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SAFE TOURISM PRACTICES IN HISTORICAL CITIES: THE CASE OF SAMARKAND, BUKHARA, KHIVA, TASHKENT AND SHAHRISABZ

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Abstract

This article examines the development and practical implementation of safe tourism systems in Samarkand, Bukhara, Khiva, Tashkent, and Shahrissabz, the historical cities of Uzbekistan renowned for their rich cultural and historical heritage. The study explores these processes from historical, legal, institutional, and regional perspectives. Particular attention is paid to the emergence of tourist safety as a distinct area of governance within the framework of tourism reforms in Uzbekistan, the introduction of organizational safety mechanisms in historical cities, and the establishment of a secure environment at tourist destinations, cultural heritage sites, and within transport infrastructure. The article also provides a scientific analysis of measures aimed at ensuring tourist safety and improving the effectiveness of relevant institutional arrangements. Furthermore, it puts forward scientific and practical recommendations for enhancing tourist safety systems in historical cities, strengthening cooperation between relevant government authorities and tourism stakeholders, and developing region-specific safety approaches that take into account the requirements of cultural heritage preservation.

Keywords: Safe tourism, historical cities, Samarkand, Bukhara, Khiva, Tashkent, Shahrissabz, tourism safety, cultural heritage, tourism infrastructure, public safety, tourism policy.



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INTRODUCTION

Uzbekistan occupies a significant place in the world's cultural heritage as a country rich in historical cities. While the historical areas of Samarkand, Bukhara, Khiva, and Shahrissabz are associated with internationally recognized cultural heritage sites, Tashkent stands out as a major political, economic, and tourist center that combines ancient urban planning traditions with the modern infrastructure of the capital. The inclusion of Itchan Kala in Khiva on the UNESCO World Heritage List in 1990, the Historic Centre of Bukhara in 1993, the Historic Centre of Shakhrisabz in 2000, and Samarkand – Crossroad of Cultures in 2001 demonstrates the international cultural significance of these cities [5].

Although these cities share certain similarities in terms of historical heritage and tourism potential, they differ considerably in their territorial structure, the location of tourist attractions, transportation facilities, and requirements related to the preservation of their historical environments. Therefore, ensuring safe tourism requires not only unified national legal mechanisms but also the development of organizational approaches that take into account the specific characteristics of each city.

MATERIALS AND METHODS

The source base of this study consists of regulatory and legal documents of the Republic of Uzbekistan concerning the provision of safe tourism, the strengthening of public safety, the regulation of tourism activities, and the use of tangible cultural heritage sites, as well as official materials published by government authorities and information provided by the UNESCO World Heritage Centre on historical cities. The Resolution of the Cabinet of Ministers of the Republic of Uzbekistan No. 939 dated November 23, 2017, the Resolution of the President of the Republic of Uzbekistan No. PQ-4229 dated March 6, 2019, and the Law of the Republic of



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Uzbekistan No. ZRU-549 “On Tourism” dated July 18, 2019, were selected as the principal legal sources. These documents provide a basis for examining the legal foundations of state policy on organizing safe tourism in historical cities and the distribution of responsibilities among the relevant institutions [1–3].

Based on the principles of historicism and objectivity, the study examines issues related to ensuring safe tourism in the selected cities in close connection with the development of Uzbekistan’s tourism policy. Particular attention is devoted to the institutional mechanisms established since 2017 to ensure tourism safety and the subsequent expansion of their territorial coverage. Through the comparative-historical method, the study identifies similarities and differences among Samarkand, Bukhara, Khiva, Tashkent, and Shahrissabz in terms of their historical environments, tourism infrastructure, and the organization of tourist movements. The application of institutional analysis made it possible to examine the legal mechanisms of cooperation among government authorities responsible for ensuring safe tourism, internal affairs agencies, local administrations, and tourism service providers. Furthermore, using a systematic approach, tourism safety is interpreted as an integrated framework of interconnected components, including the personal security of tourists, transportation and pedestrian safety, the protection of cultural heritage sites, information services, sanitary conditions, and the provision of assistance in emergency situations.

RESULTS

Samarkand, as one of the oldest cultural centers of Uzbekistan, holds particular historical significance in the development of tourism. Its centuries-old architectural heritage, its role in the history of international trade and cultural relations, and its modern tourism infrastructure create specific requirements for the organization of safe tourism. The presence of historical sites such as Registan Square, the Shah-i-



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Zinda Complex, the Bibi-Khanym Mosque, the Gur-e-Amir Mausoleum, and the Ulugh Beg Observatory contributes to the development of various forms of tourism throughout the city. At the same time, the location of these sites in different parts of Samarkand requires a consistent approach to ensuring tourist safety during travel between destinations, the use of transportation services, and visits to historical complexes.

The historical urban landscape of Samarkand has been recognized by UNESCO as a cultural area characterized by the coexistence of urban layers from different historical periods. In particular, the ancient settlement of Afrasiab, architectural complexes dating back to the Timurid period, and urban areas developed during subsequent historical periods contribute to Samarkand's distinctive cultural identity [6]. This characteristic indicates that ensuring safe tourism requires not only protecting the personal security of tourists but also considering regulations governing access to historical sites, pedestrian movement, traffic flows, and cultural heritage preservation.

The specific legal foundations for ensuring safe tourism in Samarkand are directly associated with Resolution No. 939 of the Cabinet of Ministers, adopted in 2017. Under this resolution, Samarkand, together with Bukhara, Khiva, and Shahrizabz, was selected as one of the initial cities designated for the implementation of the Safe Tourism Concept. The resolution provided for measures aimed at ensuring the safety of tourism activities, improving the relevant functions of internal affairs agencies, introducing modern information and communication technologies, and establishing cooperation among responsible organizations. These measures created an important legal foundation for organizing specialized tourism safety arrangements in Samarkand [1]. The significance of this reform in the context of Samarkand can be explained by the geographical distribution of historical sites and the interconnected nature of tourist routes. Therefore, ensuring safety should not



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be limited to monitoring individual historical complexes but should be based on a coordinated approach covering all stages of tourist itineraries.

Bukhara is distinguished by the integrity of its historical and cultural heritage, its ancient urban planning traditions, and the close proximity of architectural monuments and traditional residential buildings within its historical center. While major historical complexes in Samarkand are distributed across different parts of the city, many cultural heritage sites in Bukhara are concentrated within an interconnected network of streets, squares, and neighborhoods in the historical center. This characteristic increases the need to coordinate pedestrian movement, the use of historical buildings, the daily activities of local residents, and the operation of service facilities when organizing tourism activities.

The Historic Centre of Bukhara was inscribed on the UNESCO World Heritage List in 1993. UNESCO recognizes it as one of the significant cultural areas in Central Asia where the historical urban structure has remained relatively well preserved. The Ark Fortress, the Poi Kalyan Complex, the Lyabi-Hauz Ensemble, historical madrasas, and traditional trading structures reflect not only Bukhara's architectural heritage but also its centuries-long socioeconomic development [7]. The designation of Bukhara as one of the first cities selected for the implementation of the Safe Tourism Concept under Resolution No. 939 of 2017 can be examined in connection with its historical and tourism significance. This resolution established the legal basis for organizing specialized tourism safety measures, strengthening cooperation among relevant government authorities, and defining organizational responsibilities related to ensuring safety at tourist sites in Bukhara [1].

Khiva stands out among historical cities for its architectural integrity and the clearly defined territorial boundaries of its historical center. The Itchan Kala Complex, the city's most important tourist attraction, was formed on the basis of



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ancient urban planning traditions. Its fortified defensive walls, historical gates, narrow streets, architectural monuments, and traditional residential buildings are of particular interest to visitors. Although the relatively compact nature of this historical area makes it possible to organize tourist visits within a concentrated territory, it may also create safety challenges associated with the accumulation of tourist flows along specific routes and at entry and exit points.

This territorial integrity is particularly important for understanding the organizational characteristics of safe tourism in Khiva. Since tourism activities within Itchan Kala largely involve walking tours, visits to historical buildings, and movement between architectural complexes, safety measures must take into account the width of historical pathways, accessibility of monuments, and the general organization of visitor movement. In such an environment, excessive reliance on technical security measures or the installation of infrastructure elements incompatible with the historical landscape may negatively affect the authenticity of cultural heritage.

Khiva's designation as one of the initial cities selected for the implementation of the Safe Tourism Concept was established by Resolution No. 939 of 2017. This legal framework provided for the application of general measures aimed at improving cooperation among tourist facilities, security authorities, and local government bodies in the specific conditions of Khiva [1]. Therefore, ensuring safe tourism should not be limited to providing services for visitors but should also take into consideration the living conditions of local residents.

Tashkent, as the capital of Uzbekistan, a major transportation and communication hub, and a city with considerable historical and cultural potential, has distinctive characteristics in organizing safe tourism compared with other historical cities. Alongside ancient religious and educational sites, museums, architectural monuments, and traditional urban areas, the city possesses an international airport,



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railway stations, a metro system, major highways, and modern service complexes. Consequently, ensuring tourist safety in Tashkent extends beyond individual historical districts or tourist attractions and is closely connected with the city's extensive transportation and service infrastructure.

Resolution No. PQ-4229 of March 6, 2019, played an important role in expanding the institutional framework for ensuring safe tourism in Tashkent. This document approved proposals to extend the Safe Tourism Concept, which was being implemented in Bukhara, Samarkand, Khiva, and Shahrissabz, to Tashkent and other designated territories. The resolution also provided for measures related to the establishment of a Safe Tourism Department within the Main Department of Internal Affairs of Tashkent City [2]. The historical and organizational significance of this resolution for Tashkent lies in the adaptation of a safety concept initially developed for historical cities to the conditions of a large capital city, making it a distinct direction of state policy. This development demonstrates the expansion of the scope of safe tourism and the growing interconnection between ensuring public safety at tourist attractions and throughout transportation infrastructure.

Another important characteristic of ensuring safe tourism in Tashkent is the shared use of urban infrastructure by tourists and local residents. Routes leading to historical attractions, public transportation systems, shopping and service centers, and pedestrian areas constitute common spaces for both residents and visitors. Therefore, safety measures should be integrated into the overall public safety system without separating tourism activities from everyday urban life.

Shahrissabz is one of Uzbekistan's ancient historical centers and occupies an important place in the country's cultural tourism potential due to its architectural monuments associated with Amir Temur and the Timurid period. The remains of the Ak-Saray Palace, the Dorut Tilovat and Dorus Saodat complexes, and other historical sites are among the principal factors determining the city's attractiveness



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to tourists. At the same time, Shahrissabz's distinctive characteristics as a tourism destination are reflected in the complex relationship between historical monuments, modern urban development processes, and cultural heritage preservation requirements.

The Historic Centre of Shakhriyabz was inscribed on the UNESCO World Heritage List in 2000. However, subsequent developments within this historical area have also revealed challenges related to cultural heritage management. According to UNESCO, the Historic Centre of Shakhriyabz has been included on the List of World Heritage in Danger since 2016 [9].

Shahrissabz was also among the first four cities designated for the implementation of the Safe Tourism Concept under Resolution No. 939 of the Cabinet of Ministers in 2017. This resolution established a legal basis for applying general mechanisms aimed at ensuring the safety of tourism activities and strengthening cooperation among relevant organizations within the historical city of Shahrissabz [1].

DISCUSSION

The results of a comparative study of the legal foundations, organizational characteristics, and historical and cultural environments of Samarkand, Bukhara, Khiva, Tashkent, and Shahrissabz indicate that safe tourism has developed within the framework of a unified national policy, while its practical objectives differ according to the historical, geographical, and infrastructural characteristics of each city. This suggests that safe tourism should not be regarded as a uniform administrative activity implemented identically across all regions, but rather as a complex governance system that must be adapted to local conditions while remaining grounded in common legal principles.

One of the important findings of the study is that the initial specialized approaches to ensuring safe tourism in historical cities emerged in close connection with



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reforms aimed at strengthening the international significance of tourism. In particular, the designation of Samarkand, Bukhara, Khiva, and Shahrissabz as the initial territories for implementing the Safe Tourism Concept under Resolution No. 939 of the Cabinet of Ministers in 2017 demonstrates the emergence of a comprehensive approach to developing the country's historical and cultural tourism potential and creating a favorable environment for visitors. The subsequent extension of this concept to Tashkent indicates an expansion of the territorial scope of the institutional approach to tourism safety management [1; 2].

From a comparative perspective, the differences among the selected cities are primarily reflected in the formation and use of their tourism spaces. In Samarkand, the distribution of historical sites across different parts of the city increases the need to integrate safety measures with tourist routes and transportation systems. In Bukhara, the integrity of the historical center and its traditional urban environment highlight the importance of coordinating pedestrian movement, access to cultural heritage sites, and the daily activities of local residents. In Khiva, the clearly defined boundaries of the historical center provide opportunities for assessing risks associated with the concentration of tourist flows within a particular area, while also requiring the development of safety measures compatible with the architectural characteristics of the historical environment.

Article 35 of the Law "On Tourism," adopted in 2019, establishes the legal foundations for this approach by providing for state guarantees of the safety of tourists and excursionists, the development of territorial programs by local executive authorities, and the implementation of necessary safety and assistance measures by entities operating in the tourism sector [3].

Overall, the comparative analysis of Samarkand, Bukhara, Khiva, Tashkent, and Shahrissabz demonstrates that, despite the existence of common legal and organizational foundations for safe tourism, its regional objectives vary depending



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on the urban structure of each historical city, the location of tourist attractions, transportation opportunities, and cultural heritage protection requirements. Taking these differences into account is essential for developing more flexible tourism safety management mechanisms that respond to practical needs while ensuring the preservation of historical environments.

CONCLUSION

The historical, legal, institutional, and territorial analysis of the formation and development of safe tourism practices in Samarkand, Bukhara, Khiva, Tashkent, and Shahrissabz demonstrates that ensuring tourist safety has emerged as a distinct and consistently developing area of Uzbekistan's tourism policy. In particular, the establishment of the legal framework for implementing the Safe Tourism Concept in historical cities through Resolution No. 939 of the Cabinet of Ministers dated November 23, 2017, the expansion of its territorial coverage under Presidential Resolution No. PQ-4229 dated March 6, 2019, and the strengthening of legal guarantees for tourist safety through the Law "On Tourism" adopted in 2019 are regarded as significant institutional developments in this field.

Overall, the examination of safe tourism practices in Samarkand, Bukhara, Khiva, Tashkent, and Shahrissabz indicates that this area has acquired considerable institutional significance within Uzbekistan's tourism policy. It also demonstrates that the organization of safety measures in historical cities should be based on the integration of general principles of public administration with specific regional characteristics. The findings of this study may serve as a foundation for further research into the historical and legal development of safe tourism, the expansion of comparative studies among historical cities, and the formulation of scientific and practical recommendations aimed at creating a safe and sustainable environment in tourist destinations.



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