



Article

Development of Creative Tourism in Rural Areas Based on the Involvement of Traditional Mahalla

Usmanova Dilafuz

1. Candidate of Sciences in Economics, Associate Professor at Department of International Business Silk Road International University of Tourism and Cultural Heritage
- * Correspondence: dilafuzusmonova849@gmail.com

Abstract: The scientific article considers the problems and directions of development of creative tourism in remote rural areas, which promotes the involvement of tourists in such types of tourism as ecotourism and agrotourism. This predetermines the formats of creative tourism, in which emphasis will be made on various forms of interaction with nature; on environmental actions aimed at restoring the natural environment in the destination visited. The rural areas of Central Asia, possessing a significant cultural and symbolic capital, preserved unique traditions and customs, authentic working atmosphere and life have strong prerequisites for the development of creative tourism.

Keywords: Creative tourism, rural areas, mahalla institution, community-based tourism (CBT), ecotourism and agrotourism

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1. Introduction

In the second half of the 1990s, given the rapid growth of tourism and creative industries, researchers were faced with the question of determining the interaction formats of these spheres of the economy. The subject of research was the concept of creative tourism, one of the first definitions given by G.Richards and C.Raymond: "Tourism which offers visitors the opportunity to develop their creative potential through active participation in courses and learning experiences which are characteristic of the holiday destination where they are undertaken" [1]. The authors of this definition focused on developing the creativity of the tourists themselves based on different types of training practices. A few years later, at an international conference of UNESCO in Santa Fe, USA, a definition of creative tourism was adopted, reflecting the development of tourists not only based on teaching practices, but also through interaction with local residents and their culture. "Creative tourism is travel directed towards an engaged and authentic experience, with participative learning in the arts, heritage, or special character of a place, and it provides a connection with those who reside in this place and create this living culture" [2].

In recent years, the range of research objects on creative tourism has expanded. If until the mid-2010s the main trends of creative tourism were considered by cities, especially large ones, and as a consequence small and medium ones, in the last decade researchers have focused on developing creative tourism in rural areas of different regions of the

world. Thus, in the handbook-monographs on cultural tourism [3] a theoretical basis has been formed, within which cultural tourism in rural areas is considered as a product constructed through interaction, on the one hand, with tourists, artisans and local socio-cultural traditions, and, on the other hand, based on solving the problems of authenticity, commercialization and influence of local communities when transforming traditions into a tourist product.

Publications on creative tourism in rural areas are aimed, first, at the consideration of this type of tourism as an opportunity for the tourist to become an active participant in various creative processes related to both rural work and entertainment, not be a passive consumer of cultural and cognitive practices. Secondly, the authors develop models that allow to use creative tourism as a tool for sustainable development of diverse local communities, which are the basis of socialization in rural areas. Third, the development of creative tourism is seen as a factor in the diversification of rural incomes, providing an opportunity to combine traditional activities with demonstration and communication practices of creative tourism. Liu & Kou consider the synthesis of key determinants of creative tourism development, emphasizing: (1) orientation towards the participation of the tourist in the creative process (workshops, hands-on activities), (2) role of local stakeholders and communities in the formation of creative tourism products (3) the need to preserve intangible cultural heritage as a primary resource for creative tourism supply [4]

Research on creative tourism has also affected the prospects of its development in rural areas of Central Asia. As noted by C.Usmonova for remote rural areas of Central Asia, creative tourism has a special importance: it is in such places that traditions and handicrafts are often alive, and infrastructure for the development of mass tourism is insufficient. It should also be borne in mind that the region of Central Asia is characterized by a rich cultural base linked to the Silk Road, as well as extensive rural and mountainous areas where crafts and intangible heritage historically play a key role [5]. It is in these areas that creative tourism can stimulate sustainable development and create the involvement of local communities in working with tourists [6]. Developing these ideas, the authors of the monograph *Tourism in Central Asia* [7] point out that this region has a high potential for cultural and creative tourism thanks to the heritage of the Silk Road, traditional architecture, nomadic systems and crafts. The post-Soviet period opened opportunities for interpretation and commercialization of local cultural resources, but infrastructural and institutional constraints shape different levels of rural tourism development.

Literature review: The survey of cases in various countries of Central Asia shows the distribution of the following formats of creative tourism: (a) hands-on workshops (weaving, dyeing, pottery, basketry) - tourists learn from masters, paying for training; (b) participatory festivals and rituals - tourists act as spectators or sometimes take part in limited cultural practices while strictly respecting cultural rules and traditions; (b) demonstration + commercialization - the display of handicrafts is combined with the sale of finished products, often with the possibility of customization; (d) interpretive narratives/ storytelling - craftsmen and guides tell about the background, meanings and traditions of various crafts (myths, techniques, significance), which widens the outlook and involvement of the tourist. Thang, N. P. and Ding ,C. emphasize that workshops and demonstrations provide direct income and a basis for generating demand but require institutional support (marketing, logistics, quality standards)/ However, we note that in remote rural areas there is a lack of such forms of state support for the development of creative tourism[8-9].

Researchers also note the important role of the event component in the development of creative tourism in rural areas: festivals and territorial holidays: local holidays (eg, Navruz, village fairs) are used as a platform for creative programs and handicraft presentations. [10]

In the republics of Central Asia, along with popular worldwide formats of creative tourism has developed tourism based on nomadic (nomadic) experience: organization of overnight stays in yurts, horse riding, acquaintance with nomadic cuisine and ceremonies - a cultural, as well as creative proposals (tourists get involved in cooking, knitting, quilting and so on. n.)[11].

Thus, it can be concluded that the rural areas of Central Asia, possessing significant cultural and symbolic capital, preserved unique traditions and customs, authentic working atmosphere and lifestyle have strong prerequisites for the development of creative tourism.

Within the framework of this study, the thesis is considered that the organizational-legal and sociocultural basis for tourism development in remote rural areas of Uzbekistan should become community based tourism (CBT). According to Goodwin & Santilli "A tourism model where local communities exercise significant control, management, and ownership. Its core principles include collective decision-making, equitable benefit distribution, and the use of tourism as a tool for community development and cultural empowerment". [12] WWF defined community based tourism as a form of tourism "where the local community has substantial control over, and involvement in, its development and management, and a major proportion of the benefits remain within the community." Suansari, P. clarifies the essence of community-based tourism, stressing that "CBT is not simply a tourism business that aims at maximizing profits for investors[13]. Rather, it is more concerned with the impact of tourism on the community and environmental resources. CBT emerges from a community development strategy, using tourism as a tool to strengthen the ability of rural community organizations that manage tourism resources with the participation of the local people" [14]. These definitions emphasize the local community's collective decision-making on tourism development and sharing of its benefits collectively. This approach should motivate the rural population, first, to include in their production activities various forms of interaction with tourists; second, to develop skills and competences (communication, service, language) for working with tourists; Third, the development of working formats with various types of cultural, natural and professional heritage.

Ecotourism is a key element of CBT in rural areas of different countries and regions. Ecotourism is now defined as "responsible travel to natural areas that conserves the environment, sustains the well-being of the local people, and involves interpretation and education" Visiting rural areas always involves getting to know local natural attractions, unique flora and fauna, and local practices of using natural resources[15]. Within the framework of ecotourism, there is an acquaintance with the basics of ecological approaches to human interaction with nature and this familiarity requires a certain organizational framework. In remote rural areas, such interaction should be established between local communities in various forms of their socialization and tour operators creating the tourist product and ensuring the stay of tourists in attractive settings. It should be borne in mind that one of the main motivations for visiting remote rural areas is the desire to visit «untouched» natural places away from large cities.

The second element of CBT is agrotourism. One of the most inclusive definitions of agrotourism was developed by the National Center for Agricultural Law: "Agrotourism can be defined as a form of commercial, recreational or educational enterprises that link agricultural production and/or processing with tourism to attract visitors to the farm, ranch, or other agricultural business for entertainment and/or education of visitors, as well as income generation for the farm, ranch or business owner."[16]. Patterson, I. and Umar Aslam, M. draw attention to both the support within the framework of agrotourism of local small business, as well as the preservation of cultural traditions of agricultural production. " Agrotourism is a sustainable tourism business that respects and maintains the integrity of local cultures through the purchase of local goods and participation in small, local businesses in rural areas. There is a need to support enterprises that preserve

cultural heritage and traditional values in the agricultural sector, as well as to assist local economies that conserve clean resources while using as few non-renewable resources as possible"[17]. Attracting residents of remote villages to provide various tourist services is possible on the basis of social institution mahalli, which will reduce the severity of such problems inherent in these settlements, as youth outflows, seasonal employment in agricultural work, lack of jobs for women.

The term "mahalla" is of Arabic origin and means "territory, space, place". Historical sources confirm its centuries-old history. In particular, there are reports that its roots go back to the Bronze Age. In the works of Alisher Navoi and Mahmoud Koshgari, the word "mahalla" is used to refer to the places where merchants and craftsmen live. Since then, the management of mahallas was carried out on a voluntary basis, had its own unwritten internal rules and was considered equally legal for all. Sievers E. in the article «Uzbekistan's Mahalla: From Soviet to Absolutist Residential Community Associations» noted that the term «mahalla» is usually used in Uzbekistan and Tajikistan to describe a district or local community, which is mainly characterized by common traditions, language, religion and ethnicity. The Mahalla, in both historical and modern terms, «a clearly defined socio-demographic, cultural and spiritual integrity, as well as an administrative-territorial unit in which people are united by traditions, customs and human, business and legal relations» [18]. As noted by Sievers, the most universal and remarkable aspect of mahalli is that no mahalli member for class, professional or religious reasons is excluded from public events and interactions. According to Cieślowska, the modern mahalla is difficult to qualify as a community. Rather, mahala is the lower territorial form of social self-government and organization of religious and family rituals. [19]

There are usually three approaches to the study of Uzbek mahalli. The first group of scientists argues that in the post-Soviet period, mahala became an effective instrument of state control and management of society [20]. The second group of researchers focuses on the relationship between mahalli and the state and its role in the social protection system of the population of Uzbekistan. They argue that the mahalla provides a feedback link between the people and the state, giving the opinion of the population to the state bodies and decision-makers. The third and largest group of researchers claims that the mahalla plays a positive role in the development of Central Asian societies by assuming the functions of civil society. Moreover, the researchers prove this with examples from both Uzbekistan and Tajikistan. Although they claim that the mahalla can serve as a basis for democracy, they note at the same time that this does not prevent the government from using the mahalla to its own advantage. This point of view is shared by researchers such as and many others[21].

The remote regions of Uzbekistan have considerable potential for the development of creative tourism thanks to a combination of rich cultural heritage, craftsmen folk crafts, unique nature, rural lifestyle and preserved ethnographic traditions. Creative tourism can be a key element of sustainable regional development, creating new jobs, attracting tourists and strengthening local identity. The most important feature of the development of creative tourism in remote rural areas of Uzbekistan is the fact that its organizational basis are mahallas as an important sociocultural and social phenomenon. It is necessary to emphasize that the activity of mahallas in the field of tourism largely corresponds to the concept of community based tourism (CBT).

It should be emphasized that although the development of tourism in rural areas of Uzbekistan is a response to economic difficulties in the agricultural sector, important factors stimulating this process include the availability of such a resource as cultural heritage and the preservation of the traditional mahalla system as a potential basis for CBT.

2. Materials and Methods

Financial is the mahalli of the Urgutsky district of the Samarkand region of the Republic of Uzbekistan. The Samarkand region is one of the largest in the republic in terms of population, and its regional center - the ancient city of Samarkand, inscribed on the UNESCO World Heritage List as a «Crossroads of cultures», acts as an attractive tourist center. Thanks to the attractiveness of its regional center in 2024, the Samarkand region received 2,523 million foreign tourists and 4,715 million local tourists. However, the excessive concentration of tourist flow in one city has given the regional authorities the task of diversifying tourist destinations and increasing the number of tourists visiting rural areas. The Urgutsky district of the Samarkand region was chosen as a potential area for tourism development. This area is located in a mountainous area on the foothills of the Zeravshan Ridge and its main specialization is fairly low-income agriculture. Therefore, the development of tourism can give an important economic impulse to improve the economic situation in the region, to overcome seasonality in employment of a large part of the population and to establish young people in their home areas.

Thus, **the aim of this study** was to investigate the tourism potential of the Urgutsky district for the development of creative and related types of tourism in it and to determine the role of mahallas in creating favourable conditions for the development of tourism in the area.

In the first stage, the authors also conducted a SWOT analysis that allowed to assess the potential of developing creative tourism, which seems to be the most promising type of tourism in this area, but needs to interact with related types of tourism.

Table 1. SWOT analysis of potential development of creative tourism in Urgutsky district

Strong point	Weak point
<p>1) Rich craft heritage (Urgut is known for its traditional crafts: ceramics, weaving, embroidery, metal and wood products (In the Urgout market (Urgout market) tourists can directly purchase works of local craftsmen: carpets, embroidery, ceramics, jewelry. Family dynasties of craftsmen: for example, the dynasty of potters Oblakulov exists many generations.</p> <p>2) Natural geographical potential Urgutsky district is located on the slopes of the Zeravshan Ridge, which creates attractive conditions for ecological and mountain tourism. There are beautiful natural features: the old garden with chimney trees «Chor-Chinor» - an interesting point for tourists.</p> <p>3) Rural living infrastructure In the Urgutsky district, tourist villages are developing: for example, the village of Omoncotton officially received the status of «tourist village». Created guest houses (family guest farms), capsule accommodation and other services for tourists.</p> <p>4) Active market Bazaar Urguta - large and very lively: good flow of tourists, especially on weekends, which gives opportunities for the sale of</p>	<p>1. Limited training of local craftsmen Not all craftsmen have experience working with tourists (conducting master classes, explaining techniques, interacting with non-skilled workers). Perhaps lack of marketing skills - it can be difficult for craftsmen to promote their products as a tourist product.</p> <p>2. Infrastructure constraints Although tourist villages are developing, perhaps not in all rural settlements of the Urgutsky district the infrastructure of tourist accommodation (roads, sanitary conditions, logistics) is sufficiently developed. The remoteness of some craft workshops or natural sites can be a barrier without good transport.</p> <p>3. Seasonality of tourist flow Tourism can be seasonal: in cold or extreme months the flow of tourists falls, which affects the stability of income of craftsmen and guest houses. Out of season tourists may be few, especially those who are interested in «creative» tourism, not just visiting the bazaar.</p> <p>4. Risks of culture commercialization</p>

<p>handicrafts, authentic products. Tourists can not only observe, but also interact with craftsmen, which creates opportunities for creative workshops.</p> <p>5) State support Support of tourism by the regional authorities: development of «tourist villages», creation of infrastructure. Urgut has investment potential - in the official materials talk about communications, facilities for the location of production and tourism development.</p>	<p>In mass tourism traditional crafts can become «tourist goods», losing their authenticity.</p> <p>Tourist pressure can change the way of life of residents, which may have a negative impact on cultural identity.</p> <p>5. Limited financial resources Initial investment for workshops, craft studios, training programmes and housing infrastructure can be high. Local residents may not have access to sufficient funding or grants.</p>
<p>Possibilities</p>	<p>Threats</p>
<p>1. Development of thematic creative tourist routes Creation of thematic tours: master classes on ceramics, wood carving, embroidery, blacksmithing, etc. Attracting tourists interested in «living crafts» and cultural immersion, not just sightseeing.</p> <p>2. International and national investments Attracting investments and grants (for example, from international cultural funds, UNESCO, sustainable development funds) to support tourist villages. Partnership with tourism companies both within Uzbekistan and abroad to promote Urgut as a creative dive site.</p> <p>3. Digitalization of crafts Selling the products of the craftsmen of Urguta through online platforms (marketing pages, handicraft sites) to expand the market outside the physical bazaar. Conducting online master classes and virtual craft workshops, which will attract tourists who can not come personally.</p> <p>4. Environmental and sustainable tourism Development of eco-tourism and mountain tourism together with creative tourism: tourists can live in authentic guest houses, participate in craft practices, enjoy nature. Implementation of sustainable tourism principles to minimize negative impact on Urgut's natural resources.</p> <p>5. Educational and cultural initiatives Organization of residences for artists, craftsmen and artisans who invite tourists to join joint projects. Holding handicraft festivals, fairs, cultural festivals that will</p>	<p>1. Loss of authenticity Under the pressure of tourists, handicrafts can become a «tourist commodity» and not a living cultural practice. It is possible a cultural shock or change in the traditional way of life of local residents, if tourists will insist on «show version» crafts.</p> <p>2. Environmental risks Increased tourist flow can affect the natural environment (such as pollution, water stress, forests). Without proper management of tourist flows, there may be problems with the sustainability of natural zones in the Urgutsky district.</p> <p>3. Economic instability of tourism Tourism is a sensitive industry: economic crises, pandemics, decline in tourist interest can sharply reduce the flow of tourists. If the craft business is heavily dependent on tourists, they may remain vulnerable to falling demand.</p> <p>4. Competition Urgut competes with other tourist destinations in the Samarkand region (and all of Uzbekistan), especially with more famous historical centers. There may be other tourist villages or craft centres competing for attention and resources.</p> <p>5. Regulatory and administrative barriers Lack of coordination between authorities, artisans and the tourism sector can slow down projects. There may be problems with licensing, regulations, infrastructure development, especially in rural areas.</p>

make Urgup known as a center of craft creativity.

In the second phase of the study, the role and potential of attracting mahallas for tourism development was examined. It should be noted that the leadership of the Republic of Uzbekistan attaches great importance to involving mahallas in tourist activities. In 2020, UNESCO approved the request of the republic to include in the Representative list of intangible cultural heritage of humanity UNESCO such element of heritage as «Traditions and culture mahalli in Uzbekistan» This was an important factor for the promotion of mahalla and Uzbek tourism in general on the world tourist market. In recent years, there has been a steady growth of the tourist flow in Uzbekistan. So from 2017 to 2024, the number of foreign tourists increased from 2.69 to 7.96 million people.



Figure 1. Indicators of Tourism Development in Uzbekistan

Fig.1. The volume of services provided in the country as a whole over the past five years has shown steady growth. The share of value added of the country's tourist product rose from 8.4% in 2020 to 9.4% in 2024, which is due to the increasing involvement of producers in the value chain through integration processes in clusters, accelerated development of hotel chains, digitalization of services.

Table 1. Socio-economic indicators of tourism development in Uzbekistan in 2020-2024.

№	Indicators	2020	2021	2022	2023	2024
1	Volume of services provided, billion soums	219978	28438	366891	649806	818428
2	Inbound tourism, thousand people	1 504	1 881	5 233	6 626	7 957
3	Domestic tourism, thousand people.	176,65	522,1	538,9	728,6	4910,0
4	Total served by tourist organizations, thousand people	212,3	577,8	673,7	1157,1	1972,9
5	Tourism employment, thousand people	231431	190814	208053	214613	215679
6	Share of gross value added created in tourism industries in the country's GDP, %	8,4	7	7,8	9,1	9,4

Table 1 presents the socio-economic indicators of tourism development in Uzbekistan for the period 2020–2024. The data demonstrate a significant recovery and expansion of the tourism sector over the observed period. In particular, the volume of services provided shows a sharp increase after 2021, indicating rapid growth in tourism-related economic activity. Inbound tourism exhibits a steady upward trend, reflecting the

gradual restoration of international travel and increased attractiveness of Uzbekistan as a туристик yoʻnalish. Domestic tourism also rises substantially, especially in the later years, highlighting growing internal mobility and demand for tourism services. The number of tourists served by tourism organizations increases consistently, suggesting improved institutional capacity and service provision. Employment in the tourism sector remains relatively stable with a moderate upward trend, indicating sustained job creation. Moreover, the share of gross value added generated by tourism in the country's GDP increases, underscoring the growing contribution of tourism to Uzbekistan's overall economic development.

The growth of tourist activity is based on significant changes in the industry, which is expressed in the expansion of the number of available cultural sites and the formation of new routes. Since mahallas are carriers of authentic culture, their inclusion in the tourist infrastructure makes the country more attractive to tourists. As part of Uzbekistan's efforts to develop tourism (infrastructure, visa liberalization, renovation of historical sites), the intensification of tourism activities of mahallas, which have significant cultural potential, is becoming an important success factor. The more mahallas are involved in tourism activities, the more unique impressions tourists get, and this leads to positive reviews, repeat visits and an increase in tourist traffic.

Within the framework of this study, it was studied how the cultural potential of mahallas can be promoted to the tourism market. As the results of the study showed, in recent years there has been a rapid increase in the digitalization of mahallas. If in 2020 5845 mahallas (62.0% of the total) had access to high-speed Internet, then in 2024 there were already 8905 (94.5%) mahallas. At the same time, the number of users of the Digital Mahalla platform increased during this time from 1.2 million to 6.4 users. The number of mahallas with their own digital maps and QR navigation increased from 22 in 2020 to 310 in 2024. The number of cultural heritage sites equipped with QR codes increased from 145 in 2020 to 1620 in 2024. Virtual tours of mahallas posted on local websites in 2021-2024 gained 2.3 million views, of which 41 percent are foreign audiences. Such high growth rates of digitalization of mahallas and the scale of digitalization allow:

- to actively promote mahallas in the market of tourism services
- broadcast cultural events online,
- create virtual tours of mahallas,
- promote workshops and craft products,
- hold festivals with online promotion.

Mahallas are becoming not only a physical place to visit, but also a digital platform for promoting cultural heritage. **Digitalization of mahallas turns them into modern, competitive tourist and socio-economic centers, ensuring the sustainable development of the regions.**

3. Results

At the third stage of the study, a sociological survey was conducted, during which it was studied to what extent the development of creative tourism related to agricultural activities in tourist areas affects the choice of tourists. The majority of the population living in 116 mahallas of Samarkand region is engaged in activities such as trade, embroidery, blacksmithing, weaving and pottery. It is natural that these activities are also of great interest to guests of the region. The sociological survey was conducted among residents of the Urgut district (200 people) and tourists from other regions of Uzbekistan (103 people) in May 2023 and June-July 2024. A total of 303 respondents took part in the survey. The data obtained were analyzed using the STATA-17 program, and the following results were obtained:

Table 2. General priority levels of SWOT factors

SWOT Group	Priority of the group	SWOT Group Factors	SWOT Group	Priority of factors in the group
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Strengths	0,365	Wealth of natural and cultural resources	0,2860
		An abundance of pilgrimage sites	0,1140
		Presence of a national park	0,0698
		Well-preserved unique cultural monuments	0,3349
		Development of tourism activities	0,1953
Weakness	0,163	High unemployment rate	0,0808
		Lack of information resources	0,1667
		Weak interoperability between organizations	0,3182
		Shortage of qualified personnel	0,1768
		Imperfect infrastructure	0,2576
Possibilities	0,365	Ensuring the material income of the local population	0,1716
		Growth in the production of national handicrafts	0,2666
		Attracting foreign investors	0,0460
		An effective solution to the problem of nature conservation	0,3459
		Improving the living standards of the local population	0,1217
Threats	0,106	Unequal distribution of benefits	0,3060
		Further deterioration of flora and fauna	0,1375
		Temporary Nature of Jobs	0,0643
		Narrow range of services	0,3459
		High population density in the region	0,1463

Table 2 presents the general priority levels of SWOT factors, highlighting the relative importance of strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, and threats in the tourism development context. The results indicate that strengths and opportunities have the highest priority values, reflecting the significant potential of natural and cultural resources, well-preserved heritage sites, and opportunities related to income generation and sustainable development. Within the strengths group, well-preserved cultural monuments and the wealth of natural and cultural resources demonstrate the highest factor priorities. In the weaknesses category, weak interoperability between organizations and imperfect infrastructure emerge as the most critical constraints. The analysis of opportunities emphasizes nature conservation solutions and the growth of national handicrafts as key drivers of development. Among threats, a narrow range of services and unequal distribution of benefits are identified as the most significant risks. Overall, the results suggest that leveraging strengths and opportunities while addressing key weaknesses and mitigating threats is essential for sustainable tourism development.

The results of the study allow us to conclude that guests of the Urgut district, the most visited in the Samarkand region, are interested in a comprehensive tourist product, which includes elements of agrotourism, ecotourism and creative tourism.

Thus, according to the results of the study, 37.2% of respondents who visited the villages of the Urgut district expressed a desire to organize visits to farms, "horseback riding", participation in the production of fodder for farms. However, it should be noted that in rural tourist areas there is no demand for the service "participation in agricultural

activities". Despite the fact that local tourists do not have a direct interest in "participating in agricultural activities", 36.6% of respondents expressed a request for "crop observation".

In the direction of animal husbandry, the analysis shows that among all respondents who visited tourist areas in rural areas, there is a high demand for "observing and participating in beekeeping", collecting honey and packing in dishes, tasting and making candles. This type of activity can be clearly attributed to one of the formats of creative tourism. The presence of a pronounced demand for this type of creative activity puts on the agenda the issue of creating conditions for consumers of a complex tourist product, which includes several types of tourism. According to the results of the analysis of our study, 37.5% of respondents who visited remote rural areas expressed a desire to use the "rock climbing" service and the organization of eco-trails, plein airs of artists and photographers, creative hikes: "trekking + master class".

More than half of the tourists who visited rural areas expressed a desire to use the service of land art projects in the mountains; eco-camps with yoga, drawing, music. Respondents visited mountainous areas to view waterfalls and caves. Their visits were largely due to the attractiveness of ecotourism in the region, which can be seen as a "pull factor". Such an environmental factor as natural silence can also be attributed to this: 28.6% of local tourists who visited tourist areas in rural areas noted a low noise level in these places.

However, local and/or foreign tourists also pay attention to the socio-economic conditions of the territory and the quality of the services provided. In terms of natural factors, 44.1% of local tourists who visited rural areas rated the natural beauty of the region as positive. It can be said that the natural beauty of the region directly contributes to the increase in the tourist flow.

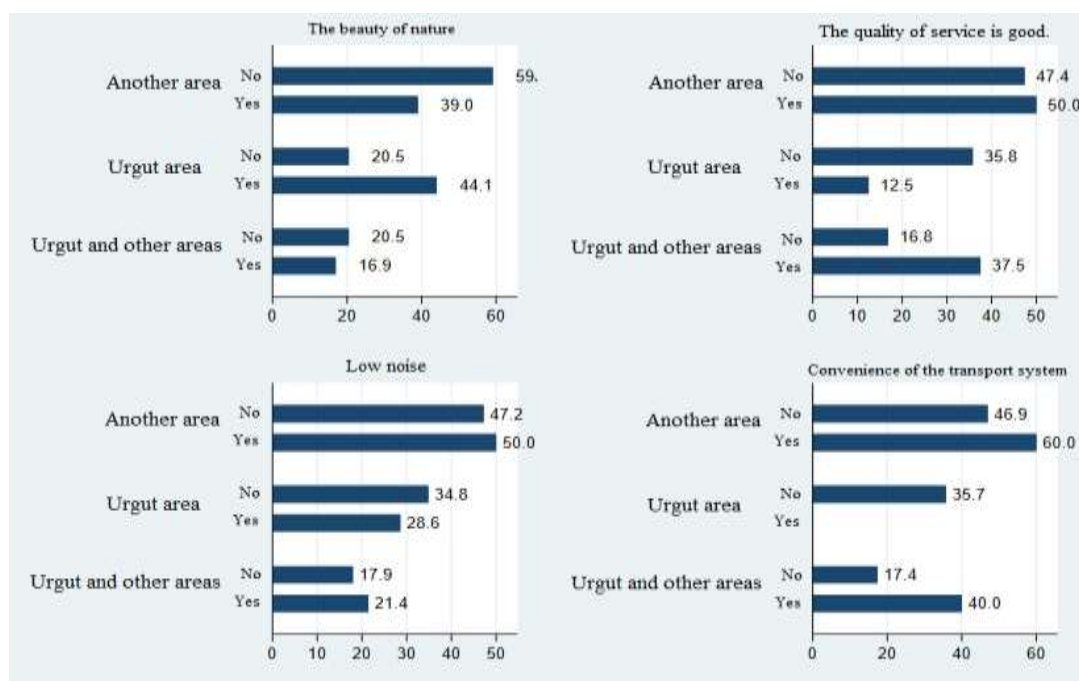


Figure 2. Factors of choice of tourist zones by tourists

Fig. 3 illustrates the main factors influencing tourists' choice of tourist zones. The results indicate that accessibility, availability of infrastructure, and the attractiveness of natural and cultural resources play a decisive role in destination selection. Service quality and safety conditions also significantly affect tourists' preferences, while pricing and accommodation options serve as additional determining factors. Overall, the figure highlights that tourists' choice of zones is shaped by a combination of economic, infrastructural, and experiential considerations.

However, tourists pointed to the low quality of services provided in the existing tourist locations of the district. In addition, visitors reported that the transport system is

inconvenient. In this regard, it is necessary to pay special attention to improving the quality of services in tourist areas and organizing an effective transport infrastructure. The role of the traditional institution of the mahalla is certainly important here, since being essentially a community, the mahalla today contributes to the economic development of the territory on the basis of integration with business and the state.

4. Conclusion

Given that community-based tourism is beginning to gain momentum in Uzbekistan, it is advisable to consider the mahalla as an organizer of creative tourism, especially in remote regions of the country. The majority of the population living in rural mahallas is engaged in such traditional crafts, which creates prerequisites for the development of creative tourism. Studies conducted in the mahallas of the Urgut district made it possible to develop the following recommendations on their promising specializations in the field of tourism.

Gardening is developed in Soigos mahalla, which is of great importance for the further expansion of green areas of the district. There are natural springs in this mahalla, which creates natural conditions for planting trees and plants located in the foothills. Small rivers and tributaries in Amankuton mahalla play an important role in watering green spaces. The presence of a national natural park in this mahalla makes it possible to study and conduct research on its unique flora. The arable and stony relief of Tersak mahalla creates a favorable environment for drought-resistant plants. The expansion of green areas in areas with high tourism potential, especially on weekends, will form a sense of nature protection and instill in the younger generation a love for the environment. In conclusion, it can be stated that the creation of green parks in Tersak, Amonkuton and Saigos mahallas will ensure the preservation of ornamental trees and medicinal plants and their use as a tourist product.

Thus, it can be concluded that the development of creative tourism in remote rural areas of Uzbekistan will be based on the involvement of tourists in such types of tourism as ecotourism and agrotourism. This predetermines the formats of creative tourism, which will focus on various forms of interaction with nature; on environmental actions aimed at restoring the natural environment in the visited destination; to participate in certain routine agricultural processes; for the development of some technologies for processing agricultural products and cooking authentic dishes. All of the above gives great originality and originality to creative tourism in a remote rural area, which is the Urgut district.

Future research can touch on specific formats of support for creative tourism by mahallas; tools for interaction between mahallas and tour operators and influencers of creative tourism; search for ways to achieve public choice within the framework of community-based tourism; study of the synergistic effect of interaction between ecotourism, agritourism and creative tourism.

The limitation of this study is that it is based on the experience of developing and supporting creative tourism in one specific region of the Republic of Uzbekistan. Although the current situation in the development of tourism is quite typical for many regions of the republic, it seems necessary to conduct comparative research on this issue in the future.

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