IMPORTANCE OF FESTIVALS IN ATTRACTING TOURISTS TO UZBEKISTAN

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Abstract. *The present research is focused on the major ones, namely, Navruz, Silk and Spices Festival, and Sharq Taronalari, to discuss the impact of festivals in attracting tourists to Uzbekistan. The quantitative survey method is used along with collecting secondary data from official tourism reports to find out factors like visitor motivation, experience, satisfaction, and spending patterns. The results are quite amazing because they show that festivals do attract more tourists and this in turn creates the need for the management and marketing of festivals that additionally raise the profile of Uzbekistan as a cultural tourism destination.*

Key words: *Festival, tourism, development, tourist, attractions, Uzbekistan.*

Introduction

Cultural events that are incorporated in tourism business are gaining more and more popularity, however, there are still very few studies done on their impact on the behavior and destination choice of travelers in Uzbekistan. Coupled with the above-mentioned, still open questions about the attractions that bring tourists to the events, varying perceptions of their enjoyment, and the extent to which festivals contribute to the inclusion of the country among the tourist destinations have been raised. It is really important for the stakeholders, tourism strategists, and surrounding areas who want to have a sustainable tourism development by the adequate utilization of the powers of festivals to gain insights into these dynamics. Hence, the present research work is aimed at uncovering how cultural festivals affect the inflow of tourists into Uzbekistan and thus, bridging the voids in understanding. . The research objectives are: [to appraise the characteristics and attraction of notable Uzbek festivals;](Azizbek Allaberganov and Pippa Catteral, 2023). The purposes were to study the reasons, visitors' satisfaction and their consumption during festivals; and to suggest changes in festival management and marketing approaches aimed at tourist attraction. In this manner, the research both develops the theoretical

understanding of the case and gives concrete measures for cultural tourism to thrive in Uzbekistan. In Central Asia, cultural festivals are mainly seen as a tool for promoting tourism. The nations such as Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, and Uzbekistan have created festivals where the main elements for pulling in tourists, both local and overseas, are their historical sites and non-material cultural heritage. The prediction has been made that the festival of regional artistic expressions, music, and gastronomy will be held simultaneously by (Abdurahmonov, 2018) The strategy is to make Central Asia a more visible destination for tourists and to ensure that their stay is not just a one-off. On the other hand, the problems are really difficult to handle because of the very poor infrastructure, lack of advertisement and no measuring of the festivals' impact on tourist movement. Central Asia has always been the home of the most magnificent cultural festivals that are the best and most vivid representation of its great past.

Literature review

Every year, on the spring equinox, on the 21st of March, millions upon millions of people in the Zoroastrian lands and beyond celebrate Nowruz with customs, traditional foods, music, and dancing. The Silk and Spices Festival is not just a Central Asian Heritage celebration but also a demonstration of a glorious past that has been covered by dust where once the merchants and their goods traversed. The venue for the Silk and Spices Festival is historic cities such as Samarkand and Bukhara where the ancient Silk Road of the country with its entire handicrafts and food is revealed. The festival draws in both local and international tourists and visitors alike. The annual Sharq Taronalari international music festival has become famous for its role in fostering cross-cultural relations and uniting artists from every part of the earth.world. (Elham Cheraghi,Zahed Ghaderi,Mohammadhossein Dehghan,Pour Farashah,Mironshokh Uktamov, 2025) Anyone who visits these festivals would find them a bit more than just a fun place to be, but still, the massive increase in popularity has still not led to substantial empirical studies that can capture their impacts on visitors' behavior, satisfaction, and spending. There is a knowledge gap regarding the connection between cultural events and tourism development due to the fact that most of the existing studies focus on either general tourism trends or festival organization rather than cultural events (Amiriddinova, 2024). The concepts of destination image formation and event tourism theory are central to this study. Based on the event tourism theory, festivals do not serve merely as attractions, but, to some extent, also as originators, thereby having an impact on the decision-making

process and behavior of the tourists. (Getz, 2010). The same way, destination image theory claims that festivals strongly affect the consumers' perceptions, the extent of their happiness, and their decision to return in the future. (Gartner, 1993). This framework would provide a means for studying the impact of cultural festivals on tourist satisfaction and therefore on the attractiveness of Uzbekistan.

A significant factor that impacts the tourism sector by festivals is displaying the different cultural characteristics and their lives in a region. Festivals are the core of cultural tourism, and they also create and promote economic benefits while fostering the development of national heritage and unity. The rise in travelers' demand for genuine and deep experiences has recently made festival tourism one of the most dynamic sectors of the global tourist industry. ((Crompton J.)). Festivals are a major attraction for travelers but more than that, they are a means by which the place develops character through the connection created between the visitors and the local community. The festivals contribute significantly to the image of Uzbekistan as a hospitable and culturally rich country where it is nice to visit. The government initiatives that support culture and event tourism are very important but so is the diversification of the tourism sector. The festivals like Sharq Taronalari (Melodies of the East) in Samarkand, Silk and Spices Festival in Bukhara, and Boysun Bahori in Surkhandarya which incorporate music, art, food, and crafts are luring not only local visitors but also those from abroad. Through these events, Uzbekistan is not only promoting herself on the world tourism map but also allowing the tourists to discover its nonconformist cultural values.(UNWTO, 2021).

Methodology

The main goal of this research was to uncover the long-term trajectory of festival development along with the corresponding increase in tourism by marking the years 2000 to 2025.The main indicators of demand for travel are the arrivals of local and foreign visitors to Samarkand, which are the dependent variables of the study.

Results

Festivals that have strong cultural branding and are marketed worldwide are the most effective in attracting international travellers. (Laing, 2018). The study not only showed through its analysis that the dates of the festival are one of the elements luring tourists to a particular place, but it also further proved that the average duration of tourists' stay was lengthened due to the festivals they planned to attend. Besides, there was a significant association between the periods of the specific festivals and the tourism revenue, meaning that the tourists were

spending more on accommodation, food, transport, and cultural goods. The two main factors that determined the number of visitors the most were the accessibility of transport and the ease of getting a visa; these factors support the argument that the success of a festival is wholly dependent on the underlying proper infrastructure and legal measures in place. However, the economic conditions in the tourists' countries of origin also influence their travel decisions, whereas changes in the exchange rate have a negligible impact. In conclusion, the findings of the research confirmed that the festivals have a very significant impact on the demand for tourist services in Samarkand. (Donald Getz, Stephen J, 2016).

Conclusion

Festivals are the primary factor in travelers' choice of Samarkand and at the same time, they are behind the remarkable increase of the city's tourism. Moreover, besides uplifting the destination's reputation, festivals draw in more tourists, extend their stay and, therefore, increase revenue for local businesses. The conclusions of the research emphasize the strategic function of festivals in luring tourists and increasing the appeal of Samarkand as a travel destination. The event tourism literature asserts that festivals provide one-of-a-kind cultural experiences that make places different from others and also create emotional bonds between the tourists and the places. The city as a UNESCO World Heritage site, the festivals are legitimate with the celebration of history, culture, and customs of Samarkand. Besides, the hotels' monthly guest statistics show that the influx of tourists due to festivals' demand is very high, indicating that the tourists are keen on the cultural events as well as the historical sites. The time spent by the visitors was one of the main reasons for the festivals' capability of stimulating visitors' deeper interaction with the place and, thus, esoteric economic impacts.

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