

CULTURAL FESTIVALS AS A MEANS OF PROMOTING TRAVEL TO UZBEKISTAN

Turobova Marjona Xasan qizi

*Master's student, "Silk Road" International
University of Tourism and Cultural Heritage*

marjonaturobova02@gmail.com

+998930430302

Annotation: This article investigates the importance of cultural events in Uzbekistan's tourist promotion efforts. It examines how significant festivals such as Sharq Taronalari, Navruz, and the Silk and Spices Festival benefit the tourist industry by highlighting the country's unique cultural identity and past. The report also underlines the importance of festivals in improving Uzbekistan's worldwide image, encouraging cultural interaction, and assisting local communities. The findings are useful for developing tourist strategy and designing cultural policies.

Keywords: Uzbekistan, cultural festivals, tourist promotion, cultural heritage, Navruz, Sharq Taronalari, Silk and Spice Festival, cultural tourism, sustainable development.

INTRODUCTION

Uzbekistan is a country with rich cultural traditions, one of which is the celebration of various national and religious holidays throughout the year. In order to attract tourists to their country, the Uzbek people have revived nationwide grandeur celebrations, which could serve as cultural festivals. Cultural festivals are events during which a society or group of people enjoy a common change in their traditions and cultures, motivating them to stage their traditions for the general public. This event draws attention from various critics and spectators, including academicians, researchers, scholars, journalists, school-workshop students, and the public. In turn, the excitement stemming from these festivals and events feeds back to a review-overview article from the critics. The seasonal change of highlighted events also brings out different tourist flows to the countries of interest. A festival must be a portrayal of an entire culture so as to draw the interest of the people all around the globe and cover a greater audience [9]. It is a much wise thought to start from something that can gather at least 50% of a country's population and not more than 2000 people. The Republic of Uzbekistan is one of the ancient cradles of unique civilizations. The culture of this small country located in the very heart of Central Asia is full of precious historical artifacts, chants, fairy tales, verbal and other forms of art. On par with these historical ornaments, the folklore musical culture of the Uzbek people is a priceless jewel and is considered as a special branch of the World Heritage Fund. Folk songs, dance, drama, epics and legends, navruz khonliklari, dastan, maqol, restor, foolad, dastangur, gulyor, shaksidan, moshakillat, secila, qistiq, o'zbeku, aziz, o'rganish, o'lmasi, ashulalar, and dastankanchilik are recognized as types of folklore. Folklore is the activity of creation, distribution and acceptance of qualitatively different literary and musical works, which were created by anonymous folk masters. The content of folklore is the thoughts, ideas, feelings, traditions, worldviews and everyday experiences of a randomly agitated crowd [3]. Folk composers are represented as anonymous masters. So the creation of the composition is a

creative product of the people. However, whether it be a song of people's creativity or a folk song of an outstanding poet, the creation of song works could not be limited only with this as the product of people or nation. Songs having deep meaning, instructive content and high art are the honor of the nation and the pride of the people from which it appeared. Since folk songs appeared as a necessity in a certain historical situation, those harmony of folk songs was usually created along with the formation of the language. In the course of time, unusual volumes of these songs were collected in the people's fund. Destined by fate, they also passed through unheard trials [6]

LITERATURE REVIEW

Cultural and eco-tourism are specific forms of tourism that emphasize natural and spiritual landscapes, cultural and historical heritage, and a way of life. Uzbekistan is rich in ancient history. Today, the tourism potential of the republic is characterized by natural and climatic diversity, rich historical and cultural heritage, unique architecture, and hospitality of the local population. Each season and region of the republic has unique, diverse nature, features of flora and fauna. In Central Asia there is a desert, and semi-desert. There are mountains and valleys, thick forests and salt pans. There are large rivers, lakes, underground rivers, and springs [8]. Tourism is embraced by a broad range of stakeholders now. Cities around the globe stage festivals each year to strengthen their tourism appeal. Not only is tourism enhanced by proposed festivals, local residents can also immerse in festive entertainment. Thus, being simply a more accessible and beautiful destination, some cities become the viable guardians of spectacular and enchanting festivities. It is widely acknowledged that interchanges can blossom when local residents welcome and treat outsiders as guests. However, where cities are budding toward ambitious tourism development why is it that newcomers are not simply ferried in and out, greeted with much pomp and basically left in peace? Some cities allow, even encourage, outsiders to cross the threshold into sacred places, to tread on hallowed ground and gaze at the festering façade of the mighty metropolitans [2] Destination branding and marketing arguments prevail. This means not content with plucking audience from established consumption fields, cities aspire to invent their own spectacles, using a mix of local ingredients arranged and packaged to serve distinct visitor needs [1]. Equal at a more pressing level, amongst the most mundane of human activities, these festive spectacles fulfilling many local needs are at once diverse and distinctive. Festivals represent a way of selling the country as a product, by attracting tourists, industries and investments.

Uzbekistan is a country with a high potential of organizing national and international festivals: a rich culture and history, fascinating natural treasures, hundreds of local craftsmanship workshops, varied and rich national traditions [5]. The scope of the research was to analyze the current festivals in Uzbekistan and their potential of attracting those tourists with an interest for festivals. A multiple case study questionnaire was made and sent to the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Ministry of Culture, as well as to the privatized departments of culture of a number of regions. From these regions, Tashkent, Bukhara, Samarkand, Khiva and Namangan were analyzed. On the review of official national and regional tourism promoting sites, 43 international and national festivals were discovered. [10] Most of these were organized in Tashkent, but the regions were highly present as well. Regarding the content of the festivals, this was really diversified and covered the aspects analyzed beforehand.

The competing festivals were investigated. The festival conditions were specified according to their importance for both organizers and tourists. The biggest competitors are attended by over 100,000 participants and offer various programs. Two great competitors were

investigated by a summarized SWOT analysis. It is advisable for the tourism authorities and professionals of Uzbekistan to cooperate in the further developing and promoting of festivals which can also be included in the Great Silk Road Tours of UNESCO. Close cooperation, a big advertising budget, and good promotional campaigns are vital for the promoting of the festivals of Uzbekistan [7].

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

The aim of the study is to evaluate the cultural methodology of festivals as tools for tourism promotion. The study aims to examine the programs and activities of the festivals in attractive tourist destinations of Uzbekistan. The study considers a list of thematic packages of cultural festivals and determines what tourism stakeholders can do.

Data collection

The research was conducted in 2025 through a survey-based questionnaire. The respondents belong to Uzbekistan, Indonesia, India, Malaysia, Korea, Turkia China, and Russia. The sampling technique used was snowball sampling, which is a non-probability sampling technique. The questionnaire was adjusted based on prior research about the topic and distributed via mail, WhatsApp, Facebook, Telegram and Viber Groups. There were two versions of the questionnaire used. The first one was attended by foreign visitors to our nation. The interests and challenges they encountered both during and following the visit were noted. Additionally, a direct interview with the "Silk Road International University of Tourism and Cultural Heritage" professors and instructors—who are authorities in the field of tourism—was undertaken. An online survey was used for the second one. A Google survey with a number of distinct questions was created based on the scientific publications that were studied. Appendix 1 contains multiple choice answers for the open-ended questions.

ANALYSIS AND RESULTS

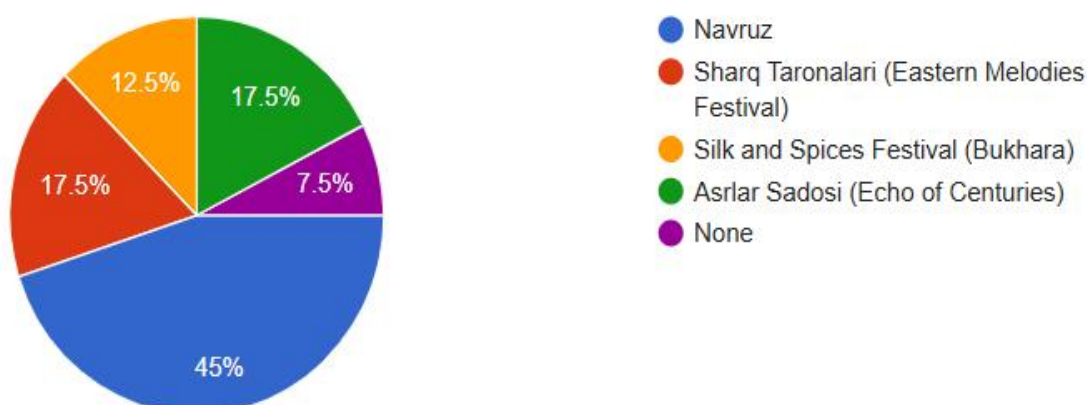
The online survey findings paint a bright picture of Uzbekistan's cultural tourist industry. The average survey respondent is a woman (57.5%) between the ages of 22 and 27 (60%). This group is sizable, with the bulk of people engaged in cultural tourism. A substantial majority of respondents (37.5%) visit Uzbekistan several times per year, suggesting a strong affinity for the country's culture. This action indicates the nation's reliance on repeat tourism.

The study revealed an unusual finding: a considerable number of people are aware of the region's festivities. The great majority (75%) is aware of Uzbek cultural festivals. The most well-known of these is Navruz, the traditional spring holiday (45%), demonstrating strong branding and cultural value. The power of social media may be the most impressive insight. Social media platforms (Instagram, Facebook) are the most popular sources of information on Uzbek festivals, reaching 70% of respondents. In comparison, other forms of transportation are employed by a smaller proportion of passengers. This emphasizes the vital role that social media plays in attracting tourists. Attending these cultural festivals is a popular sort of tourism, as seen by the large number of attendees. A substantial majority of poll participants, over 85% (55% expressing that they are "very interested" and 30% indicating that they are "somewhat interested"), indicate interest in Uzbekistan's cultural tourism. As a result, tourism operators may benefit from the current level of enthusiasm. Traditional Uzbek music and dance (60%), as well as native food and cuisine (52.5%), are major tourist attractions. These findings suggest that operators can profit.

Finally, the report highlighted Uzbekistan's tourism potential. The strong preference for traditional qualities suggests that those working in tourism must take care to ensure that their

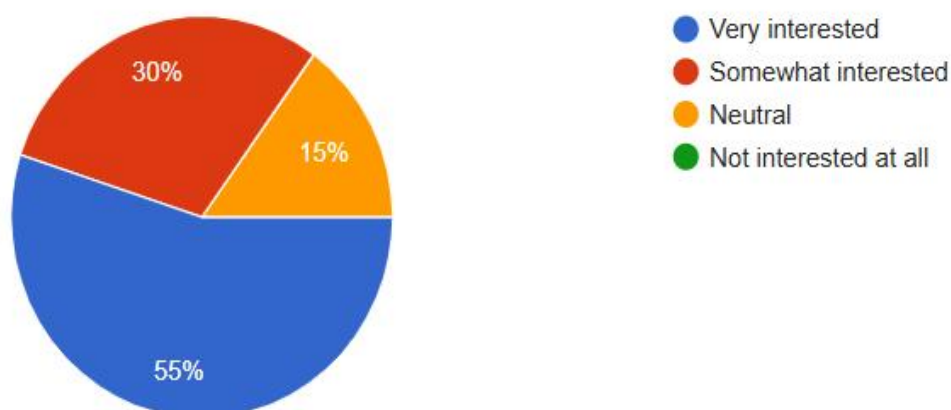
experiences are authentic. Furthermore, the proliferation of social media channels suggests that using these platforms to promote the country is a successful strategy

Figure 4: Respondent's familiarity with Uzbek festivals



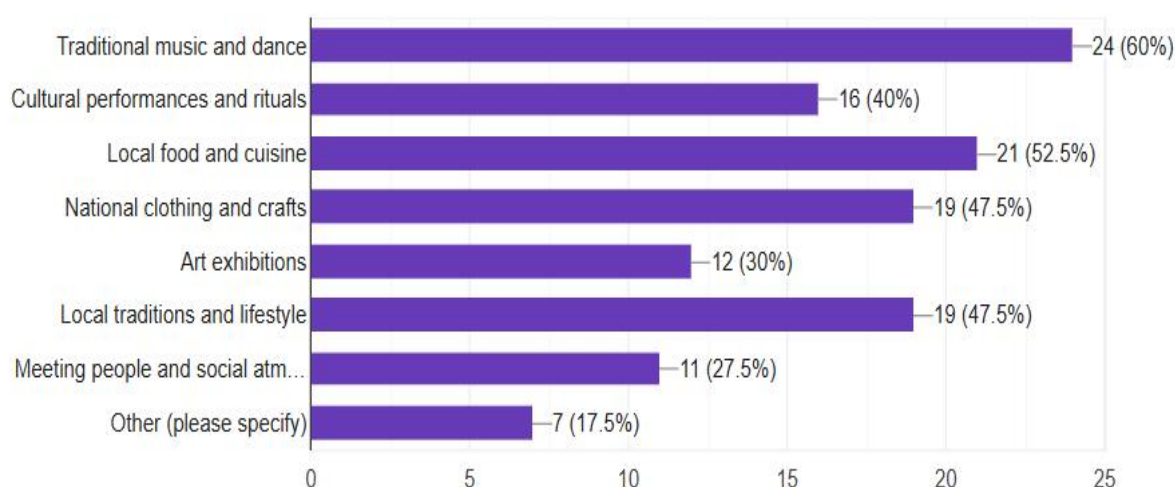
When people were asked which Uzbek festivals are they the most familiar with, the largest number of them, 45 percent know about Navruz which is the most famous festival in Uzbekistan. The festivals named Sharq taronalari (Eastern Melodies Festival) and Asrlar Sadosi (Echo of Centuries) are second popular ones which is the same 17.5% people familiar with. Only 12.5 percent of people founded Silk and Spices Festival which usually hold in Bukhara .Only 7.5% of the people are not familiar with those festivals which is mentioned before.

Figure 5: People's interest in participating in Uzbek festivals



This survey describes the measure of Uzbek people's interest in terms of attending a cultural festival in Uzbekistan. According to the survey, more than half of the people, namely 55% are considered as the very interested group. Which means, people in Uzbekistan have a strong desire for taking part in such cultural celebrations. The another 30 percent are considered somewhat interested group, while fifteen percent remain neutral, which is not sure neither they have strong interest nor disinterest. Interestingly, nobody in the survey described being not interested, which mean that cultural festivals are interesting to attend for more people

Figure 6: The most attractive feature of cultural festivals



The most appealing aspect was traditional music and dance shows 24 point out of 25, equal to 60%, considered as the most amazing. Local food and cuisine was the second most fascinating 21 points out of 25 equal to 52.5%. Also, people show interest for both national clothing, crafts and local traditions, lifestyle both are 19 points out of 25, equal to 47.5 percent. While cultural performances and rituals took 16 points out of 25 and this equal to 40%. Art exhibitions, social atmosphere, and other aspects showed the last appealing ones, 12, 11, 7 points out of 25 respectively.

CONCLUSION

Uzbekistan is one of the richest countries in the world in terms of cultural and historical heritage, hospitable people, and unique natural beauty. In recent years, Uzbekistan has made every effort to develop tourist infrastructure, actively sought out the necessary external partners, and improved the situation in the country, including entrepreneurial activity. It is also important to identify further effective areas for the development of tourism. This research analyzes cultural festivals held in Uzbekistan and their influence on the nation's tourist attractiveness as a tourism development tool. Today, the importance of cultural festivals held throughout the world continues to grow. Festivals allow for the presentation of cultural heritage, and, in addition to being entertainment events, they support an understanding of different cultures. Festivals provide local communities with opportunities for mass participation, educational processes, and cultural development [4] Cultural festivals have become a powerful tool for tourism promotion.

Traditionally the most significant festivals are held in cities with rich cultural heritage, for example, in Bukhara, which holds ciyazhaabiya, in Samarkand, which holds Sharq Taronalari, and in Khiva, which holds Meros, as well as in Tashkent. In addition to these festivals, many others are held. Since their inception, these cultural festivals have attracted financial investments. Many talented scientists, scholars, musicians, artisans, etc., from Uzbekistan and abroad, have been involved. Rare manuscripts, books, tools, etc., have been gathered and restored. Since the announcement of the “Year of Tourism”, as promoted by the President of the Republic of Uzbekistan, additional support for tourism has been provided. Enhancing the development of already existing festivals, as well as organizing new festivals, will certainly help popularize Uzbekistan's rich historical and cultural heritage as well as increase the tourist attractiveness of Uzbekistan.

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