

SOCIAL MEDIA PROMOTION OF CULTURAL HERITAGE DESTINATIONS: THE CASE OF KHIVA

Rajabboyeva Gulsevar San’atovna
Silk Road International University of Tourism and Hospitality
E-mail: rajabboyevag594@gmail.com

Annotatsiya: Ijtimoiy tarmoqlar turistik destinatsiyalarni targ‘ib qilish va tavsiya etishda muhim vositaga aylanib bormoqda, chunki sayohatchilar safar davomida suratlar, videolar va o‘z taassurotlarini joylashtirish imkoniyatiga ega. Bu, ayniqsa, o‘ziga xos me’morchiligi, tarixiy binolari va an’anaviy amaliyotlari bilan ajralib turadigan madaniy meros obyektlari uchun muhimdir. Mazkur tadqiqotda O‘zbekistonning madaniy meros destinatsiyasi sifatida Xivaning Instagram Reels platformasidagi tasvirlanishi o‘rganilgan. Tadqiqotda vizual materiallarni sifat jihatidan tahlil qilish va miqdoriy tasniflashni o‘z ichiga olgan aralash usuldan foydalanilgan. Jami yettita ochiq foydalanish imkoniyati mavjud bo‘lgan Reels tanlab olingan bo‘lib, ular uchta toifaga ajratilgan: tarixiy yodgorliklar va me’morchilik (n = 4; 57,1%), an’anaviy madaniyat va hunarmandchilik (n = 2; 28,6%) hamda shaxsiy sayohat tajribasi (n = 1; 14,3%). Kontentlarning auditoriya faolligi darajasi turlicha bo‘lgan. An’anaviy raqs aks ettirilgan Reel taxminan 54 700 ta, tepasida qushlar uchib yurgan Kalta Minor minorasi tasvirlangan Reel esa taxminan 42 600 ta layk to‘plagan. Natijalar tarixiy me’morchilik va madaniy chiqishlar internetda auditoriya e’tiborini jalb qila olishini ko‘rsatadi, biroq tanlanma hajmining kichikligi sababli ushbu natijalarni umumlashtirish mumkin emas. Tadqiqot Xivaning tarixi va madaniyati Instagram Reels platformasida qanday namoyon etilayotganiga dastlabki baho beradi hamda kelgusidagi tadqiqotlar uchun muhim yo‘nalishlarni belgilaydi.
Kalit so‘zlar: ijtimoiy tarmoqlar (Instagram Reels); madaniy meros; turizmni targ‘ib qilish; Xiva, O‘zbekiston; raqamli marketing; turistik destinatsiya imiji.

Abstract: Social media is an essential tool for recommending tourism destinations, as while traveling they can upload images, videos and experience. This is particularly true for cultural heritage sites especially those with their architecture, historical buildings and traditional practices. An exploration of Instagram Reels Representations of Khiva, Uzbekistan as a heritage place. The technique employs a mix of techniques for cosmetic assessment, involving qualitative reading of visuals and quantitative classification. In total, seven publically available Reels were chosen which are classified into three categories as historical monuments and architecture (n = 4; 57.1%), traditional culture and crafts (n = 2; 28.6%) and personal travel experience (n = 1; 14.3%). Engagement level varied. A traditional dance was about one of. A Reel of a traditional dance had about 54,700 likes, and one showing the Kalta Minor Minaret with birds overhead had about 42,600. Both historical architecture and cultural performance can attract attention online, although a sample this small cannot be generalised. The study gives a first look at how Reels show Khiva’s history and culture and points to what further research should do.
Keywords: social media (Instagram Reels); cultural heritage; tourism promotion; Khiva, Uzbekistan; digital marketing; destination image

Абстрактный: Социальные сети становятся важным инструментом продвижения и рекомендации туристских дестинаций, поскольку путешественники могут размещать фотографии, видео и делиться своими впечатлениями непосредственно во время поездок. Это особенно актуально для объектов культурного наследия, отличающихся уникальной архитектурой, историческими зданиями и традиционными практиками. В данном исследовании рассматривается представление Хивы, Узбекистан, как объекта культурного наследия на платформе Instagram Reels. В исследовании использован смешанный подход, включающий качественный анализ визуальных материалов и их количественную классификацию. Всего было отобрано семь общедоступных Reels, которые были распределены по трём категориям: исторические памятники и архитектура (n = 4; 57,1%), традиционная культура и ремёсла (n = 2; 28,6%) и личный туристический опыт (n = 1; 14,3%). Уровень вовлечённости аудитории различался. Reel с изображением традиционного танца набрал около 54 700 лайков, а публикация с изображением минарета Кальта-Минор на фоне пролетающих птиц — около 42 600 лайков. Полученные результаты показывают, что историческая архитектура и культурные выступления способны привлекать внимание аудитории в социальных сетях, однако небольшой объём выборки не позволяет обобщать полученные результаты. Исследование представляет первоначальный анализ того, как история и культура Хивы репрезентируются в Instagram Reels, и определяет направления для дальнейших исследований.
Ключевые слова: социальные сети (Instagram Reels); культурное наследие; продвижение туризма; Хива, Узбекистан; цифровой маркетинг; имидж туристской дестинации.

Introduction (Kirish/Введение).

Social media has been used quite regularly as a marketing tool for destinations in recent years. People go on Instagram to share photos and videos of their travels and experiences with people, who may be just about anywhere. People use Instagram to post photos and videos of their trips and adventures to an audience that could be anyone, anywhere. Unlike a brochure, this content is meant to be reacted to since it can be liked, commented on, or shared. This type of promotion works well with heritage destinations. It's easy to do visually, and a great video can make someone want to see what's in store at a place they've never been. The city of Khiva is one of the most popular of the country's heritage sites. The historic inner town, Itchan Kala was inscribed as a UNESCO World Heritage Site in 1990, [1]. The narrow old streets, the madarasas and the minarets provide plenty of material for film makers. Instagram Reels can do this so easily – you can mix your content with video footage and music in a short video. One game about Khiva could be dedicated to the Kalta Minor Minaret [2], another person on a street at dusk, a dance show, or a tourist strolling down the old city. Both depict a different Khiva. It's not just about beautiful buildings when it comes to promoting a heritage destination. Social media can provide a glimpse into their customs and traditions and daily routines of the people who live there. Viewing Instagram activity can therefore give an idea of what is presented online, and how the culture is marketed to prospective visitors to Khiva. The task of this study is to investigate the Instagram Reels on Khiva and how it represents the city as a cultural heritage place. In recent years, social media has become a regular part of how destinations are marketed. On Instagram, travelers, bloggers, tourism organizations, and small local businesses all post photos and videos for an audience that can be anywhere in the world. Unlike a brochure, this content invites a response, since people can like it, comment on it, or share it. Heritage destinations suit this kind of promotion well. It is easy to depict monuments, old architecture, performances, food, and daily life visually. A good video can even make someone curious about a place never been to! Khiva is a city in Uzbekistan that attracts tourists to explore its ancient heritage. In 1990, the UNESCO got Inner Town Itchan Kala inscribed as

a World Heritage. Madrasahs, minarets and narrow old streets give plenty to film for creators. Combining footage, music, and your own commentary into a short film is easy with Instagram Reels. An example reel could be featuring the Kalta Minor Minaret. Another could include a street scene at sunset, a dance performance, a visitor walking through the old city etc. Each example highlights a unique Khiva. It is not just about an attractive building in promoting a heritage destination. Social media often shows the customs and traditions associated to living there and everyday life. That’s why the Instagram post on Khiva allows us to examine which elements of Khiva are presented online and how a cultural identity is constructed. The study explores Instagram Reels focusing on Khiva, and asks how they represent the city as a cultural heritage site. Social media can show customs, traditions, and the everyday life of the people who live there. For this reason, looking at Instagram content can tell us which parts of Khiva are shown online and how its cultural identity reaches potential visitors. This study looks at Instagram Reels about Khiva and asks how they present the city as a cultural heritage destination.

Social media creates opportunities for tourism promotion, but not all content presents a destination in the same way. Some creators concentrate on monuments and architecture, while others show traditions or their own travel experiences. These differences matter because a heritage destination is made up of a physical place and also of the traditions, identities, and experiences connected to it. The problem addressed here is how Instagram Reels represent Khiva’s historical and cultural identity, and what types of content appear in the selected examples.

This study aims to explore how Instagram Reels contribute to the online promotion of Khiva as a cultural heritage destination.

The objectives of the study are:

1.To identify the main types of cultural heritage content in selected Reels about Khiva.

2.To describe how monuments, architecture, and cultural traditions are shown visually.

3.To examine how personal travel experiences shape the way Khiva is presented.

4.To compare visible audience engagement across content categories.

5.To discuss the possible role of Instagram Reels in promoting cultural heritage tourism in Khiva.

The study asks four questions:

RQ1: What types of cultural heritage content appear in selected Instagram Reels about Khiva?

RQ2: How do these Reels represent Khiva’s historical and cultural identity?

RQ3: What differences in visible audience engagement can be observed across content categories?

RQ4: What do the findings suggest about the role of Reels in promoting Khiva as a cultural heritage destination?

Literature review (Mavzuga oid adabiyotlar tahlili/Обзор литературы).

There is no doubt that social media has revolutionized the way people discover travel destinations. In the past, tourists' travel relied on travel agencies, guidebooks, brochures and official tourism websites. They now also check online reviews and consider photos and videos of other visitors. In an online travel search, Xiang and Gretzel investigated social media and concluded it has become an integral component of travelers' information search. In the paper, “Web 2.0 and social media: new challenges to decision making processes in tourism,” Živković, Gajić and Brdar presented the aspects of electronic word of mouth (eWOM) as a part of the process of choice of a travel destination, especially the behavior change that has taken place in the last decade. In a case study with the destination of Lisbon, Miguéns, Baggio, and Costa investigated the use of consumer generated content in TripAdvisor, explaining how consumers are influencing the image of the destination and how they are providing the information required by other consumers for planning their trips. Sotiriadis examined the literature covering the period 2009–2016, which explored how social media impacts the behaviour of tourists, with a specific focus on online reviews, and recommended strategies for tourim businesses. Matikiti-Manyevere and Kruger conducted a literature review on trip planning and identified that each of the steps involved is executed using social media, predominantly for research prior to travelling and for sharing experiences afterwards. The role of social media in tourism promotion has been revealed in these studies, along with the reasons for it is worth studying when we ask how a destination appears online. Uzbekistan is at an early stage of the digital tourism industry, which is experiencing growth, and Rakhmonova drew parallels with the international market, such as Instagram, TikTok, Facebook and Telegram. The author emphasized the need for UGC and its discussion on the need to modify international marketing practice to meet local conditions. The study looks at the sector as a whole, though, not at particular destinations. image and supply information that others use to plan trips. Sotiriadis reviewed research published between 2009 and 2016 on how social media has changed tourist behaviour, paying particular attention to online reviews, and suggested strategies for tourism businesses. Matikiti-Manyevere and Kruger reviewed the literature on trip planning and found that social media sites are used at every stage, mostly to search for information before a trip and to share experiences afterwards. Scholars explain how social media supports tourism promotion, and user-generated content (UGC) becomes necessary for examination when researchers examine how a destination appears on the internet. Looking at Uzbekistan, international work was compared with the country’s growing digital tourism sector by Rakhmonova, who investigated communication networks including Instagram, TikTok, Facebook, and Telegram. Experts claim that international marketing methods must match local realities because user-generated content carries great value for destinations. In this research, the entire sector is examined as a whole rather than specific destinations alone.

Human thoughts and feelings regarding a location define destination image. Such perceptions are shaped by pictures, video recordings, descriptions, personal experience, and advice from other persons. Many people believe that Instagram holds great significance because Instagram operates as a visual network where individuals display places through photographs and brief video clips. Photographic displays and keyword tags on Instagram were examined by Sukiman, Chew, and Tan to understand the way user-generated content builds place identity for the UNESCO World Heritage Sites of Melaka and Penang in Malaysia. Kusumaningtyas and colleagues surveyed followers of one Indonesian museum’s Instagram account and found that the quality of the museum’s content was linked to how people saw the museum and to whether they intended to visit.[9] Two studies deal with Uzbekistan’s image directly. Fayzullaev, Heldt Cassel, and Brandt compared official tourism promotion with tourists’ Instagram posts. Official promotion focused mainly on historical monuments, cultural traditions, and Silk Road heritage, while tourists’ posts gave a more varied picture that also included natural landscapes and personal experiences.[10] Eitzenberger and Thimm found that residents had a more positive view of Uzbekistan than non-visitors, whose views were often shaped by stereotypes, and they argued for targeted marketing.[11] These studies suggest that Instagram content is more than promotion; it is also a way of representing a place. A Reel about the Kalta Minor Minaret presents Khiva through its architecture and visual character, while a video of a traditional dance brings out performance and artistic expression. That is why sorting social media content into categories helps when studying heritage promotion. Still, online visibility does not mean people will actually visit. Online attention and real tourist behaviour are not the same. They need to be studied separately. Itchan Kala, Khiva's historic inner town, entered the UNESCO World Heritage list in 1990[3]. One study on the city's tourism potential looked at its religious heritage. Shakhriyorov examined Khiva as a possible destination for ziyarah tourism. The study uses a descriptive, qualitative approach based on existing sources. It highlights Khiva’s Islamic heritage and well-preserved historical sites and discusses how the city could promote itself and add to Uzbekistan’s wider tourism sector [3]. So how Khiva is communicated to wider audiences matters, but this study does not look at how social media presents the city. Digital technology gives heritage new ways to reach people. Buildings, museums, crafts, and cultural practices can be shared through photos, videos, and virtual tours. Todorova-Ekmekci looked at good practice and at different media and marketing approaches for presenting and promoting cultural heritage digitally [4]. Aiello, Fai, and Santagati examined virtual museums and virtual reality as ways of promoting and enhancing cultural heritage [5]. Reels are quite different from virtual museums or formal digitisation projects. They are short and visual rather than text-heavy. For Khiva, such videos can show heritage through architectural details, performances, crafts, and personal travel moments, and looking at them can help explain how the city’s heritage is communicated online.

Audience engagement is another thing social media research looks at. Likes and comments show that people interacted with a post, but they do not explain why [6]. Instagram users see tourism content in many forms: historical information, scenery, performances, and personal experiences. Comparing engagement across content categories may therefore show how audiences respond to different ways of representing a destination. Engagement numbers need careful reading, though. A Reel can get many likes because of its music, its editing, the creator’s popularity, or its entertainment value, not because viewers want to visit. Engagement should be read together with the content itself. Earlier research has covered Uzbekistan’s destination image on Instagram, how residents and non-visitors see the country, social media marketing in tourism, and Khiva’s potential for religious tourism.[18] Among the studies reviewed

here, none looks at how Instagram Reels present Khiva’s cultural heritage. This study tries to fill that gap with a preliminary content analysis of selected Reels. It asks not only how often each content category appears but also how those categories communicate the city’s history and culture. It asks not only how often each content category appears but also how those categories communicate the city’s history and culture.

Methods (Tadqiqotni amalga oshirishda foydalanilgan usullar/ Методы).

This study uses a mixed-methods case study design to investigate how Khiva is represented in Instagram Reels. The quantitative part classifies the selected Reels into content categories and records visible engagement metrics. The qualitative part examines how historical monuments, cultural traditions, and travel experiences are represented visually. Combining the two allows the study to look at the distribution of content as well as the meanings the videos convey. Khiva is treated as a single cultural heritage destination. The data are publicly available Instagram Reels about Khiva, Uzbekistan. This data consists of Instagram Reels that can be accessed publicly. I searched through Instagram and bookmarked relevant Reels. Screenshots were taken of visible data on 17 th October 2026. 7 Reels were chosen for preliminary analysis as they show specific aspects of Khiva that are relevant to cultural heritage tourism. This includes historical monuments, architectural features, cultural displays, traditional items and tourist experiences. This sample of data is not random or representative of all the Reels available for Khiva as it was selected as part of an exploratory sample of data found whilst searching through Instagram. Data was analysed based on 3 categories: Historical Monuments and architecture: Personal experiences and travel vlogs: Traditional culture and crafts. The Reels were placed within these categories depending on the primary visible feature of the video. For example, if the video had mostly shown the Kalta Minor Minaret then it would have been placed in the historical monuments and architecture category. If it was mostly showing traditional dance it would have been in the traditional culture and crafts category. If tourists appeared in a video that focussed on historical monuments, then it would still be categorised based on the dominant feature of the video. The 7 Reels were placed within the categories outlined above. This allowed for frequency and percentage calculations to be made. To calculate the percentage. I used: Percentage = (Number in category / Total number) x 100 As there were 7 examples in total each Reel will make up around 14.3% of the sample. Visible likes and comments were also noted. Descriptive statistics were used to summarise the data. No statistical tests were used as the sample was too small to make any meaningful generalizations. Qualitative data was analyzed based on what was visible in the chosen Reels. Questions I asked myself while analyzing were : What historical or cultural factors can be seen? How is Khiva being portrayed? What aspect of the destination are they highlighting? Patterns were identified on how the Reels portray historical architecture, traditional culture and tourist experiences. For example, the Reels featuring the Kalta Minor Minaret mostly showed the architectural features of Khiva. The dance reel showed the culture of the area. This helped me understand how the chosen content portrays different aspects of the destination. The data used in this study is public information from social media platforms. There was no interaction with creators and private information was not gathered. If this research is developed into formal research, then this will comply with university research ethics and Instagram's terms of use. Creator names and personal information will only be used if suitable and necessary. There are many limitations within this study. Firstly, there is a small sample size of just seven examples. Secondly, these Reels were not randomly sampled but were chosen based on what was seen during browsing. This means that the data may be biased towards the researcher's choice. Thirdly, engagement numbers can change over time. Therefore, the numbers given are simply what was visible on the day. Fourthly, there is no direct link between likes and comments and wanting to visit Khiva. Lastly, this research only looked at Instagram Reels and does not look at other platforms such as TikTok, YouTube and Facebook. This means that the findings should be considered as initial observations and there may not be a definite conclusion on Instagram influencing cultural heritage tourism in Khiva.

Analysis and rezults (Tahlil va natijalarlar /Анализ и результаты). There were a total of seven Reels analysed, which were split into three categories (Table 1).

Table 1.

Distribution of the seven analysed Reels

Content category	Number of Reels	Percentage
Historical monuments and architecture	4	57.1%
Traditional culture and crafts	2	28.6%
Personal travel experience	1	14.3%
Total	**7**	**100%**

Note: Initial analysis of seven Reel screenshots.

There were more Reels within the historical monuments & architecture category (4/7 Reels). Two Reels were within the traditional culture & crafts category and one was within the personal experience category. Overall, the Reels selected focused primarily on historical architecture. However, these findings are based on a very small sample size and cannot be generalised to all content about Khiva on Instagram.

There were many Reels focusing on historical architecture. Three Reels focussed on the Kalta Minor Minaret and one focussed on a historic street at sunset. This provides an insight into how Khiva is portrayed through its architecture, historical backdrop and aesthetically pleasing visuals. Different lighting and angles were used which created different impressions of the locations. For example, the Kalta Minor Reel had birds flying overhead which paired the historical architecture with an aesthetically pleasing natural backdrop. This shows how architectural heritage can be conveyed through the monument and filming style. Overall, this suggests that historical monuments can provide clear visual markers of Khiva on Instagram.

Two of the seven Reels (28.6%) focused primarily on cultural heritage. One showed a performer dancing in traditional clothing and the other showed a traditional looking metal container with decorative tiles. Dance conveys movement, clothing, artistic flair and cultural identity. The objects and decorative items show cultural artistry in the local area. This provides a wider view on how Khiva is portrayed. There was one Reel showing a tourist walking along a historic street. This provided a different perspective to the other Reels as it showed how people actually visit Khiva. The presence of the tourist helped to link the architectural features of the location to a personal experience of travelling. This may help people to visualise visiting. However, we cannot see from the screenshot if people formed an intention to visit.

There were likes and comments noted where possible (Table 2).

Table 2.

Engagement numbers (likes) of the seven Reels (highest to lowest).

Content shown	Likes	Comments
Traditional dance performance	54,700	1,078
Kalta Minor Minaret with birds	42,600	303
Kalta Minor Minaret with a tourist nearby	19,500	117
Traditional-looking vessel and decorative tiles	7,680	227
Kalta Minor Minaret and surrounding buildings	5,347	56
Historic street at sunset	4,256	108
Tourist walking through a historic street	3,624	65

Note: Engagement numbers were noted on the 17 th October 2026. Numbers can change over time.

The Reel with Traditional Dance has received the highest engagement with 54,700 likes and 1,078 comments. The second highest engagement was received by the Kalta Minor Reel with Birds (42,600 likes). On average traditional culture Reels received roughly 31,190 likes. Monuments received on average 17,926 likes and travel received 3,624 likes. There was a wide range of engagement in the monument category, ranging from 4,256 likes to 42,600 likes. This shows the engagement is not solely down to the type of content being posted. Music, editing, amount of followers of the creator and visual appeal of certain scenes may have more impact on engagement. As there are only seven Reels, and follower numbers and views were not provided, this is just an example of what the sample looked like.

Discussion

The most common category in the sample of seven Reels was historical monuments and architecture. 4 of the Reels focused on

architecture including 3 of the Kalta Minor Minaret and 1 historical street at sunset. This is consistent with the findings of Fayzullaev, Heldt Cassel and Brandt who found official promotion of Uzbekistan focuses on historical monuments and Silk Road heritage. [19] It also aligns with previous research that has shown social media plays a key role in how travelers source and perceive information about destinations. Posting images and videos of architecture seems like an effective method to showcase Khiva online. The monuments can be used as an iconic symbol to represent the destination. However, this does not indicate that architecture is the main focus of all Reels about Khiva. This would require a larger and more systematic sample.This sample included traditional dance and traditional looking items. This indicates that cultural heritage can be seen through traditional practices and objects. Research into digital heritage communication looks at how digital media can be used to inform people about cultural information. Reels provide a different approach than virtual museums. They help to showcase cultural aspects in a quick, easy to watch format. The dance helps to show traditional movements and artistry which cannot be done through an image. Crafts allow the viewer to see the tangible side of cultural identity. This could be used alongside the architecture promotion to show that Khiva also has cultural heritage. However, we need to understand how common traditional culture is in Instagram content about Khiva. The Reel of a tourist walking along a historic street shows Khiva differently. Rather than showing a monument alone, it puts the destination inside a personal travel experience. This relates to Sotiriadis, who studied how tourism experiences are shared on social media [7]. Content like this gives viewers a sense of how a place looks and feels from a visitor’s point of view, and it could support more formal promotional material. This study, however, looked at visual content, not viewer responses, so it cannot say whether such videos make people more likely to visit Khiva. This could be answered by carrying out research using questionnaires or interviews with tourists. There was varying levels of interaction between the audience and Reels. The traditional dance video received approximately 54,700 likes and the Kalta Minor Minaret with birds received approximately 42,600 likes. This shows that cultural performances and videos focusing on architecture can gain significant attention. It also demonstrates that different aspects of cultural heritage can be highlighted. However, these numbers are simply descriptive and do not demonstrate that content of any particular type will perform better or be more effective. The Reels may have been made by different people, have different audience sizes, published at different times, have different lengths and have been edited differently. This can impact how much interaction they receive regardless of the content. The number of likes and comments do not directly tell us anything about how many people went to Khiva. To gain more conclusive results a more systematic sample would be needed to carry out further research.

Although there are some limitations to this initial analysis there are several practical implications.

Historical architecture can be used within visual promotion. Videos of well-known monuments help the audience recognise Khiva and learn about its architectural heritage

Cultural traditions can be used alongside architectural content. Showing dances, crafts and local traditions demonstrates elements of culture which can’t be shown through architecture

Personal travel experiences can be used to link heritage to tourism. Showing tourists walking along historical streets helps the audience visualise visiting Khiva.

Accurate cultural information is important. Whilst images can attract attention captions and descriptions give context to the history and culture. This should therefore be provided by tourism organisations and local creators. [22]

Responsible promotion should be used when promoting tourism. The communication should accurately portray the local culture and be respectful to historical sites and cultural traditions

These are recommendations based on the content analysed and further research would be needed to determine how effective they are.

Conclusion and Recommendations (Xulosa va takliflar/Выводы и предложения).

This study explored how Instagram Reels promote Khiva, Uzbekistan as a cultural heritage destination. A quantitative approach was used to classify seven Reels and a qualitative approach to analyse their imagery. Three themes were identified. Historical monuments and architecture were mentioned within four Reels (57.1%). Traditional culture and crafts were mentioned within two Reels (28.6%) and personal travel experiences within one Reel (14.3%). Analysis of the imagery within the chosen Reels demonstrated that Khiva has been promoted as having both tangible and intangible heritage. Reels of historical monuments illustrated that the city is known for its architectural character. Reels focusing on traditional dance and artefacts demonstrate Khivas intangible culture. Finally, the tourist walking down the historic road shows how personal travel experiences can also be promoted. Some Reels had high visible engagement levels. The traditional dance Reel had around 54,700 likes and the Kalta Minor Minaret with birds Reel had around 42,600 likes. This suggests that Reels highlighting various heritage can gain attention online. However, no reasoning is provided as to why individuals are engaging with the content or if they will visit. This study provides initial insight into how one heritage city is being promoted within Reels compared to previous research that looked at Uzbekistan as a whole. It demonstrates how quantitative data can be used alongside qualitative to analyse how social media can be used to promote tourism. Due to the small exploratory sample, no clear conclusions can be drawn. Results cannot be generalised across all Reels promoting Khiva and cannot show causation between social media engagement and tourists visiting. Further research should be conducted using a larger and more systematic sample. Interviews or questionnaires could be conducted with tourists to understand if this type of content impacts their awareness of the destination, intentions to visit and decision to visit. If confirmed, results suggest that Reels could be a useful way of promoting the monuments, traditions and experiences that Khiva has to offer. Understanding how Reels can promote these could help tourism stakeholders create more informative and culturally responsible digital promotion.

References (Foydalanilgan adabiyotlar/Литературы)

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3. Shokhrukh Shakhriyorov, “The Potential of Khiva in Ziyarah Tourism of Uzbekistan,” Eurasian Journal of Social Sciences, Philosophy and Culture 4, no. 6, pt. 2 (2024): 38–46, https://doi.org/10.5281/zenodo.12578605.
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6. Likes and comments change over time, so the figures reported in this study reflect only what was visible when the Reels were recorded.
7. Sotiriadis, “Sharing Tourism Experiences in Social Media.”