

M.A. Yesbolova^{1*} , N.E. Kulumzhanov² ,

D.B. Zharkimbayeva¹ 

¹Al-Farabi Kazakh National University, Almaty, Kazakhstan

²Almaty Management University, Almaty, Kazakhstan

*e-mail: azimova_8383@mail.ru

THE IMPACT OF UNESCO WORLD HERITAGE STATUS ON TOURISTS' MOTIVATION: A CASE STUDY OF TURKESTAN

This study examines the primary motivations of tourists visiting Turkestan, focusing on the influence of its UNESCO World Heritage Site (WHS) status, specifically the Mausoleum of Khoja Ahmed Yasawi, on visitor decisions. Employing a survey of 137 respondents from diverse age and gender groups, the research explores factors such as historical and cultural appeal, leisure, spiritual experiences, and prior knowledge. The findings highlight that the UNESCO WHS designation significantly enhances Turkestan's prestige, with the majority of visitors citing cultural and historical exploration as key motivators. However, a substantial portion of respondents remain unaware of the site's UNESCO status, indicating a need for improved promotional strategies. The study also reveals that prior knowledge of Turkestan's rich history and culture positively influences visitors' sense of authenticity and connection. Recommendations for improvement include enhanced signage, infrastructure upgrades, and expanded cultural programs to address logistical challenges and deepen engagement. Additionally, opportunities exist to diversify tourism offerings, such as adventure and luxury experiences, to attract broader audiences. This research underscores the dual role of UNESCO WHS designation as a tool for heritage preservation and sustainable tourism development. By addressing identified gaps, Turkestan can further position itself as a leading cultural and spiritual tourism destination, contributing to regional and global tourism growth.

Keywords: Heritage tourism, UNESCO World Heritage Site, tourist motivation, cultural tourism, Turkestan, Khoja Ahmed Yasawi Mausoleum.

M.A. Есболова¹, Н.Е. Кулумжанов², Д.Б. Жаркимбаева¹

¹Ал-Фараби атындағы Қазақ ұлттық университеті, Алматы, Қазақстан

²Алматы Менеджмент Университеті, Алматы, Қазақстан

*e-mail: azimova_8383@mail.ru

ЮНЕСКО-ның Әлемдік мұра мәртебесінің туристердің мотивациясына әсері: Түркістан кейсі

Бұл зерттеу туристердің Түркістанға барудағы негізгі себептерін, сондай-ақ Қожа Ахмет Ясауи кесенесінің ЮНЕСКО-ның Бүкіләлемдік мұра нысаны мәртебесінің олардың шешімдеріне әсерін зерттейді. Жас және жыныс бойынша әртүрлі топтардан 137 респондент қатысқан сауалнама тарихи және мәдени тартымдылық, демалыс, рухани тәжірибе және алдын ала білім сияқты факторларды зерттеді. Нәтижелер көрсеткендей, ЮНЕСКО мәртебесі Түркістанның беделін айтарлықтай арттырады, ал туристердің көпшілігі мәдени және тарихи зерттеулерді негізгі себеп ретінде көрсеткен. Алайда, респонденттердің елеулі бөлігі нысанның ЮНЕСКО мәртебесі туралы білмейтінін көрсетті, бұл жарнамалық стратегияларды жетілдіру қажеттігін көрсетеді. Сондай-ақ зерттеу Түркістанның бай тарихы мен мәдениеті туралы алдын ала білімнің келушілердің шынайылық пен байланыс сезімдерін жақсартуға әсер ететінін анықтады. Ұсыныстарға туристік инфрақұрылымды жақсарту, мәдени бағдарламаларды кеңейту және ақпараттық белгілерді күшейту кіреді. Сонымен қатар, белсенді демалыс пен сәнді туризм сияқты ұсыныстарды әртараптандыру арқылы кеңірек аудиторияны тарту мүмкіндіктері бар. Бұл зерттеу ЮНЕСКО мәртебесінің мұраны сақтау және тұрақты туризмді дамытудағы маңызды рөлін айқындайды. Түркістан өз артықшылықтарын тиімді пайдалана отырып, аймақтық және жаһандық туризм нарығында жетекші мәдени және рухани орталық ретінде өз позициясын нығайта алады.

Түйін сөздер: Мәдени мұра және туризм, ЮНЕСКО-ның Бүкіләлемдік мұра нысаны, туристік мотивация, мәдени туризм, Түркістан, Қожа Ахмет Ясауи кесенесі.

М.А. Есболова^{1*}, Н.Е. Кулумжанов², Д.Б. Жаркимбаева¹¹Казахский национальный университет им. аль-Фараби, Алматы, Казахстан²Алматы Менеджмент Университет, Алматы, Казахстан

*e-mail: azimova_8383@mail.ru

Влияние статуса объекта Всемирного наследия ЮНЕСКО на мотивацию туристов: кейс Туркестана

В данном исследовании рассматриваются основные мотивы туристов, посещающих Туркестан, с акцентом на влияние статуса объекта Всемирного наследия ЮНЕСКО, в частности мавзолея Ходжи Ахмеда Ясави, на их решения. В опросе приняли участие 137 респондентов различных возрастных и гендерных групп. Исследование изучает такие факторы, как историческая и культурная привлекательность, отдых, духовный опыт и предварительные знания. Результаты показывают, что статус объекта Всемирного наследия ЮНЕСКО значительно повышает престиж Туркестана, при этом большинство посетителей называют культурные и исторические исследования ключевыми мотивами. Однако значительная часть респондентов не осведомлена о статусе объекта ЮНЕСКО, что указывает на необходимость улучшения стратегий продвижения. Исследование также показывает, что предварительные знания о богатой истории и культуре Туркестана положительно влияют на чувство аутентичности и связи у посетителей. Рекомендации по улучшению включают более качественную навигацию, модернизацию инфраструктуры и расширение культурных программ для решения логистических проблем и углубления вовлеченности. Кроме того, существуют возможности для диверсификации туристических предложений, таких как активный и роскошный туризм, для привлечения более широкой аудитории. Исследование подчеркивает двойную роль статуса объекта Всемирного наследия ЮНЕСКО как инструмента сохранения наследия и устойчивого развития туризма. Устраняя выявленные недостатки, Туркестан сможет укрепить свои позиции ведущего культурного и духовного туристического направления, способствуя развитию регионального и глобального туризма.

Ключевые слова: культурное наследие и туризм, объект Всемирного наследия ЮНЕСКО, мотивация туристов, культурный туризм, Туркестан, мавзолей Ходжи Ахмеда Ясави.

Introduction

Heritage tourism involves traveling to visit historical and cultural sites with the goal of engaging with places, activities, and artifacts that authentically reflect a region's cultural heritage and history (Chen & Rahman, 2018).

The main objective of heritage tourism is to offer visitors accurate and meaningful insights into these sites, enabling them to appreciate local art, architecture, and traditions. Such destinations play a vital role in increasing national tourism revenue, which significantly contributes to regional and national development (Plangmarn et al., 2012).

Consequently, studying and understanding tourist motivation is essential. This topic has long been a key area of interest for both researchers and tourism professionals, as it is crucial for explaining tourist behavior and conducting in-depth tourism analyses (Castaño Blanco et al., 2003; Jang et al., 2009; Pestana et al., 2020).

Over the past decades, the investigation of tourist motivations has remained a central theme in tourism research, supported by various conceptual frameworks (Hsu & Huang, 2008). Among these, the Push–Pull Theory proposed by Crompton is one

of the most widely recognized and frequently applied approaches (Crompton, 1979).

This theory conceptualizes motivation as internal needs or desires that drive individuals to act in pursuit of satisfaction (Li et al., 2016). According to the Push–Pull framework, travel decisions are shaped by a combination of internal “push” factors and external “pull” factors, where the latter relate to specific attributes of a destination (Crompton, 1979).

Push factors are associated with intrinsic motivations, often linked to Maslow's hierarchy of needs (Fodness, 1994). These include desires such as escaping daily routines, seeking relaxation, pursuing adventure, achieving prestige, improving health, and fostering social interaction (Kao et al., 2008). However, visiting a UNESCO World Heritage Site is also considered one of the key motivating factors for tourists.

UNESCO World Heritage Site (WHS) status is widely perceived as a marker of exceptional quality, offering unique on-site experiences. This designation enhances tourists' confidence, facilitates decision-making, and reduces perceived risks when choosing a destination (Wang et al., 2015).

1. Such choices by tourists have notable implications for local communities and businesses, which

often benefit from increased attention but also face challenges in meeting the expectations associated with World Heritage-inspired travel (Poria et al., 2013).

2. However, existing research presents mixed findings regarding the extent to which World Heritage Site (WHS) status influences tourists' intention to visit (Pavlić et al., 2017). Furthermore, significant gaps remain in tourism studies, particularly in understanding how destination image is shaped not only prior to the visit but also during the on-site experience (Wang et al., 2015).

Prior knowledge is widely recognized as a key factor influencing how individuals search for information before traveling (Yamashita & Takata, 2020). Reflecting tourists' cognitive motivations, it plays a crucial role in shaping their decision-making processes and subsequent behavior (Gursoy & McCleary, 2004). According to Gursoy (2004), information search involves either activating previously stored knowledge or acquiring new information from external sources. This process is commonly divided into two types: internal and external search (Yamashita & Takata, 2020).

Yamashita and Takata (2020) further distinguish two main dimensions of prior knowledge: familiarity and expertise. Familiarity refers to accumulated experiences with a product or destination, whereas expertise reflects the ability to effectively perform tasks related to it. Among these, familiarity is particularly important, as it provides detailed insights into specific attractions—often conceptualized as object-based authenticity—which strongly influences tourists' destination preferences.

Turkestan has long been recognized as the city associated with Khoja Ahmed Yasawi, a prominent historical figure who played a significant role in the spiritual development of Turkic societies. This status was reinforced in 1396 when Tamerlane commissioned the construction of Yasawi's mausoleum, transforming Turkestan into a major religious center (Çalışkan & Özer, 2021).

Today, the Mausoleum of Khoja Ahmed Yasawi, a UNESCO World Heritage Site, remains the city's most iconic landmark, attracting visitors from around the world. At the same time, Turkestan offers a broader range of cultural and natural attractions, including the 12th-century Hilvet semi-underground mosque, the History Museum of Turkestan, the Otrar National Museum, and the Sayram-Ugam National Nature Park (Kazakh Tourism, 2024).

The government of Kazakhstan has made the promotion of Turkestan as a premier tourist destina-

tion a top priority, leveraging its rich cultural and historical heritage. Substantial investments have been allocated to upgrading the city's infrastructure and tourism facilities, transforming it into a dynamic cultural and spiritual center. At the core of these efforts is the UNESCO-listed Mausoleum of Ahmed Yasawi, which continues to draw both domestic and international visitors. In addition to this iconic site, the government has supported the development of modern attractions, such as the Karavansaray Complex, while maintaining a strong focus on preserving historical landmarks. This approach ensures that Turkestan appeals to a broad spectrum of tourists. Aggressive marketing campaigns aimed at neighboring countries and international audiences, combined with improved transportation networks, have significantly enhanced Turkestan's appeal. These efforts are part of Kazakhstan's larger strategy to diversify its economy and establish Turkestan as a key player in both regional and global tourism markets.

1. In 2023, Turkestan reached significant milestones in both its economic and tourism sectors, showcasing the success of its strategic initiatives. By the end of September, the city had attracted 245.8 billion tenge in investments, contributing to a gross regional product of 222.7 billion tenge a 15% increase compared to the previous year. Industrial production also experienced steady growth, with 12 billion tenge coming from manufacturing and an additional 5.5 billion tenge from the energy sector (Akimat Turkestan, 2024). The tourism sector thrived as well, welcoming 678,500 pilgrims and tourists in the first nine months of the year, including 6,700 international visitors—a remarkable 24.1% increase (Akimat Turkestan, 2024). This balanced focus on economic diversification and tourism highlights Turkestan's evolution as both a cultural and industrial hub. The city's rich heritage, embodied by the UNESCO-listed Mausoleum of Ahmed Yasawi, continues to attract global attention. Looking ahead, sustained investments in infrastructure, strategic marketing efforts, and the adoption of sustainable practices will be key to maintaining Turkestan's momentum and achieving its long-term development objectives.

The aim of this research is to explore the primary motivations of tourists for visiting Turkestan and to determine whether its status as a UNESCO World Heritage Site influences their decision to visit. To achieve this aim, several research questions were formulated:

1. What are the primary motivational factors for tourists visiting Turkestan?

2. How does the UNESCO World Heritage status of Turkestan influence tourists' motivation to visit the destination?

3. How does tourists' prior knowledge of Turkestan's historical and cultural significance affect their motivation to visit?

4. What additional factors (e.g., infrastructure, accessibility, marketing) contribute to tourists' motivation alongside the UNESCO designation and their prior knowledge of Turkestan?

Methodology

Participants

A total of 137 respondents participated in this research, representing a wide range of age groups and genders. The largest age groups were those aged 20–30 and 10–20 years, with each category consisting of 42 respondents. Smaller age groups included 18 participants aged 30–40 and 26 participants aged 40–50. Representation from older age groups was significantly lower, with only a few participants aged 50–60 and 60–70 years, indicating limited engagement from these demographics. In terms of gender, female respondents made up the majority of the sample, contributing 114 responses, while male participants accounted for just 23 responses. This distribution underscores a predominant involvement of younger individuals and female participants in the research, which may shape the perspectives and insights reflected in the findings.

Research Instrument

To gain a deeper understanding of tourists' motivations, preferences, and experiences in Turkestan, a comprehensive survey was developed and conducted. The goal of the survey was to evaluate key factors shaping travel behavior, perceptions of Turkestan as a destination, and the influence of its UNESCO World Heritage Site (WHS) status on visitor decisions.

Survey Structure:

The questionnaire was divided into several sections, each targeting specific aspects of the tourist experience:

1. Demographic Information

Participants shared details such as their age group, gender, and whether they had visited Turkestan before. Those with prior visits were asked about the frequency of their trips.

2. Motivations for Visiting Turkestan

Respondents identified their reasons for visiting, including the UNESCO WHS Mausoleum of

Khoja Ahmed Yasawi, exploring historical and cultural heritage, leisure activities, or seeking religious or spiritual experiences. An open-ended option was also included for other motivations.

3. Perception of UNESCO World Heritage Status

This section explored how the WHS designation of the Mausoleum influenced participants' travel decisions and whether the status enhanced Turkestan's prestige and appeal as a destination.

4. Attraction Preferences

Participants were asked to highlight their preferred attractions, such as historical landmarks, modern entertainment complexes, or religious sites.

5. Desired Experiences

This part focused on the types of experiences tourists sought, such as historical exploration, spiritual engagement, leisure and entertainment, or educational activities related to Kazakh culture.

6. Information Sources

Respondents indicated how they learned about Turkestan as a tourist destination, choosing from options like social media, government advertisements, word of mouth, or academic studies.

7. Factors Influencing Travel Decisions

Participants rated the significance of various factors, such as UNESCO status, historical importance, accessibility, and personal recommendations, using a five-point Likert scale.

8. Activities of Interest

Tourists selected activities they were likely to engage in during their visit, including guided tours, gondola rides, shopping for local crafts, or attending cultural festivals.

9. Satisfaction and Suggestions for Improvement

Participants rated their satisfaction with Turkestan's tourism promotion and infrastructure and shared suggestions for improvements, such as better signage, enhanced transportation, or additional attractions.

10. Prior Knowledge and Authenticity

This section explored how familiar participants were with Turkestan's history and culture, examining how their prior knowledge influenced their perception of authenticity and connection to the destination.

The survey was meticulously designed to offer a holistic view of tourists' experiences and perceptions, enabling a detailed analysis of how heritage tourism, visitor motivations, and destination appeal intersect in Turkestan.

Results and discussion

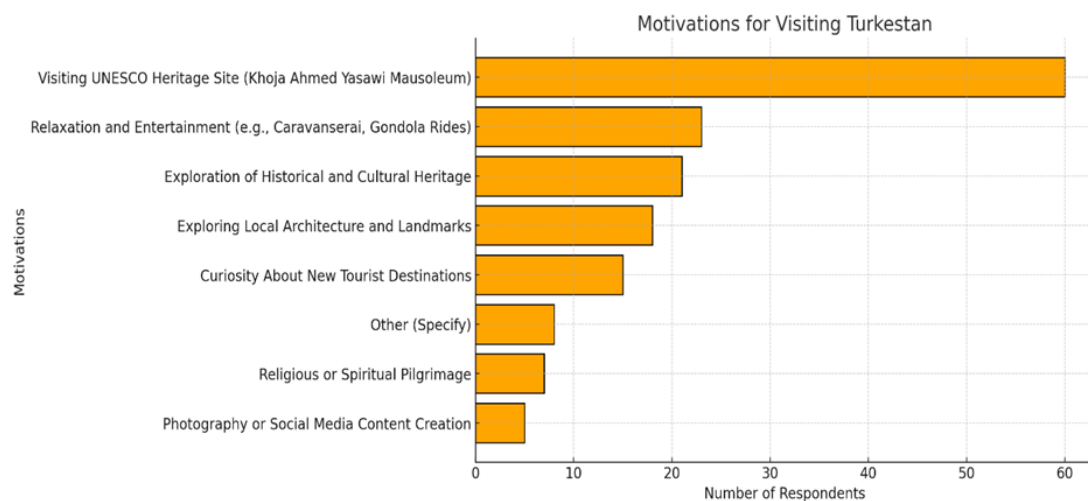
The analysis of visitation history reveals that a significant majority of respondents, 116 individuals (85%), have previously visited Turkestan, while 21 respondents (15%) reported they had never been to the city. Among those who have visited, the frequency of visits varies considerably. A substantial segment, comprising 100 respondents (74%), indicated they had visited Turkestan 1–3 times, suggesting a relatively limited engagement with the location. Another group, 23 respondents (17%), reported visiting 3–10 times, reflecting a moderate level of familiarity. Meanwhile, a smaller subset of 14 respondents (10%) demonstrated more extensive involvement, with 10–20 visits recorded. These findings highlight a spectrum of familiarity and connection to Turkestan, which likely shapes respondents' perceptions and experiences of the area.

An accompanying graph sheds light on the primary motivations for visiting Turkestan, underscoring the city's cultural and historical significance. The most cited motivation, mentioned by 42.3% of respondents, is visiting the UNESCO World Heritage Site Khoja Ahmed Yasawi Mausoleum (Figure 1). This finding reinforces Turkestan's role as a central

cultural and historical attraction. Secondary motivations include relaxation and entertainment at venues such as the Caravanserai, accounting for 16.1% of responses, reflecting the city's growing appeal to leisure-oriented tourists (Figure 1). Additionally, 11.7% of respondents reported being motivated by a desire to explore Kazakhstan's historical heritage, illustrating a strong interest in the country's cultural identity. Smaller groups expressed niche interests, such as spiritual pilgrimages (4.4%) and photography or content creation (3.6%), pointing to potential opportunities for specialized tourism offerings (Figure 1).

While the graph provides valuable insights into visitor motivations, it does not include demographic context, such as age or gender differences, which could help refine strategies for targeting specific audience segments more effectively. Furthermore, the data lacks qualitative insights, particularly regarding the 4.4% of respondents who selected "Other" as their primary motivation. This gap suggests the possibility of unexplored opportunities within the dataset (Figure 1). It is also important to note that the data represents a specific moment in time, and visitor motivations are likely to evolve alongside changes in infrastructure, cultural trends, or tourism marketing efforts.

Figure 1
Tourists Motivations for Visiting Turkestan



Note: Compiled by the author.

The survey responses strongly confirm that the UNESCO World Heritage designation significantly enhances the prestige and appeal of a destination. A vast majority of respondents (123 out of 137) agreed that the UNESCO label increases a destination's attractiveness and reputation. In contrast, only a small minority (14 respondents) expressed skepticism about the designation's role in influencing appeal.

The survey results further reveal that UNESCO status is a critical factor for many visitors in deciding to travel to Turkestan. Specifically, 49 respondents stated that the designation "strongly influenced" their decision to visit, suggesting that the recognition elevates the site's visibility and perceived value. Additionally, 26 respondents reported that UNESCO status "moderately influenced" their decision, while 15 noted a "slight influence." However, a noteworthy finding is that 32 respondents were unaware of Turkestan's UNESCO designation, and 15 stated that it had "no influence" on their decision to visit.

The strong influence of UNESCO recognition aligns with existing tourism studies, which regard World Heritage designation as a marker of prestige, authenticity, and trust. Such labels act as assurance of the site's cultural and historical significance, enhancing its overall appeal. For Turkestan, the UNESCO status likely sets it apart from other regional destinations, framing it as a must-visit location. This study contributes to the broader discussion on cultural heritage and tourism management by demonstrating how World Heritage recognition functions as both a preservation tool and a driver of sustainable tourism development. By attracting visitors interested in cultural and historical exploration, UNESCO sites can stimulate economic benefits while fostering global heritage awareness.

The study also explores the role of prior cultural awareness in shaping tourist behavior and experience. Survey results indicate that a majority of respondents were either "somewhat familiar" (55) or "very familiar" (49) with Turkestan's historical and cultural heritage before visiting, highlighting cultural awareness as a key motivator for travel. However, a smaller group reported limited familiarity (14) or neutrality (16), suggesting opportunities for educational initiatives to enhance visitor engagement.

Survey findings reveal that prior knowledge of Turkestan's history significantly enriches visitors' sense of authenticity. A majority of respondents

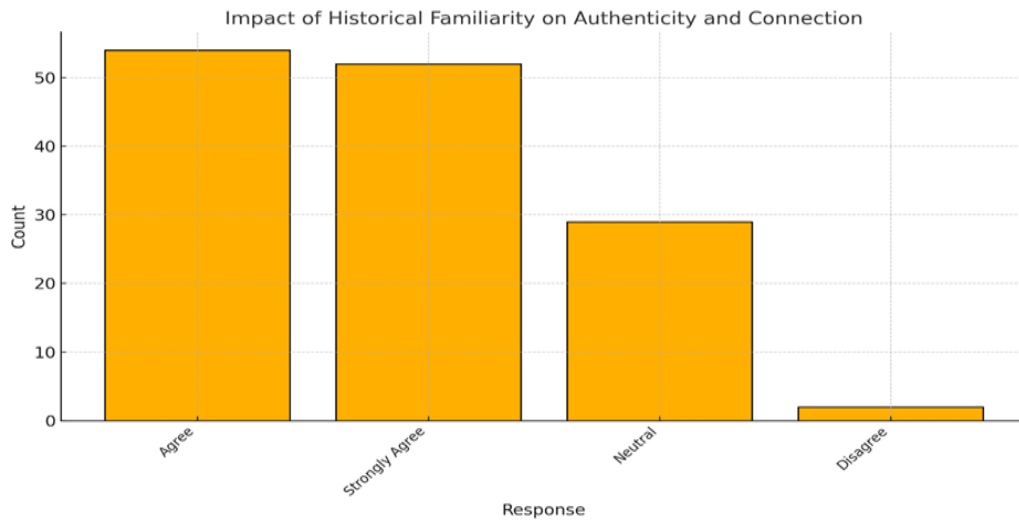
(66) stated that prior knowledge "significantly enhanced" their experience, while 36 noted it "somewhat enhanced" their sense of authenticity. Smaller groups expressed neutrality (28) or minimal/no impact (7). These findings align with broader theories in cultural tourism, which suggest that informed visitors are more likely to interpret cultural symbols and historical narratives, fostering a deeper emotional and intellectual connection to the site. Respondents who expressed neutrality or minimal impact might prioritize other aspects of their visit, such as leisure or aesthetics, or lack sufficient prior knowledge to fully engage with the cultural elements presented.

The findings further emphasize the role of historical familiarity in shaping perceptions of authenticity and emotional connection. Survey results show strong agreement that prior knowledge positively impacts the visitor experience, with 54 respondents agreeing and 52 fully agreeing that familiarity with Turkestan's history enhanced their visit (Figure 2). A smaller portion expressed neutrality (29), and only 2 respondents disagreed (Figure 2). These results suggest that familiarity serves as a bridge between visitors and Turkestan's cultural identity, enriching their emotional and intellectual engagement with the site's historical significance. Authenticity remains a central theme in heritage tourism, where visitors seek meaningful, historically rooted experiences. This study highlights the importance of fostering cultural awareness and knowledge to enhance the perceived authenticity and connection of visitors to destinations like Turkestan.

The survey shows that people visiting Turkestan are mostly drawn to the city for its cultural and historical significance, with 58 participants citing this as their main reason for visiting (Figure 3). This comes as no surprise given Turkestan's rich heritage and its status as a UNESCO World Heritage site, which makes it an attractive destination for cultural tourism. The city's deep historical roots are a defining feature of its identity, pulling in visitors who are eager to connect with its historical landmarks and stories. Spiritual experiences also play an important role in drawing tourists, as 21 respondents emphasized this as a key motivation for their trip (Figure 3). Turkestan's reputation as a significant pilgrimage site, with its blend of historical and religious importance, makes it a key destination for spiritual tourism.

Figure 2

Impact of Historical Familiarity on Authenticity and Connection



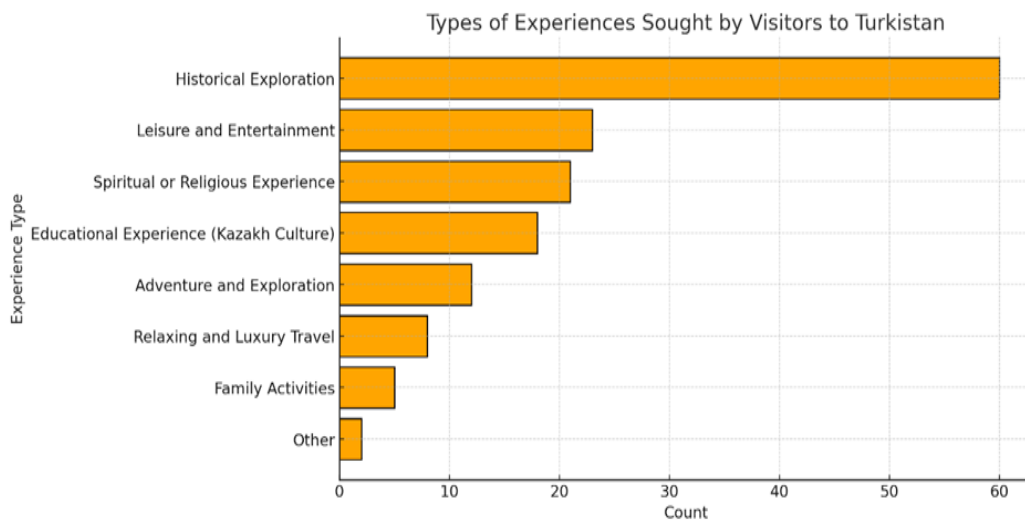
Note: Compiled by the author.

In addition to historical and spiritual interests, visitors expressed other reasons for traveling to Turkestan, such as leisure and entertainment (23 responses) and opportunities to learn about Kazakh culture (18 responses). These results indicate that Turkestan appeals to a variety of interests, presenting itself not only as a hub for heritage tourism but also as a place

for broader cultural and recreational activities. However, niche interests such as adventure, luxury, and family-oriented activities garnered minimal attention in the survey. This suggests there could be untapped potential for developing these areas, creating opportunities to appeal to a wider range of visitors and expand Turkestan's tourism offerings.

Figure 3

Types of Experiences Sought by Visitors to Turkestan



Note: Compiled by the author.

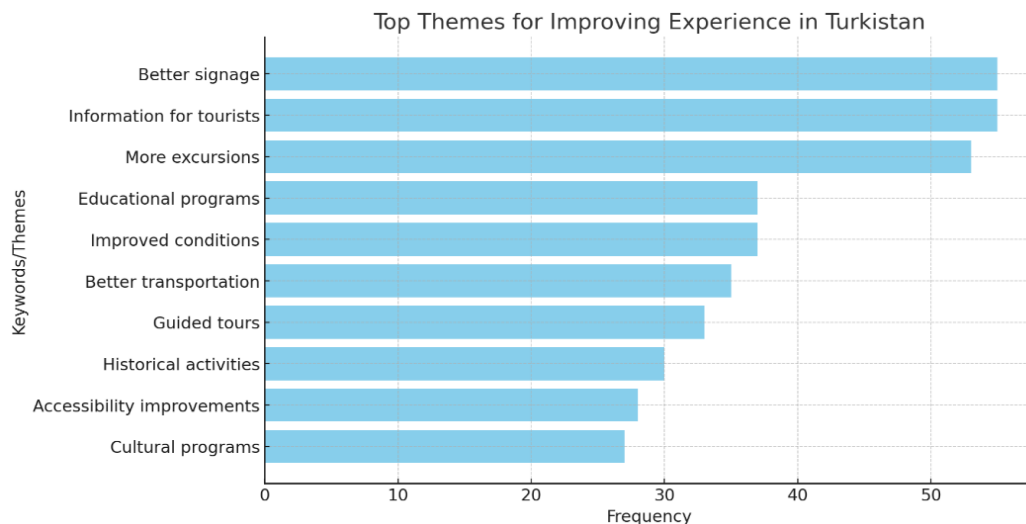
The survey highlights that visitors to Turkestan see room for improvement in several key areas to enhance their overall experience. The most frequently mentioned suggestion was the need for “better signage and information for tourists,” with 55 respondents identifying this as a top priority (Figure 4). This shows a clear demand for improved guidance and accessibility at tourist sites, particularly given Turkestan’s status as a UNESCO World Heritage site. Enhancing informational infrastructure aligns with global best practices in heritage tourism, where well-designed information systems play a vital role in boosting visitor satisfaction.

Another significant area of interest was the call for “more excursions and educational programs,” which 53 respondents highlighted (Figure 4). This reflects a growing desire for cultural engagement, as tourists increasingly seek opportunities to dive deeper into Turkestan’s history and cultural identity. Offering more such programs could cater to the rising demand for transformative travel experiences, where visitors aim to gain personal growth and establish meaningful connections with the destinations they explore.

The survey also pointed out the need for “improved conditions and accommodations,” noted by 37 respondents (Figure 4). This finding emphasizes the importance of ensuring comfortable and accessible lodging options to support the growth of tourism in the city. Additionally, many respondents mentioned infrastructure upgrades, such as better transport systems, which highlights the logistical challenges tourists may encounter when navigating Turkestan.

While these themes dominated the feedback, other suggestions like “cultural programs” and “guided tours” point to niche opportunities that could help diversify Turkestan’s tourism offerings. These insights suggest that Turkestan has the potential to evolve from being predominantly a heritage destination to a more versatile tourism hub, appealing to both cultural and recreational interests. However, the relatively limited focus on areas such as adventure tourism or luxury experiences highlights untapped opportunities for future development to attract a broader and more diverse audience.

Figure 4
Top Themes for Improving Experience in Turkestan



Note: Compiled by the author.

Conclusion

This study aimed to explore the primary motivations of tourists for visiting Turkestan and to determine whether its status as a UNESCO World Heritage Site influences their decision to visit. The

findings reveal that cultural and historical exploration is the predominant motivator, with the Mausoleum of Khoja Ahmed Yasawi serving as a central attraction. UNESCO World Heritage designation significantly enhances the city’s prestige, influencing both domestic and international tourists’ deci-

sions and perceptions. However, a notable portion of visitors remain unaware of the UNESCO status, indicating a need for broader awareness campaigns.

The results also emphasize the role of prior knowledge in enhancing visitors' sense of authenticity and connection to Turkestan's cultural heritage. This underscores the importance of educational initiatives and informative programs to deepen cultural awareness and foster meaningful engagement. Furthermore, the study identifies critical areas for improvement, including infrastructure enhancements, better signage, and expanded cultural offerings, which are essential to elevate the overall visitor experience.

By addressing these challenges and leveraging its rich historical and cultural assets, Turkestan can

continue to grow as a dynamic heritage tourism destination. Sustained efforts in marketing, infrastructure development, and the diversification of tourist offerings will ensure its long-term appeal and competitiveness in regional and global tourism markets.

Author Contributions

M.A. Yesbolova – Corresponding Author; Writing – Review & Editing; Supervision.

N.E. Kulumzhanov – Methodology; Data Curation; Formal Analysis; Investigation.

D.B. Zharkimbayeva – Methodology; Investigation; Data Curation; Formal Analysis.

References

- Akimat Turkestan. (2024). Available at: <https://www.gov.kz/memleket/entities/ontustik/press/news/details/643038?lang=ru>
- Chen, H., & Rahman, I. (2018). Cultural tourism: An analysis of engagement, cultural contact, memorable tourism experience, and destination loyalty. *Tourism Management Perspectives*, 26, 153–163. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.tmp.2017.10.006>
- Castañó Blanco, J. M., Moreno Sáez, A., García Dauder, S., & Crego Díaz, A. (2003). Psychosocial study of tourist motivation: Factors involved in the choice of Madrid as a destination. *Estudios Turísticos*, 158(1), 4–5.
- Crompton, J. L. (1979). An assessment of the image of Mexico as a vacation destination and the influence of geographical location upon that image. *Journal of Travel Research*, 17(4), 18–23. <https://doi.org/10.1177/004728757901700404>
- Fodness, D. (1994). Measuring tourist motivation. *Annals of Tourism Research*, 21(3), 555–581. [https://doi.org/10.1016/0160-7383\(94\)90120-1](https://doi.org/10.1016/0160-7383(94)90120-1)
- Gursoy, D., & McCleary, K. W. (2004). Travellers' prior knowledge and its impact on their information search behavior. *Journal of Hospitality & Tourism Research*, 28(1), 66–94. <https://doi.org/10.1177/1096348003261218>
- Hsu, C. H., & Huang, S. (2008). Travel motivation: A critical review of the concept's development. In *Tourism management: Analysis, behaviour and strategy* (pp. 14–27).
- Huang, S., Afsharifard, A., & van der Veen, R. (2016). Examining the moderating role of prior knowledge in the relationship between destination experiences and tourist satisfaction. *Journal of Vacation Marketing*, 22(4), 320–334. <https://doi.org/10.1177/1356766715618996>
- Jang, S. S., Bai, B., Hu, C., & Wu, C. M. E. (2009). Affect, travel motivation, and travel intention: A senior market. *Journal of Hospitality & Tourism Research*, 33(1), 51–73. <https://doi.org/10.1177/1096348008329666>
- Kao, M., Patterson, N. S., & Li, C. K. (2008). Motivations and satisfactions of Taiwanese tourists who visit Australia: An exploratory study. *Journal of Travel & Tourism Marketing*, 24(1), 17–33. https://doi.org/10.1300/J073v24n01_02
- Kazakh Tourism. (2024). *Turkestan: Historical and cultural complex*. <https://qaztourism.kz/upload/iblock/871/871f870cb55a25fbdecdd53cb3ada46e.pdf>
- Li, M., Zhang, H., & Cai, L. A. (2016). A subcultural analysis of tourism motivations. *Journal of Hospitality & Tourism Research*, 40(1), 85–113.
- Pavlič, I., Portolan, A., & Puh, B. (2017). (Un)supported current tourism development in UNESCO protected site: The case of Old City of Dubrovnik. *Economies*, 5(1), 9–13. <https://doi.org/10.3390/economies5010009>
- Pestana, M. H., Parreira, A., & Moutinho, L. (2020). Motivations, emotions, and satisfaction: The keys to a tourism destination choice. *Journal of Destination Marketing & Management*, 16, 1–9. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.jdmm.2018.12.006>
- Plangmarn, A., Mujtaba, B. G., & Pirani, M. (2012). Cultural value and travel motivation of European tourists. *Journal of Applied Business Research*, 28, 1295–1304.
- Poria, Y., Reichel, A., & Cohen, R. (2013). Tourist's perceptions of World Heritage sites and their designation. *Tourism Management*, 35, 272–274. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.tourman.2012.02.011>
- Uğur Çalıışkan, & Özer, Ö. (2021). Relationship between local residents' perceptions of tourism and support attitudes in post-communist countries: Case of Turkestan (Kazakhstan). *Tourism Planning & Development*, 18(5), 573–593. <https://doi.org/10.1080/21568316.2020.1837228>
- Wang, Z., Yang, Z., Wall, G., Xu, X., Han, F., Du, X., & Liu, Q. (2015). Is it better for a tourist destination to be a World Heritage site? Visitors' perspectives on the inscription of Kanas on the World Heritage List in China. *Journal for Nature Conservation*, 23, 19–26. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.jnc.2014.11.001>
- Yamashita, R., & Takata, K. (2020). Relationship between prior knowledge, destination reputation, and loyalty among sport tourists. *Journal of Sport & Tourism*, 24(2), 1–11. <https://doi.org/10.1080/14775085.2020.1763192>

Information about authors:

Moldir Yesbolova (corresponding author) – Master of Cultural Studies, Senior Lecturer, Kazakh State Agrarian Research University (Almaty, Kazakhstan, e-mail: azimova_8383@mail.ru).

Nurzhan Kulumzhanov – Doctor of Philosophy (PhD), Associate Professor, Almaty Management University (Almaty, Kazakhstan, e-mail: kunimzhanov@mail.ru).

Dana Zharkimbayeva – Candidate of Philosophy, Senior Lecturer, Al-Farabi Kazakh National University (Almaty, Kazakhstan, e-mail: dana_3691@mail.ru).

Авторлар туралы мәлімет:

Есболова Молдир Ауелтаевна (корреспондент-автор) – Мәдениеттану магистрі, аға оқытушы, Қазақ ұлттық аграрлық зерттеу университеті (Алматы, Қазақстан, e-mail: azimova_8383@mail.ru).

Кулумжанов Нұржан Еркенович – Философия докторы (PhD), қауымдастырылған профессор, Алматы менеджмент университеті (Алматы, Қазақстан, e-mail: kunimzhanov@mail.ru).

Жаркимбаева Дана Бактубаевна – Философия ғылымдарының кандидаты, аға оқытушы, әл-Фараби атындағы Қазақ ұлттық университеті (Алматы, Қазақстан, e-mail: dana_3691@mail.ru).

Сведения об авторах:

Есболова Молдир Ауелтаевна (корреспондент-автор) – магистр культурологии, старший преподаватель, Казахский государственный аграрный исследовательский университет (Алматы, Казахстан, e-mail: azimova_8383@mail.ru).

Кулумжанов Нұржан Еркенович – PhD, ассоциированный профессор, Алматы Менеджмент Университет (Алматы, Казахстан, e-mail: kunimzhanov@mail.ru).

Жаркимбаева Дана Бактубаевна – кандидат философских наук, старший преподаватель, Казахский национальный университет им. аль-Фараби (Алматы, Казахстан, e-mail: dana_3691@mail.ru).

Поступила 10.11.2025

Принята 10.01.25