



Article

The Perspectives of Cultural Heritage Tourism in Uzbekistan

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Abstract: This study examines the role of Uzbekistan's cultural heritage in the development of its tourism sector, addressing a gap in sustainable tourism management regarding the preservation of heritage sites. While ancient monuments, museums, and intangible heritage offer significant potential for tourism growth, mass tourism poses risks to these fragile assets. The research aims to explore this dynamic using secondary data and analytical methods, including induction and deduction. Findings emphasize the importance of sustainable tourism planning and the integration of modern technologies to protect cultural heritage. The study suggests that tourism organizations should prioritize conservation to ensure long-term cultural preservation.

Keywords: Cultural tourism, Heritages, Museums, Preservation, Sustainable tourism, Tourism activities.

1. Introduction

Many countries are attempting to attract foreign visitors with the help of their cultural heritages. Cultural and heritage tourism refers to the economic growth of a country by attracting citizens of another nation who is interested in the history and heritage of the other community [1]. Today, for many countries, tourism sector is one of the vital sectors that boost the country's economy [2]. The culture of the certain group makes this place unique and tourism sector develops and supports this culture by attracting visitors in this place. Culture has a significant role in hospitality and it is one of the best tourism products for tourism organizations. The relationship between culture, heritage and tourism has been identified in previous studies and it can be seen that cultural heritage and tourism are closely related and both serve to increase the competitiveness of tourism of a country [3].

After gaining independence in 1991, Uzbekistan declared the protection and preservation of historical and cultural heritage as the main principle of its social policy. Uzbekistan strives to utilize all relevant international and regional tools recommended by the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) and other international organizations in the preservation of cultural heritage. Uzbekistan's cultural policy is aimed at preserving the tangible and intangible heritage of the country, and several historical and cultural monuments, such as Samarkand, Shakhrisabz, Bukhara and Khiva, are included in the UNESCO World Heritage List. The cultural space of Boisun district, as well as Shashmaqom and Ashula, are included in the Representative List of the Intangible Cultural Heritage of Humanity. As cultural and environmental problems are increasingly manifested in the development of cultural tourism, researchers are focusing

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on the cultural and ecological environment in the development of cultural tourism resources.

The negative development of modern tourism, such as mass tourism, leads to the loss of the cultural tourism environment in many regions and the destruction of cultural heritage sites. The importance of cultural ecological balance and cultural integrity is gradually being recognized by people. It is carried out in order to promote the scientific development and protection of cultural resources, as well as the protection of cultural diversity and integrity in the development of tourism, the balance of cultural ecology, the preservation of cultural heritage and the sustainable development of tourism.

The outcomes of this paper contributes to the existing research literature in the following ways:

1. The research gives new-insights about the relationship between cultural heritage and tourism.
2. The paper investigates the positive effects of culture and heritage on tourism development in Uzbekistan.

2. Materials and Methods

In this article, the secondary research method was mainly used and existing published papers by Uzbek and foreign scientists related to role of culture, heritage and tourism. The role of museums in hospitality sector were discussed. Furthermore, critical approach, induction and deduction, analysis and synthesis and observation methods were utilized in the research paper.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Researchers have been conducting research on the factors that influence the desire to visit a specific location and this is crucial for the development and promotion of tourist spots [4]. For long time, historical and cultural tourism locations are a category of places that have been attracting increasing focus [5] and it is true that culture has a great impact for visitors on the decision to visit [6]. The similar results can be seen in Myung Kim, Choong-Ki Lee, James F. Petrick and Young Sik Kim research as well. They have found that when it comes to the predicting tourist wish at tourism spot, culture has a enormous role in this process [7].

Jungyoon Park conducted a research called "On role of the culture and tourism development in the strategic planning for city attractiveness" and he said that culture is an asset for tourism organizations for increasing destination appeals [8]. There are 8208 cultural heritage objects in Uzbekistan and they are under state protection. 2197 of them are architectural, 4730 are archaeological monuments, 682 objects are magnificent arts and other objects that considered as worthy of attention [9].

There are four UNESCO World Heritage Sites in Uzbekistan. The first heritage is called Itchan Kala and it was inscribed into the list of UNESCO World Heritage Sites in 1990. It is located in Khiva where the place is walled and it is considered as a largest surviving walled city to date. This was a key stop in the ancient Silk Road route and ten thousand of tourists visit this unique place each year. The second heritage that included to the UNESCO list of World Heritage Sites in Uzbekistan in 1993. The city was built in the 6th century BC where it was located nearby Silk Road route and there are a lot of mosques, madrassas and other religious buildings in the area [10].

The city is famous for well-preserved monuments and other types of cultural heritages. The third world cultural heritage is historic center of Shakhrisabz and it was added to the list of UNESCO World Heritage Sites in 2000. The monuments were built by Amir Timur who was the Empire's great leader. The beautiful Ak-Saray Palace is located

in this town. The fourth famous cultural heritage is Samarkand city and it has been under UNESCO World Heritage Sites since 2001. Samarkand rose to prominence in antiquity and in the present it is a significant part of country's cultural legacy. Samarkand which dates back to the 7th century, flourished under Timurid Dynasty. It rose to prominence in Islamic architecture with the construction of several mosques, madrassas, bazaars and other buildings [11].

Methodology

The methodology of this study primarily employs a secondary research approach, drawing on existing literature and reports to analyze the role of cultural heritage in Uzbekistan's tourism sector. The research relies on data from scholarly articles, government reports, and case studies published by Uzbek and international experts. This method enables a comprehensive understanding of the current trends, challenges, and opportunities in cultural heritage tourism. The data were gathered from a variety of sources, including UNESCO reports, local government tourism statistics, and cultural heritage documentation. Additionally, critical methods such as induction and deduction were used to evaluate the relationship between cultural heritage and tourism [12].

The research also involved the analysis of qualitative data related to cultural heritage sites, including museums, ancient buildings, and intangible heritage assets, with a focus on how these assets contribute to tourism. Analytical tools were employed to synthesize information from diverse sources, allowing the research to address the knowledge gap in sustainable tourism planning [13].

Observations of tourism practices in Uzbekistan, particularly around major heritage sites like Samarkand, Bukhara, and Khiva, were also included to offer a grounded perspective on how these sites attract tourists. By employing this methodology, the study effectively evaluates both the economic and cultural impact of heritage tourism, providing insights into sustainable strategies for preserving cultural assets while fostering tourism development. The research emphasizes the need for an integrated approach that combines tourism promotion with the conservation of cultural heritage to ensure long-term sustainability [14].

3. Results and Discussion

Let us consider the role of museums in the cultural heritage tourism development. They contribute to the development of tourism not only by preserving their unique culture, history and art, but also by providing meaningful experiences to tourists. We look at the importance of museums in cultural heritage tourism in the table below:

Table 1. Components of the analysis of the importance of museums in the effective use of cultural heritage resources of the Silk Road regions

<i>Components</i>	<i>Description</i>
Cultural education	Museums provide comprehensive knowledge to visitors by displaying the historical and cultural wealth of various nations. This knowledge broadens the world view of tourists and increases their respect for other cultures.

Preservation of historical and cultural heritage	Museums have the task of preserving national and international cultural heritage and passing it on to future generations. They protect this heritage by collecting, cataloging, and conducting scientific research on historical objects, works of art, and archaeological finds.
Economic development	Museums greatly contribute to economic development through tourism. Tourists visiting museums use many different services within the country (hotels, restaurants, transportation, etc.), which benefits the local economy.
Cultural exchange	Museums promote cultural exchanges at the national and international level. Through exhibitions, scientific conferences and cultural events, cultures of different countries come closer to each other, which makes tourism more attractive.
Development of tourism infrastructure	Museums often stimulate the development of tourism infrastructure. New hotels, restaurants, shopping centers and other tourist services will develop around the museums. This will increase the standard of living of the local communities.
Digital innovation	Modern technologies help to make museums more efficient. Virtual exhibitions, digital exhibits and interactive games play a major role in attracting tourists. This will serve the development of cultural heritage tourism on a global scale.
Support local culture	Museums support and promote local arts and crafts. This serves to provide employment to the local population and preserve the national culture.

As can be seen from the role of museums in cultural heritage tourism, their activity is not limited to the preservation of historical exhibits. They are important on a global scale by promoting tourism, supporting the economy and providing cultural exchange. In this regard, the "Silk Road" regions have great potential for sustainable development of the tourism sector, as these regions have a rich historical, cultural and archaeological heritage. The following trends are observed for the development of tourism through the effective use of this heritage [15].

Table 2. Analysis of factors of effective use of cultural heritage resources of Silk Road regions.

<i>Factor</i>	<i>Description</i>
Creating cultural routes	Attract tourists by creating integrated cultural routes in cities along the Silk Road. These routes direct tourists to different cultural and historical places and they complement each other.
Organization of cultural festivals and events	Holding cultural festivals and events in the regions is one of the effective methods of tourism development. These events attract tourists at national and international level and showcase the cultural heritage of the area.
Restoration of ancient monuments	Restoration of ancient monuments in the "Silk Road" regions and giving them a new life with the help of modern technologies is an important part of tourism development. The restored monuments are of great interest to tourists.
Support local crafts.	Tourism can be made more attractive by developing local crafts and arts. This not only helps to preserve the cultural heritage, but also has a positive effect on the local economy.
Development of ecotourism	It is important to preserve natural resources and involve the local population in tourism activities through the development of ecologically clean and sustainable tourism in the "Silk Road" regions. Ecotourism allows tourists to enjoy the natural and cultural resources of the area.
Implementation of digital technologies	The creation of virtual tours, mobile applications and interactive maps with the help of digital technologies will make it easier for tourists and bring the cultural heritage of the area to the general public.
Scientific research and international cooperation	It requires conducting international scientific research in order to study and promote the cultural heritage of the region. Through these scientific collaborations, new archaeological findings can be discovered and the cultural wealth of the area can be further increased.
Development of museums.	It is necessary to emphasize the need to increase the interest of tourists by modernizing museums in the region, adding new exhibits and organizing interactive exhibitions.
Improve transport and infrastructure	Improving transport and infrastructure for easy access to tourist spots along the "Silk Road" was considered urgent. It helps to make the trips of tourists comfortable and safe.

The measures listed above are important for the sustainable development of the tourism sector through the effective use of the cultural heritage of the Silk Road regions.

They are of great importance in attracting tourists, developing the local economy and preserving cultural heritage. The number of visitors to existing museums in our country has been constantly growing. But in 2020, due to the corona virus, this indicator fell. However, from 2022, the number of visitors started to increase again. An increase in the number of visits to museums may mean that the population of the country is becoming more interested in the process of national historical and cultural development.

4. Conclusion

From the analysis of existing scientific works, it can be concluded that cultural heritage is an important element of tourism. This kind of tourism provides a chance for visitors to experience their culture and traditions in depth by visiting places, monuments, museums, galleries, festivals, concerts and culturally significant communities. Uzbekistan can attract more tourists with the help of its tangible and intangible heritages and it can be a vital foundation in the development of tourism sector. Uzbekistan's cultural heritage is quite rich and these values contribute to the development of our country as a whole. As it is mentioned already in the paper, most visited cultural heritages in Uzbekistan are followings: Itchan Kala, Historic Center of Bukhara, Historic Center of Shakhrisabz, Samarkand. Cultural heritages in our country can make a great contribution to strengthening cultural ties, developing communication and cooperation between nations. In addition, our culture and historical heritages attract tourists from around the world, contribute to the development of tourism infrastructure, create new jobs and increase the income of regions. The positive relationship can be seen among culture, heritage and tourism and it can be seen that cultural heritage and tourism are closely related and both serve to increase the competitiveness of tourism of a country.

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