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**Abstract:** This study examines tourism patterns at Uzbekistan's main cultural and historical attractions. It evaluates statistical indicators such as visitor counts, growth rates, and specific site attendance, with a focus on well-known destinations like Samarkand's Registan complex and the country's museums. The analysis also situates these figures within the broader context of national tourism performance, highlighting infrastructure development, government initiatives, and global recognition of Uzbekistan as an emerging cultural tourism hub.

**Keywords:** Uzbekistan tourism; cultural heritage; historical sites; visitor data; Registan Square; museum attendance; tourism indicators

**INTRODUCTION:** Uzbekistan, situated at the heart of the ancient Silk Road, has long been a meeting point of cultures, religions, and trade routes. In recent years, the country has leveraged this rich heritage to position itself as a premier cultural tourism destination. Cities such as Samarkand, Bukhara, Khiva, and Shakhrisabz boast a remarkable concentration of UNESCO World Heritage Sites, monumental architecture, and centuries-old traditions that continue to captivate both domestic and international travelers. The government has undertaken substantial reforms to make the tourism sector more accessible and appealing. Visa-free entry for citizens of dozens of countries, modernization of transportation networks, investment in hospitality infrastructure, and the restoration of historical monuments have significantly increased tourist flows. As a result, Uzbekistan has experienced a sharp rise in visitor numbers, with cultural and historical sites being at the center of this growth. Monitoring and analyzing visitation patterns to these sites is essential for sustainable tourism development. Visitor statistics not only reveal the popularity and seasonal dynamics of particular attractions but also help policymakers allocate resources for conservation, infrastructure, and marketing. They serve as a critical tool for understanding the balance between tourism growth and heritage preservation, ensuring that increased traffic does not compromise the authenticity or physical integrity of the monuments. Furthermore, in the context of global competition for cultural tourism markets, showcasing reliable and up-to-date indicators of site visits helps Uzbekistan strengthen its brand image abroad. This is particularly important as the nation seeks to diversify its tourism offerings, extend visitor stays, and encourage exploration beyond the most famous landmarks. By examining these indicators, stakeholders can identify both opportunities and challenges in managing Uzbekistan's unique cultural legacy while maximizing its contribution to the economy.

#### LITERATURE REVIEW

The study of cultural and historical tourism in Uzbekistan has gained increasing attention in recent years, particularly in the context of post-pandemic recovery and sustainable development. Several researchers highlight that Uzbekistan's rich architectural heritage, unique traditions, and strategic location on the Silk Road make it one of the most promising destinations in Central Asia [1]. According to Karimov and Rahmonova (2022), cultural heritage tourism accounts for the majority of inbound travel to Uzbekistan, with Samarkand, Bukhara, and Khiva leading in visitor numbers due to their UNESCO World Heritage status [2]. These cities not only attract foreign tourists but also

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encourage domestic cultural mobility, contributing to regional economic diversification. Sharipov (2021) emphasizes that government reforms, such as introducing visa-free regimes for citizens of over 90 countries, have significantly boosted tourism inflows. The author notes that simplified entry procedures have made Uzbekistan more competitive compared to neighboring countries [3]. This policy shift, combined with infrastructure development, has increased accessibility to remote heritage sites, thereby broadening the geographic spread of tourism benefits.

In terms of statistical trends, Tursunov (2023) reports that in 2022, Samarkand's Registan complex alone welcomed over one million visitors, while national museums collectively recorded more than three million visits in 2023 [4]. These figures underscore the central role of cultural sites in shaping overall tourism performance. International scholars also recognize Uzbekistan's tourism potential. Henderson (2020) identifies Uzbekistan as an "emerging cultural powerhouse" in Central Asia, stressing the importance of heritage preservation alongside tourism promotion [5]. Similarly, Timothy and Nyaupane (2009) argue that successful heritage tourism requires a balance between visitor access and conservation measures to protect the authenticity of historical monuments [6]. Recent tourism strategies also align with global trends toward sustainable tourism. The UNWTO (2024) recommends that countries like Uzbekistan adopt visitor monitoring systems, seasonal demand management, and community-based heritage management to ensure long-term viability [7]. This approach mirrors Uzbekistan's own 2025 tourism strategy, which aims to extend average tourist stays, reduce seasonal fluctuations, and encourage visits to lesser-known cultural destinations.

### RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

In 2025, tourism in Uzbekistan has reached record-breaking levels. In April alone, over 1 million foreign tourists visited the country, marking the highest monthly figure ever recorded. Between January and May, the total number of foreign visitors reached 4.2 million, which is 48.2% higher than in the same period of 2024. This sharp increase reflects the success of policies such as visa liberalization, infrastructure upgrades, and intensified international marketing campaigns. The largest number of international arrivals came from neighboring countries, with Kyrgyzstan contributing 1,280,100 visitors, Tajikistan – 993,700 visitors, and Kazakhstan – 889,600 visitors. Other significant source markets in 2025 included Russia, Afghanistan, Türkiye, China, India, and Italy. The dominance of neighboring countries highlights the importance of regional travel corridors and cultural ties in sustaining visitor numbers. The strong performance in 2025 builds on the achievements of 2024, when Uzbekistan welcomed 10.2 million foreign tourists and generated 3.5 billion USD in tourism revenues, representing more than a 50% increase compared to 2023. Domestic tourism also grew steadily, with 22.7 million trips made under national initiatives like "Travel Around Uzbekistan!". In 2025, projections indicate that the country will attract around 11 million foreign visitors and achieve 3.8 billion USD in revenues. To maintain momentum, Uzbekistan in 2025 has expanded its tourism portfolio beyond cultural heritage. New tourism types have been introduced, including industrial, geological, scientific, military, and administrative tourism. Each of these is being developed in partnership with relevant government agencies to attract niche market segments and reduce the effects of seasonality.

Digitalization plays an increasingly important role in tourism services. In early 2025, a pilot version of an interactive Tourist Map was launched at Samarkand International Airport. This digital platform provides visitors with multilingual information, cultural site descriptions, and customizable routes. Free tourist SIM cards, QR-code-based service access, and integration with international navigation systems have also been introduced to improve convenience and visitor satisfaction. Uzbekistan has

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also gained notable international recognition in 2025, being included in the BBC's list of the Top 25 Global Travel Destinations for its outstanding preservation of cultural heritage and development of sustainable tourism. Later in the year, the country will host the first Bukhara Biennale, an event expected to attract international tourists, artists, and scholars, further enhancing Uzbekistan's cultural profile on the world stage.

### CONCLUSION

Uzbekistan's tourism sector in 2025 has reached a remarkable stage of growth, combining record visitor numbers, rising revenues, and improved service quality. Strategic investments in infrastructure, digital innovations, and tourism diversification have strengthened the country's global position while preserving its cultural heritage. Recognition on international platforms and the expansion of tourism beyond traditional destinations demonstrate the effectiveness of these efforts. To sustain this momentum, continued focus on sustainable practices, balanced regional development, and high-quality visitor experiences will be essential. With these priorities, Uzbekistan is set to remain one of the most attractive and competitive cultural tourism destinations in the world.

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