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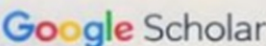
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Xizmat ko'rsatish va turizm sohasi

Service sector and tourism

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FROM HERITAGE TO REVENUE: HISTORICAL AND CULTURAL TOURISM SERVICES AND REGIONAL ECONOMIC GROWTH IN UZBEKISTAN

Ismatullayev Jasur Anvarovich, Erkayeva Barno Abdurakhimovna

ОТ НАСЛЕДИЯ К ПОЛЬЗЕ: ИСТОРИЧЕСКИ-КУЛЬТУРНЫЕ ТУРИСТИЧЕСКИЕ УСЛУГИ И РЕГИОНАЛЬНЫЙ ЭКОНОМИЧЕСКИЙ РОСТ В УЗБЕКИСТАНЕ

Исматуллаев Жасур Анварович, Эркаева Барно Абдурахимовна

MEROSDAN FOYDAGA: O'ZBEKISTONDA TARIXIY-MADANIY TURIZM XIZMATLARI VA MINTAQAVIY IQTISODIY O'SISH

Ismatullayev Jasur Anvarovich, Erkayeva Barno Abdurakhimovna

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Abstract. This article provides a comprehensive analysis of the transformation of cultural heritage into an economic resource, using the cases of Samarkand, Bukhara, Khiva, and Shahrisabz. It substantiates the role of historical and cultural tourism within regional economies, particularly its impact on employment generation, service exports, and regional branding. The study identifies three interrelated environments shaping tourism development: the phenomenal (tourist perception and experience), the filtering (institutional, economic, social, and infrastructural conditions), and the experiential (practical organization and economic outcomes). Their combined influence on tourism performance is critically examined. Drawing on international best practices, the paper proposes cluster-based development, digital platform integration, service chain coordination, and sustainable management mechanisms. The findings highlight the necessity of positioning historical and cultural tourism as a strategic driver of regional development and competitiveness.

Keywords. Historical and cultural tourism, cultural heritage, regional development, tourism clusters, digital tourism, economic efficiency, service sector, tourism branding, sustainable development, authenticity, tourism infrastructure, service exports.

Аннотация. В данной статье проводится комплексный анализ процесса трансформации культурного наследия в экономический ресурс на примере таких исторических городов, как Самарканд, Бухара, Хива и Шахрисабз. Обосновывается значимость историко-культурного туризма в структуре региональной экономики, его влияние на занятость населения, экспорт услуг и формирование регионального бренда. В исследовании выделены три взаимосвязанные среды развития туризма: феноменальная (восприятие и опыт туриста), фильтрующая (институциональные, экономические, социальные и инфраструктурные условия) и опытная (практическая организация и экономическая эффективность). Раскрывается их роль в обеспечении устойчивого функционирования туристической системы. На основе международного опыта предложены направления кластерного развития, цифровизации туристических услуг, интеграции сервисной инфраструктуры и внедрения механизмов устойчивого управления. Полученные результаты подтверждают необходимость рассмотрения культурного туризма как стратегического фактора регионального развития.

Ключевые слова. Историко-культурный туризм, культурное наследие, региональное развитие, туристические кластеры, цифровой туризм, экономическая эффективность, сфера услуг, туристический брендинг, устойчивое развитие, аутентичность, туристическая инфраструктура, экспорт услуг

Annotatsiya. Mazkur maqolada Samarqand, Buxoro, Xiva va Shahrisabz kabi tarixiy shaharlarda madaniy merosning iqtisodiy resursga aylanish jarayoni kompleks yondashuv asosida tahlil qilinadi. Tadqiqotda tarixiy-madaniy turizmning hududiy iqtisodiyotdagi o'rni, uning bandlikni oshirish, xizmatlar eksportini kengaytirish hamda



hududiy brend shakllanishiga ta'siri ilmiy jihatdan asoslab beriladi. Maqolada fenomenal (idrok va tajriba), filtrlovchi (institutsonal, iqtisodiy, ijtimoiy va infratuzilmaviy omillar) hamda tajribaviy (amaliy va iqtisodiy natijadorlik) muhitlar o'zaro bog'liq tizim sifatida ko'rib chiqilib, ularning turizm samaradorligiga ta'siri ochib beriladi. Shuningdek, xalqaro tajribalar asosida turizmni klasterlash, raqamli platformalarni joriy etish, xizmatlar zanjirini integratsiyalash va barqaror boshqaruv mexanizmlarini rivojlantirish bo'yicha takliflar ishlab chiqiladi. Tadqiqot natijalari tarixiy-madaniy turizmni hududiy rivojlanishning strategik omili sifatida baholash zarurligini ko'rsatadi.

Kalit so'zlar: tarixiy-madaniy turizm, madaniy meros, hududiy rivojlanish, turizm klasterlari, raqamli turizm, iqtisodiy samaradorlik, xizmatlar sektori, turizm brendingi, barqaror rivojlanish, autentiklik, turizm infratuzilmasi, xizmat eksporti.

■ INTRODUCTION

The past two decades have seen a marked shift in how historical heritage is understood within regional development planning. Expanding international travel and growing competition between tourist destinations have pushed economies to look more carefully at what distinguishes them — and for regions that include cities like Samarkand, Bukhara, and Khiva, that distinction is substantial. What was once preserved largely for its own sake has increasingly become subject to market pressures, where the ability to attract, accommodate, and retain visitors shapes economic outcomes as much as the heritage itself. The economic contribution of this sector runs through several channels at once. Visitor spending in heritage cities rarely concentrates in one place. Accommodation, meals, guided tours, cultural events, and craft purchases each feed a different segment of the local economy — and when these segments are linked, an incoming dollar or euro does not stop at the first transaction. It moves. The guesthouse owner pays local suppliers; the craft vendor sustains a skill that might otherwise disappear. Digital booking platforms have extended this dynamic further, giving smaller regional operators direct access to international markets that were previously out of reach. What this means in practical terms is that historical tourism has moved beyond being a cultural policy concern. The foreign currency it generates, the employment it sustains, and the small businesses it supports make it a structural component of regional economic life — one that requires active management rather than passive preservation. In this way, historical and cultural heritage is monetized directly through the service sector, forming a highly profitable and multiplier-effect economic segment within the region's GDP. Behind the visible appeal of heritage tourism lies a process worth examining on its own terms — how a medieval monument or a craft fair shifts from cultural asset into economic one. Samarkand, Bukhara, and Shakhrisabz went through precisely this kind of transition, gradually integrating into international travel networks in ways that changed what these places do, not just what they are. The structure becomes clear when traced through a single visit. Someone arriving to see a historic site also needs accommodation, food, transport, and guidance — separate businesses, each feeding the others. Craft sellers and food vendors benefit from the same visitor the museum attracts, without any of them having coordinated to bring that person. The resulting economic activity spreads into trade, transport, and local production in ways that aggregate statistics tend to flatten. This study examines those connections — how heritage tourism services shape employment, regional

branding, and service exports, and under what conditions that contribution can be strengthened. This study examines that process. Specifically, it looks at how historical and cultural tourism services contribute to regional branding, employment, and service exports — and how heritage becomes revenue through the service ecosystem surrounding it. The broader aim is to establish a clearer analytical basis for understanding what this sector actually delivers in terms of regional growth, sustainability, and competitive positioning, rather than assuming its value is self-evident.

■ LITERATURE REVIEW

Among the scholars who have conducted research on historical and cultural tourism, Greg Richards interprets cultural and historical tourism as a strategic resource for economic development. He scientifically substantiates that cultural tourism contributes to regional branding, the formation of tourism rent, and the creation of high added value in the service sector. Richards points out that historical and cultural tourism stands among the principal forces shaping post-industrial economies. As demand for cultural experiences continues to grow, heritage resources are gaining greater weight in contemporary tourism markets — both in terms of visitor appeal and economic return. [1]

Dallen J. Timothy examines heritage tourism from both institutional and economic standpoints. A central concern running through his work is the ongoing difficulty destination managers encounter when trying to keep heritage sites intact while also making them financially viable and administratively functional. He explains historical and cultural tourism as an economic mechanism for sustainable regional development.[2] Melanie K. Smith studies the economic essence of cultural tourism in relation to creative industries, the urban economy, and the service sector. In her research, historical and cultural tourism is considered a factor that increases regional competitiveness through innovative services.[3] Scholars such as John Urry and Erik Cohen explain cultural tourism through the concept of authenticity. They argue that the economic effectiveness of historical and cultural sites depends on whether they are perceived as “real” or “staged,” and this directly affects tourism revenues.[4] Further developing this idea, Dean MacCannell associates historical and cultural tourism with the transformation of cultural objects into economic commodities. Through the theory of “staged authenticity,” he reveals the economic nature of historical heritage within the tourism industry.[5] Another scholar, David Throsby, proposes a comprehensive evaluation of the economic and intangible value of historical and cultural heritage through the theory of cultural capital. He



analyzes historical tourism within the framework of the balance between economic efficiency and cultural sustainability. [6] In addition, Nigel Morgan and Annette Pritchard examine historical and cultural tourism as a tool of regional marketing and branding, substantiating the economic mechanisms of shaping tourism demand through historical heritage.[7]

The above studies demonstrate that in international scholarship, historical and cultural tourism is considered not only a cultural phenomenon but also a strategic resource for economic development. Yet most of this scholarship remains centered on Western or well-documented tourist destinations. Countries like Uzbekistan — where historical depth is considerable but systematic economic analysis of cultural tourism remains

thin — have received comparatively little attention. This gap in the literature suggests that existing frameworks may not translate directly to such contexts, and that region-specific research is still needed.

■ RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

Theoretical Foundations foreign scholars have done substantial work on this. The frameworks they developed touch on economic, social, and cultural dimensions of historical tourism — and while no single approach covers everything, taken together they offer a workable foundation. David Throsby is one of the more interesting voices here. His core argument is simple but consequential: cultural heritage is not just symbolically valuable, it behaves like capital.

Table 1

Comparative Analysis of Methodological Approaches⁶⁰

Comparison Criterion	Foreign Scholars' Approach (Researchers)	Uzbek Scholars' Approach (Researchers)	Methodological Differences and Integration Conclusions
Theoretical Basis	Cultural capital – D. Throsby; Authenticity – E. Cohen; Experience economy – G. Richards[8]	National economy and service sector – N.T. Tuxliev; Regional development – B.S. Safarov	Theoretical depth exists, requires adaptation to national context
Methodological Focus	Conceptual and systematic models – D.J. Timothy, C.M. Hall[9]	Applied-statistical and normative analysis – Q.X. Abdurahmonov, M.A. Raximov	Integration of conceptual and statistical approaches is necessary
Interpretation of Heritage	Economic and intangible value asset – D. Throsby, M.K. Smith[10]	National wealth and development resource – A.T. Khudoyberganov, D.A. Rakhimova	Assess heritage as economic asset should be strengthened
Assessment Criteria	Experience quality, tourist perception, cultural value – J. Urry, J. Larsen[11]	Employment, income, service volume – N.T. Tuxliev, Z.K. Islomov	Integration of qualitative and quantitative indicators is necessary
Approach to Authenticity	“Real” vs. “staged” – E. Cohen [12]	Primarily conservation and preservation – A.T. Khudoyberganov, D.A. Rakhimova	Authenticity should be aligned with economic efficiency
Regional Development Model	Clusters, DMO – M.E. Porter, D.J. Timothy[13]	Regional development and specialization – B.S. Safarov	Cluster development should align with regional policy
Sustainability Concept	Economic–social–cultural balance – B. Garrod, A. Fyall, UNESCO[14]	Heritage preservation + economic growth – D.A. Rakhimova	Sustainability indicators need to be implemented
Digital Approach	Smart destination, Big Data – UNWTO, G. Richards[15]	Initial digitalization – Z.K. Islomov	Acceleration of digital mechanisms is essential
Role of the State	Regulator and environment creator – C.M. Hall, UNWTO[16]	Active participant and initiator – Q.X. Abdurahmonov	Public-private partnership should serve as methodological basis
Scientific Methods	Qualitative analysis, conceptual models – E. Cohen, M.K. Smith[17][18]	Statistical and regional analysis – N.T. Tuxliev, B.S. Safarov	Econometric and index methods need integration
Primary Goal	Global competitiveness and experience quality – G. Richards, UNWTO[19]	National and regional economic growth – N.T. Tuxliev, Q.X. Abdurahmonov	Integration of global and national goals is required

⁶⁰ Prepared by author



Historical sites attract visitors, and visitors bring money — but Throsby goes further, insisting that the intangible side of heritage cannot simply be traded off against economic gain. Both matter, and any serious assessment has to account for both. Richards is less concerned with valuation and more with the mechanics of how culture becomes a tourism product. A region's history does not sell itself — it gets packaged, positioned, and marketed. His research follows that process and looks at what it means for regional competitiveness. Richards' framework underscores the importance of accounting for quality factors and the experience economy in evaluating historical and cultural tourism. Dallen J. Timothy examines heritage tourism from institutional and managerial perspectives. What both authors share, perhaps without intending it, is an awareness that none of this happens automatically. Every functioning heritage site has a political and administrative story behind it. Funding decisions, competing interests, local governance — these shape outcomes in ways that economic frameworks alone rarely capture. That gap in the literature is worth acknowledging. Erik Cohen interprets cultural tourism through the concept of authenticity. He differentiates between “real” and “staged” culture and examines how tourism impacts the economic efficiency of cultural content. This approach provides a critical methodological basis for balancing quality and economic outcomes. The “tourist gaze” concept, developed by John Urry and Jonas Larsen, enables the evaluation of tourism based on tourist perception and consumption behavior. This methodology demonstrates the need to assess historical and cultural tourism not only as a resource but also in terms of demand and perception systems. Additionally, Michael E. Porter's theories of clustering and competitiveness provide a methodological framework for developing tourism as a regional economic system. This approach facilitates the development of historical and cultural tourism through tourism clusters, value chain expansion, and enhanced regional competitiveness. Overall, foreign research indicates that evaluating historical and cultural tourism requires the integration of cultural capital, authenticity, service economy, regional governance, and competitiveness concepts. These approaches form a scientific and methodological foundation for assessing and developing historical and cultural tourism in the context of Uzbekistan.

The table below presents a comparative analysis of foreign and Uzbek scholars' methodological approaches to historical and cultural tourism:

This methodological framework demonstrates the potential for integrating foreign and Uzbek scholars' approaches both conceptually and practically. It provides a solid **scientific and methodological basis** for assessing and developing historical and cultural tourism, considering regional

policies, competitiveness, and the quality of tourist experiences.

■ ANALYSIS AND RESULTS

This study identifies three environments that together drive the development of historical and cultural tourism services: the phenomenal (or sensory) heritage environment, the filtering environment, and the experiential heritage environment. While each operates differently, their combined effect ultimately shapes how well historical and cultural tourism performs — economically, socially, and culturally.

At its core, the phenomenal environment is about what tourists feel and understand when they stand in front of a heritage site. The physical remnants of history, the intangible traditions surrounding them, the landscape, the local atmosphere — all of these feed into a single, highly personal experience. When that experience lands well, the data shows it: satisfaction scores climb, people come back, and they tell others. Theoretically, this aligns with what Cohen (1988) argued about authenticity as a constructed perception, and with Urry's (1990) observation that tourists do not simply see — they interpret through a socially shaped lens.

The filtering environment refers to the conditions that either enable or obstruct the conversion of heritage assets into actual tourism products. Four filters were examined: economic, social, physical, and institutional. On the economic side, investment levels and demand conditions set the boundaries of what is possible. The gap between Shahrisabz and districts like Qamashi or Chiroqchi tells a revealing story. In Shahrisabz, targeted public and private investment restored Amir Temur heritage sites and put in place the infrastructure visitors need — and the results followed. Visitor numbers grew and held. In Qamashi and Chiroqchi, the heritage exists. What does not exist, or not yet, is reliable road access and the basic services that turn a heritage site into a destination worth travelling to. All four filters are connected: a gap in any one weakens the entire system. In Qashqadaryo region specifically, weak institutional frameworks and transport shortcomings have pushed tourist activity into a handful of larger towns, leaving much of the region's heritage underutilized.

Table 2 shows that the phenomenal and experiential environments are not competing frameworks — they are complementary. The phenomenal environment opens up the subjective and cultural content of tourism, while the experiential environment explains how that content gets translated into economic outcomes. Leaning too heavily on the phenomenal risks overlooking measurable results; focusing exclusively on the experiential invites over-commercialisation and the gradual hollowing out of authenticity. A methodology that brings both together is therefore not just preferable — it is necessary.



Table 2

The role of phenomenal and experiential heritage environments in the methodology of historical-cultural tourism⁶¹

Criterion	Phenomenal (Perceptual) Heritage Environment	Experiential (Practical) Heritage Environment
Core nature	The environment in which tourists perceive, understand, and evaluate heritage	The practical organisation of heritage as a tourism product
Interpretation of heritage	Symbolic, emotional, and cultural value	Economic resource and service bundle
Central question	"How does the tourist feel and perceive heritage?"	"How is heritage managed, and what economic outcomes does it produce?"
Theoretical foundations	Cultural capital (Throsby), authenticity (Cohen), tourist gaze (Urry)	Service economics, sustainable tourism, market mechanisms
Type of analysis	Qualitative	Quantitative and applied
Key indicators	Satisfaction levels, quality of experience, sense of authenticity	Visitor numbers, revenue, employment, investment
Assessment methods	Surveys, interviews, content analysis	Statistical, econometric, and index-based methods
Heritage management approach	Priority on preserving cultural and social values	Priority on efficiency and economic performance
Risks	High degree of subjectivity	Commercialisation and erosion of authenticity
Outcome	A strong emotional and cultural experience	Sustained economic returns and development
Methodological significance	Reveals the qualitative dimension of historical-cultural tourism	Measures the economic effectiveness of historical-cultural tourism

Spain's figures — 83.7 million tourists and tourism accounting for 11.8% of GDP — were built on cluster-based development and smart destination platforms across 49 UNESCO World Heritage sites. Italy took a different but equally deliberate path: its smart heritage city approach, combining digital monitoring with careful transport logistics around 59 World Heritage properties, pushed annual revenue past €155 billion. France extended tourist stays from an average of 2.3 to 3.1 nights by weaving festival tourism and creative industries into the heritage offer — a shift that had a direct effect on per-visitor spending. Turkey's story is instructive for a different reason: public-private partnerships drove a 2.6-fold increase in cultural tourism

revenue between 2010 and 2019, demonstrating what sustained institutional commitment can achieve even without starting from a position of strength.

Adapting these lessons to Uzbekistan calls for movement on four fronts: first, developing historical and cultural tourism through clustering and building integrated tourist routes between Samarkand, Bukhara, Khiva, and Shahrisabz; second, introducing mechanisms for the economic valuation of cultural capital and tourism rent; third, shifting tourism management toward digital platforms and real-time monitoring; and fourth, ensuring that the use of heritage is always balanced against its preservation — a balance that cannot be assumed but has to be actively managed.

⁶¹ Prepared by author

<https://ojs.kstu.uz/index.php/ej>

Table 3
Comparative analysis of the heritage environments shaping historical and cultural tourism services⁶²

Environment type	Primary function	Analytical approach	Outcome
Phenomenal (sensory) environment	The tourist's subjective perception of heritage	Qualitative: surveys, interviews	Emotional experience and intention to revisit
Filtering environment	Regulating the conversion of heritage resources into tourism products	Multi-factor: economic, social, physical, institutional	Determines heritage quality and tourism effectiveness
Experiential heritage environment	Practical organisation and management of heritage	Quantitative: statistical, econometric	Sustained economic returns and visitor flow

Table 3 lays out where each environment fits in the overall process. The phenomenal environment shapes the tourist's initial motivation and the decision to visit at all. The filtering environment then determines how fully that motivation translates into an actual trip. The experiential environment captures what happens during the visit and in its aftermath — the economic activity generated, the social value produced, and whether heritage is left better or worse off than before. When all three work together, the results compound: tourism value grows, heritage is preserved rather than consumed, and the local economy gains something durable.

The platform management model developed in this study organises the development of historical and cultural tourism services into four stages. The first maps and assesses the resource base, treating heritage as the primary form of capital. The second takes that capital to market through digital tools and targeted marketing. The third brings individual services — accommodation, guided tours, transport, ecological monitoring, information provision — into a single value chain. The fourth stage is where economic returns are realised.

The model's internal logic follows a sequence: design concept → objectives → functions → integration → implementation → end users. This sequence is not just organisational tidiness; it reflects the practical need to connect strategic intent with operational delivery at every step.

Virtual reality capabilities allow tourists to engage with heritage sites interactively before they arrive, enriching the pre-visit experience and broadening access for those who cannot travel in person. Visitor flow management addresses overcrowding, seasonal pressure, and infrastructure strain — all of which, left unmanaged, damage the very heritage that draws people in the first place. The environmental management component brings ecological risk monitoring, resource efficiency, and green tourism principles into the operational core of the platform. All of these functions converge in a single integrated system, moving heritage tourism management

from a collection of disconnected activities to something that can actually be steered.

The inter-regional cluster component of the model draws on three international precedents: Spain's destination management and clustering approach, Italy's heritage monetisation and branding strategy, and the UAE's infrastructure-led digital integration model. Together, these informed the argument that Uzbekistan needs a unified cluster architecture — one that links Samarkand, Bukhara, Khiva, and other historical centres through shared infrastructure, digital innovation, and coordinated governance and marketing.

Localisation is sometimes treated as an aesthetic choice — a way to make a destination feel more authentic rather than generic. This study's findings push back on that framing. For Uzbekistan, building tourism around its own historical, cultural, natural, and social fabric is not a branding decision; it is the only realistic path to a competitive and durable tourism sector. The digital dimension makes this more urgent, not less. UNWTO data puts 65 to 70 percent of all tourist bookings through digital channels. That is not a trend still gathering pace — it is already the dominant reality, and local tourism products that have not been adapted to it are effectively invisible to most of the market.

The main advantage of a localised tourism model is that it allows a destination to meet global market expectations without sacrificing what makes it distinctive. Spain's tourism sector, which employs more than 2.5 million people and accounts for roughly 12% of GDP, and France's measurable gains in per-visitor spending through festival and creative industry integration — both point to the same conclusion: localisation, done well, delivers.

UN data indicates that in regions where sustainable tourism models are in place, between 30 and 35 percent of tourism revenue reaches local communities directly. For Uzbekistan, that figure carries weight beyond the economic argument. A tourism model that channels income toward local populations is also one that

⁶² Prepared by author

<https://ojs.kstu.uz/index.php/ej>



gives those communities a stake in protecting the heritage that draws visitors in the first place — and that connection is what makes the model sustainable over time.

■ CONCLUSION

Historical and cultural tourism occupies a distinct position within regional economies. Unlike conventional production, it generates added value by drawing existing heritage into economic circulation — converting monuments, traditions, and cultural practices into revenue, employment, and export earnings. The theoretical frameworks developed by Throsby, Urry, and Cohen collectively support the view that heritage assets should be treated not as objects of passive preservation but as capital capable of producing sustained economic returns through the service sector. The research makes clear that the presence of heritage resources alone does not determine economic outcomes. Clustering, digital transformation, public-private partnership, and service quality standards must work in combination for tourism to deliver consistent results. The experiences of Italy, Spain, France, and Japan demonstrate that it is precisely this alignment of conditions — rather than the volume of heritage — that distinguishes high-performing destinations from those that underperform relative to their potential. For Uzbekistan, the implication is straightforward. The heritage corridor anchored by Samarkand, Bukhara, Khiva, and Shakhrisabz represents a competitive position in the global tourism market that few countries can match. Realizing that position, however, requires adaptation rather than imitation — fitting international experience to local institutional conditions, regional characteristics, and existing economic structures. Taken together, the findings argue that historical and cultural tourism should be repositioned in policy thinking: not as an extension of cultural administration, but as a strategic economic resource with direct implications for regional competitiveness, sustainable growth, and service export capacity. Placing it at the center of regional development strategy is not merely defensible — it is, on the evidence presented here, the more analytically sound position.

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