



GREEN TOURISM IN CENTRAL ASIA - SUSTAINABLE PRACTICES IN SAMARKAND'S GROWING HOSPITALITY SECTOR.

Shamsieva Shakhnoza Jaloliddin qizi

shakhnozashamsieva974@gmail.com

Silk Road International University of Tourism and Cultural Heritage

Abstract: Green tourism is a practice that embraces sustainability while protecting the environment, preserving cultural heritage, and ensuring the well-being of local people. Green tourism is rapidly developing in Central Asia, contributing to sustainability by making its cultural heritage and nature more accessible to the public. Samarkand is one of the regions of Uzbekistan that is contributing to the rapid growth of sustainable practices. This study discusses the hospitality sector of Samarkand, which is developing tourism in Central Asia and playing a key role in sustainable practices. At the same time, it highlights the structures being implemented to establish sustainability, the challenges to be overcome, and the strategies to overcome the problems.

Keywords: Green tourism, Samarkand, Central Asia, sustainability, hospitality, eco-tourism, community-based tourism.

1 | Introduction

Currently, green tourism, and in general, the concept of sustainability, is gaining momentum in the tourism industry worldwide. In this study, sustainability practices are presented based on the Central Asian context. As is known, Samarkand is famous for its Silk Road and has historical significance, and is currently guiding various stakeholders in the hospitality industry towards sustainability. In addition, the current obstacles, proposed solutions, methodologies, and the introduction of green tourism practices into the growing tourism industry of Samarkand are presented in detail.

2 | LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1 | Sustainable tourism

At the same time, many new scientific literature sources emphasize that sustainable tourism plays an important role in balancing the equality between nature, the economy of the state, and social interests.

At the same time, it is emphasized that the concept of sustainable tourism should not only include nature conservation, but also benefit the local community culturally and



economically, according to UNWTO. (Kun.uz, 2023). It is reflected that the rapid development of sustainable tourism brings comprehensive benefits to a country, for example, economic development, and respectful preservation of the wealth bestowed by nature, especially for Uzbekistan.

Samarkand, which is the most unique and historically significant among the regions of Uzbekistan, provides a huge opportunity for the development of sustainable tourism. Samarkand is actively developing the sustainability of Uzbek tourism, especially in the field of heritage, emphasizes Zohidov (2020). The establishment of eco-tourism and eco-tourism programs, which are an integral part of sustainability, is the result of the efforts of the nation.

The main ideas promoted in this literature are that the concept of introducing sustainability into the tourism sector does not only encompass green sustainability, but also two important factors: strengthening local community cohesion and bringing inclusiveness to society. (ResearchGate, 2020).

In addition, the conclusions that eliminating tension, resource scarcity, and pollution are environmental sustainability come from the research of Kiberleninka (2021). His proposals for Central Asian countries show that by focusing on sustainability in nature, they create unique opportunities for tourists. In particular, he highlights Samarkand as a destination that focuses on sustainability.

2.2 | Current Initiatives and Stakeholders

Many stakeholders, both public and private, are playing an important role in establishing sustainable tourism practices, and green tourism in general, in Samarkand. For the first time, a center dedicated to green tourism was established by UNWTO in Samarkand. (Kun.uz, 2023). Sustainable tourism stakeholders; tourism businesses, local governments, and academic institutions are the main users in the establishment of such a center.

The role of local hotels, tour operators, and eco-lodges in the development of green tourism in Samarkand is also evident from the Turkistan Adventure company, which makes a special impression on tourists, given that this company is focused on offering eco-friendly packages to tourists. The main goal is to provide tourists with an opportunity to get to know the local environment and local traditions, including nature-based outdoor activities.

Community-based tourism (CBT) has been an important tool in Samarkand in integrating sustainability into mainstream tourism practices. The goal of the CBT platform is to further enhance the economic efficiency of ordinary communities



through tourism without neglecting cultural heritage and the environment. According to ResearchGate (2021), one of the effective methods that has led to sustainable outcomes in Samarkand is to incorporate local ideas and traditions into planning and management of tourism initiatives.

3 | Sustainable Practices in the Hospitality Sector

Samarkand's hospitality sector has implemented sustainable practices such as waste reduction, water and energy efficiency, including the use of energy-efficient appliances and solar power to reduce its carbon footprint. Such practices in the hospitality sector reduce their environmental impact by moving towards sustainability. (Iskandarova, 2020).

Another important aspect of sustainability in Samarkand is the use of local raw materials in the construction of hotels. Such practices usually benefit the local economy, while reflecting the culture of the community. Samarkand boutique hotels embody the architecture of the region, using local stones and wood in the construction of such hotels, while also eliminating the environmental pollution caused by transportation. (CAJITMF, 2023).

In addition, for tourists looking for accommodations that embody eco-tourism, Samarkand stands out in the hospitality sector by meeting sustainable standards for hotels, adapting to eco-certifications. (Academia.edu, 2018).

3.1 | Ecotourism and Nature-Based Attractions

There are many eco-tourism attractions in Samarkand that include nature-based activities. According to Zenodo (2022), eco-tourism activities organized in remote areas can provide a sustainable economy and increase environmental awareness. It is proposed that Samarkand expand tourism opportunities for economic growth and ecological development.

3.2 | Socio-Economic Impact

Green tourism benefits the local community. Sustainability has played an important role in the creation of many jobs and the growth of infrastructure investment. (Cyberleninka, 2021). Businesses focused on sustainability have earned income by increasing permanent employment, which has benefited the hospitality industry in particular.

In addition, green tourism is also important in balancing equality in society by attracting women and youth.



According to a study by ResearchGate (2021), women-run hotels and youth-run eco-tours in rural areas not only promote business sustainability, but also promote social equity.

3.3 | Challenges and Barriers to Green Tourism in Samarkand

Zenodo (2022) notes that the main obstacle is the inability of small businesses to absorb large costs and investments, making it increasingly difficult to implement sustainable practices. This suggests that the sustainability practices implemented in large businesses are difficult to apply and develop in small businesses.

It is also worth noting that the lack of a legal approach to sustainability by the government in Uzbekistan has led to relatively slow development.

Although the importance of UNWTO in the development of green tourism is recognized, it is noted that the lack of political approach poses obstacles. (Kun.uz, 2023).

The risk of environmental sustainability in Samarkand may arise in cases where urban planning and development projects are not balanced. (Iskandarova, 2020).

Therefore, in Samarkand, not only tourism development is the main goal, but also balancing the flow of tourists, which will prevent environmental degradation.

4. Strategic Recommendations for Improving Samarkand's Green Tourism

CAJITMF (2023) states that in developing sustainability in the tourism sector, it is necessary to pay greater attention to scientifically informing local businesses, that is, increasing the number of experienced employees.

Increasing reforms aimed at developing sustainability is a better step, and an initiative has been established in Samarkand called the International Center for Green Tourism, which belongs to the UNWTO. (Kun.uz, 2023).

ResearchGate (2021) suggests that engaging local people in tourism practices and educating them about eco-tourism is also an important factor in developing sustainable tourism experiences.

5 | CONCLUSIONS

Samarkand stands out from other regions in Central Asia in developing green tourism by engaging local people, establishing international partnerships, and playing a significant role in their sustainable practices. However, there are



challenges, such as financial, staff awareness, and regulatory compliance, that are major obstacles to developing sustainability. Despite these, it is clear from the examples highlighted that Samarkand is doing the best in developing green tourism.

It is worth noting that in the next upcoming few years, Samarkand will stand out as one of the most sustainably developed cities in Central Asia and play an important role in ensuring that future generations enjoy the greenery of this incomparable city, and perhaps even preserve its cultural heritage.

References

1. Kun.uz. (2023). UNWTO plans to create and finance an international center for green tourism in Samarkand. <https://kun.uz/en/news/2023/11/18/unwto-plans-to-create-and-finance-an-international-center-for-green-tourism-in-samarkand>
2. Turkistan Adventure. (2022). Eco-friendly tourism options in Uzbekistan's Silk Road cities: A sustainable travel guide. <https://turkistanadventure.com/blog/eco-friendly-tourism-options-in-uzbekistan-s-silk-road-cities--a-sustainable-travel-guide>
3. Zohidov, A. (2020). Nature-based tourism in Samarkand: Sustainable development perspectives. <https://zenodo.org/records/7250364>
4. ResearchGate. (2020). National nature-based tourism in Samarkand Region: Sustainable development strategies. https://www.researchgate.net/publication/344617015_National_nature-based_tourism_in_Samarkand_Region
5. CAJITMF. (2023). Factors determining sustainable practices in tourism and hospitality within the built environment of Samarkand. <https://cajitmf.centralasianstudies.org/index.php/CAJITMF/article/view/244/261>
6. Academia.edu. (2018). Factors determining the sustainable practices in tourism and hospitality within the built environment of Samarkand. <https://www.academia.edu/36294974/FACTORS>