

LOCAL FESTIVALS AS A TOOL FOR DEVELOPING CULTURAL TOURISM IN UZBEKISTAN

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Annotatsiya: O‘zbekistonda madaniy turizm an’anaviy ravishda tarixiy obidalar va yodgorliklarga asoslangan bo‘lsa-da, bugungi kunda mahalliy festivallar jonli madaniyatni namoyon etish va rivojlantirishda muhim ahamiyat kasb etmoqda. Mazkur tadqiqotda aholining festivallarning madaniy turizmni rivojlantirishdagi roliga bo‘lgan munosabati tahlil qilingan. 40 nafar respondent o‘rtasida o‘tkazilgan so‘rovnoma natijalari chastota va foiz ko‘rsatkichlari asosida tahlil qilindi. So‘rovda qatnashgan respondentlar orasida eng ko‘p tanilgan festival Navro‘z bo‘lib, u 45 foizni tashkil etdi. Shuningdek, madaniyat, milliy taomlar va hunarmandchilik, musiqa va raqslar festivallarda ishtirok etishga undovchi asosiy motivlar sifatida qayd etildi. Respondentlarning aksariyati (70%) festivallar haqida ijtimoiy tarmoqlar orqali ma’lumot olgan. Ishtirokchilarning 85 foizi festivallar madaniy turizmni rivojlantirishga hissa qo‘shadi, deb hisoblaydi. Ularning fikricha, festivallar o‘zbek madaniyatini targ‘ib qilish (87,5%), milliy an’analarni saqlash (82,5%), sayyohlarni jalb qilish (80%) va mahalliy tadbirkorlikni qo‘llab-quvvatlashga (70%) xizmat qiladi. Respondentlar tomonidan aniqlangan asosiy muammolar reklamaning yetarli emasligi (36,4%), ingliz tilida ma’lumotlarning kamligi (27,3%), shuningdek, transport va turar joy bilan bog‘liq muammolardan iborat.
Kalit so‘zlar: mahalliy festivallar, madaniy turizm, tadbirlar turizmi, autentiklik, turistlarning qoniqishi, destinatsiyaga sodiqlik, O‘zbekiston.

Abstract: Uzbekistan's cultural tourism has traditionally based itself on monuments, but nowadays local festivals develop on living culture. The answer of people is in analysis concerning how they see the role of festivals in developing cultural tourism. A questionnaire survey of 40 respondents was analyzed through frequencies and percentages. For the surveyed, the main festival they knew was Navruz (45%), as well as motives (culture, food and crafts, music and dances) which pushed them to come to the festival. Most of them (70%) heard about the festivals through social media. The majority of respondents (85%) believes that festivals contribute to cultural tourism development, as they promote Uzbek culture (87.5%), preserve traditions (82.5%), attract tourists (80%) and support local business (70%). The problems the respondents see are a lack of advertising (36.4% obtained this answer), lack of information in English (27.3%) and issues with transportation and accommodation.
Keywords: local festivals, cultural tourism, event tourism, authenticity, tourist satisfaction, destination loyalty, Uzbekistan

Абстрактный: Традиционно культурный туризм в Узбекистане основывался преимущественно на исторических памятниках и достопримечательностях, однако в настоящее время местные фестивали играют важную роль в представлении и развитии живой культуры. В данном исследовании проанализировано отношение населения к роли фестивалей в развитии культурного туризма. Результаты анкетного опроса 40 респондентов были проанализированы с использованием частотного и процентного методов. Среди опрошенных наиболее известным фестивалем оказался Навруз — 45%. Основными мотивами участия в фестивалях были названы культура, национальная кухня и ремесла, музыка и танцы. Большинство респондентов (70%) узнали о фестивалях через социальные сети. 85% опрошенных считают, что фестивали способствуют развитию культурного туризма. По их мнению, фестивали способствуют продвижению узбекской культуры (87,5%), сохранению традиций (82,5%), привлечению туристов (80%) и поддержке местного бизнеса (70%). Среди основных проблем респонденты выделили недостаточную рекламу (36,4%), нехватку информации на английском языке (27,3%), а также проблемы, связанные с транспортом и размещением.
Ключевые слова: местные фестивали, культурный туризм, событийный туризм, аутентичность, удовлетворённость туристов, лояльность к туристической дестинации, Узбекистан.

Introduction (Kirish/Введение).

Cultural tourism has become one of the most important directions of modern tourism development. Unlike traditional tourism, which is often focused on visiting historical monuments and architectural sites, contemporary cultural tourism increasingly emphasizes direct interaction with local communities, traditions, customs, gastronomy, crafts, music and other forms of living culture.

Uzbekistan has significant potential for cultural tourism. The country's ancient cities, historical monuments, traditional crafts, national cuisine, music, dance, folklore and customs create a strong cultural foundation for attracting domestic and international tourists. Samarkand, Bukhara, Khiva, Tashkent, Shakhrisabz and other destinations have traditionally formed the basis of the country's cultural tourism product.

At the same time, modern tourists are increasingly interested not only in observing cultural heritage but also in participating in cultural activities. Festivals provide such an opportunity because they combine cultural traditions with entertainment, communication, gastronomy, handicrafts and tourism services. As a result, festivals can become an important component of the tourism product of a particular region.

Local festivals are especially important because they allow communities to demonstrate their own cultural identity. Traditional music, dance, national clothing, handicrafts, culinary traditions and folklore can be presented directly to visitors. Such experiences can create stronger emotional connections between tourists and destinations.

International research shows that authenticity is an important factor in the development of cultural festivals. Authentic cultural experiences can strengthen the identity of local communities and contribute to social sustainability. Researchers emphasize that the preservation of cultural authenticity is important for ensuring the long-term development of festival tourism [1].

Another important aspect is the relationship between cultural knowledge, authenticity and visitor loyalty. Research conducted at cultural festivals demonstrates that visitors' existing knowledge and knowledge acquired during the festival can influence their loyalty, while perceived authenticity plays an important mediating role [2].

Festival satisfaction can also influence destination loyalty. Research on the Alaçatı Herb Festival demonstrated that festival programmes, festival spaces, staff, souvenirs and information can affect visitor satisfaction and subsequently contribute to destination loyalty [3].

The relationship between authenticity, satisfaction and destination loyalty has also been identified in studies of music festivals. Research shows that the authenticity of the festival experience can influence satisfaction, destination loyalty and future behavioural intentions of visitors [4].

For Uzbekistan, these issues are particularly relevant because the country has a large number of cultural traditions that can be transformed into attractive tourism experiences. Navruz, traditional music festivals, craft festivals, gastronomic events and regional cultural celebrations can contribute to the diversification of the national tourism product.

Therefore, the purpose of this study is to examine local festivals as a tool for developing cultural tourism in Uzbekistan and to identify their potential contribution to cultural promotion, preservation of traditions, tourist attraction and local economic development.

The study focuses on several important questions. These include identifying the most recognized festivals, determining the main motivations for festival participation, examining the main sources of festival information, assessing public perceptions of the role of festivals in cultural tourism development and identifying the main problems limiting their tourism potential.

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

The relationship between festivals and tourism has received increasing attention in recent tourism research. Festivals are considered not only cultural events but also important tourism resources capable of creating economic, social and cultural benefits for destinations.

Le and colleagues examined authenticity in events and its relationship with social sustainability. Their systematic review demonstrated that authentic events can contribute to local identity, community well-being and sustainable destination development. The authors emphasize that authenticity should remain an important element of festival management [1].

Rivetti, Rossi and Lucadamo investigated attendee loyalty at cultural festivals. Their research demonstrated that previous knowledge and knowledge acquired during festivals positively influence visitor loyalty. The researchers also identified perceived authenticity as an important factor in this relationship [2].

Özkan and Yıldız studied festival satisfaction and destination loyalty using the Alaçatı Herb Festival as a case study. Their findings indicate that the programme, festival area, staff, souvenirs and information influence visitor satisfaction. This suggests that festival management should consider not only cultural content but also the quality of the visitor experience [3].

Fang and Liu examined authenticity experiences in the context of music festivals. Their research identified relationships between festival authenticity, visitor satisfaction, destination loyalty and behavioural intentions. The study demonstrates that memorable and authentic festival experiences can influence tourists' future decisions regarding destinations [4].

Recent research on intangible cultural heritage tourism also emphasizes the importance of authenticity and cultural identity. Studies demonstrate that perceived authenticity and cultural involvement can positively influence tourist loyalty and experiential value [5].

Research on cultural festivals in Central Asia has highlighted the importance of Navruz as a cultural tourism resource. Navruz combines traditional rituals, food, music, community interaction and cultural identity, making it particularly suitable for cultural tourism development [6].

Research focusing specifically on Uzbekistan has also emphasized the role of cultural festivals in promoting tourism. Festivals such as Navruz, Sharq Taronalari and the Silk and Spices Festival have significant potential for strengthening the international image of Uzbekistan and promoting cultural exchange [7].

Other studies have examined festivals as instruments for attracting tourists to Uzbekistan. Their findings suggest that cultural events can increase tourist interest in destinations and contribute to the development of local tourism services [8].

Recent research on cultural events in heritage destinations further demonstrates that event quality and tourist satisfaction can influence economic outcomes. This finding is important for Uzbekistan because many festivals take place in historically significant destinations where tourism expenditure can support local businesses and communities [9].

Overall, the literature demonstrates that festivals can influence tourism development through several interconnected dimensions. These include cultural authenticity, visitor satisfaction, destination attractiveness, destination loyalty, local business development and preservation of cultural heritage.

However, there remains a need for additional empirical research focusing on how local people perceive festivals as instruments of cultural tourism development in Uzbekistan. The present study contributes to this research area by examining the responses of 40 participants and identifying the perceived advantages and limitations of local festivals.

Methods (Tadqiqotni amalga oshirishda foydalanilgan usullar/ Методы).

The study was conducted using a quantitative descriptive research approach. The main research instrument was a structured questionnaire designed to examine respondents' perceptions of local festivals and their role in cultural tourism development.

The survey involved 40 respondents. The questionnaire focused on several aspects of festival tourism, including awareness of local festivals, motivations for participation, sources of information, perceptions of the cultural and economic contribution of festivals and problems associated with festival tourism.

The collected responses were analyzed using descriptive statistical methods. Particular attention was given to the frequency of responses and their percentage distribution.

The study also used secondary information obtained from academic publications and research studies concerning cultural tourism, festival tourism, authenticity, visitor satisfaction and destination loyalty.

The research has an exploratory character. Therefore, the results reflect the perceptions of the surveyed respondents and should not be interpreted as a statistically representative assessment of the entire population of Uzbekistan.

Analysis and rezults (Tahlil va natijalarlar /Анализ и результаты).

The survey results demonstrate that local festivals have considerable potential for the development of cultural tourism in Uzbekistan.

The first important finding concerns festival recognition. Among the respondents, Navruz was the most widely recognized festival, accounting for 45 percent of responses. This result can be explained by the deep cultural and social significance of Navruz in Uzbekistan.

Navruz represents one of the most visible examples of how traditional culture can become a tourism resource. The festival includes traditional food, music, dance, national clothing, community celebrations and various cultural activities. Therefore, it provides visitors with an opportunity to experience Uzbek culture in a direct and interactive way.

The survey also examined the main motivations that encourage people to participate in festivals. Culture and traditions were among the most important motivations. Traditional food and handicrafts were also identified as important elements. Music and dance represented another important component of festival attractiveness.

These results demonstrate that festival tourism is not based on a single cultural activity. Instead, tourists are attracted by a combination of cultural experiences. A visitor may attend a festival to learn about traditions, taste traditional food, purchase handicrafts, listen to music and participate in entertainment activities.

This multidimensional character gives local festivals an important advantage over some traditional forms of cultural tourism. A historical monument is primarily an object to be observed, while a festival allows tourists to participate directly in cultural activities.

Another important finding concerns the role of social media. Seventy percent of respondents indicated that they received information about festivals through social networks.

This result demonstrates the growing importance of digital communication in festival tourism. Social media platforms allow

organizers to present festival programmes, photographs, videos, cultural performances and information about destinations to potential visitors.

For international tourists, digital promotion is particularly important. Information about the festival should include the date, location, programme, transportation, accommodation, prices and cultural activities. Providing such information in English can significantly improve the accessibility of festivals to international visitors.

The survey also revealed a strong positive perception of festivals. Eighty-five percent of respondents believe that local festivals contribute to cultural tourism development.

The respondents identified several major contributions of festivals. The largest proportion, 87.5 percent, associated festivals with the promotion of Uzbek culture. This indicates that festivals are perceived primarily as platforms for cultural communication.

The preservation of traditions was identified by 82.5 percent of respondents. Festivals provide an opportunity to demonstrate traditional customs and transmit cultural practices to younger generations.

Eighty percent of respondents believe that festivals help attract tourists. This finding demonstrates the tourism potential of cultural events. A festival can become an additional reason for tourists to visit a particular region at a specific time.

Seventy percent of respondents associated festivals with support for local businesses. This is an important economic dimension of festival tourism. Visitors may spend money on accommodation, restaurants, transportation, handicrafts, souvenirs and locally produced food.

Therefore, the economic effect of festivals can extend beyond the festival venue itself. Increased visitor flows can benefit a broader group of local businesses and service providers.

At the same time, the survey identified several problems. The largest problem was insufficient advertising, identified by 36.4 percent of respondents. This suggests that many potentially attractive festivals may not receive sufficient visibility among domestic and international tourists.

Another important problem was the lack of information in English, identified by 27.3 percent of respondents. This problem may restrict the participation of international tourists because they need accessible information about the festival and destination.

Transportation and accommodation were also identified as challenges. These issues are particularly relevant for festivals held in smaller cities and rural areas where tourism infrastructure may be less developed.

The results therefore indicate that the development of festival tourism requires an integrated approach. Cultural content alone is not sufficient. Successful festivals require effective promotion, accessible information, convenient transportation, appropriate accommodation and quality visitor services.

The findings are consistent with recent international research demonstrating that authenticity, visitor satisfaction and festival quality can influence destination loyalty and future tourist behaviour. In particular, research shows that authentic cultural experiences can strengthen emotional connections between visitors and destinations [2; 4].

For Uzbekistan, this means that festival development should focus on maintaining authentic cultural content while simultaneously improving tourism infrastructure and marketing.

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

The study demonstrates that local festivals have significant potential as a tool for developing cultural tourism in Uzbekistan. The findings show that festivals perform several important functions simultaneously. They promote national culture, preserve traditions, attract tourists and support local businesses.

The survey results indicate that Navruz is the most widely recognized festival among respondents. Cultural traditions, traditional food, handicrafts, music and dance represent important motivations for festival participation. Social media is the main source of festival information for a significant proportion of respondents.

The most important finding is that 85 percent of respondents believe that festivals contribute to cultural tourism development. The majority also associate festivals with cultural promotion, preservation of traditions, tourist attraction and local business development.

However, several challenges need to be addressed. Insufficient advertising represents the main problem. Limited English-language information may reduce the attractiveness of festivals for international visitors. Transportation and accommodation difficulties may also restrict the development of regional festival tourism.

Based on the findings, several recommendations can be proposed.

First, Uzbekistan should develop a unified national calendar of cultural festivals. Such a system would make information about festival dates, locations and programmes more accessible to tourists.

Second, festival organizers should strengthen digital marketing. Social networks should be actively used to promote festival programmes, cultural performances, traditional food, handicrafts and tourism opportunities.

Third, festival information should be provided in Uzbek, Russian and English. Multilingual information would make local festivals more accessible to international tourists.

Fourth, festivals should be integrated with wider tourism packages. A festival visit could be combined with excursions to historical monuments, museums, craft centres, restaurants and natural attractions.

Fifth, local businesses should be more actively involved in festival organization. Hotels, restaurants, artisans, farmers, transport companies and souvenir producers can all benefit from increased visitor flows.

Sixth, the authenticity of local festivals should be protected. Excessive commercialization can reduce the cultural value of festivals. Local communities should therefore play an active role in presenting their traditions.

Seventh, transportation and accommodation infrastructure should be improved in areas hosting major festivals.

Finally, systematic visitor feedback should be introduced. Organizers should regularly assess visitor satisfaction, cultural experience, spending patterns, intention to revisit and willingness to recommend the festival.

In conclusion, local festivals should not be considered simply as entertainment events. They can become an important component of Uzbekistan's cultural tourism strategy. By combining authentic cultural heritage with effective marketing, quality tourism services and local community participation, festivals can contribute to sustainable tourism development and strengthen the cultural and economic potential of regions.

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