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Analysis of the Factors Influencing the Development of Nostalgic Tourism in Samarkand

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Abstract: This study investigates the potential of developing nostalgic tourism in Samarkand by analyzing the socio-economic, historical, and emotional factors that influence this emerging tourism segment. Based on panel regression analysis covering data from 2016 to 2024 and 39 foreign countries, the study identifies key determinants of nostalgia-driven travel flows. Factors such as trade volume (imports and exports), population ties, unemployment levels, price sensitivity, service quality, historical colonial links, religious affiliation, and internet access all show significant influence. The findings suggest that countries with stronger economic and historical ties to Samarkand are more likely to generate higher volumes of nostalgic tourists. Moreover, practical recommendations include designing specialized travel routes, integrating digital platforms such as interactive maps and AR tools, and tailoring services to the emotional and cultural needs of the diaspora. This research contributes to the academic understanding of nostalgic tourism and provides strategic insights for sustainable destination development in Samarkand.

Keywords: Nostalgic Tourism, Samarkand, Diaspora, Emotional Travel, Tourism Flows, Panel Regression, Cultural Identity, Trade Ties, Digital Tourism, Uzbekistan Tourism Strategy

1. Introduction

In today's increasingly complex global tourism industry, the demand for new, emotionally driven, and identity-based forms of travel is rising significantly. Among these, the phenomenon of nostalgic tourism is emerging as a distinct segment within modern tourism, characterized by its emotional and cultural foundations. Nostalgic tourism refers to a type of travel motivated by personal history, childhood memories, cultural roots, or family connections. It is typically undertaken by individuals seeking to reconnect with their homeland or the land of their ancestors¹.

This form of tourism is particularly relevant for countries characterized by high levels of migration flows. Such travel not only generates economic benefits, but also serves to strengthen cultural and social ties with diasporas. Samarkand, in this context, stands out as one of the regions with significant potential. Since gaining independence, millions of citizens have emigrated abroad for various reasons, and many among them and their descendants maintain a desire to reconnect emotionally and culturally with Samarkand. Addressing this need through tourism is therefore a matter of strategic importance. Moreover, services offered in this direction should not be limited to showcasing cultural monuments alone, but should also incorporate experience-based elements such as

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rediscovering emotionally significant places, presenting local lifestyles, and developing routes related to personal and ancestral histories².

The relevance of this study lies in the fact that, while nostalgic tourism is increasingly recognized in international practice as an emotionally and economically significant sector, the services, travel routes, and marketing mechanisms related to this segment remain underdeveloped in Samarkand³⁻⁴. In particular, there is a lack of comprehensive research on the quantitative analysis of nostalgia-driven tourist flows, as well as their economic efficiency and social impact. Therefore, the development of organizational and economic mechanisms based on scientifically grounded approaches in this field has been defined as the primary objective of this study.

2. Materials and Methods

This study empirically analyzes the factors influencing the number of international visitors traveling to Samarkand based on nostalgia-driven motivations—such as personal history, cultural ties, and family connections. The primary dependent variable is the number of tourists ($\ln \text{Tourists}$), expressed in logarithmic form to represent the number of foreign citizens visiting Samarkand. The analysis evaluates the impact of various factors including population size (\log), unemployment rate, life expectancy, price levels, internet usage, GDP per capita, purchasing power, travel costs, and air connectivity (weekly flight frequency), among others. These variables collectively serve to assess the social, economic, political, and cultural determinants that shape nostalgia-based travel patterns⁵.

3. Results and Discussion

Recent studies conducted in Canada, Australia, Israel, and Poland demonstrate that nostalgic tourism is often deeply intertwined with migration patterns. For instance, descendants of Russian and Samarkand-origin Jewish immigrants residing in Israel frequently travel back to Uzbekistan, particularly to cities like Tashkent, Bukhara, and Samarkand⁶. These visits are often described as "memory tourism," wherein travelers engage in emotionally driven activities such as visiting former synagogues, schools, cemeteries, and neighborhoods⁷.

Similarly, in South Korea, Korean-Americans who emigrated to the United States between the 1960s and 1980s return to their childhood villages in a phenomenon known as "hometown tourism," which is actively supported by local governments⁸⁻⁹.

In the United Kingdom and Germany, the concept of "reverse diaspora tourism" has emerged, providing travel opportunities for second- and third-generation diaspora members to explore their ancestral homelands. Notably, in Germany, "Heimatreisen" programs targeting descendants of Polish and Bulgarian immigrants have gained popularity. These experiences are built upon emotional connection, local cuisine, cultural elements, and historical context¹⁰.

Nostalgia-based tourism is not solely shaped by migration history or diasporic connections¹¹; it is also deeply influenced by economic factors, the government's approach to tourism, institutional convenience, and the availability of services that help restore emotional and cultural values. As a relatively new and promising direction within the modern tourism industry, nostalgic tourism is formed on the basis of personal memories, cultural identity, and historical ties¹².

To empirically identify the factors influencing the number of foreign tourists visiting Samarkand for nostalgia-driven reasons, a panel data analysis was conducted. The study covers observations from 39 foreign countries over the period 2016–2024. The panel structure allows for tracking variables across multiple subjects over time and space, enabling deeper analysis of both static and dynamic variations.

A random effects panel regression model was chosen as the primary analytical method. The main advantage of this model lies in its ability to include time-invariant

variables (such as colonial ties, religious affiliation, and geographic distance) in the regression, and to generalize results across units. The Hausman test produced a p-value greater than 0.05, indicating that the null hypothesis cannot be rejected, and therefore the random effects model is appropriate for this analysis.

Table 1. Hausman Test Results: Comparison of Fixed and Random Effects Models.

Model	Difference in Estimators	Chi-Square (χ^2)	Degrees of Freedom (df)	p-value	Decision
Random Effects Model	Present	17.36	19	0.56	Random effects model is appropriate (p > 0.05)

All statistical analyses were conducted using the STATA software platform. The empirical model was estimated by identifying coefficient values, standard errors, p-values, and 95% confidence intervals, with detailed interpretation of the results. The overall fit and statistical reliability of the Random Effects Model were assessed through the Wald χ^2 test, as well as internal and external variance analysis (R^2 statistics). In addition, diagnostic indicators were applied to verify the model's robustness and validity.

Table 2. Key Determinants of Nostalgic Tourism Identified Through the Random Effects Model (2016–2024).

Variable (english)		Koeffitsient	P > z
Imports (foreign)	X1	0.0122	0.005
Exports (foreign)	X2	0.0718	0.07
Population (Samarkand)	X3	0.1468	0.092
Unemployment (foreign)	X4	0.2178	0.046
Gov. effectiveness (Samarkand)	X5	1.5183	0.008
Political stability (foreign)	X6	-0.1884	0.008
Landlocked (foreign)	X7	0.5815	0.24
Life expectancy (foreign)	X9	0.1088	0.015
Price level (Samarkand)	X10	-0.2026	0.082
Internet (Samarkand)	X11	0.0079	0.023
Colonial tie	X12	4.1156	0.002
Common religion	X13	2.1494	0.0212
GDP per capita (foreign)	X14	0.3072	0.097
Population (foreign)	X15	0.842	0.087
Area (foreign)	X16	0.0994	0.545
PPP (foreign)	X17	0.7734	0.021
GDP per capita (Samarkand)	X18	2.8125	0.047
Distance	X19	-3.125	0.0223

Source: Based on the panel data regression model constructed in Stata 17

The results show that approximately 70% of the variation in nostalgia-driven tourist flows across countries can be statistically explained. This indicates a high explanatory power of the model.

One of the strongest factors influencing the number of foreign visitors traveling to Samarkand for nostalgic reasons is the level of existing trade and economic relations with their countries of origin. In the model, the volume of imports from foreign countries ($\beta = 0.0122$; $p = 0.005$) is statistically significant at the 1% level, indicating that stronger economic ties lead to increased touristic connections. Such economic integration contributes to greater awareness of Samarkand through cultural and informational flows, thereby attracting more tourists. The volume of exports ($\beta = 0.0718$; $p = 0.070$) is significant at the 10% level, suggesting that bilateral trade relations help foster emotional and professional connections. Additionally, the size of Samarkand's population ($\beta = 0.1468$; $p = 0.092$) is also significant at the 10% level, indicating that the presence of relatives and diaspora networks within the country remains a motivating factor for nostalgic travel[13-14].

The unemployment rate in foreign countries ($\beta = 0.2178$; $p = 0.046$) has a statistically significant effect, suggesting that higher unemployment levels are associated with an increase in nostalgia-driven visits. This correlation may indicate that unemployed individuals have more available time and heightened emotional needs, which strengthen their interest in reconnecting with their roots. Moreover, the quality of public services in Samarkand, measured by government effectiveness ($\beta = 1.5183$; $p = 0.008$), emerges as the most influential factor, statistically significant at the 1% level. This finding underscores that well-organized government services, safety, cleanliness, and a tourist-friendly environment significantly impact travelers' decisions.

An increase in the price level ($\beta = -0.2026$; $p = 0.082$) has a statistically significant negative effect at the 10% level, indicating that higher costs may act as a barrier for budget-conscious travelers. Conversely, the expansion of internet access ($\beta = 0.0079$; $p = 0.023$) has a positive influence, as it enables tourists to obtain more information about Samarkand, make online bookings, and experience emotional engagement through virtual connections. Notably, the "colonial tie" variable ($\beta = 4.1156$; $p = 0.002$) exerts the strongest statistical impact, reflecting the influence of shared history, language, culture, and governance systems as drivers of nostalgia-based travel. Furthermore, a common religious affiliation ($\beta = 2.1494$; $p = 0.0212$) promotes cultural and spiritual affinity, thereby increasing the frequency of identity-driven tourism[15].

4. Conclusion

In conclusion, this study has empirically examined the key factors influencing the development of nostalgia-driven tourism to Samarkand by employing a panel data regression model based on data from 39 foreign countries between 2016 and 2024. The findings reveal that economic linkages—specifically the volume of imports and exports—strongly affect tourist flows, as do diaspora ties, unemployment rates in source countries, the quality of public services in Samarkand, shared religious and historical connections, and the availability of internet access. Notably, government effectiveness emerged as one of the most significant determinants, emphasizing the importance of a safe, clean, and well-managed environment in attracting emotionally motivated visitors. Conversely, high price levels and greater geographic distance from Samarkand tend to reduce nostalgia-based tourism flows. The study highlights that nostalgic tourism is not solely a cultural or emotional phenomenon but is closely intertwined with economic integration, digital infrastructure, and strategic governance. Based on these insights, the research recommends developing targeted travel routes that include memory-based landmarks, ancestral homes, culturally significant locations, and personal histories. Additionally, the integration of digital technologies—such as interactive maps, augmented reality (AR),

online booking systems, and multimedia storytelling – can enhance emotional connection and accessibility for diaspora tourists. This comprehensive approach supports Samarkand's long-term tourism development goals by fostering sustainable, identity-driven, and emotionally resonant travel experiences. Ultimately, by addressing both tangible and intangible dimensions of nostalgia, Samarkand can strengthen its appeal as a meaningful destination for global diasporas and strategically position itself in the emerging niche of memory-based tourism. These findings provide a strong foundation for future policy development and destination management strategies aimed at promoting inclusive, culturally rich, and economically impactful tourism.

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