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ijtimoiy-iqtisodiy, innovatsion texnik,
fan va ta'limga oid ilmiy-amaliy jurnal

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05.01.02 – Tizimli tahlil, boshqaruv va axborotni qayta ishlash
05.01.03 – Informatikaning nazariy asoslari
05.01.04 – Hisoblash mashinalari, majmualari va kompyuter tarmoqlarining matematik va dasturiy ta'minoti
05.01.05 – Axborotlarni himoyalash usullari va tizimlari. Axborot xavfsizligi
05.01.06 – Hisoblash texnikasi va boshqaruv tizimlarining elementlari va qurilmalari
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05.02.00 – Mashinasozlik va mashinashunoslik
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05.08.03 – Temir yo'l transportini ishlatish
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THE INFLUENCE OF TRAVEL MOTIVATIONS AND TOURIST PREFERENCES ON DESTINATION CHOICE: EVIDENCE FROM INTERNATIONAL TOURISTS VISITING UZBEKISTAN

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Abstract: The psychological factors influencing tourists’ destination choices are examined, with particular emphasis on international tourism in Uzbekistan, a country distinguished by its rich historical heritage, traditional architecture, cultural diversity, and unique local experiences. The study aims to identify the psychological, social, and practical factors influencing tourists’ destination choices and travel preferences. A questionnaire survey was conducted among international tourists visiting Uzbekistan to investigate their travel motivations, sources of information, preferred types of tourism, practical considerations, and interest in exploring new cultures. The empirical basis of the study consists of questionnaire responses collected from 20 international tourists at Registan Square in Samarkand.

Keywords: tourist decision-making, destination choice, travel motivation, tourist behavior, travel preferences, destination image, cultural tourism.

Annotatsiya: Turistlarning sayohat yönalişini tanlaşiga ta’sir etuvçi psixologik omillar örganilib, asosiy e’tibor boy tarixiy merosi, an’anaviy me’morçiligi, madaniy xilma-xilligi va öziga xos mahalliy tajribalari bilan ajralib turadigan Özbekistondagi xalqaro turizmga qaratilgan. Tadqiqotning maqsadi turistlarning sayohat yönalişi va dam oliş turini tanlaşiga ta’sir körsatuvçi psixologik, ijtimoiy va amaliy omillarni aniqlaşdan iborat. Özbekistonga taşrif buyurgan xorijiy turistlarning sayohat motivlari, axborot manbalari, afzal köradigan turizm turlari, sayohat bilan boğliq amaliy jihatlar hamda yangi madaniyatlarni örganişga bölgan qiziqişlarini aniqlaş maqsadida sörovnoma ötkazilgan. Tadqiqotning empirik asosini Samarqand şahridagi Registon maydonida 20 nafar xorijiy turist iştirokida ötkazilgan sörovnoma natijalari taşkil etadi.

Kalit sözlar: turistlarning qaror qabul qiliş jarayoni, turistik yönalişni tanlaş, sayohat motivatsiyasi, turistlar xulq-atvori, sayohat afzalliklari, turistik destinatsiya imiji, madaniy turizm.

Аннотация: Рассмотрены психологические факторы, влияющие на выбор туристами направления путешествия, с особым акцентом на международный туризм в Узбекистане — стране, отличающейся богатым историческим наследием, традиционной архитектурой, культурным разнообразием и уникальными местными туристскими впечатлениями. Цель исследования заключается в выявлении психологических, социальных и практических факторов, влияющих на выбор туристской дестинации и предпочтения туристов в организации отдыха. Для изучения мотивов путешествия, источников информации, предпочтительных видов туризма, практических аспектов поездки и интереса к знакомству с новыми культурами проведён анкетный опрос иностранных туристов, посещающих Узбекистан. Эмпирическую основу исследования составили результаты анкетирования 20 иностранных туристов, проведённого на площади Регистан в городе Самарканде.

Ключевые слова: процесс принятия решений туристами, выбор туристской дестинации, туристская мотивация, поведение туристов, туристские предпочтения, имидж туристской дестинации, культурный туризм.

INTRODUCTION

The selection of a holiday destination is a complex decision-making process influenced by various external and internal factors. Tourists typically consider destination-related attributes, including travel costs, safety and security, transportation accessibility, accommodation facilities, cultural and historical attractions, and available recreational activities. However, personal factors, such as interest in the destination, reasons for travelling, expectations, past experiences, and the desire to learn about new cultures, can also affect destination choice.

People travel for a variety of reasons. Some are interested in historical monuments, traditional cuisine, architecture, and culture, while others are more interested in nature, relaxation, adventure, or entertainment. The information tourists receive can play a role in shaping their expectations. Recommendations from friends, online travel websites, social media platforms, and online reviews can influence individuals' perceptions of a country.

Uzbekistan provides an interesting context for studying travel decisions because of its historical cities, rich cultural heritage, traditional architecture, and distinctive local traditions. Cities such as Samarkand attract tourists interested in learning about the country's history and experiencing its culture. Identifying why international tourists choose to visit Uzbekistan can help explain which aspects attract their attention and what they expect from their visits.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Crompton (1979) identified several socio-psychological and cultural motivations influencing tourist behavior, including relaxation, social interaction, novelty, and education [1]. Similarly, Beerli and Martin (2004) highlighted the importance of travel motivations and previous experiences in shaping tourists' perceptions of destinations [2]. Therefore, destination choice can be understood as a multidimensional process involving interactions among destination attributes, individual motivations, and tourists' perceptions and preferences. Qiu, Masiero, and Li (2018) examined the psychological aspects of destination choice [3]. Their research contributed to understanding the various factors that may influence tourists when selecting a destination.

Access to information also plays a significant role in tourists' destination selection processes. Before making travel decisions, tourists frequently seek information from various sources, including travel websites, social media platforms, online reviews, travel blogs, and official tourism websites (Fodness and Murray, 1997; Xiang and Gretzel, 2010) [4, 5]. These information sources can influence tourists' perceptions and expectations of potential destinations. Baloglu (2000) demonstrated that information sources and travel motivations contribute to destination image formation and influence tourists' intentions to visit particular destinations [6].

Practical factors can also influence destination choice. Travel costs, transportation, safety, accommodation, and journey duration can all influence the feasibility of visiting a particular destination. Nicolau and Mas (2006) demonstrated that distance and travel costs influence destination selection, although their effects vary depending on tourists' motivations [7].

Cultural interest can be an important consideration when evaluating destinations with rich historical and cultural heritage. According to Richards (2018), cultural heritage, historical attractions, and cultural experiences constitute significant motivations for tourism [8]. Similarly, McKercher (2002) demonstrated that cultural motivations influence destination selection, although their importance varies among different tourist segments [9]. Cultural heritage may be particularly important to tourists visiting Uzbekistan, especially historical cities such as Samarkand. However, international tourists may have different motivations for visiting the country. Recommendations, personal interests, transportation, budget, and other factors can also influence destination choice. Although previous research has examined destination choice, social influences, and tourists' decision-making processes, it is also important to consider the experiences and preferences of tourists visiting specific destinations.

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

This research is based on a questionnaire survey. A sample of 20 international tourists was surveyed at Registan Square in Samarkand, Uzbekistan. Tourists were approached face-to-face and asked whether they had time to complete the questionnaire. The questionnaire consisted of 15 questions, including 14 multiple-choice questions and one open-ended question. The questions addressed the main purpose of travel, intended length of stay, preferred destinations within Uzbekistan, travel companions, reasons for visiting, information sources, preferred types of tourism, destination selection processes, previous visits to Central Asian countries, interest in learning about new cultures, means of transportation to Uzbekistan, and factors that might encourage longer stays.

ANALYSIS AND RESULTS

The survey aimed to identify tourists' travel motivations, destination preferences, information sources, decision-making processes, and factors influencing their travel experiences and length of stay. The questionnaire consisted of 15 questions covering different aspects of tourist behavior. Since some questions allowed respondents to select more than one answer, the total number of responses to certain questions exceeded the sample size. Therefore, the percentages presented in this section were calculated based on the total number of participants (n = 20), rather than the total number of selected responses.

Tourist Motivations and Destination Preferences. The findings indicate that Uzbekistan's historical and cultural heritage plays an important role in attracting the surveyed tourists. When asked what initially attracted their attention to the country, 12 respondents (60%) selected historical monuments, while 11 (55%) identified culture and traditions. Food was mentioned by four respondents (20%), landscapes by two (10%), and other factors by one (5%) (Figure 1).

A similar pattern emerged when respondents were asked about their preferred types of tourism. Cultural tourism was the most frequently selected category, with 13 responses (65%), followed by historical tourism with 11 responses (55%). Nature and adventure tourism attracted eight respondents (40%), while food tourism and religious tourism received four (20%) and one (5%) responses, respectively (Figure 2).

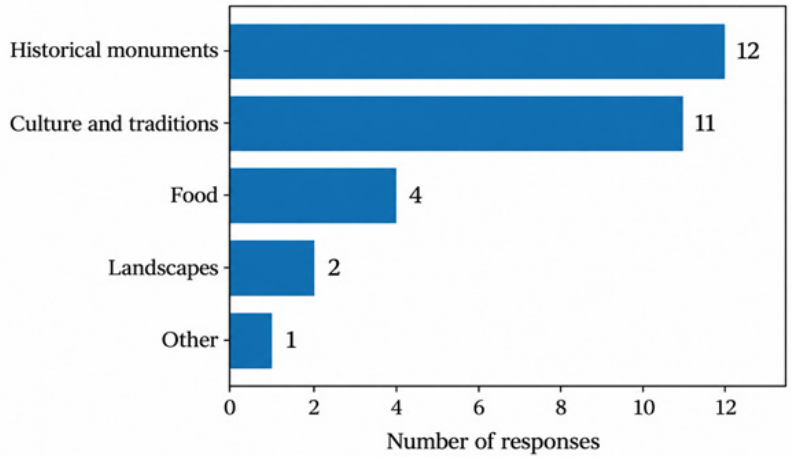


Figure 1. What first attracted attention to Uzbekistan (n = 20)

*Some survey questions allowed multiple responses, so total may exceed 2

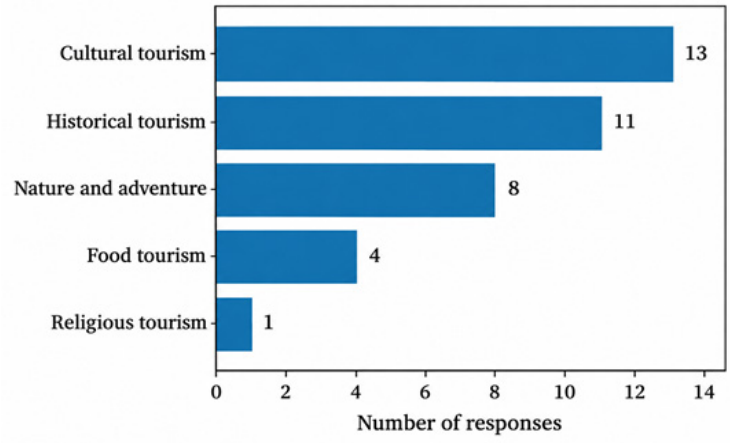


Figure 2. Tourism types of greatest interest* (n=20)

*Some survey questions allowed multiple responses, so total may exceed 20.

These findings suggest that historical and cultural attractions are particularly important to the surveyed tourists. The relatively high level of interest in nature and adventure tourism also suggests opportunities to diversify Uzbekistan's tourism offerings beyond its traditional historical and cultural products.

Regarding destination choices, Tashkent was the most frequently selected city, mentioned by 19 respondents (95%). Bukhara was selected by 10 participants (50%), followed by Khiva with four responses (20%). One respondent (5%) selected another destination. These findings indicate that Tashkent and Bukhara

occupied prominent positions in the travel plans of the surveyed participants (Figure 3).

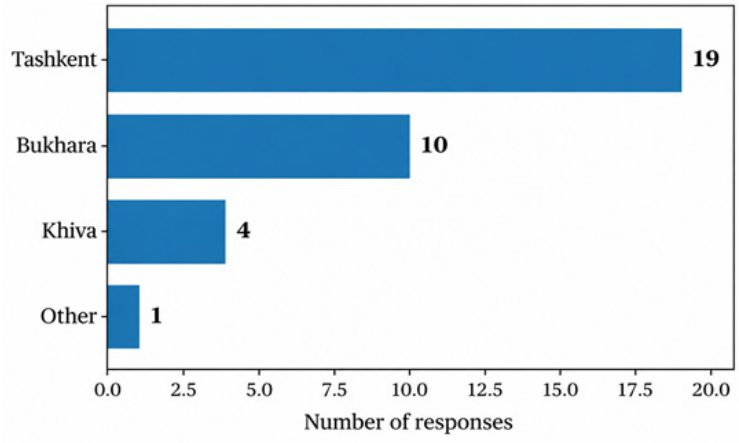


Figure 3. Tourism types of greatest interest* (n=20)

*Some survey questions allowed multiple responses, so total may exceed 20.

Information Sources and Tourist Decision-Making. The survey also examined the sources of information tourists used before travelling to Uzbekistan. Social media emerged as the most frequently reported information source, selected by 12 respondents (60%). Travel websites ranked second, with nine responses (45%), while recommendations from friends or family were mentioned by five respondents (25%). Books, films or documentaries, travel agencies, and other sources were each selected once (5%) (Figure 4).

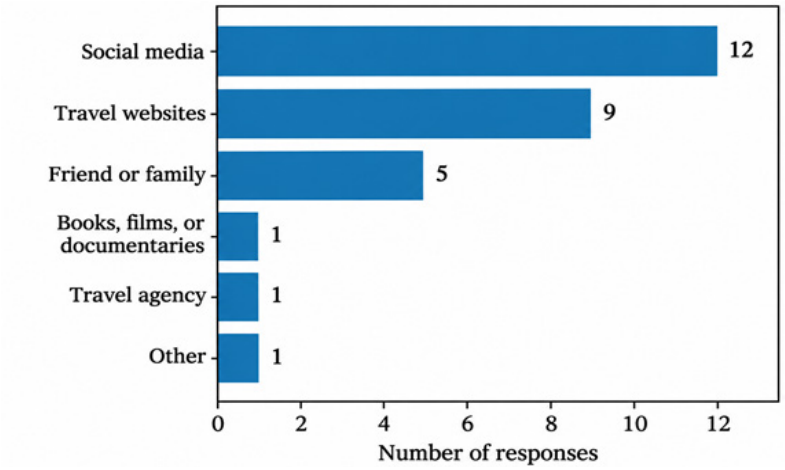


Figure 4. Main information sources before the trip* (n=20)

*Some survey questions allowed multiple responses, so total may exceed 20.

These findings highlight the importance of digital information channels in shaping tourists' awareness of Uzbekistan and supporting their travel planning. In particular, the frequent use of social media and travel websites suggests that online content may play a significant role in the destination selection process.

Regarding how tourists selected places to visit, 13 respondents (65%) reported planning their itineraries independently. Four respondents (20%) selected recommendations from friends, and another four (20%) reported deciding on places after arriving in Uzbekistan. Three respondents (15%) indicated that a travel agency had planned their visits.

The results suggest that independent travel planning is common among the surveyed tourists. This finding, together with the widespread use of digital information sources, indicates the importance of accessible and reliable destination information for visitors organizing their own travel experiences.

Practical Factors Influencing Travel Decisions. Practical considerations were also found to influence tourists' travel planning. Travel cost was the most frequently selected practical factor, mentioned by 11 respondents (55%). Safety ranked second, with eight responses (40%), followed by available time, selected by seven respondents (35%). Flight availability was identified by five participants (25%), while none selected visa requirements as their most important practical consideration.

These results indicate that economic considerations, personal safety, and time availability are particularly relevant factors in the travel planning decisions of the surveyed group. Although cultural and historical attractions appear to generate interest in Uzbekistan, practical circumstances may also influence how tourists organize their visits and choose their travel arrangements.

Cultural Interest and Expectations of Tourists. One of the most significant findings concerns tourists' interest in discovering unfamiliar cultures. Of the 20 respondents, 16 (80%) considered discovering unfamiliar cultures very important, while four (20%) considered it somewhat important. All participants selected a positive response category.

This finding suggests that cultural discovery is a particularly strong motivation among the surveyed tourists and may contribute substantially to their interest in visiting Uzbekistan (Figure 5). When asked what they would most like to learn about the country, 17 respondents (85%) expressed an interest in Uzbekistan's history. Traditions were selected by 13 respondents (65%), while 12 (60%) indicated an interest in learning about the everyday lives of local people. Food attracted five responses (25%), and modern development was selected by three participants (15%).

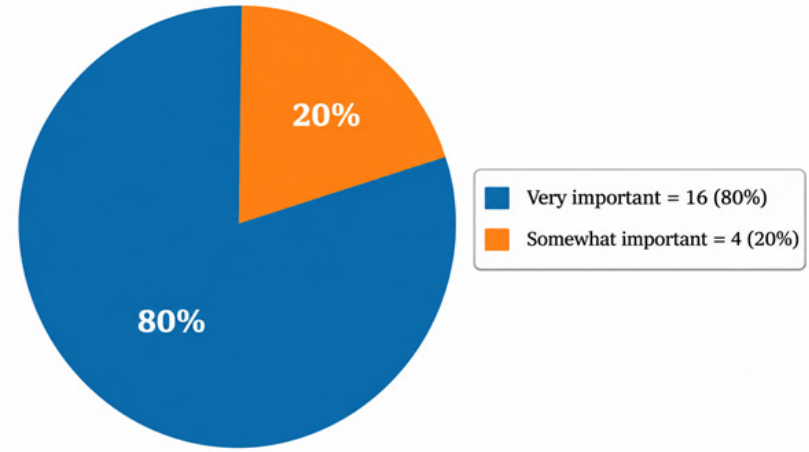


Figure 5. The importance of discovering unfamiliar cultures (n=20)

These findings suggest that tourists' cultural interests extend beyond visiting historical monuments. A considerable proportion of respondents also expressed interest in local traditions and everyday life, indicating potential demand for experiences that offer direct interaction with local communities and opportunities to understand contemporary Uzbek society.

Factors Encouraging Longer Tourist Stays. The final part of the questionnaire explored factors that might encourage tourists to extend their stays in Uzbekistan. Nature and outdoor activities received the highest number of responses, selected by 10 participants (50%). Cultural events and festivals ranked second, with nine responses (45%), followed by additional historical sites, selected by eight respondents (40%). Lower travel costs were mentioned by two respondents (10%), while additional local food experiences were selected by one respondent (5%) (Figure 6).

These results indicate that the availability of diverse tourism activities may be an important consideration in tourists' willingness to extend their visits. In particular, nature-based experiences, cultural festivals, and additional historical attractions appear to offer promising opportunities to encourage longer stays.

The findings also suggest that expanding the range of tourism products could potentially strengthen the attractiveness of Uzbekistan as a destination and provide tourists with additional reasons to visit different regions of the country.

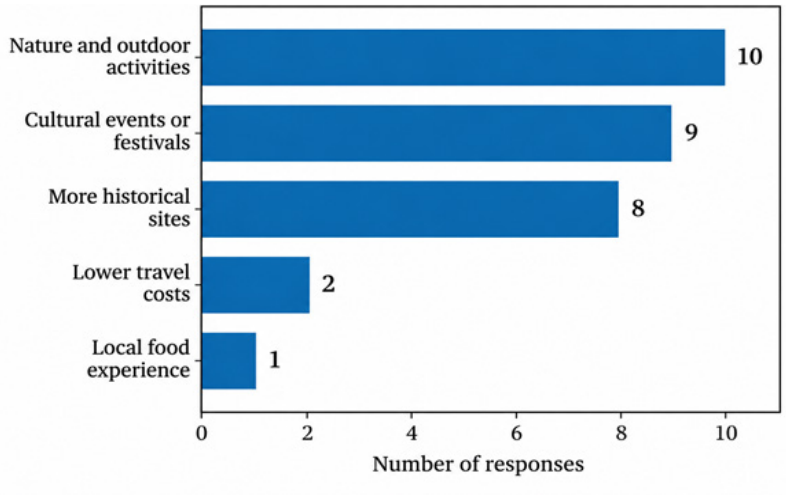


Figure 6. What might encourage visitors to extend their stay* (n=20)

*Some survey questions allowed multiple responses, so total may exceed 20.

Overall, the survey findings reveal several important characteristics of tourist motivations, preferences, and destination choices in Uzbekistan.

First, leisure tourism was the dominant travel purpose, with most respondents planning to stay for approximately one week. Second, historical monuments and cultural traditions were the strongest reported attractions, while cultural and historical tourism were the most popular tourism interests.

Third, social media and travel websites emerged as important information sources, and independent itinerary planning was common among participants. Fourth, travel costs, safety, and available time were the most frequently identified practical considerations influencing travel planning.

Fifth, the findings indicated a particularly strong interest in cultural discovery, with 80% of respondents considering the exploration of unfamiliar cultures very important. Moreover, respondents expressed considerable interest in Uzbekistan's history, traditions, and everyday life.

Finally, nature-based activities, cultural events, and additional historical attractions were identified as the most attractive factors that might encourage tourists to extend their stays.

Taken together, these results suggest that Uzbekistan's historical and cultural heritage constitutes a major source of destination attractiveness, while the diversification of tourism experiences, particularly through nature-based, cultural, and community-oriented activities, may provide additional opportunities to improve visitor experiences and encourage longer stays.

Given the sample of 20 respondents and the use of multiple-response questions, these findings should be interpreted as exploratory and descriptive, providing a basis for further research on international tourists visiting Uzbekistan.

CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

This research examined the factors influencing tourists' destination choices and travel preferences. The findings suggest that the surveyed international tourists were attracted to Uzbekistan by its historical landmarks, cultural heritage, and traditional values. Social media and travel websites were identified as important sources of information during their travel planning.

The participants expressed considerable interest in cultural and historical tourism. Their responses also reflected an appreciation of Uzbekistan's architecture, history, traditional cuisine, and local hospitality. These findings suggest that tourists' destination choices are influenced by their personal interests, cultural motivations, information sources, and practical considerations. Moreover, the research provided insights into how the surveyed international tourists perceive Uzbekistan and the factors contributing to its attractiveness as a destination. The country's historical and cultural heritage, hospitality, and distinctive local experiences contribute to its tourism appeal.

Research Limitations

The research has certain limitations. The survey involved 20 tourists at a single popular tourist attraction. Therefore, the sample reflects the views of tourists visiting Registan Square during the survey period and provides insights into their specific experiences and preferences. The findings should consequently be regarded as exploratory rather than conclusive evidence about the entire international tourism market in Uzbekistan.

Future research could involve a larger sample and include participants from different cities to gain a more comprehensive understanding of tourists' travel motivations and preferences.

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