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# The Influence of National Culture and Sociocultural Factors on Foreign Tourist Behavior in Uzbekistan: Challenges and Implications

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**Abstract:** This paper studies the effect of national culture and socio-cultural factors on behavior of overseas tourists in Uzbekistan. Surveying 520 tourists and conducting 25 in-depth interviews, the study finds that hospitality, cultural authenticity, national cuisine and interaction with people are the most significant factors for tourist satisfaction. Meanwhile, some hurdles also come to light such as the environmental question, transport difficulties, digital access obstacles and a mismatch between expected levels of service quality and its realized level. The research shows that cultural and historical legacy (68% of tourists are ready to come back to Uzbekistan) is still the most competitive factor for Uzbekistan. The article suggests specific practical initiatives for the development of tourism infrastructure, including the culturally adapted service provision, digitalization and a system "Tourist Taxi Uzbekistan". The findings offer a scientific foundation for improving the competitiveness and sustainable development of tourism industry in Uzbekistan.

**Keywords:** National culture; sociocultural factors; foreign tourist behavior; inbound tourism; cultural authenticity; tourist satisfaction; quality of tourism services; digital accessibility; tourism infrastructure; repeat visitation

## 1. Introduction

Tourism is one of the perspective branches in the policy on socio-economic development of Uzbekistan. The Government of the Republic has in recent years pursued an active policy to liberalise visa regime, develop infrastructure and improve investment environment in tourism. The growth trends of inbound tourism show a certain dynamic for the formation of a positive image of our country in the global tourism market.

In this way, the relevance of the research is reinforced, because the state tourism policy of the Republic of Uzbekistan is regulated by Presidential Decree UP-87 "On measures to sharply increase tourist flows in 2025–2026 and expand tourism services" [1]. Strategic importance of tourism is and the necessity to develop service quality and diversity of tourist products are stressed in this Decree. Its application needs an objective study of the behavior of foreign tourists, their aspects and expectations, as well as travel behaviors based on science[25], which is in line with our research purposes.phase.

As of 2025, tourism in Uzbekistan is on the rise. In the first seven months of 2025 (from January to July), Moldova welcomed 6.319 million foreigners, or by 48.9% more than in the same period for the last year [2]. As of the end of September (i.e., 9 months into) in 2025, the amount of foreign visitors was over 8.6 million [3]. Outbound tourism is also

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growing: in January-February 2025, Uzbekistanis have made over 1 million trips abroad, which is by 21.4% more than last year. In this sense, the country is leaning toward two way travel flow expansion.

Most international arrivals are from neighbouring countries. Of 6.3 million visitors between January and July 2025, about 82.5% were from Central Asia. The distribution by major countries is as follows: Kyrgyzstan, 1.84 million Kazakhstan, 1.46 million Tajikistan, 1.44 million Russia, Italy and others oh my![4]

The purposes of visits were distributed as follows: visiting relatives – 4.338 million; tourism – 949 thousand; business trips – 710 thousand; trade – 255 thousand; medical treatment – 54 thousand; education – 10 thousand people. This structure illustrates that a significant share of trips is socio-cultural in nature, which requires clarification in statistical accounting, as such visits do not always involve full consumption of tourism services [5].

In 2023, the country had in excess of 5,000 places of accommodation, hotels and hostels or guest houses [6]. The mean duration of stay for foreign tourists was 4–5 days, and the per capita average spend was approximately USD 305, higher than in 2019 (3 days; USD 195) [7]. The information reveals the process of travel time change from morning to evening with spending level increase as well and finally forms stable and sustainable tourism demand.

The Tourism Market of Nowadays: Cultural and Sociocultural Aspects Impacting Tourists' Behavior Perception of particular behavior can attribute to different levels among the regression variables. This is especially true for Uzbekistan, which has seen a steady growth of tourist traffic in recent years. In this framework, the development of authenticity is an important factor for tourism destinations with intangible cultural heritage. Authenticity is physical and experiential as we see and feel places -It's about both the actual environments themselves and the human experience of them. In addition, the cultural identity about tourists' involvement, interest and emotional attachment is able to increase their satisfaction more significantly and foster loyalty that would ultimately contribute to the long-term development of tourist destinations and revisit probability [8].

## 2. Materials and Methods

This article discusses the role of national-cultural and sociocultural determinants on behavior of foreign tourists in Uzbekistan. We used a mixed-methods approach with quantitative survey data and qualitative interviews in order to draw out both statistical patterns as well as detailed insights.

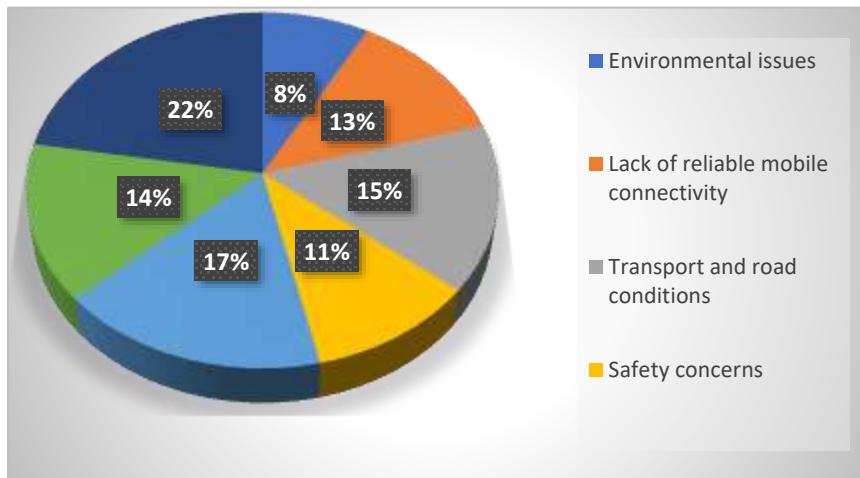
The empirical foundation of the study covered 520 foreign tourists to Uzbekistan and 2025 in-depth interviews with representatives from tourism sector. Data gathering included administering structured questionnaires with respect to tourist motivations, satisfaction, service quality and digital accessibility, supplemented by semi-structured interviews that examined cultural expectations and travel experiences. Data were also studied in conjunction with official statistics and previous research.

Descriptive analysis of data was used to determine the dominant behavioral patterns, and thematic content analysis to elicit qualitatively important insights. Comparison analysis revealed variation between nationalities and type of visitor. Ethical issues (such as informed consent, confidentiality) have been well considered.

## 3. Results

The study also identified a number of challenges encountered by foreign tourists during their visit to Uzbekistan. Based on the survey results, quantitative data were obtained that reflect the most common difficulties arising during travel. The data presented in the figure illustrate a structured distribution of the main problems that foreign tourists reportedly face while traveling across Uzbekistan. The figure visualizes the relative weight of each identified category of difficulties, including environmental and

infrastructural factors, issues of transport accessibility, service quality, and the discrepancy between tourist expectations and promotional materials [16].



**Figure 2. Problems Encountered by Tourists During Their Travel in Uzbekistan**

First and foremost, the data demonstrate that the primary challenge for tourists remains environmental pollution and the overall ecological situation (8%), which underscores the need to strengthen measures aimed at preserving natural areas. According to the author, the environmental dimension shapes tourists' initial impressions of the country and exerts a lasting influence on their overall satisfaction. [17]

Moreover, an almost comparable share corresponds to the lack of stable mobile connectivity (13%), which significantly complicates tourist navigation. The author emphasizes that the development of digital infrastructure should become one of the priority directions for improving the quality of the tourist experience.

In addition, the condition of roads and transport facilities (15%) represents a notable difficulty, indicating the need for modernization of the road network. From the author's perspective, improvements in transport logistics directly affect regional accessibility and stimulate the development of both domestic and inbound tourism.

It is also important to note that tourists highlight various safety-related issues (11%), which are closely associated with trust in the tourism environment. The author stresses that ensuring tourist safety is a key element in forming a positive country image.

Equally important is the fact that a portion of respondents indicated a discrepancy between actual conditions and promotional materials (17%), which creates a gap between expectations and reality. According to the author, a more realistic positioning of tourism products is required.

Finally, a certain share of tourists highlighted issues related to service quality (22%), which reflects the need to enhance professional standards among industry personnel. The author considers the development of human capital in tourism to be a key factor in ensuring competitiveness.

Based on the conducted analysis, the author proposes the following recommendations for improving the tourism sector in Uzbekistan:

Development of culturally sensitive service. It is essential to train personnel in tourism and hospitality enterprises in intercultural communication, etiquette, and the psychology of interaction with representatives of different countries. This approach will reduce the number of conflict situations and increase tourist satisfaction. The implementation of certification programs in cross-cultural competence for service employees may serve as an effective tool to enhance service quality.

Improvement of Digital Conversion for Overseas Visitors. Some 49 percent of foreign visitors felt difficult at the online services and map application while they were here, it found. It has been suggested to develop an integrated digital environment

providing multilingual map, online guides, booking services, feedback and payment facilities for the tourists too.

Diversification of the Tourism Product. There must be new forms of tourism, such as ethnostenstye, gastronomic and eco-tourism, event tourism. For example, the involved and getting along with the participation of tourists in cooking national dishes (plov, samsa, lagman), as well as master classes on silkworms products (glazed pottery and ceramics) contributes to enriched communication cultural exchange, formation of a distinctive tourist product.

Successful management of the industry involves shaping a scientific and analytical base, regularly conducting sociological surveys among tourists, evaluating satisfaction dynamics, monitoring digital feedback, creating a national database on tourist behavior.

Innovative approaches to tourism marketing. The use of neuromarketing, Big Data, and social media behavior analysis enables more precise segmentation of target audiences and the creation of individualized offers for tourists. Within the framework of strategic tourism marketing development in Uzbekistan, the author emphasizes the necessity of expanding the country's promotional concept beyond the traditional image of "the land of ancient cities and the Great Silk Road." Contemporary international tourism trends indicate that foreign tourists increasingly seek a balanced combination of cultural authenticity and the modern lifestyle of the destination country.

Quoting results from a survey of foreign tourists ( $n = 520$ ), the 46% first viewed Uzbekistan only as a historical and religious place. But 57 per cent said they were surprised to discover there was a high level of urbanization, beautiful architecture and comfort from modern facilities after visiting – showing how the country is not marketing itself effectively. As a result, a successful marketing campaign for Uzbekistan as tourism destination was founded on the principle of creating an integrated historical and modern image of the country, resulting into continuous branding that will attract admirers of Eastern culture and young active tourists eager to explore "adventurous" world.

The development of the specialized taxi service for foreign tourists is one of the promising vectors in improving the quality of tourism services in Uzbekistan. The published research was based on a review of foreign tourist feedback on the city as well as author's survey ( $n = 520$ ), according to which 22% of foreigners experienced inconvenience regarding the navigation within the city, and in 48% of cases they felt drivers didn't know enough about tourist routes, venues or catering facilities.

In this context, the establishment of a state program, "Tourist Taxi Uzbekistan," is proposed, which would form an integral part of the strategy for culturally sensitive services and modern transport infrastructure [18], see table 2.

**Table 2. Recommendations for the Implementation of a Tourist Taxi System in Uzbekistan**

(Developed by the author based on empirical research, 2025)

No.	Development Direction	Content of Recommendation	Expected Effect
1	Creation of a Tourist Taxi Brand	Develop a unified corporate style (e.g., light turquoise or golden-beige vehicle colors, logo featuring Uzbek symbols). Vehicles should be easily recognizable on streets, at	Increased recognition and trust among foreign tourists; strengthening of the country's visual brand.

No.	Development Direction	Content of Recommendation	Expected Effect
		Airports, and near tourist attractions.	
2	Driver Training and Certification	Organize courses for drivers on intercultural communication, knowledge of the city, attractions, restaurants, and hotels. Mandatory proficiency in at least one foreign language.	Improved service quality; higher tourist satisfaction; enhanced image of the country as a hospitable destination.
3	Implementation of the "Tourist Taxi Uzbekistan" Mobile Application	Create a multilingual application for online booking, payment, and service evaluation. Include navigation, information on attractions, and route recommendations.	Simplified tourist mobility; increased digital accessibility and transparency of services.
4	Integration with Tourism Infrastructure	Ensure coordination between the taxi service, airports, hotels, museums, cafes, and tour agencies. Provide official tourist taxi stands.	Formation of a unified logistics chain for tourists ("airport–hotel–attraction–airport"); increased travel comfort.
5	Quality Control System	Introduce trip evaluation mechanisms, a hotline, and a feedback system to respond promptly to complaints.	Maintenance of high service standards and client trust.
6	Economic and Social Incentives	Provide tax benefits and licenses for program participants, and create additional employment opportunities.	Development of small businesses, increased employment, and enhanced sector investment attractiveness.

Based on the above, the implementation of the "Tourist Taxi Uzbekistan" system will create a synergistic effect between the country's transport, marketing, and cultural policies. This will contribute to the enhancement of tourism service quality, improved mobility for foreign visitors, and the strengthening of Uzbekistan's international image as a modern and comfortable destination.

The conducted study allows us to conclude that Uzbekistan possesses a substantial cultural potential, which, under appropriate institutional and marketing support, can serve as a factor for sustainable growth in the tourism sector. The integration of cultural values, digital innovations, and high-quality service will create the conditions necessary to enhance the country's international competitiveness and to establish a positive and distinctive tourism brand.

#### 4. Conclusion

The study conducted shows that the cultural and historical potential of Uzbekistan is its tremendous resource, and it attracts foreign tourists. At the same time, the examination of foreign tourists' behavior indicates that sociocultural dimensions

associated to authenticity and relational interactions are significantly influencing factors when building senses on tourist satisfaction and loyalty. Although the VFR segment is the largest in terms of visitors, an increasing trend can be seen for the leisure segment, with culture and historical as the strongest motivations.

The research also highlights pressing issues that facilitated or hindered tourist experiences, such as environmental challenges insufficient transport facilities, minimal mobile network coverage, low levels of service quality and safety, limitations in accessing financial services as well as disconnections between promotional material and reality. Providing a solution for these challenges by creation of culturally directed services, digital modernization, expansion in types and forms of tourist products, targeted marketing are the necessary things for improving quality of service and tourism development potential as well as increasing international competitiveness of Uzbekistan.

A very interesting approach is the cross-fertilisation of tourism, culture and marketing policies that can be witnessed in the (upcoming) practice of "tourist taxi Uzbekistan", pretends to increase mobility and service providing quality, as well as footage of Uzbekistan having become a modern yet hospitable country for tourist. An integration of cultural factors, digital techniques and high-level service is supposed to realize a sustainable improvement as well as repeat visitation by developing of an integral tourism brand attractive both to the lovers of culture heritage and modern active tourists.

The author's own analysis indicates that cultural values, social norms, and patterns of cross-cultural interaction increasingly shape not only the motivation of foreign tourists but also the structure of their expectations, perception of the destination, satisfaction levels, and overall behavioral trajectory. In the context of Uzbekistan's rapidly modernizing tourism sector, these factors are decisive in understanding why tourists choose particular routes, how they evaluate service quality, and what behavioral responses arise during cultural contact.

Based on the research, the author argues that Uzbekistan's unique cultural heritage-manifested in historical sites, traditional crafts, hospitality practices, and cultural codes-forms a specific behavioral model among visitors, characterized by heightened interest in authenticity, emotional engagement, and motivations related to learning, exploration, and aesthetic experience. At the same time, sociocultural barriers, such as differences in communication styles, service expectations, and informal social norms, may significantly influence the subjective tourist experience and overall satisfaction.

Therefore, from the author's perspective, a comprehensive analysis of consumer behavior in Uzbek inbound tourism must integrate cultural and sociocultural variables as core analytical components, as they explain not only existing behavioral patterns but also allow forecasting future trends in demand, visitor satisfaction, and the competitiveness of Uzbekistan's tourism market. In conclusion, Uzbekistan's tourism sector holds substantial development potential, provided that institutional, infrastructural, and marketing strategies are effectively aligned with the behavioral expectations and cultural motivations of foreign tourists.

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