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Geographical Features of Tourism Development in Southwestern Uzbekistan: A Study Based on Social Surveys

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Abstract: This article examines the geographical features of tourism development through the lens of social surveys. The impact of the socio-economic development levels of various regions on tourism infrastructure is analyzed based on the opinions of respondents. Based on the findings of these surveys, relevant conclusions and recommendations are provided for the further enhancement of the sector.

Keywords: *respondents, survey, representativeness, travelers, domestic tourism, regional economy.*

Introduction

In social research, the use of questionnaires and social surveys is of great importance for studying and accurately assessing living conditions, lifestyles, the actual state of various services provided to the population, and social problems. The most precise and comprehensive research results are achieved through social surveys. A characteristic feature of this method is that the developmental status of the process under study and the factors influencing it are analyzed through direct, live communication with the residents or employees active in that specific environment [1, 2]. Modern requirements demand the study of issues such as organizing work in accordance with current standards, clarifying the activities of enterprises and organizations, identifying factors affecting achievements and shortcomings, as well as analyzing migration and labor market dynamics. In this regard, live surveys and direct communication with people yield significantly more effective and accurate results than general statistical data. For instance, the questionnaire method is applied to determine the prospective plans of enterprises, the opportunities and obstacles in their implementation, their successes and failures, as well as the aptitude and inclinations of employees [3, 4].

In recent years, the rapid development of telecommunications, Telegram, and internet networks has enabled the conducting of online surveys. In particular, to conduct a deeper analysis of the geographical features of tourism development in Southwestern Uzbekistan, sociological surveys were specifically carried out via the Telegram platform [5].

Methodology

In the survey, respondents were approached with the following questions. To the question "Do you want to travel?" in the sociological survey, among the 11 administrative-territorial units participating, only respondents from Samarkand 2.5% and Kashkadarya 1.5% provinces chose the "No" option. In all other provinces, 100% of the participants expressed a desire to travel. In most cases, the desire for travel is stronger among the urban population. The small percentage of people in the aforementioned provinces who do not wish to travel may be due to the relatively lower level of urbanization, the presence of tourist and recreational sites in their own regions, and their proximity to these sites in daily life.

To the question titled "Which of the following cities would you like to visit?", 50% of respondents from the Republic of Karakalpakstan stated they would like to visit Samarkand, and 50% chose Termez. They are drawn by the distance from their own region, as well as the uniqueness of the nature, culture, architecture, and historical-cultural monuments. Respondents from Andijan province expressed a desire to travel to Samarkand 50%, Bukhara 25%, Karshi 12.5%, and Termez 12.5%. Specifically, the fact that the oasis-valleys of Uzbekistan differ in every way from the Fergana Valley, the differences in the socio-economic development of these regions, and the uniqueness of ethnographic customs and traditions are interesting to respondents from Andijan.

Result and Discussion

Respondents from Bukhara province stated they would travel to Samarkand 60% and Bukhara, 40%. This may be due to the uniqueness of Samarkand—known as the "Mirror of the World"—with its historical and cultural monuments, gastronomy, and new urban entertainment venues. Respondents from Jizzakh province expressed a desire to visit Samarkand 50% and Bukhara 50%. The specific architecture, antiquity, and diversity of tourist sites in Samarkand and Bukhara, as well as their distinct ethnographic culture, stand out compared to the tourist-recreational sites in Jizzakh, providing spiritual nourishment to local tourists [6]. Participants from Navoiy province expressed a desire to travel to Bukhara 50% and Termez, 50%. While Bukhara attracts them as a place where the ancestors of Navoiy residents lived, Termez fascinates travelers as a peripheral and southern region of our republic, with its unique ethnography, culture, nature, and gastronomy. Such attractiveness is not replicated in the Navoiy province [7, 8].

Respondents from Samarkand province indicated that they would travel to the cities of Samarkand at 13.5 percent, Bukhara at 32.5 percent, Karshi at 11 percent, Termez at 27

percent, Navoiy at 2.5 percent, and Tashkent at 2.5 percent [9]. The fact that Samarkand province is located in the center of the republic and serves as a major transport hub ensures travel convenience, making it easier to visit all other regions.

Respondents from Surkhandarya province expressed a desire to travel to Samarkand at 67 percent, Bukhara at 15.6 percent, Karshi at 2.1 percent, Termez at 10.3 percent, Navoiy at 2.1 percent, Tashkent at 1 percent, and Khiva at 1 percent. The highest preferences were for Samarkand and Bukhara. Naturally, for the population of Surkhandarya, located in the remote southern part of the country, the desire to visit central regions is high [10]. This may be driven by factors such as infrastructure, the harmony of modern and historical architecture, the multi-ethnic population, the abundance and diversity of modern higher education institutions, and the availability of entertainment venues [11].

Participants from Tashkent province stated they would travel to Bukhara at 67 percent and Samarkand at 16.5 percent. Being situated adjacent to and in harmony with the highly urbanized capital, Tashkent city, it is natural for local tourists from this region to have a strong desire to visit ancient cities. Respondents from Kashkadarya province expressed interest in visiting Samarkand at 45 percent, Bukhara at 29 percent, Karshi at 9 percent, Termez at 4.1 percent, Navoiy at 1.5 percent, Tashkent at 4.2 percent, and Khiva at 1.5 percent. The specific nature of employment and lack of economic diversification among the population of Kashkadarya province contribute to their strong desire for travel [12].

To the question, "How well do you know the tourist sites in Samarkand, Bukhara, Kashkadarya, Surkhandarya, and Navoiy provinces?", 100 percent of respondents from the Republic of Karakalpakstan and Namangan province answered that they do not know them very well. This is likely because these regions are located quite far from Southwestern Uzbekistan. Conversely, 100 percent of respondents from Khorezm province answered that they know them well. This suggests that for the people of Khorezm, a region surrounded by desert, there is a strong motivation to see the nature, valleys, rivers, and mountains of other provinces, as well as their unique historical-cultural architecture [13].

Regarding the question "How many times a year do you travel?", 100 percent of respondents from Khorezm and Bukhara provinces chose the once-a-year option. In Tashkent province, the results were split with 33.3 percent traveling once, 33.3 percent twice, and 33.4 percent three or more times. Respondents from Namangan province at 100 percent stated that they have never traveled. Participants from Samarkand, Surkhandarya, and Kashkadarya provinces reported traveling one, two, three, or more times per year.

To the question "Do you prefer to travel alone or with family?", participants from the Republic of Karakalpakstan split their answers between alone at 50 percent and with close relatives at 50 percent. In contrast, 100 percent of respondents in Namangan province chose close relatives, while 100 percent in Khorezm province chose family. Respondents from Samarkand, Surkhandarya, and Kashkadarya provinces provided varied answers: traveling alone at 3, 11.5, and 4.5 percent, respectively; family at 54.0, 55.5, and 53.5 percent; with friends at 38, 30, and 40.5 percent; and with close relatives at 5.0, 3.0, and 1.5 percent. This indicates that the majority of respondents prefer traveling with family or friends. To the question "What types of tourist sites do you want to see during your trip?", 100 percent of respondents from Namangan chose archaeological sites.

Participants from Bukhara province focused on ecotourism sites at 20 percent and all types of sites at 80 percent. The absence of mountainous terrain in the nature of Bukhara province likely increases the desire to visit lush, pristine areas. Respondents from Jizzakh, Navoiy, and Khorezm provinces, as well as the Republic of Karakalpakstan, chose all objects at 100 percent. In Samarkand, Surkhandarya, and Kashkadarya provinces, interest was nearly equally distributed among archaeological, architectural, religious, sightseeing, and ecotourism sites.

Regarding the question "Are you satisfied with transport and infrastructure facilities when you travel?", 100 percent of respondents from the Republic of Karakalpakstan, Jizzakh, Navoiy, and Khorezm provinces answered yes. This may be due to the fact that the socio-economic development and infrastructure in these regions lag behind other provinces; thus, they compare the services to the underdeveloped or non-existent services

in their own areas. Meanwhile, 100 percent of participants from Namangan province answered that they are not satisfied. In Bukhara at 80.0 percent and Tashkent province at 83.5 percent, respondents chose the no option. To the question "How do you rate the quality of tourism services in the cities and districts of Uzbekistan?", 100 percent of respondents in Khorezm province answered good. In the Republic of Karakalpakstan, answers were split between good at 50 percent and average at 50 percent, while in Tashkent province, 17 percent chose good and 83 percent chose average. In Surkhandarya province, 51.5 percent rated services as good and 44.5 percent as average.

The poor option was selected by respondents in Andijan at 12.5 percent, Kashkadarya at 10.0 percent, Surkhandarya at 4.0 percent, and Samarkand province at 2.8 percent. Overall, the good and average options were dominant for this question, which can be viewed as a positive situation.

In response to the question "In which season do you prefer to travel?", 100 percent of respondents from Khorezm province chose spring, while in the Republic of Karakalpakstan, the answers were split equally, with 50 percent choosing spring and 50 percent choosing summer. Since these regions have desert characteristics, the population finds spring and summer to be the most favorable times for travel. Specifically, the recreational value and attractiveness of mountainous areas increase during these seasons, drawing in residents from desert zones [14]. The winter option was selected more frequently by respondents in Tashkent province at 16.5 percent, Kashkadarya at 3 percent, and Samarkand at 2.5 percent. This trend may be attributed to the socio-economic development of these provinces, a higher proportion of Russian-speaking populations, and the professional occupations of the residents, which lead to a greater inclination toward visiting mountain recreation centers during the winter. To the question "Do you consider mobile applications for tourist sites necessary?", 100 percent of respondents in almost all provinces answered yes. Only a small fraction of participants in Surkhandarya at 5 percent, Kashkadarya at 4.5 percent, and Samarkand province at 2.5 percent chose the no option. Therefore, the analysis indicates that developing mobile applications for tourist sites is essential. Such tools would create comprehensive conveniences for tourists and provide better opportunities for planning their leisure time [15].

Conclusion

Based on the points discussed above, it can be concluded that the direct analysis of travelers' preferences through sociological surveys has ensured the authenticity of the research process. Grounded in these insights, organizing tourism services in a correct and evidence-based manner will create a strong foundation for the development of the sector. Furthermore, efficiently organizing tourism infrastructure while considering the socio-economic development potential of each region will yield significant economic results

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