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TOURIST DESTINATIONS IN SAMARKAND CITY: CULTURE AND TOURISM DEVELOPMENT

Isaeva Mukhlisa
Silk Road International University
of Tourism and Cultural Heritage
1st year student
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Abstract

Samarkand is a popular place to visit in Uzbekistan. It is an incredible place with lots of buildings and a rich culture. The way of life in Samarkand has been passed down through generations. Registan Square is a central feature and attracts tourists. This is a symbol of Samarkand's culture and some key places to visit are Shah-i Zinda, Gur-eAmir Mausoleum and Bibi Khanym Mosque. These places are loved by history and architecture lovers.

Keywords: Registan Square, Central Asia, Shah-i Zinda, Bibi Khanym Mosque, Gur-e-Amir Mausoleum, Silk Road, Ulug Beg Madrasa, Registan Square.

Intrduction

Samarkand is a place with a history and lots of monuments to show the growth of Central Asia. Samarkand is located in the part of Uzbekistan and is well known to be connected to the Great Silk Road. In the past Samarkand has been a major hub for trade, science and culture. During the Timurid era it increased in growth and you can still see this through the historic buildings. These monuments have made Samarkand popular with international and domestic tourists.

The Samarkand regional administration report that in 2023 around 2.15 million foreign tourists and 4.5 million domestic tourists travelled to the region. This makes the tourism service exports worth 406 million US dollars. These numbers show how important tourism is to the economy however they do not show the situation in Samarkand city.

The purpose of this article is to analyse the tourist destinations in Samarkand and what they contribute to tourism. As well as this it will discuss the opportunities and challenges of attracting tourists whilst maintaining Samarkand's identity.

Methodology

This article is based around data. The data surrounding tourism and cultural heritage was gathered from government publications, tourism reports and academic research. This study mainly focused on the importance of tourist attractions and how satisfied tourists were with their travels.

There are four different tourist destinations that were looked into. These were Registan Square, Shahi-Zinda, Gur-e-Amir Mausoleum and Bibi Khanym Mosque. These were chosen as they show different aspects of Samarkand's cultural heritage.

This article is based on data from published sources and therefore does not give a true indication of how popular each attraction is. Instead it gives an overview of how tourism has developed. A reason for this is due to there not being reliable numbers of visitors to all four tourist attractions.

Registan Square is a place located in Samarkand. There are three madrasas here. 1.Ulug Beg Madrasa 2 Sher Dor madrasa 3 Tilya Kori Madrasa. These buildings show how Islamic architecture and beautiful designs developed in Cental Asia.

For example, Ulug Beg Madrasa was built in the 17th century. Both Sher Dor and Tilya Kori madrasas were also built in the same century. They have beautiful decorated entrances, domes and intricate tiling. This makes Registan Square particularly popular with visitors. It also shows how important Samarkand was during times.

From a tourism perspective this place has more to offer than just beautiful architecture. Visitors can learn about the institutions from the past, take photographs and really get a feel for one of the historical areas in the region. This helps promote Samarkand.

However, the increase in interest means there is a responsibility to ensure Registan Square remains safe. If it is not well protected then there can be damage due to high levels of tourism and tourists not being careful.

Shahi-Zinda is another place to visit in Samarkand. This place contains tombs and places of worship. They are covered in tiling and have beautiful designs. This makes it stand out compared to other places in the city.

It is said to be a very unique place as it combines buildings, events and spiritual concepts. Visitors can see different styles and learn about the religious traditions that are connected to this place.

It is incredibly important to look after Shahi Zinda. According to the data putting rules in place for visitors and locals can ensure the treasure is protected.

Gur e Amir Mausoleum is connected to Amir Temur and the Timurid dynasty. This is one of the monuments in Samarkand and has a large dome with decorated walls and well planned interiors.

It was found that visitors are attracted to this place due to the religion. They want to learn more about the place and see the hidden gyms and cultural growth in Central Asia. Visitors can also see how the designs of the buildings showed power, faith and art at the time.

From a learning perspective I can see how this place shows how old buildings can be used as a way of learning and tourist attractions. With skilled guides and clear displays visitors can see more than just the appearance of the monument.

However it is important to look after the materials and architectural details. Tourism should be promoted through conservation.

Bibi-Khanym Mosque is another landmark that helps boost tourism in Samarkand. The mosque dates back to the Timurid era. This shows how ambitious and skilled the builders were at the time. The large buildings and decorated features make it a key place for history and Islamic design lovers.

The mosque also helps enhance the experience for Samarkand. When tourists visit these places in one trip they can see different styles of buildings, different types of architecture and learn how the city has grown over the years.

The area around can also help local business owners make money. With craft shops, food. Tour guides. However this must be carefully managed to ensure the value of the place is not reduced.

Overall these four places show how Samarkand has a charm to attract tourists due to having a range of cultural attractions.

Tourism statistics show how big the industry is and how it can help the economy. In 2023 the Samarkand regional administration reported that 2.15 million foreign tourists visited the region. At the same time 4.5 million domestic tourists visited Samarkand. This shows how popular the area is with international tourists. The area also reported that the tourism service exports were worth 406 million US dollars.

This shows that tourism is an activity within the region. The money from tourists helps local hotels, restaurants, transport, tour companies and sellers of goods. This means it can create jobs and business opportunities for those living in the area.

1. Number of tourists reported to have visited Samarkand region in 2023.
Tourists: 2.15 million
Tourists: 4.50 million
(Source: Samarkand Regional Administration, 2023 tourism briefing. Each section represents 250,000 visitors.)

As shown in Figure 1 there was more tourists reported to have visited than foreign tourists. This shows how important the domestic market is to boost tourism. Local tourists can help boost businesses throughout the year. They may be more likely to visit places on their trips or during public holidays.

2. Key tourism indicators for Samarkand region 2023:
Foreign tourist arrivals 2.15 million
Tourist visits 4.50 million
Tourism service exports US$406 million
Length of stay 2.7 days. (Source: Samarkand Regional Administration, 2023 tourism briefing.)

The average length of stay was reported to be 2.7 days. This is important to know for the development of tourist destinations. If tourists stay for multiple days they may get the opportunity to see historical monuments, try local food and visit other cultural places. I notice that the length of stay depends on factors such as quality of accommodation, ease of transport, activities available and overall experience. If these factors are good then tourists will stay for longer.

5. Tourism development and tourist experience

The quality of tourist destinations depends on factors such as importance, accessibility, quality of service and availability of information. Whilst Samarkand has monuments to visit it is important to have transport, places to stay and clear directions for tourists to enjoy their trips.

Academic research has been done around the features of tourist destinations in Samarkand. This has looked at how different aspects of the destination impact how satisfied tourists are and whether they would return or recommend Samarkand. One study was done with responses from 223 tourists in Samarkand. This shows how important it is to look at tourist experiences rather than just general tourism statistics. This is important as whilst Samarkand may have attractions there could be issues with tourists. For

example they may have issues with transport, communication and information. By improving signage, guides and online information tourists can easily understand the importance of Samarkand's sites.

3. Key areas to improve tourist experience in Samarkand:

Preservation

Information for visitors

Transport and accessibility

Quality of service

Sustainable management

(Note: Figure 3 shows five suggestions for tourism development. These are not results or scores from surveys. The bars are the same as examples.)

One way to improve tourist experience is to connect the tourist destinations in Samarkand. This can be done through walking routes and guided tours. This can help tourists see the connections between the monuments in Samarkand. Using digital maps, audio guides and language options can make the visits more beneficial.

Local residents should also be considered when developing tourism in Samarkand. Small businesses, craft makers, restaurants and cultural groups can benefit from the need for goods and services when Samarkand tourism increases. By helping these businesses the benefits can be spread across the community.

[Note: Data from articles relating to tourism from Google Schoolar.]

Conclusion

Samarkand is a tourist spot as there are lots of historical monuments, beautiful architecture and a strong connection to the Great Silk Road. Registan Square, Shah-i-Zinda, Gur-e-Amir Mausoleum and Bibi-Khanym Mosque show why Samarkand is important in history. All of these attractions help boost tourism in Samarkand and create opportunities for local businesses. The numbers from Samarkand region show how important tourism is to the economy. In 2023 Samarkand region welcomed 2.15 million tourists and 4.5 million local visitors. Samarkand tourism services also brought in around 406 million US dollars. However this does not fully tell us how happy tourists are or how popular each attraction is. Future planning for Samarkand tourism must balance promoting Samarkand's sites whilst ensuring Samarkand's heritage is protected, providing information to tourists and boosting Samarkand's services. I feel it is as important to protect Samarkand's identity as it is to attract guests. By focusing on both Samarkand can continue to be a tourist spot in Uzbekistan.

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