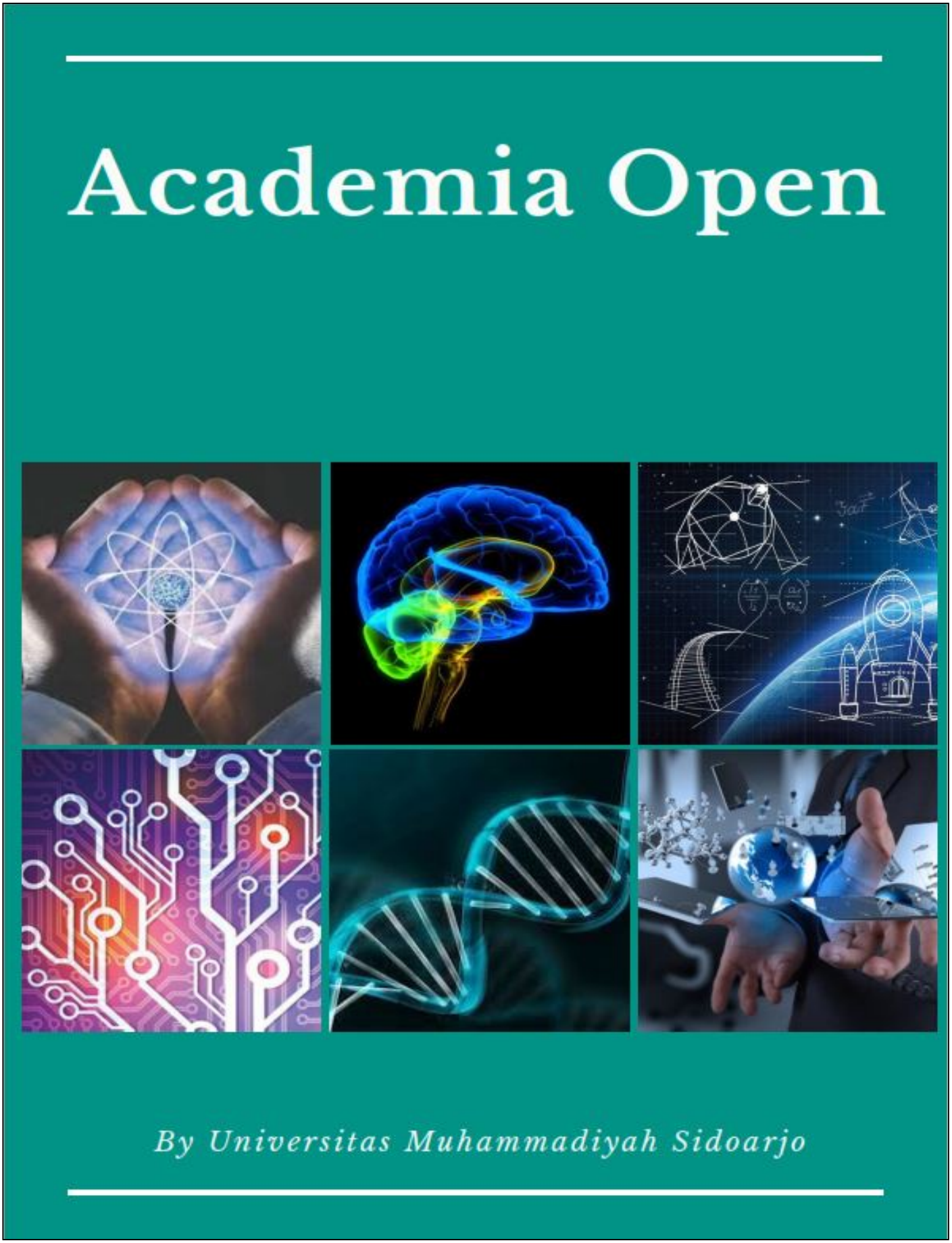
Academia Open
Vol 10 No 1 (2025): June
DOI: 10.21070/acopen.10.2025.11280 . Article type: (Business and Economics)

Table Of Content

Journal Cover 2
Author[s] Statement 3
Editorial Team 4
Article information 5
Check this article update (crossmark) 5
Check this article impact 5
Cite this article 5
Title page 6
Article Title 6
Author information 6
Abstract 6
Article content 7

ISSN 2714-7444 (online), https://acopen.umsida.ac.id, published by Universitas Muhammadiyah Sidoarjo
Copyright © Author(s). This is an open-access article distributed under the terms of the Creative Commons Attribution License (CC BY).

Academia Open
Vol 10 No 1 (2025): June
DOI: 10.21070/acopen.10.2025.11280 . Article type: (Business and Economics)



ISSN 2714-7444 (online), https://acopen.umsida.ac.id, published by Universitas Muhammadiyah Sidoarjo
Copyright © Author(s). This is an open-access article distributed under the terms of the Creative Commons Attribution License (CC BY).

Academia Open
Vol 10 No 1 (2025): June
DOI: 10.21070/acopen.10.2025.11280 . Article type: (Business and Economics)

Originality Statement

The author[s] declare that this article is their own work and to the best of their knowledge it contains no materials previously published or written by another person, or substantial proportions of material which have been accepted for the published of any other published materials, except where due acknowledgement is made in the article. Any contribution made to the research by others, with whom author[s] have work, is explicitly acknowledged in the article.

Conflict of Interest Statement

The author[s] declare that this article was conducted in the absence of any commercial or financial relationships that could be construed as a potential conflict of interest.

Copyright Statement

Copyright © Author(s). This article is published under the Creative Commons Attribution (CC BY 4.0) licence. Anyone may reproduce, distribute, translate and create derivative works of this article (for both commercial and non-commercial purposes), subject to full attribution to the original publication and authors. The full terms of this licence may be seen at http://creativecommons.org/licences/by/4.0/legalcode

Copyright © Author(s). This is an open-access article distributed under the terms of the Creative Commons Attribution License (CC BY).

Academia Open
Vol 10 No 1 (2025): June
DOI: 10.21070/acopen.10.2025.11280 . Article type: (Business and Economics)

EDITORIAL TEAM

Editor in Chief

Mochammad Tanzil Multazam, Universitas Muhammadiyah Sidoarjo, Indonesia

Managing Editor

Bobur Sobirov, Samarkand Institute of Economics and Service, Uzbekistan

Editors

Fika Megawati, Universitas Muhammadiyah Sidoarjo, Indonesia

Mahardika Darmawan Kusuma Wardana, Universitas Muhammadiyah Sidoarjo, Indonesia

Wiwit Wahyu Wijayanti, Universitas Muhammadiyah Sidoarjo, Indonesia

Farkhod Abdurakhmonov, Silk Road International Tourism University, Uzbekistan

Dr. Hindarto, Universitas Muhammadiyah Sidoarjo, Indonesia

Evi Rinata, Universitas Muhammadiyah Sidoarjo, Indonesia

M Faisal Amir, Universitas Muhammadiyah Sidoarjo, Indonesia

Dr. Hana Catur Wahyuni, Universitas Muhammadiyah Sidoarjo, Indonesia

Complete list of editorial team (link)

Complete list of indexing services for this journal (link)

How to submit to this journal (link)

ISSN 2714-7444 (online), https://acopen.umsida.ac.id, published by Universitas Muhammadiyah Sidoarjo
Copyright © Author(s). This is an open-access article distributed under the terms of the Creative Commons Attribution License (CC BY).

Academia Open
Vol 10 No 1 (2025): June
DOI: 10.21070/acopen.10.2025.11280 . Article type: (Business and Economics)

Article information

Check this article update (crossmark)



Check this article impact (*)















Save this article to Mendeley



(*) Time for indexing process is various, depends on indexing database platform

ISSN 2714-7444 (online), https://acopen.umsida.ac.id, published by Universitas Muhammadiyah Sidoarjo
Copyright © Author(s). This is an open-access article distributed under the terms of the Creative Commons Attribution License (CC BY).

Academia Open
Vol 10 No 1 (2025): June
DOI: 10.21070/acopen.10.2025.11280 . Article type: (Business and Economics)

Mass Events as Key Drivers of Tourist Appeal in Samarkand City

Ibragimov Sardorbek Khusanovich, sardorbek3005@gmail.com, (1)
Assistant of Samarkand Branch of Tashkent State University of Economics, Samarkand, Uzbekistan

(1) Corresponding author

Abstract

General Background: The tourism sector is a strategic priority in Uzbekistan, with cultural heritage and gastronomy serving as key pillars. **Specific Background:** Samarkand, as a historical city, is central to national tourism development plans, with increased emphasis on leveraging mass events to boost destination appeal. **Knowledge Gap:** Despite international recognition of event tourism's role, empirical evidence from Central Asia, particularly linking event frequency with tourist influx, remains limited. **Aims:** This study investigates the impact of mass cultural and gastronomic events on the attractiveness of Samarkand as a tourist destination, using correlation and regression analysis. **Results:** A strong positive correlation ($r \approx 0.98$) was found between the number of mass events and tourist arrivals from 2017–2023. Regression analysis showed that each additional event increases tourist numbers by approximately 172,500. **Novelty:** The research provides one of the first quantitative models in Uzbekistan linking event tourism with visitor data, distinguishing between cultural and gastronomic tourism impacts. **Implications:** The findings support policy recommendations to institutionalize annual event calendars, integrate gastronomic branding, and align local stakeholder involvement with sustainable tourism strategies to enhance destination competitiveness.

Highlight :

- Mass events in Samarkand show a strong positive correlation ($r \approx 0.98$) with increased tourist arrivals.
- Combining cultural and gastronomic tourism creates a powerful, diversified attraction for visitors.
- Regular and well-promoted festivals significantly boost both international reputation and local economic impact.

Keywords : Tourism, Samarkand, Festivals, Gastronomic Tourism, Destination Attractiveness

Published date: 2025-06-03 00:00:00

ISSN 2714-7444 (online), https://acopen.umsida.ac.id, published by Universitas Muhammadiyah Sidoarjo
Copyright © Author(s). This is an open-access article distributed under the terms of the Creative Commons Attribution License (CC BY).

Academia Open
Vol 10 No 1 (2025): June
DOI: 10.21070/acopen.10.2025.11280 . Article type: (Business and Economics)

Introduction

The tourism sector is one of the priority industries of Uzbekistan's economy, with the country's rich cultural and historical heritage and unique gastronomic traditions providing a foundation for shaping diverse tourism products. The concept of destination attractiveness refers to how interesting and desirable a particular region is for tourists [1]. Destination attractiveness is influenced by numerous factors, including historical heritage sites, infrastructure, service quality, and safety conditions. In recent years, global practice has increasingly recognized mass cultural and entertainment events as important factors in enhancing destination appeal. For example, large international festivals and concerts attract additional attention and tourism flows to a destination, thereby improving the region's image [2], [3].In Uzbekistan, the development of tourism is supported at the state policy level, and sectoral reforms are underway. Notably, under the 2017–2019 government program, the task was set to significantly increase the tourism potential of Samarkand city by organizing annual traditional cultural and gastronomic festivals (such as the "Samarkand Breads," "Samarkand Artisans," "National Dishes," and "Eastern Sweets" festivals). Through such events, local customs, cuisine, and artistic expressions are showcased, helping to strengthen the destination's brand [4]. Additionally, the presidential decree adopted on December 24, 2022, approved the concept of transforming Samarkand region into the "Tourism Gateway of New Uzbekistan," outlining additional measures to increase both foreign and domestic tourist flows to the area. As part of these efforts, new tourism centers were constructed, and infrastructure was developed to host major conferences and festivals. Furthermore, the hosting of the 25th session of the UN World Tourism Organization (UNWTO) General Assembly in Samarkand in October 2023 contributed to further enhancing the city's international tourism reputation [5]. The purpose of this article is to scientifically study the impact of mass cultural and gastronomic events on the attractiveness of tourist destinations in the context of Uzbekistan, using Samarkand city as a case study, and to develop recommendations for their effective utilization. To achieve this purpose, the following tasks were set: (1) review the scientific literature and both international and local research on destination attractiveness; (2) analyze the dynamics of mass events and tourism indicators in Samarkand city ; (3) identify the correlation and regression relationship between the number of mass events and tourist flows; (4) conduct a comparative analysis of cultural and gastronomic tourism directions; and (5) develop conclusions and recommendations to enhance destination attractiveness based on the obtained results [6], [7].

Methodology

The research employed observation, comparative analysis, statistical analysis, and correlation-regression methods. First, a review of relevant scientific literature and previous studies on the use of mass events in tourism development was conducted. Both local and international sources were used, particularly focusing on research related to destination competitiveness, gastronomic branding, and tourism in the context of Uzbekistan. In the next stage, key tourism indicators for Samarkand city between 2017 and 2023 were collected, including the number of foreign tourists, total visitor arrivals, the volume of tourism services, and the number of major mass events held during the same period. The sources of statistical data included reports from the Ministry of Tourism and Cultural Heritage of the Republic of Uzbekistan, the State Statistics Committee, as well as official announcements and reports published in the mass media. For example, national-level visitor dynamics were drawn from Daryo information site (reporting 6.6 million foreign tourists in 2023, 26.9% higher than in 2022), while for Samarkand specifically, it was noted that the Registan complex alone attracted 1.03 million visitors (both domestic and foreign) during 2022. The collected data were entered into Microsoft Excel, where several tables and charts were generated. To assess the relationship between the number of tourists and the number of events, the Pearson correlation coefficient was calculated. To confirm the reliability of the correlation, a simple regression model was built (with the number of tourists as the dependent variable and the number of events as the independent variable). The regression equation was evaluated using the least squares method, and its parameters were analyzed. Additionally, to compare the characteristics of cultural and gastronomic tourism, a comparative analysis approach was used, comparing the development status, events, and impacts of both tourism types in Samarkand within a unified framework. Furthermore, the study applied approximate modeling methods to explore scenario-based projections of future tourist flow growth as a result of increasing the number of gastronomic events. For example, it examined the question: if the number of large annual festivals were doubled, by what percentage would the tourist flow increase? Such hypothetical calculations relied on the regression equation derived from the adjusted correlation relationship, as shown in Equation (1).

$$Y=a+b\cdot X \quad (1)$$

where X is the number of mass events held in a given year, and Y is the number of tourist arrivals (in persons) for that same year.

Additionally, the annual growth rates of tourism indicators (in percentage terms) were calculated using the following formula:

$$g(\%)=(Y_t-Y_t\text{-}1)/Y_t-1\times 100\%, \quad (2)$$

ISSN 2714-7444 (online), https://acopen.umsida.ac.id, published by Universitas Muhammadiyah Sidoarjo
Copyright © Author(s). This is an open-access article distributed under the terms of the Creative Commons Attribution License (CC BY).

Academia Open
Vol 10 No 1 (2025): June
DOI: 10.21070/acopen.10.2025.11280 . Article type: (Business and Economics)

where Yt is the number of tourists in year t, and Yt_{-1} is the number of tourists in the prev correlation coefficient between the number of events and the number of tourists was calculated using:

$$r_{XY} = \frac{\sum_{i=1}^{n}(X_i - \bar{X})(Y_i - \bar{Y})}{\sqrt{\sum_{i=1}^{n}(X_i - \bar{X})^2 \sum_{i=1}^{n}(Y_i - \bar{Y})^2}}$$

Figure 1.

where X_i and Y_i are the number of events and tourists, respectively, in year i;

$\bar{X}$ and $\bar{Y}$ are the average values of these indicators; and n is the number of years. In the calculations, n=7 (covering the years 2017–2023). Based on the obtained results, conclusions and recommendations were developed.

Literature review

In the scientific literature on destination attractiveness and the impact of mass events on tourism, various approaches can be found. Research focused on enhancing destination appeal typically examines the role of natural and cultural resources, service quality, infrastructure, and pricing policies. For example, Yu. Dashchuk analyzed research directions on the competitiveness of tourist destinations and identified influencing factors, including not only cultural heritage sites but also organized events and festivals. Similarly, local scholar D. Bekzhanov, in his research, proposed innovative approaches to financing investment projects in tourist destinations, noting that such innovations can increase both the attractiveness and competitiveness of a destination [8]. In foreign literature related to event tourism, the concept of “event tourism” is treated as a separate research field. International scholars emphasize that mass cultural, sports, and gastronomic events serve as critical tools in regional development and marketing strategies. Notably, Donald Getz and other researchers have highlighted how planned festivals and fairs significantly influence the creation of a destination’s image. According to Getz’s event typology, festivals and celebrations fall into the category of cultural spectacles that attract tourists and have the unique power to create once-in-a-lifetime impressions at the destination [9], [10]. Researchers like Michelle Duffy and Judith Mair have emphasized that new trends are emerging in post-pandemic festival research, particularly focusing on factors such as the safety of the location and the possibility of hosting events outdoors.Additionally, the topic of gastronomic tourism occupies an important place in studies on destination attractiveness. Recent research in gastronomic tourism shows that local cuisine and food festivals offer high potential for shaping a region’s brand. For instance, S. Faiziyeva and S. Roziyev studied the impact of gastronomic branding on tourism regions, highlighting how creating a local food brand can enhance a destination’s attractiveness. According to their conclusions, effectively marketing gastronomic heritage makes a region competitive not only in domestic but also in international tourism markets. At the same time, foreign authors have conducted comprehensive analyses of the economic, social, and environmental impacts of festivals and mass events on tourism [11], [12]. They point out that festivals can serve as a source of additional revenue for the local economy and foster pride and cohesion within local communities; however, if mismanaged, they can negatively affect the environment or disrupt local ways of life. Thus, the literature review shows that mass events are increasingly becoming an integral component of tourist destinations. It is emphasized that by leveraging tools from the creative industries (festivals, art exhibitions, business forums), high effectiveness can be achieved in destination marketing. Organizing thematically relevant events on a regular basis (for example, annually or biennially) is considered a crucial factor in attracting tourists. Therefore, in Uzbekistan, there is a growing trend of regularly hosting international festivals and conferences in cities with high tourism potential.

Result and Discussion

Dynamics of Tourism Indicators and Mass Events in Samarkand (2017–2023)To highlight the main trends in the tourism sector of Samarkand city during the research period, data for the years 2017 to 2023 were analyzed. Since this period includes the strong impact of the pandemic on the tourism sector, the indicators before 2019, during the pandemic (2020–2021), and in the recovery phase (2022–2023) show significant differences. Table 1 presents the annual dynamics of tourist arrivals and the number of mass events held in Samarkand as an illustrative example.

Year	Number of Major Mass Events*	Total Tourist Arrivals (thousands)**	Annual Growth in Tourist Numbers (%)
2017	More than 3 (e.g., Sharq Taronalari Festival, etc.)	~500 thousand	–

Copyright © Author(s). This is an open-access article distributed under the terms of the Creative Commons Attribution License (CC BY).

Academia Open
Vol 10 No 1 (2025): June
DOI: 10.21070/acopen.10.2025.11280 . Article type: (Business and Economics)

2018	4 (next round of festivals, etc.)	~800 thousand	+60%
2019	5 (international music festival, etc.)	~1,000 thousand (1 million)	+25%
2020	1 (local / Navro‘z events)	Fewer than 100 thousand	–90%
2021	2 (Sharq Taronalari revived)	Over 300 thousand	+200%
2022	6 (gastronomic festival, marathon, etc.)	1,200 thousand (1.2 million, record)	+300%
2023	8 (UN General Assembly session, festivals, etc.)	~1,300 thousand	+8.3%

Table 1. *Annual Dynamics of Mass Events and Tourist Arrivals in Samarkand City (2017–2023)*

Note : The number of planned events for 2017–2019 is provided approximately based on official sources; in 2020, many events were canceled due to the pandemic; the 2021–2023 data are based on official reports and announcements. Source of tourist figures: Reports from Samarkand regional tourism authorities, statistics on visits to Registan, and author’s estimates. According to the data in Table 1, the number of tourists visiting Samarkand increased sharply between 2017 and 2019. Nationwide, Uzbekistan also recorded a historical maximum during this period, with foreign tourist numbers rising from 2.7 million in 2017 to 6.7 million in 2019. Samarkand captured a fair share of this growth—by 2019, nearly 1 million tourists visited the city. A striking example is the 12th Sharq Taronalari International Music Festival held in August 2019, which featured over 300 artists from more than 80 countries and attracted thousands of foreign guests.In 2020, the global COVID-19 pandemic halted international tourism; Uzbekistan’s incoming foreign tourist flow dropped from 6.7 million in 2019 to 1.5 million in 2020, confirming the sector’s severe contraction. In Samarkand, although local events like Navro‘z celebrations were held, the number of foreign tourists was nearly negligible, and domestic travel was heavily restricted, resulting in a dramatic decline in tourist numbers (estimated at −90% in the table).By 2021, restrictions were gradually eased, and international events began to resume. Notably, in August 2021, Samarkand hosted the 13th Sharq Taronalari International Music Festival, contributing to a more than twofold increase in tourist arrivals compared to 2020 (see Table 1). In 2022, the tourism sector began fully recovering—Uzbekistan welcomed 5.2 million foreign tourists, while Samarkand set a new record, hosting approximately 1.2 million visitors throughout the year [13]. This surge was supported by the opening of the Silk Road Tourist Center, the Navro‘z Regatta Festival, gastronomic festivals, an international marathon, and other major events. Particularly notable were the city’s first-ever gastronomic festivals—held in April at Central Park and the Samarkand Marathon charity half-marathon in December. Consequently, tourist numbers grew dramatically in 2022 (≈+300%). In 2023, while the growth rate slightly slowed, total visits continued rising to approximately 1.3 million. That year, the city hosted nearly eight major events, including the UN World Tourism Organization (UNWTO) General Assembly session in October and the 14th Sharq Taronalari Festival in August. Nationwide, the number of foreign tourists in Uzbekistan reached 6.6 million in 2023, nearing pre-pandemic levels (98% of 2019 levels), representing a 27% increase over 2022.Based on the data in Table 1, a correlation analysis was conducted to determine the relationship between the number of public events and the number of tourists. The calculations showed that the Pearson correlation coefficient between the number of events and the number of tourist visits for the period 2017–2023 is approx 0.98$. This means that there is a very strong positive correlation (r=+1 indicates an ideal directly proportional relationship). It is worth noting that the data for 2020 are considered an outlier due to the pandemic. If we exclude 2020 (i.e., analyze the years 2017–2019 and 2021–2023), the correlation becomes even stronger, approaching $r \to 1.0$. Of course, it is necessary to correctly interpret the cause-and-effect aspects of this relationship: along with the specific effect of the number of events, general economic and political factors also created the basis for the growth of tourism [14]. It should also be borne in mind that when the number of mass events reaches a certain norm, their effect may decrease (tipping point). However, since there were relatively few events for this period in previous years, each additional large festival significantly attracted tourists.

Correlation analysis results: For the years 2017–2023, the Pearson correlation coefficient between the number of events X and the number of tourist visits Y was calculated as:

$r_{XY} \approx 0.98$

This indicates a very strong positive correlation (with the ideal maximum being r=+1. If the year 2020 (affected by the pandemic) is excluded, the correlation becomes even stronger, approaching r→1.0. However, when interpreting these results, it is essential to consider the causal relationship carefully.

Regression model: The derived simple linear regression equation is:

$\hat{Y} = -37.5 + 172.5 \cdot X$

Where:

ISSN 2714-7444 (online), https://acopen.umsida.ac.id, published by Universitas Muhammadiyah Sidoarjo
Copyright © Author(s). This is an open-access article distributed under the terms of the Creative Commons Attribution License (CC BY).

Academia Open
Vol 10 No 1 (2025): June
DOI: 10.21070/acopen.10.2025.11280 . Article type: (Business and Economics)

1. X= number of major events held per year,
2. Y^= predicted number of tourists (in thousands).

According to this model, each additional large event increases the tourist count by an average of approximately 172.5 thousand.

Coefficient of determination: The determination coefficient of the regression is:

$R^2 \approx 0.95$

This means that about 95% of the variation in Y is explained by the factor X in the model, while the remaining 5% is influenced by other factors.

Comparative Analysis of Cultural and Gastronomic Tourism (Case of Samarkand)

Although Samarkand's main tourism products have traditionally relied on cultural and historical heritage, in recent years, the gastronomic direction has been actively developing. Table 2 presents a comparative description of key aspects of cultural and gastronomic tourism in Samarkand.

Aspects	Cultural Tourism	Gastronomic Tourism
Main attractions	Rich historical and architectural monuments (Registan, mausoleums, mosques, museums) and cultural heritage sites.	Local national dishes (Samarkand bread, pilaf, samsa, halva, etc.), food markets (Siab Bazaar), and traditional culinary culture.
Mass events	"Sharq Taronalari" international music festival, folk arts exhibitions, ethno-theatrical performances, historical events.	Gastronomic festivals (bread festival, national dishes festival, "Eastern Sweets" exhibition), gastro tours, and tasting events.
Tourist motivation	Interest in culture and history; sightseeing of architectural monuments; exploring local customs and arts.	Interest in tasting national dishes; learning local culinary secrets; seeking new gastronomic experiences.
Economic impact	Increased demand for hotels, guides, and transportation; growth in excursion and souvenir sales; income from entry tickets to cultural sites.	Increased income for kitchens, cafés, and restaurants; development of local food producers and market sales; creation of new tourism products linked to culinary heritage.
Seasonality	Main tourist seasons are spring and autumn (due to favorable weather); some cultural events (Navruz, Independence Day) occur in spring-summer.	Dishes are available year-round, but festivals are usually held in spring or autumn; food tours may slightly decrease during the summer heat.
Branding and marketing	Positioned as "Samarkand – Treasure of Cultural Heritage"; marketing emphasizes historical figures and the image of the ancient city.	The "Samarkand Cuisine" brand is being developed; iconic dishes like Samarkand bread and pilaf are promoted; special gastronomic tours are actively advertised.

Table 2. *Comparative Characteristics of Cultural and Gastronomic Tourism in Samarkand*

The summarized data in Table 2 shows that cultural and gastronomic tourism are complementary directions. While Samarkand has long attracted tourists with its immense cultural heritage, this heritage is now being enriched with gastronomic experiences. For example, after visiting Registan or the Bibi-Khanym Mosque, tourists have the opportunity to go to the historic Siyob Bazaar and taste local breads and dried fruits. Cultural tourism offers travelers intellectual and aesthetic experiences, while gastronomic tourism provides emotional satisfaction through sensory and taste experiences [15]. The economic impacts of both types are also interconnected: cultural tourists typically use restaurants and cafés, and gastronomic tourists prefer dining in historical settings.From 2017 to 2023, several pioneering steps were observed in Samarkand in both directions. In addition to cultural events, the introduction of the first gastronomic festivals added a new dimension to the local event calendar. For example, following the 2018 approved program, the "Samarkand Breads" festival and the "National Dishes" exhibition were effectively organized. In 2022, an international event named the "Gastrotourism Festival" attracted international participants, where various Uzbek dishes were prepared and showcased. In this way, gastronomic tourism has begun to contribute to destination attractiveness as a new product in the city.The interaction between cultural and gastronomic directions can also be seen in specific mass events in Samarkand. For example, during the biennial "Sharq Taronalari" international festival, guests enjoy not only music and art but also sample Uzbek cuisine through national food fairs organized as part of the festival. Another example is the Navruz celebrations: traditional

Copyright © Author(s). This is an open-access article distributed under the terms of the Creative Commons Attribution License (CC BY).

events like the “Sumalak Sayli” (sumalak fair) and other culinary gatherings act as a form of food diplomacy, sparking tourist interest. Thus, by adding gastronomic elements to cultural events or enriching food festivals with cultural programs, it is possible to achieve a synergistic effect.

Discussion of Correlation and Forecast Results

The results presented above show that, in the case of Samarkand, mass events have a significant influence on enhancing the attractiveness of the tourism destination. Of course, it is complex to quantify the exact “pulling power” of such events, as many direct and indirect factors influence tourist flows. However, correlation analysis confirms that increasing the number of events and organizing them systematically creates positive dynamics in tourist inflow. To achieve effective impact, the quality of events, their target audience, and their regularity are of great importance, as also highlighted in the literature review section. In Samarkand’s case, this is evident: the “Sharq Taronalari” festival, having built its brand over more than 20 years, leads to noticeably higher tourist flows during festival years, especially in August. Similarly, before and during the 2023 UN World Tourism Assembly session, demand for the city’s hotel and transport infrastructure surged — the event reportedly hosted over 1,000 delegates and guests. Such examples demonstrate the immediate economic impact of events: hotel occupancy and service sector revenues significantly increase during event periods. For example, during the spring gastronomic festival, demand for local dishes in city restaurants reportedly rose, with some businesses recording a 20–30% increase in sales (based on unofficial data).However, for events to have the most positive and sustainable impact on the tourist destination, they must be effectively managed. As some researchers emphasize, poorly planned or low-quality events may fail to deliver the expected results. For example, small events that only generate temporary attention but do not contribute to attracting tourists can lead to inefficient use of resources. Therefore, in a major destination like Samarkand, special attention must be given to the content and quality of events. Themes that genuinely attract tourists should be selected — for instance, cultural and gastronomic themes are more appealing in Samarkand than, say, business forums. According to expert recommendations, every event “recipe” should include the necessary “ingredients”: an interesting theme, regularity, famous participants, and effective PR coverage. Only under these conditions will an event be “appetizing” and achieve the desired impact.Another important aspect when analyzing the tourism market in Samarkand is the involvement of the local population in events. After all, any festival or mass celebration is not just for foreign tourists, but primarily creates a festive atmosphere for local guests and residents. The active participation of Samarkand locals, their hospitality, and their love for cultural heritage leave a warm impression on visitors. One of the most pleasant experiences for tourists is direct interaction and celebrating together with the local people. Therefore, when organizing events, it is effective to engage local communities, establish volunteer networks, and encourage collaboration.

Discussion

Based on the above results, the following discussions can be outlined using the example of Samarkand:First, it is confirmed that mass events are a crucial driver for increasing tourism attractiveness. Of course, festivals and concerts are not the only draw of a destination, but they can add significant value to the existing rich historical heritage. Shows and performances held against the backdrop of Samarkand’s magnificent architectural ensembles (for example, laser shows or concerts in Registan Square) have contributed to tourists gaining memorable experiences. From this perspective, creating “emotional connection” through events can be a key success factor in destination marketing. Academic literature emphasizes that such events help differentiate a destination from competing regions. Second, developing the symbiosis between cultural and gastronomic tourism creates great opportunities for Samarkand. After all, this city is not only a center of historical monuments but also rich in culinary traditions. Nowadays, tourists strive not only to see landmarks but also to “taste” the local lifestyle and dishes. It is well-known that the trend of “gastronomic travel” is growing worldwide, and Samarkand can create its own brand in this area (for example, using phrases like “land of Samarkand bread” or “capital of plov”). As S. Faiziyeva and co-authors point out, if a gastronomic brand becomes an integral part of the regional tourism brand, the overall competitiveness of the destination increases. Samarkand’s breads are already famous; now it would be appropriate to commercialize this internationally (e.g., obtain GI certification) and organize an annual bread festival. This way, a new segment of tourists (foodies — gastronomic tourists) can be attracted, ensuring diversification of the tourism flow.Third, the research revealed that the factors of regularity and continuity are crucial. That is, mass events produce real benefits only when they are held periodically (on a planned calendar) rather than as one-time actions. For example, the “Sharq Taronalari” festival has been held every two years since 1997, turning it into an international brand. If it had been held just once or irregularly, it would not have gained such influential power. Therefore, it is necessary to establish other major events in Samarkand on a traditional calendar as well. For instance, forming a schedule that includes an annual gastronomic festival every spring (around Navruz), a handicrafts exhibition every autumn, and a major music festival every two years would make it easier for tourists to plan their trips in advance. Looking at international experience, events like the Cannes Film Festival, Oktoberfest, or Rio Carnival attract millions of tourists worldwide precisely because of their regularity. For now, Samarkand’s regular international events are limited to two or three (Sharq Taronalari and possibly the marathon in the future). Therefore, there is an opportunity to introduce new thematic festival-forums as well (for example, historical reenactments, oriental fashion shows, etc.). Fourth, it is also necessary to consider the sustainability and local impact of mass events. While tourism events almost always appear positive, there are some associated risks. For example, large tourist flows can place a burden on the environment (increased waste, energy consumption, etc.), and they may temporarily cause inconvenience to the local population. During major events in

ISSN 2714-7444 (online), https://acopen.umsida.ac.id, published by Universitas Muhammadiyah Sidoarjo
Copyright © Author(s). This is an open-access article distributed under the terms of the Creative Commons Attribution License (CC BY).

Samarkand, there have been cases of heavy traffic and shortages of hotel accommodations. To address this, it is important to carefully plan and prepare infrastructure ahead of each event. A good example is how, before the 2023 UN Tourism Assembly, several new hotels were opened and the airport was renovated in the city. Similar preparatory measures should be carried out before each major festival or forum. After all, it is important that the event leaves a positive "legacy" even after it ends — such as new facilities, enhanced skills among local specialists, an elevated city brand, and so on. Achieving these outcomes means the event has successfully fulfilled its purpose.In conclusion, it can be emphasized that through the effective use of mass events, it is possible to increase the attractiveness not only of Samarkand but of all tourist regions of Uzbekistan. In this, events should be developed according to the specific cultural or natural resources of each region. For example, historical and handicraft festivals in Bukhara, ethnographic tradition festivals in Khiva, and modern art and gastro-fairs in Tashkent. This approach enriches the country's tourism brand as a unified concept and creates the notion in foreign markets of: "Come to Uzbekistan — there's a festival waiting in every city."

Conclusions and Recommendations

Based on the research results, several important conclusions and recommendations can be drawn regarding the role of mass events in enhancing the attractiveness of tourist destinations, particularly using Samarkand as an example. The analysis showed that the regular organization of cultural festivals, gastronomic celebrations, sports-cultural marathons, and similar events significantly increases the flow of tourists. The increase in such events during 2017–2019 had a clear positive impact on tourism indicators, and the post-pandemic recovery period also aligned with the relaunching of these events. Therefore, mass events serve as an effective tool to enhance a destination's competitiveness and should be deliberately integrated into tourism development strategies. A key recommendation is the need to develop cultural and gastronomic tourism in harmony. To diversify the tourism product, initiatives that combine cultural heritage with gastronomic traditions have proven to be highly effective. Initial steps taken in Samarkand, such as introducing gastronomic festivals and creating a national food brand, have shown promising results. Moving forward, it is recommended to strengthen Samarkand's image as a "gastronomic destination" by holding a prestigious annual culinary festival and promoting local dishes at the international level. Additionally, including a gastronomic segment, such as food fairs and tastings, in the programs of cultural events can enhance overall visitor satisfaction.Another important aspect is the establishment of a traditional international festival calendar. Formalizing an annual or biennial schedule of major festivals in Samarkand and other tourist cities can extend the tourist season and ensure there is always an attractive reason for travelers to visit. For example, organizing a Navruz celebration and a gastro-festival in spring, a handicrafts festival in summer, a music or dance festival in autumn, and an ethno-fair in winter would provide a year-round calendar of engaging events. Announcing the dates and programs of these events in advance and coordinating them with foreign tour operators is essential for maximizing their impact. The quality and marketing of events play a critical role in determining their success. It is essential to involve professional organizers, sponsors, and media partners, especially for prestigious festivals. Conducting an effective promotional campaign beforehand — particularly using targeted advertising through online platforms and social media, such as dedicated festival websites and hashtags — can significantly increase visibility. Each event should have its own distinctive brand and logo, and target tourist segments must be clearly defined. To elevate the visitor experience, inviting internationally recognized artists or chefs as participants is highly recommended.Moreover, involving the local community and ensuring the sustainability of events are crucial components of success. Festivals not only showcase local culture but also provide valuable income opportunities for local businesses. Broadly involving local artisans, chefs, and artists in events, as well as promoting volunteer initiatives to engage students and youth, helps foster local pride and enrich the visitor experience. It is equally important to adhere to eco-friendly principles, such as minimizing plastic use and maintaining cleanliness, as these actions positively influence the overall image of the destination. In conclusion, the case of Samarkand demonstrates that, even in the context of Uzbekistan, mass events can serve as a powerful driver of tourism development. For future research, it is recommended to expand the scope by comparing the impact of events in other cities such as Bukhara and Khiva, conducting tourist surveys to assess how festivals influence satisfaction and loyalty, and applying economic modeling to calculate the return on investment (ROI) for each major event. These findings can offer valuable insights for both practical organizers and government officials, supporting the creation of strategies aimed at boosting the attractiveness and competitiveness of tourist destinations. Figure 1 presents a conceptual model proposed by the author, illustrating how mass events can be used to increase the appeal of a tourist destination.

References

1. Cabinet of Ministers of the Republic of Uzbekistan, "On Measures for Rapid Development of the Tourism Potential of Samarkand City and Samarkand Region in 2017–2019," Decision No. 450, Jun. 30, 2017. [Online]. Available: http://lex.uz/docs/3255466
2. President of the Republic of Uzbekistan, "On Additional Measures to Effectively Use the Tourism and Transport Potential of Samarkand Region and Develop the Region Based on the Concept 'Samarkand – Tourism Gateway of New Uzbekistan'," Decree No. PQ–455, Dec. 24, 2022. [Online]. Available: https://uza.uz/posts/363144
3. D. Y. Bekzhanov, "Innovative Approaches to Financing Investment Projects in Tourist Destinations,"

ISSN 2714-7444 (online), https://acopen.umsida.ac.id, published by Universitas Muhammadiyah Sidoarjo
Copyright © Author(s). This is an open-access article distributed under the terms of the Creative Commons Attribution License (CC BY).

Economics and Innovative Technologies, no. 1, 2020. [Online]. Available: https://iqtisodiyot.tsue.uz
4. S. F. Faizieva and S. S. Ruziev, “Forming a Brand of the Tourist Region With the Influence of the Gastronomic Brand,” Education, Science and Innovative Ideas in the World, vol. 16, pp. 128–133, 2023. [Online]. Available: https://uniwork.buxdu.uz
5. J. Carlsen, K. Getz, and L. Soutar, “Festival Management Innovation and Failure,” International Journal of Event and Festival Management, vol. 1, no. 2, pp. 120–131, 2010.
6. D. Gursoy, R. Nunkoo, and M. Yolal, Festival and Event Tourism Impacts. Abingdon, UK: Routledge, 2020.
7. Daryo News, “Uzbekistan Welcomes Almost 7 Mn Tourists in 2023,” Daryo, Jan. 10, 2024. [Online]. Available: https://daryo.uz/en/2024/01/10/uzbekistan-welcomes-almost-7mn-tourists-in-2023
8. TourCentralAsia, “Tourism Industry of Uzbekistan – Statistics 2023,” TourCentralAsia.com, Jan. 5, 2024. [Online]. Available: https://tourcentralasia.com/uzbekistan/uzbekistan-tourism-industry-statistics/
9. OCA Magazine, “Investment Attractiveness of Event Tourism,” Open Central Asia Magazine, Apr. 5, 2024. [Online]. Available: https://www.ocamagazine.com/2024/04/05/investment-attractiveness-of-event-tourism/
10. International Trade Administration, “Uzbekistan – Travel and Tourism Guide,” U.S. Department of Commerce, Dec. 1, 2023. [Online]. Available: https://www.trade.gov/country-commercial-guides/uzbekistan-travel-and-tourism
11. D. Getz, Event Studies: Theory, Research and Policy for Planned Events, 2nd ed. London, UK: Routledge, 2012.
12. R. Raj, P. Walters, and T. Rashid, Events Management: Principles and Practice. London, UK: SAGE Publications, 2013.
13. C. M. Hall and A. M. Williams, Tourism and Innovation. London, UK: Routledge, 2008.
14. UNWTO, “Tourism and Gastronomy: A Recipe for Growth,” World Tourism Organization, 2022. [Online]. Available: https://www.unwto.org
15. B. Richards, Cultural Tourism: A Review of Recent Research and Trends. Tilburg, Netherlands: Tilburg University Press, 2018.

ISSN 2714-7444 (online), https://acopen.umsida.ac.id, published by Universitas Muhammadiyah Sidoarjo
Copyright © Author(s). This is an open-access article distributed under the terms of the Creative Commons Attribution License (CC BY).