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THE IMPACT OF TOURISM ON LOCAL COMMUNITIES IN SAMARKAND

Firdavs Abdikadirov, Jahongirov Izzatjon
"Silk Road" International University of Tourism and Cultural Heritage

Abstract. Tourism is one of the crucial factors influencing the development of society, culture, and economy of the local community in Samarkand – one of the historically important cities in Uzbekistan. The historical monuments, cuisine, crafts, and cultural heritage of the city attracts visitors from all over the world, bringing opportunities to the locals. This paper considers the influence of tourism development on the local community in terms of employment, entrepreneurship, cultural heritage preservation, socialization, and general quality of life. Tourism can bring new sources of income for local families, encourage the development of entrepreneurship, and give additional employment opportunities for young people and artisans. In addition to that, interaction of visitors and local residents can be used to increase the knowledge about local culture and heritage and promote the cultural exchange process. But tourism development in the city can cause some problems as well, including the pressure on environment, the risk of overcrowding of the area, seasonal employment, and the uneven income distribution. Digital marketing and e-WOM can be helpful in promoting the community based tourism. It is argued in the

paper that the tourism management should be sustainable and involve the cooperation of local residents, authorities and business in the city.

Keywords: tourism, local communities, Samarkand, cultural heritage, employment, local entrepreneurship, community-based tourism, sustainable development, electronic word-of-mouth.

Аннотация

Туризм является важным фактором социального,культурного и экономического развития местных сообществ Самарканда -одного из самых древних городов Узбекистана. Город известен своими архитектурными памятниками,кулинарными традициями и ремеслами. Туризм открывает множество новых возможностей для развития местных сообществ. В этой статье рассматривается влияние туризма на местные сообщества с акцентом на проблемах занятости и предпринимательства,сохранения культурного наследия,взаимодействия и качества жизни. Туризм может обеспечить дополнительную финансовую поддержку для семей,развивать малый бизнес и открывать множество новых возможностей для молодых людей и ремесленников. Кроме того,взаимодействие между туристами и местным населением может способствовать культурному обмену и повышению интереса к традициям Самарканда. Тем не менее в развитии туризма существуют и некоторые негативные аспекты такие как экологические проблемы,перенаселение туристами,сезонная занятость и несбалансированное распределение финансовых прибылей. В статье подчеркивается необходимость устойчивого управления туризмом,вовлечение местного населения и сотрудничество между государственными учреждениями и предпринимателями.

Ключевые слова: туризм, местные сообщества, Самарканд, культурное наследие, занятость, местное предпринимательство, устойчивое развитие, электронное сарафанное радио.

Annotatsiya

Turizm O‘zbekistonning tarixiy jihatdan muhim shaharlaridan biri bo‘lgan Samarqand mahalliy jamoalarining ijtimoiy, madaniy va iqtisodiy rivojlanishida muhim o‘rin tutadi. Shaharning me’moriy yodgorliklari, an’anaviy taomlari, hunarmandchiligi va madaniy merosi mahalliy hamda xorijiy sayyohlarni jalb qilib, aholi va tadbirkorlar uchun yangi imkoniyatlar yaratadi. Ushbu maqolada turizmning mahalliy jamoalarga ta’siri, xususan, bandlik, tadbirkorlik, madaniy merosni saqlash, ijtimoiy munosabatlar va hayot sifatiga ta’siri o‘rganiladi. Turizm oilalar uchun qo‘shimcha daromad manbalarini yaratishi, kichik biznesni rivojlantirishi hamda yoshlar va hunarmandlar uchun yangi imkoniyatlar ochishi mumkin. Bundan tashqari, sayyohlar va mahalliy aholi o‘rtasidagi muloqot madaniy almashinuvni kuchaytiradi va Samarqandning tarixiy an’analariga bo‘lgan qiziqishni oshiradi. Shu bilan birga, turizmning rivojlanishi ekologik bosim, odamlar gavjumligi, mavsumiy bandlik va iqtisodiy foydaning notekis taqsimlanishi kabi muammolarni keltirib chiqarishi mumkin. Maqolada turizmning mahalliy aholi uchun foydasini oshirish va madaniy o‘ziga xoslikni saqlash uchun barqaror boshqaruv hamda mahalliy jamoalarning faol ishtiroki zarurligi ta’kidlanadi.

Kalit so‘zlar: turizm, mahalliy jamoalar, Samarqand, madaniy meros, bandlik, mahalliy tadbirkorlik, barqaror rivojlanish, elektron tavsiyalar.

1. Introduction

The role of tourism in the development of communities worldwide cannot be overestimated. Tourism opens the doors to employment, entrepreneurship, cultural exchange, and development of infrastructure. Nevertheless, tourism has a much wider effect on people because it changes their lives, traditions, relationships, and living conditions.

Samarkand is an illustrative example of the interconnection between tourism and life of local community in Uzbekistan. Samarkand is one of the oldest cities located on the ancient route of the Silk Road, which was famous for trade, scientific, educational and architectural traditions of Uzbekistan. The city is known for such historical places as Registan Square, Gur-e-Amir Mausoleum, and Shah-i-Zinda, which attract people interested in exploring history and culture of Samarkand.

Tourism in Samarkand gives an opportunity for locals to engage into tourism activities, sell goods, provide tourist services, give guided tours and to promote their culture. Local restaurants, guesthouses, craft shops, transport and marketplaces can get profit from tourists. It might help people to earn money and create small companies.

Nevertheless, tourism may also change living and working environment of the residents. Increased number of tourists may affect public space, transport, water and historical areas of the city. Moreover, all people in Samarkand will not get the same benefit from tourism.

Thus, it is necessary to understand tourism not only from economic point of view, but also as a phenomenon which affects people in different way.

The purpose of this article is to analyze the influence of tourism on local communities in Samarkand and to suggest some strategies for tourism development.

2. Methodology

This article uses a qualitative approach based on literature analysis to investigate the link between tourism and local communities in Samarkand. The theoretical framework of the paper is based on the themes addressed by the author in earlier studies about gastronomic tourism, electronic word-of-mouth, and economic development of Samarkand.

The paper highlights the following five main aspects: economic benefits, employment/entrepreneurship, cultural heritage, socio-environmental impact, and sustainable community development. Special attention is paid to the connection between tourists' experience and local residents' involvement in tourism activities.

Digital communication also serves as one of the main topics of analysis in terms of marketing of local products and culture. Online reviews, social media content, and recommendations are analyzed as possible tools to connect local tourism operators with local and foreign tourists.

It should be noted that this paper is a conceptual analysis, and not an empirical study. Original surveys and interviews with local people were not conducted. Therefore, the impact discussed in the paper represents only the analysis of possible development outcomes.

3. Economic Benefits for Local Communities

One of the major possible advantages of tourism is the formation of economic opportunities for the locals. Tourists spend money on accommodations, food, travel expenses, entertainment, guide services, etc. These costs create the demand for local goods and services.

The hotels, hostels, restaurants, cafes, and travel services in Samarkand can be benefited by the tourism. Local craftsmen, market vendors, food producers, and individual tour guides can earn some money due to their services and goods sold to the tourists interested in visiting the landmarks of the city.

Tourism can prompt local residents to set up their own small businesses in accordance with local traditions. For instance, there can be guest houses run by families who will offer to eat and stay overnight at home and buy local souvenirs or attend craft workshops.

The positive impact of the tourism can go beyond those businesses which work directly with the tourists. The restaurants will have to buy products from suppliers, hostels will need cleaning and maintenance services, and tour operators can collaborate with local travel agents. In such a way, the development of the tourism will lead to economic development of all related local businesses.

At the same time, it is important that the tourists' expenses will remain in the community. If local businesses order local goods and employ local people, then the money earned by the tourism can stay in the region.

Thus, the support of small business and the collaboration of the tourism businesses with the local producers can be the key to success.

4. Employment Opportunities and Youth Development

Tourism is capable of creating employment opportunities in which people of different educational levels and skills can find themselves useful. Tourist accommodations, including hotels and restaurants, travel agencies, museums and tours providers require employees who will be able to offer different services to tourists who visit them.

Employment opportunities created by tourism may include hotel managers, waiters, drivers, tourist guides, events planners, translators, artisans, and marketing experts. Such occupations will give an opportunity to residents to get professional experience and some skills that can be used in other sectors of the economy as well.

Young people will get especially useful for themselves some tourism education and training. Speaking different languages, hospitality management, marketing and other skills related to tourism will help them to enter the tourism economy.

There will be special tourism opportunities for women and family business. Traditional cooking, embroidery, clothing production, arts and crafts can bring money to the residents while using their knowledge and skills.

However, the quality of employment remains an essential problem. Some kinds of tourism employment can be temporary or uncertain in terms of earning because some businesses depend on specific periods of tourism.

To solve these problems tourism development needs to be complemented by vocational education, business development assistance, employment rights and career opportunities.

5. Cultural Preservation and Community Identity

Cultural heritage of Samarkand is one of the primary reasons tourists visit the city. Historical buildings, traditional crafts, local cuisine, and cultural practices can be used by the city residents to promote their cultural heritage to the foreigners.

The demand created by tourism can lead to the preservation of the traditional knowledge of the local people. The artisans making ceramics, textiles, embroideries, and other traditional goods can find new clients among the tourists who are looking for something unique to take home.

Traditional food of the area gives the locals an opportunity to engage in the process of preserving cultural heritage. They can use the services of restaurants, cookery classes, or culinary workshops to showcase the local dishes, including plov, samsa, manti, and lagman.

Furthermore, the development of tourism can help residents become aware of the historical importance of the city where they live. When the cultural heritage is attracting tourists and generating economic benefits, there will be additional incentives for preserving the traditional knowledge and historical sites.

There is, however, the danger of commercialization of the culture. Some traditional practices can become distorted and modified according to the wishes of the tourists. Sometimes the historical and cultural sites can be developed in such a way that they lose their original character.

That is why the residents of the city should have the opportunity to take part in decision-making concerning heritage preservation and its promotion to tourists.

6. Social Interaction and Cultural Exchange

The process of tourism creates chances for interaction among the locals and foreigners of other nationalities and cultures.

In Samarkand, there can be many places of interaction including markets, restaurants, guesthouses, historical sites, and other community-based cultural events. The locals can present their customs, hospitality, food, and traditions to tourists, while tourists can share their experience.

This kind of interaction can help to create a good image about Samarkand and its culture, and even make locals more friendly. Also, this can stimulate locals, especially young people, to study foreign languages and learn how to communicate with other people.

The process of tourism creates chances for community participation in cultural and other events. This can create good relationships between the locals, cultural associations, and tourism organizations.

However, it is not always equally useful. Lots of tourists can interfere with residential life, put too much pressure on public space, and cause some troubles related to noise, traffic, or using local services.

Therefore, good quality of tourism development requires a good balance between welcoming tourists and providing the needs of locals.

7. The Impact of Gastronomic Tourism on Local Communities

Tourism related to food is tightly connected to community development because food tells about the traditions, agriculture, and daily life culture of local communities.

Traditional Samarkand cuisine provides options for locals to take part in tourism in terms of restaurants, cafés, bakeries, food markets, and family kitchens. Tourists who are interested in local cuisine can purchase food and participate in culinary workshops and visit markets selling local products.

Such actions are not only beneficial for the owners of the restaurants but might provide new chances to farmers, sellers at food markets, and food processors. Coordination of restaurant owners and food producers will be useful for the local supply chain development.

Gastronomic tourism can become the factor that encourages the conservation of local cooking traditions and recipes. Locals can share their knowledge of cooking with tourists in workshops, culinary demonstration events, and so on.

But the development of gastronomic tourism requires paying attention to such aspects as hygiene, high quality of services provided, reasonable prices, and authentic culinary experiences. It is also important for small businesses to get some assistance in marketing, client services, and online presence.

With the integration of food tourism into community-oriented actions, Samarkand will have a chance to generate more income while conserving the culinary traditions.

8. Digital Marketing and Electronic Word-of-Mouth

The process of digital communication became one of the major components of promoting tourist destinations. Various social media platforms, online reviews, blogs and digital guidebooks provide visitors with the possibility to share their experiences with potential tourists all over the world.

E-WOM is an opinion and recommendation communicated by consumers via online media. As mentioned above in the article by the author, positive experience online will be helpful for the improvement of destination's image.

As far as local communities of Samarkand are concerned, digital marketing provides an accessible opportunity for the promotion of small businesses and cultural experiences. Family-run guesthouses, local restaurants, craft workshops, independent guides can use digital marketing to reach out to international customers.

Photos, videos, customer reviews and descriptions of experiences will provide tourists with the possibility to learn about businesses which operate beyond popular places for tourists. This can open the door for residents of different neighborhoods to get involved in tourism.

Moreover, digital marketing can be beneficial for the development of community-based tourism through the promotion of local crafts, traditional food, cultural events and learning experiences.

However, digital marketing must correspond to reality. Otherwise, misleading information or bad customer experience can spoil the reputation of the business.

Therefore, the involvement of local entrepreneurs in courses in digital marketing, online communication, photographing and reputation management can be useful.

9. Negative Impacts and Challenges for Local Residents

Even though tourism opens up great opportunities for everyone, its development can be accompanied by various issues at the local level.

First of all, there might be the issue of stress on the infrastructure of the city. An increased number of visitors leads to increased traffic, an increase in the amount of waste, water consumption, as well as requirements related to sanitation and public places. This may concern not only tourists but also residents.

Secondly, there is the problem of inequality in the use of tourism. Enterprises located close to famous monuments may get more customers than those enterprises that operate in other areas of the city. The people who do not have enough investment money, professional skills, and online resources can suffer from it.

Thirdly, there is the issue of seasonality. When there is low demand, the residents may face lower wages of workers and low incomes of entrepreneurs. The development of various tourism products during all seasons may solve this issue.

Fourthly, there is the issue of commercial activity development, which may place additional strain on local businesses and houses. The uncontrolled development of the industry can make residents of the city feel discomfort or that their needs are ignored.

Besides, the negative impact of tourism on the environment and culture should be mentioned. The poor development of tourism may cause pollution, overcrowding, as well as the destruction of the historical environment of the area.

Thus, these problems should be taken into consideration, and the planning, investment, environmental protection, and community participation should be applied.

10. Sustainable and Community-Based Tourism Development

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Thus, these problems should be taken into consideration, and the planning, investment, environmental protection, and community participation should be applied.

11. Recommendations

To enhance the impact of tourism on the life of local communities in Samarkand, some of the following strategies should be implemented.

First, stimulate entrepreneurship of the locals. It is necessary for local authorities and tourism associations to provide assistance to small businesses, guest houses run by families, local restaurants, craftsmen, and freelance tour guides. Additional education and promotion can help small local companies attract more customers.

Second, develop professional education. Training in languages, hospitality, customer service, digital marketing, and business administration can provide locals with an opportunity to get higher-paid jobs and improve the quality of tourism services.

Third, implement community-based tourism initiatives. Cooking classes, workshops devoted to culture, local bazaars, and neighborhood tours can bring additional profit to the locals while giving tourists an opportunity to get acquainted with the everyday life of Samarkand.

Fourth, preserve the cultural heritage. The planning process of tourism in Samarkand should ensure the protection of cultural sites, crafts, cuisine, and traditions. Residents and cultural heritage experts should be actively involved in decision making processes concerning their communities.

Fifth, improve environmental management. The problem of waste, excessive consumption of water, traffic, and overcrowding should be solved to minimize the impact of tourism on residential areas and cultural sites.

Sixth, provide digital opportunities. Small businesses and entrepreneurs should be encouraged to make use of social networks, online reviews, and other digital tools for promotion.

Seventh, measure the well-being of the community. The development of tourism should be measured using such indicators as employment of local residents, sources of income, satisfaction of locals, participation of small businesses in tourism markets, environmental and cultural conditions.

All these steps will make it possible to make sure that tourism development serves the interests of local population rather than the increase of tourist flows only.

12. Conclusion

Tourism may prove useful for the well-being of Samarkand local community since it creates employment opportunities, promotes small business activities, fosters cultural interaction, and raises demand for traditional products.

Historical landmarks, cuisine, craft traditions, and hospitable atmosphere of the city create favorable conditions for involving the local community in tourism activities. Gastronomy tourism and electronic word-of-mouth will be effective methods for involving entrepreneurs into collaboration with tourists both domestic and foreign.

At the same time, tourism is associated with the risk of placing pressure on environment, increasing crowds, creating temporary job opportunities, and inequity in distributing economic benefits. All these problems are the reason for the need of proper planning and active involvement of community.

It is necessary to consider that the local population plays an important role not only in providing services for the visitors but also in planning and managing the process of tourism development. The knowledge, traditions, demands and attitudes of the local population will be necessary for maintaining the authenticity and attractiveness of Samarkand.

Conclusion

Thus, it is possible to state that community-based tourism may be helpful for developing Samarkand as an international tourist destination and promoting welfare of its communities through investments in education, small business, culture, electronic communication, and environment.

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THE ROLE OF DOMESTIC TOURISM IN PROMOTING SUSTAINABLE TOURISM DEVELOPMENT IN UZBEKISTAN

Olimova Mushtariy, Axatova Shaxina
Students of tourism hospitality
In “Silk Road” international university of tourism and cultural heritage
olimovamushtariy454@gmail.com
shaxinaaxatova21@gmail.com