may appear through a

combination of user dependency, data concentration, cross-market leverage and the lack of viable multi-homing options.

Uzbekistan has recently moved toward a more active regulation of digital platforms. The general framework of competition law is complemented by specific approaches to platform operators, including the identification of dominant position, superior bargaining power and prohibited conduct in digital environments. However, regulatory effectiveness depends on whether the authorities can measure platform power early enough. If the authority reacts only after harm becomes visible, digital markets may already have tipped in favour of one ecosystem and the restoration of competition becomes costly.

This article therefore proposes an econometric-index approach that can be used as an analytical tool in the improvement of rules prohibiting the abuse of dominant position in digital platforms. The proposed DMI is not intended to replace legal analysis; rather, it supports legal decision-making by transforming multidimensional platform characteristics into a transparent risk score. The logit component of the framework enables the authority to estimate the probability that a platform belongs to a high-risk category when sufficient data become available.

The contribution of the article is threefold. First, it systematizes the key forms of abuse in platform markets and links them with measurable indicators. Second, it develops a DMI-based model suitable for the Uzbek regulatory context. Third, it proposes an institutional mechanism for using this model in ex-ante notification, monitoring and enforcement. In this way, the article connects law, economics and applied measurement within a single IMRAD research design.

The research question is formulated as follows: how can Uzbekistan strengthen the prohibition of abuse of dominant position in digital platform markets through a measurable, risk-based and institutionally applicable model? The hypothesis is that a composite index, supported by a probability model and integrated into a

monitoring system, provides a more accurate basis for identifying dominance risks than isolated thresholds based only on turnover, market share or user number.

The study is also relevant for the development of evidence-based public administration. A digital-market authority cannot rely only on general descriptions of platform conduct. It needs indicators that are clear enough to be collected, compared and monitored over time. The DMI approach gives an initial analytical language for this purpose. It allows regulators, researchers and policymakers to discuss platform power through a common set of variables rather than through broad and sometimes ambiguous legal categories alone.

The paper adopts the position that ex-post enforcement remains necessary but is insufficient in fast-moving digital markets. Traditional enforcement normally starts after a complaint, investigation and legal qualification of a violation. In platform markets, however, harm may accumulate quickly and become difficult to reverse. Once consumers and businesses are locked into an ecosystem, remedies applied several years later may be less effective. This is why a preventive model that identifies risk before irreversible market tipping is essential for Uzbekistan's digital economy.

A further reason for the study is the growing importance of business users in platform ecosystems. Small enterprises, individual entrepreneurs, developers, advertisers and service providers increasingly rely on digital platforms as a primary channel for reaching consumers. When such business users become dependent on a platform, unilateral changes in ranking, commission, data access, cancellation policy or payment rules may have the same effect as a change in market infrastructure. In this context, the protection of competition is also connected with the protection of fair access conditions for entrepreneurship.

The relevance of the topic is intensified by the fact that digital platform markets often combine economic efficiency and exclusionary risk in the same technological

structure. The same algorithm that improves search quality can also be used to downgrade competing services. The same data architecture that increases consumer convenience can also create a barrier for rivals who cannot replicate behavioural information. The same ecosystem that reduces transaction costs for users can also make switching difficult when payments, identity, delivery, advertising and communication are integrated into a single account. Therefore, competition policy must distinguish between efficiency-enhancing integration and conduct that unfairly restricts rivals or business users.

2. Materials and Methods

The article applies a mixed methodological approach combining comparative legal analysis, institutional analysis, indicator construction and econometric modelling. Comparative analysis is used to study the regulatory logic of the European Union Digital Markets Act, the United Kingdom Digital Markets, Competition and Consumers Act, and selected competition cases involving digital platforms. Institutional analysis is used to identify how these approaches can be adapted to the administrative and legal context of Uzbekistan.

The empirical and analytical material consists of four groups of sources. The first group includes legal acts regulating competition, digital markets, electronic commerce and digital-platform conduct. The second group includes official decisions and enforcement materials concerning digital platforms, such as cases on app stores, search services, mobile ecosystems and online advertising. The third group includes academic literature on multi-sided markets, network effects, data-driven market power and platform governance. The fourth group includes platform indicators that may be collected by a competition authority through reports, open sources, user complaints and inter-agency data exchange.

The core methodological instrument is the Dominance Monitoring Index (DMI). DMI is constructed as an integral index reflecting the combined effect of platform scale, user dependency, data control and ecosystem leverage. Each indicator is normalized to a range from 0 to 1. Indicators that increase dominance risk are included directly; indicators that reduce dominance risk, such as the possibility of multi-homing, are inverted. The general form of the model is expressed as follows:
$DMI_i = w1R_i^* + w2EU_i^* + w3BU_i^* + w4NE_i^* + w5DC_i^* + w6SC_i^* + w7EL_i^* + w8(1 - MH_i^*) + w9AMI_i^* + e_i$.
In this equation, R is platform revenue, EU is active end users, BU is active business users, NE is network effect intensity, DC is data control, SC is switching cost, EL is ecosystem lock-in, MH is multi-homing possibility, AMI is adjacent-market influence, w represents weights, and e is the residual component reflecting unobserved factors. The asterisk denotes normalized variables. The model can be implemented using equal weights at the initial stage or expert-calibrated weights at the advanced stage. Equal weighting is suitable when the regulator lacks sufficient historical data; calibrated weighting is preferable when enough cases and statistical observations are available.
The second component is a logit probability model. The dependent variable takes the value of 1 if a platform is classified as a high-risk or dominant platform and 0 otherwise. The probability form is:
$P(D_i = 1) = 1 / (1 + \exp[-(\beta0 + \beta1\ln EU_i + \beta2\ln BU_i + \beta3NE_i + \beta4DC_i + \beta5SC_i + \beta6EL_i - \beta7MH_i + \beta8AMI_i)])$.
The logit model is appropriate because the regulatory outcome is categorical: a platform either crosses a high-risk threshold or does not. The signs of the coefficients are expected as follows: end users, business users, network effects, data control, switching costs, ecosystem lock-in and adjacent-market influence should increase the probability of dominance risk, while multi-homing should

reduce it. The model can be estimated after the authority collects a panel dataset on platform indicators over several years.

For the purpose of policy application, DMI scores are grouped into three categories. A score below 0.40 indicates low monitoring priority; a score between 0.40 and 0.70 indicates medium monitoring priority; and a score of 0.70 or above indicates high monitoring priority. The classification does not automatically prove a legal violation. It functions as a trigger for closer review, information requests, compliance dialogue or ex-ante obligations.

2.1. Operationalization of variables

Table 1. Variables included in the Dominance Monitoring Index (DMI)

Indicator	Meaning in platform markets	Expected effect on risk	Possible data source
Revenue (R)	Scale of monetization through commissions, advertising, data or services	Positive	Financial reports, tax and platform reports
End users (EU)	Number of active final users connected to the platform	Positive	Platform reporting and open statistics
Business users (BU)	Number of sellers, developers, advertisers or service providers dependent on access	Positive	Platform registry and business-user reports
Network effects (NE)	Increase in platform value when user groups expand	Positive	Growth dynamics and cross-side interaction data
Data control (DC)	Access to behavioural, transactional and ranking data	Positive	Data governance reports and audits

Indicator	Meaning in platform markets	Expected effect on risk	Possible data source
Switching cost (SC)	Economic and technical difficulty of moving to alternatives	Positive	User surveys, contract terms, interoperability tests
Ecosystem lock-in (EL)	Degree of integration between services, devices, payments and accounts	Positive	Service mapping and default-setting analysis
Multi-homing (MH)	Ability of users or business users to use several platforms simultaneously	Negative	Surveys, API access and contract restrictions
Adjacent-market influence (AMI)	Ability to transfer power from one market to another	Positive	Ecosystem and ownership analysis

Source: author's framework based on digital-market competition indicators.

3. Results

The results of the study demonstrate that digital-platform dominance should be interpreted as a multidimensional risk rather than a single market-share value. A platform may not control a majority of transactions in a narrowly defined market but may still exercise gatekeeping power if business users depend on its access channel, if ranking algorithms affect visibility, or if user data collected in one market are used to obtain advantages in another market. Therefore, the DMI model produces a more complete diagnosis by combining structural, behavioural and technological indicators.

The first result is the proposed variable matrix. It translates legal concerns into measurable indicators. For example, self-preferencing can be linked to ranking opacity, ownership of competing services and unequal data access; tying and bundling can be linked to ecosystem lock-in and default settings; anti-steering can

be linked to restrictions on communication with customers; and data foreclosure can be linked to the platform's control over transactional and behavioural data.

The second result is a risk classification mechanism. Platforms with low DMI values remain under ordinary market observation. Platforms with medium values are subject to periodic data requests and compliance dialogue. Platforms with high DMI values become candidates for ex-ante duties, such as transparency of ranking criteria, non-discriminatory access conditions, prohibition of unjustified tying, and requirements to allow business users to communicate with customers outside the platform.

The third result is the integration of the index with institutional monitoring. The DMI framework can be used by the competition authority as part of a digital monitoring dashboard. The dashboard can collect indicators from annual platform reports, tax and transaction data, user complaints, app-store statistics, advertising data and inter-agency information exchange. Such a system would reduce the gap between rapid market change and slow ex-post enforcement.

The fourth result is the improvement of proportionality in enforcement. Instead of applying the same level of control to all digital services, the regulator can link the intensity of obligations to the risk category. This approach is important for Uzbekistan because excessive administrative obligations for small and innovative platforms may weaken market entry, while insufficient control of large ecosystems may allow unfair exclusionary conduct.

These scenarios show that the model has diagnostic flexibility. It does not assume that all digital platforms are identical. Instead, it requires the authority to identify which source of platform power is most relevant in a given sector. The same DMI logic can therefore be adapted to marketplaces, search engines, payment systems, taxi aggregators, social networks and app stores while preserving a common legal-economic structure.

A third scenario concerns a payment platform or digital wallet. The central issue is not only the number of transactions but also the dependence of merchants, the interoperability of payment channels, commission transparency and the possibility for users to move transaction history or account links to alternative providers. If merchants cannot practically use alternative payment systems or face discriminatory conditions, the DMI score should rise through business-user dependency and switching-cost indicators.

A second scenario concerns a mobile ecosystem or app distribution service. If the platform controls access to users through a pre-installed application store, restricts alternative payment systems, limits communication between developers and consumers, and imposes technical conditions that make rival stores difficult to use, the risk indicators would be switching cost, ecosystem lock-in, interoperability restriction and anti-steering conduct. Under the proposed model, such a platform would likely fall into the high-monitoring category even if the formal market share is difficult to calculate.

A scenario application of the framework indicates how the DMI can operate without disclosing confidential business information. Suppose that a marketplace has a high number of active sellers, controls product ranking, provides its own competing retail service and collects transactional data from third-party sellers. Even if the marketplace does not charge consumers directly, the combination of business-user dependency, ranking control and data control would increase its DMI score. The regulatory response would not be an immediate sanction; it would be a request for transparency, non-discrimination commitments and monitoring of self-preferencing risks.

Table 5. Sector-specific application of DMI indicators

Platform sector	Dominant risk source	Key DMI indicators	Likely monitoring focus
Marketplace	Seller dependency and ranking control	BU, DC, SC, AMI	Self-preferencing, commission and ranking transparency
App store	Control over distribution and payment architecture	SC, EL, MH, DC	Alternative payment, third-party app access and anti-steering
Payment platform	Merchant dependency and interoperability	BU, SC, MH	Interoperability, commission transparency and account portability
Search/advertising	Data advantage and ranking opacity	EU, DC, NE, AMI	Advertising transparency and non-discriminatory ranking
Taxi aggregator	Driver dependency and algorithmic management	BU, SC, DC	Commission policy, algorithmic transparency and deactivation rules

Source: author's sectoral classification.

A practical advantage of the proposed model is that it can be introduced step by step. At the first stage, the authority may use a simplified DMI score based on revenue, users, business users and observable ecosystem links. At the second stage, after receiving regular reports from platforms, more refined indicators such as switching costs, data portability, interoperability, default settings and ranking transparency can be added. At the third stage, the authority may estimate the logit model using accumulated observations and enforcement outcomes. This staged implementation reduces administrative pressure and allows the model to mature together with the available data.

The weighting of DMI indicators should not be viewed as a purely technical question. It is also a policy decision. If the regulator considers business-user dependency to be the most urgent problem, the weight of business users and anti-steering constraints may be increased. If the policy focus is data concentration, data control and adjacent-market influence may receive higher weights. For academic integrity, every weighting system must be disclosed, justified and tested through sensitivity analysis. A model that is transparent but imperfect is preferable to an informal assessment that cannot be reproduced.

The framework can also help courts and administrative bodies in reviewing regulatory decisions. When a platform challenges its classification as high-risk, the authority can explain which indicators led to the result, how they were measured, and whether the decision is consistent with previous cases. This increases legal certainty. It also protects the regulator from arbitrary enforcement, because the DMI score does not stand alone; it is connected with evidence, classification rules and proportional procedural steps.

From the perspective of economic development, the model supports a balanced digital industrial policy. Uzbekistan needs strong domestic platforms, but these platforms should grow within a fair competitive environment. The aim is not to weaken national digital champions. The aim is to ensure that growth does not depend on unfair exclusion, opaque ranking, forced tying, discriminatory access or data practices that prevent rivals from competing on quality. A fair platform environment can attract investment, support innovation and increase the trust of both consumers and businesses.

Future research should test the model on a broader dataset. For example, annual platform indicators can be collected for marketplace services, taxi aggregators, payment platforms, app stores, online advertising systems and social networks. The authority can then compare DMI scores with complaint frequency, changes in

commission rates, business-user exit, consumer switching and entry of new competitors. Such analysis would help determine which indicators predict competition concerns most accurately.

Another direction for future research is the development of sector-specific DMI versions. A payment platform does not create the same type of dominance risk as a search engine or an app store. For a payment platform, transaction scale, interoperability and merchant dependency may be more important. For a search engine, data control, advertising access and ranking opacity may be central. For a marketplace, self-preferencing, seller dependency and commission policy may be decisive. Sector-specific calibration would make the model more precise while preserving the general logic of the index.

Source: author's proposals.

Table 4. Proposed policy package for Uzbekistan

Measure	Instrument	Responsible actors	Expected effect
Platform classification	DMI score and legal review	Competition authority	Risk-based prioritization
Notification duty	Annual digital-platform report	Platform operators	Better data and transparency
Conduct obligations	Catalogue of prohibited practices	Competition authority and sector regulators	Prevention of exclusionary conduct
Monitoring module	Digital dashboard and complaints portal	Inter-agency group	Early detection of market tipping
Compliance audit	Internal competition compliance policy	High-risk platforms	Lower enforcement costs and faster remedies

Source: author's framework.

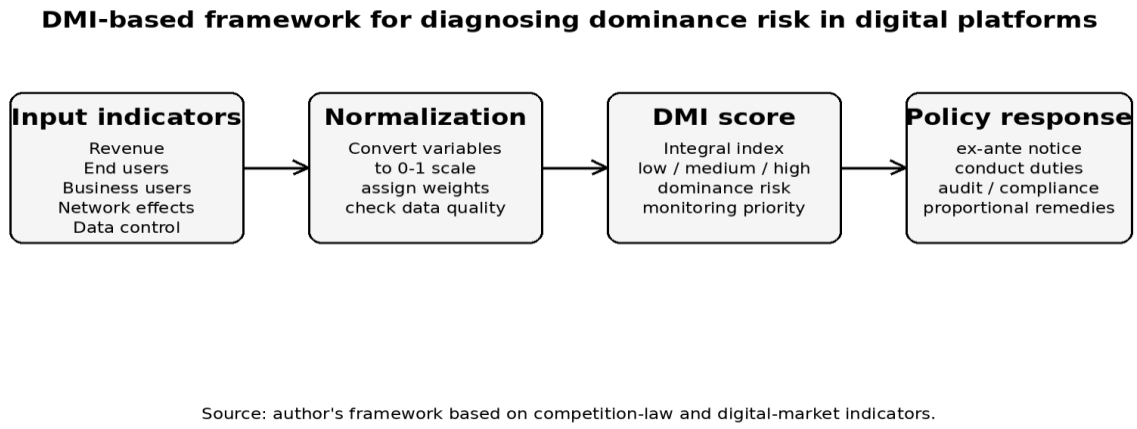

Figure 1. DMI-based framework for diagnosing dominance risk in digital platforms

Source: author's systematization.

Table 3. Catalogue of prohibited practices linked with measurable indicators

Practice	Competition concern	Relevant DMI indicator
Self-preferencing	The platform privileges its own goods or services in ranking, display or access conditions.	Data control; adjacent-market influence; ecosystem lock-in
Tying and bundling	Access to one core service is conditioned on the use of another platform service.	Ecosystem lock-in; switching cost
Anti-steering restrictions	Business users are prevented from informing consumers about alternative prices or channels.	Business-user dependency; switching cost
Data foreclosure	Competitors or business users are denied access to data necessary for effective competition.	Data control; network effects
Interoperability restriction	The platform prevents technical connection with rival or complementary services.	Multi-homing; ecosystem lock-in
Algorithmic discrimination	Ranking or recommendation systems apply unequal or opaque conditions.	Data control; business-user dependency

Source: author's classification.

Table 2. DMI risk categories and regulatory response

DMI interval	Risk level	Regulatory action	Main objective
0.00-0.39	Low	Ordinary market observation	Avoid unnecessary burden on emerging platforms
0.40-0.69	Medium	Periodic reporting and compliance dialogue	Detect growth of dependency and data concentration
0.70-1.00	High	Ex-ante duties, information requests and targeted review	Prevent exclusionary conduct before market tipping

Tables and figure supporting the results

4. Discussion

The proposed DMI framework must be understood within the broader transformation of competition policy. In traditional markets, dominance is often identified by market share, barriers to entry and control over price. In digital markets, market power is more often connected with architecture: the platform designs the rules of access, controls user interface, sets default options, collects data, ranks products and determines which business users can reach demand. These functions can create a private regulatory space within which the platform becomes both infrastructure provider and competitor.

The main policy challenge is the balance between innovation and control. Digital platforms produce significant benefits: lower search costs, new sales channels, convenient payment systems, logistics optimization, access to foreign markets and opportunities for small businesses. Strict regulation should not destroy these benefits. However, the absence of a preventive framework may allow a platform to convert network effects into durable exclusionary power. The DMI approach is

designed precisely for this balance. It does not treat platform success as unlawful; it identifies risk factors that justify closer regulatory attention.

Another important issue is data availability. In many jurisdictions, the regulator initially lacks direct access to platform-level data. This problem can be solved through notification duties, standardized reporting templates and inter-agency exchange. For instance, a platform that reaches certain user or business-user thresholds may be required to report aggregate indicators on transactions, commissions, ranking rules, data access and complaint resolution. Such reports should protect trade secrets but must provide enough information for the authority to evaluate competition risks.

The model also helps distinguish between dominance and abuse. A high DMI score indicates potential market power, not necessarily unlawful conduct. Abuse is identified when the platform uses this power to distort competition, restrict business users, degrade interoperability, impose unfair conditions or privilege its own products. Therefore, the index should be used together with a catalogue of prohibited practices. The catalogue should include self-preferencing, unjustified tying or bundling, anti-steering restrictions, discriminatory ranking, refusal of access to essential data or interface, restrictions on alternative payment systems, and unjustified blocking of third-party applications.

For Uzbekistan, the adaptation of international experience should be gradual. The European Union model is more formalized and applies detailed obligations to designated gatekeepers. The United Kingdom model emphasizes strategic market status, conduct requirements and pro-competitive interventions. Uzbekistan can combine these ideas but must avoid mechanical copying. Local digital markets are smaller, data availability is weaker, and the capacity of regulators and businesses may be different. Therefore, the preferred approach is a phased framework: first,

monitoring and data collection; second, classification of strategic platforms; third, conduct obligations for high-risk platforms; fourth, enforcement and review.

The economic effect of the proposed approach is expected to appear in several directions. First, business users obtain more predictable conditions of platform access. Second, new entrants face fewer artificial barriers created by default settings, closed ecosystems and unfair ranking. Third, consumers benefit from more choice and reduced lock-in. Fourth, the competition authority can allocate resources more efficiently because monitoring becomes risk-based. Fifth, the regulatory process becomes more transparent because platform obligations are linked to measurable indicators.

Nevertheless, the framework has limitations. DMI values may be sensitive to the chosen weights, and expert-based scoring may introduce subjectivity. This problem can be mitigated by publishing the methodology, periodically revising weights, using sensitivity analysis and gradually replacing expert scores with observed quantitative data. Another limitation is that a platform may operate across several markets, and the relevant market definition may remain contested. The model therefore should be used as a diagnostic tool rather than a substitute for legal reasoning.

The logit model also requires a reliable dataset before formal estimation. At the initial stage, the model can be used conceptually to define expected relationships among variables. After several years of monitoring, the authority can estimate coefficients and test which indicators have the strongest relationship with dominance designation or enforcement risk. This step will transform the model from a theoretical framework into an applied econometric instrument.

Finally, the model should be reviewed periodically. Digital markets change quickly: a platform that is medium-risk today may become high-risk after integration with payment, logistics or advertising services; conversely, entry by a

strong competitor may reduce dominance risk. Annual recalculation of the DMI and a three-year methodological review would allow the authority to keep the system flexible. This dynamic feature is especially important for Uzbekistan, where digital services are expanding quickly and where the regulatory framework must support both competition and innovation.

A further implementation issue is cooperation with the private sector. High-risk platforms should not be treated only as targets of enforcement. They should also be involved in compliance dialogue, because many potential violations can be prevented by changing platform rules before they create market harm. For example, a platform may voluntarily publish clearer ranking criteria, separate data collected from third-party business users from data used for its own competing services, or simplify the procedure for terminating exclusive conditions. Such preventive compliance is cheaper and more predictable than long investigations.

The practical implementation of this research also requires internal capacity building. Competition authority specialists should be trained not only in legal qualification of abusive conduct but also in the economic interpretation of network effects, data-driven advantages and algorithmic governance. A DMI model can be useful only when the officials who apply it understand the meaning of each indicator and the limits of the data. Therefore, the methodology should be accompanied by a practical guide, standard data request templates and a checklist for business-user complaints.

5. Conclusion

This article developed an IMRAD-based study of how the prohibition of abuse of dominant position in digital platform markets can be improved in Uzbekistan. The research showed that digital-platform dominance cannot be measured adequately by a single traditional indicator. Platform power is produced by the interaction of

user scale, business-user dependency, direct and indirect network effects, data control, switching costs, ecosystem lock-in, multi-homing constraints and adjacent-market influence.

The proposed DMI model offers a structured method for measuring these factors and transforming them into a risk category. The complementary logit model provides a future path for formal econometric estimation when systematic data become available. Together, these tools can support a modern competition policy that is proactive, evidence-based and proportionate.

The article recommends that Uzbekistan introduce differentiated platform categories, standardized reporting obligations, an ex-ante notification mechanism for high-risk platforms, a catalogue of prohibited practices, and an inter-agency monitoring module. These measures would strengthen the ability of the competition authority to detect risks early, protect business users and consumers, and preserve innovation in the national digital economy.

The proposed approach does not criminalize platform growth. It targets the misuse of platform power that restricts competition and harms market openness. A properly calibrated DMI framework can therefore help Uzbekistan develop a balanced digital-market policy: open enough for innovation, but strong enough to prevent the abuse of dominance in platform ecosystems.

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