

Marketing Research of Rural Tourism after Covid19 in Samarkand, Uzbekistan: Koni Ghil Meros

Sitora Shaydullaeva Sobirjonovna

Lecturer at 'Silk Road' International University of Tourism

Ibrokhimov Nodirbek

Student at 'Silk Road' International University of Tourism

Abstract: The purpose of this study is to interview people and analyze survey questionnaires in order to determine the relevance of rural tourism communities in Koni Ghil Meros, Samarkand. The interview and survey for this study were done with 41 inbound and outbound tourists in Koni Ghil Meros, Samarkand, Uzbekistan, using a tourist agreement questionnaire.

The highest degree of agreement was discovered in the area of getting new knowledge and experience, while the lowest level was found in the area of booking at a tourism destination. The research highlighted service aspects agreement, such as price, returning, feeling at home, and other elements, as well as the characteristics that have a significant impact on visitor contentment. Tourist expectations are high, according to the research, and the existing tourism destinations are unable to match them. We hope that the conclusions of this article will benefit Samarkand's tourism business. It indicates that a well-developed and compact rural tourism industry can attract more visitors and give them a better experience.

Keyword: rural tourism, Koni Ghil Meros, service quality, Covid19, tourism village, tourism destination

1. Introduction

In many regions of the world, the new coronavirus outbreak has affected practically every aspect of life. The tourism industry was expected to rebound with the coming of summer. However, because to the pandemic, this tourist season is significantly less active than prior years. Because of the extremely contagious illness, tourism businesses, like those in other industries, are attempting to gain travelers' trust by employing a variety of precautions.

The entire tourist business has experienced its worst crisis in history as a result of the fast spread of the COVID-19 epidemic (UNWTO 2020). Hall et al. 2020; Sheresheva 2020; Gössling et al. 2021). The present global economic scenario is unprecedented and catastrophic for the tourist business (Hall et al. 2020; Sheresheva 2020; Gössling et al. 2021). The immediate anti-pandemic measures, such as border closures and contact restrictions around the world, flight cancellations and additional travel bans, the formally implemented suspension of accommodation facilities, as well as reduced incomes due to the temporary or permanent closure of businesses and organizations, have caused major problems for many industries. Hotels, airlines, cruise ships, and tour companies have all seen extraordinary cancellations, resulting in significant financial losses (Alonso et al. 2020).

The total costs experienced by the worldwide travel and hospitality sector as a result of the COVID-19 epidemic are now hard to determine. The field of tourism and hospitality is designed to address secondary requirements; when people's incomes fall, they tend to reduce or remove their tourist expenditures. This became "the standard" during pandemic times, not only for the poor and destitute, but for most clients in all segments of international tourism who found themselves in a crisis position. Simultaneously, industry players battling to survive are looking for novel decisions and models of continued development, taking into

account new conditions and changing customer behavior, in addition to optimizing their operations and seeking financing (Laato et al. 2020; Sheth 2020).

Our main purpose of this study is to collect marketing data on rural tourism in Koni Ghil Meros, Samarkand. Following that, it makes several recommendations for improving Samarkand's rural tourist sector.

2. Literature review

2.1 Rural Tourism

In Uzbekistan, there are now 10,865 villages. Each of these towns has its own tourism attraction. The government places a high priority on developing new employment in rural regions and raising people's living conditions. Rural tourism is one of the economic sectors that may be leveraged to achieve this goal. The following considerations should be taken while planning rural tourism: To begin with, each community has its own collection of cultural, material, and natural resources. Cultural landscapes, rural life, and other resources form the second group. ((<http://www.bulletennauki.com>) Bulletin of Science and Practice (Scientific Journal))

The relocation of individuals from their typical place of residence to rural regions for a minimum of twenty-four hours to a maximum of six months for the express purpose of leisure and enjoyment is known as rural tourism. All tourist operations in a rural region are referred to as rural tourism.

According to the OECD, rural tourism should be:

- They are situated in rural locations.
- Functionally rural, based on the unique characteristics of the rural world: small businesses, open space, interaction with nature and the natural world, heritage, traditional societies, and traditional activities.
- Rural in scale – both in terms of construction and settlements – and hence tiny in scope.
- Characteristics of a traditional business, expanding slowly and organically and with ties to local families.
- Sustainable - in the sense that its development should contribute to the preservation of an area's unique rural character, as well as in terms of resource conservation.
- There are many distinct types of rural tourism, each reflecting a particular aspect of the rural environment, economics, and history.

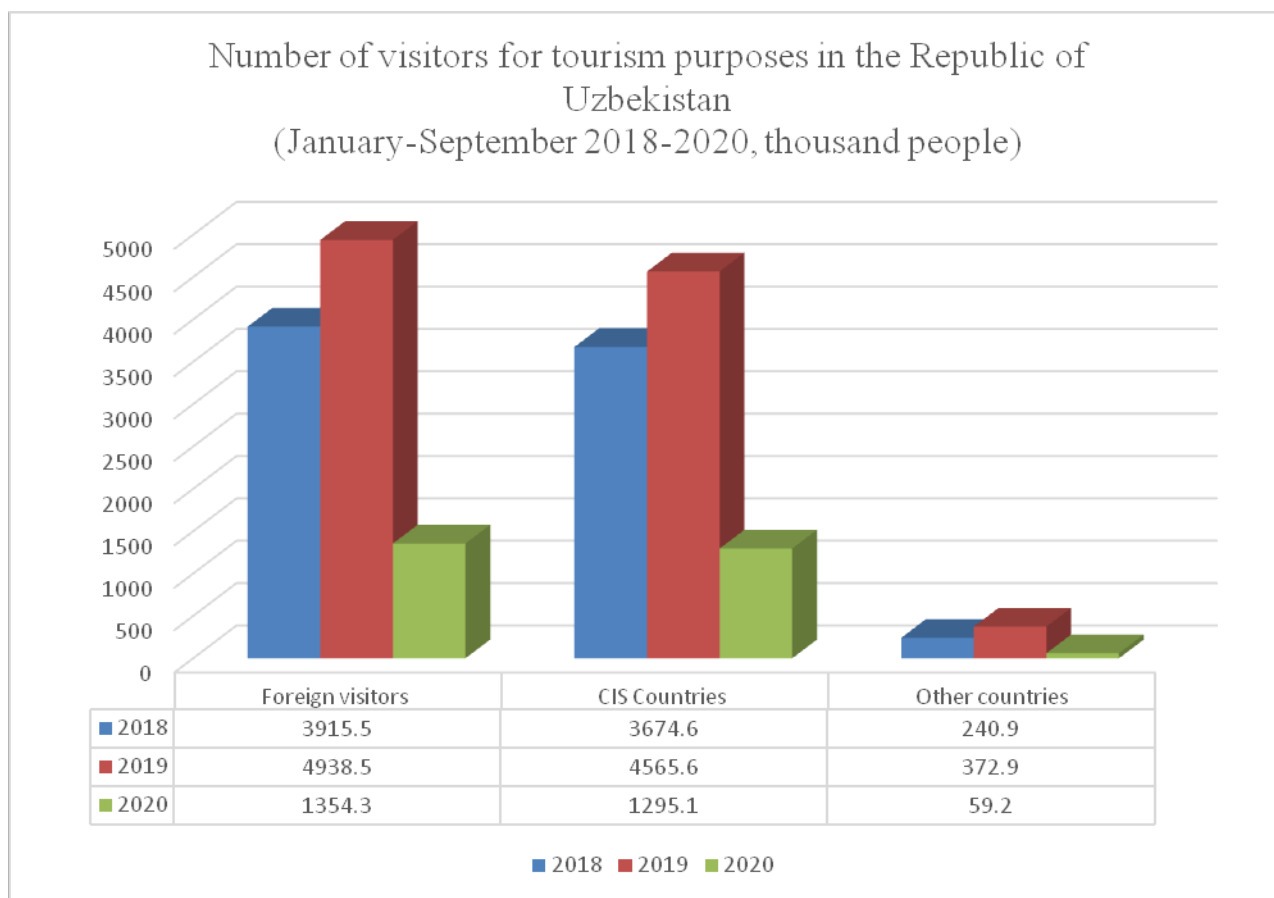
2.2 Impact of Covid19 in Rural tourism

When it comes to tourism sites, safety is crucial. The majority of visitors are expected to be adventure tourists (Lepp & Gibson, 2008). Dangers and violence caused by war or terrorism (uromskaité & Nagaj, 2018), natural catastrophes such as earthquakes (Chung-Hung & Cheng-Wu, 2010), floods, tsunamis, volcanic eruptions (Ramis et al., 2019), and forest fires can all have an impact on tourist safety. Furthermore, criminality (Ferreira & Harmse, 2000) as well as health hazards, particularly infectious illnesses, can have an impact. The connection between health hazards and the quality and availability of medical care is also a problem in this scenario.

Prior to the pandemic, rural tourism was an important source of stress relief for city dwellers. It became even more significant in the face of anti-pandemic efforts, as the thought of being secluded in a small apartment in a huge city with little possibility to go for a stroll added to the value of living in the countryside. For instance, Zhu and Deng (2020) discovered that knowledge of pneumonia risk influences behavioral inclination to embrace rural tourism. They confirmed that in 2020, Chinese people preferred rural tourism as a means to relax during the weekend, based on the examination of 412 valid samples.

2.3 Impact of Covid19 into Foreign visitors in Uzbekistan

Table 1.



The number of international tourists visiting the Republic of Uzbekistan between January and September 2020 was 1354.3 thousand individuals. When compared to the same period in 2019, this is a 72.6 percent decline.

Between January and September 2020, 1295.1 thousand foreign visitors from CIS countries visited the Republic of Uzbekistan, accounting for 95.6 percent of all visitors. (State Statistics Committee of the Republic of Uzbekistan www.stat.uz)

2.4 Koni Ghil Meros

A number of practical works are being carried out in accordance with Appendix No. 8 to the Resolution of the Cabinet of Ministers of the Republic of Uzbekistan dated July 10, 2020 No. 433 “Regulations on the procedure for assigning citizens” gatherings the status of “tourist mahalla”, “tourist village” in the Samarkand region. A gathering of inhabitants from the Koni Ghil Meros in the Samarkand area was given a certificate of a tourist mahalla for the first time in the Uzbekistan Republic.

The inauguration ceremony of the country’s first tourist hamlet “Koni Ghil Meros” located 13 kilometers from Samarkand, took held on October 16, 2020. A circular walkway 800 meters long, covering 3 hectares, allows travelers to wander along the Siyob River and rest in nature.

In addition to the producing of Samarkand paper, the craft center “Koni Ghil Meros” has established the work of potters and carpenters, and the process of making vegetable oil at oil mills using old technology has begun. In addition, a pavilion has been constructed so that you may enjoy the scenery from above. The village’s infrastructure has been upgraded, the historical look of the buildings has been restored, and cultural

and entertainment activities have been established. Walking routes, leisure grounds, guest homes, and public catering have all been built so that visitors may unwind in nature while strolling along the Siyab River.

It should be highlighted that establishing a tourist hamlet will enhance the number of visitors to Samarkand, boost the population's standard of living, and create new employment.

3. Research Data

3.1 *The Methodology of the research*

The study's overarching purpose is to identify better ways to assist rural tourism in Samarkand region, Koni Ghil Meros after Covid19. We used a variety of methodologies and procedures to achieve the research objectives. We used systematic literature analysis to gain theoretical background, and analysis of data obtained through in-depth interviews and survey questionnaires to gain insights into the attitudes of developing tourist destination in Uzbekistan toward issues of sustainable development.

3.2 *Questionnaire Design*

The data for this study was gathered using a self-administered questionnaire. The demographic and test item portions (A and B) are the two primary portions. The demographic questions in Section A of the questionnaire are used to determine demographic information about the tourist. Section B includes questions concerning the quality of service at tourism destinations, as well as their agreement with the offered viewpoint. A five-point Likert scale was employed (a score of 1 means you entirely disagree with it, and a score of 5 implies you entirely agree with it).

3.3 *Data collection*

3.3.1 *Population and data resources.*

Data collection process: Data for the analysis were collected through both online and offline surveys. The research obtained 41 respondents, including 31 offline answers and 10 online respondents. A total of 50 questionnaires were distributed but only 41 questionnaires were usable, resulting in a response rate of 82%.

Participants: The population for this study is international and domestic (outbound and inbound) tourists who visited Samarkand city for different purposes and stayed for various duration. The international and domestic tourist was chosen because:

- The study is about Rural tourism after Covid19 that may merely be helpful and doable for the research here in Samarkand where is visited by many visitors.
- Tourists are the target audience since they are utilizing the service and have the necessary knowledge and skills to respond appropriately.

The population has three characteristics that impact the generalizability of this study and as a result, it will be addressed in the remaining section.

- (1) A small number of visitors return to Koni Ghil Meros, Samarkand on a regular basis.
- (2) International and domestic tourists who must be able to visit and use the Koni Ghil Meros service in Samarkand.
- (3) Only the tourism village is located in Samarkand, Uzbekistan.

The research focuses on the tourism village of Koni Ghil Meros since it is Samarkand's first tourism village, and there is a lot of potential for the tourist industry to grow after Covid19, which will help us collect information more efficiently.

We addressed the visitors, introduced ourselves, gave a brief overview of the research project, and invited them to complete the questionnaire.

4. Results

4.1 The profile of the respondents.

Table 2

Characteristics: demographic	number	%	Characteristics: demographic	number	%
Gender			Travelling partner		
Male	26	63.4	With relatives	20	48.8
Female	15	36.6	With friends	15	36.6
			Alone	4	9.7
Age			With (other)	2	4.9
Between 18 and 20	5	12.2			
Between 21 and 30	15	36.6	Trip duration		
Between 31-40	17	41.5	1 days	27	65.9
Between 41-50	3	7.3	2-3 days	8	19.5
Between 51-60	1	2.4	4-7 days	6	14.6
Over 60	0		8-30 days	0	0
			More than 30 days	0	0
The number of visits					
One	30	73.2	Purpose of visit		
More than two	11	26.8	Leisure	20	48.8
			Business	4	9.7
Country of residence			Education	6	14.6
Domestic	35	83.4	Health	1	2.4
Overseas	6	14.6	Other	10	24.5
Religion			Challenging problems		
Muslim	37	90.3	Quality of service	15	36.6
Christian	4	9.7	Reliability	20	48.8
(Other)	0	0	Language difficulty	4	9.7
			Price	2	4.9

The survey took place between May 24 and May 30, 2021. The questionnaire was completed by 41 visitors in total. From the table 2, we can conclude that 26 out of 41 visitors were male, 63.4% as well as 15 respondents were female. Almost 42% of visitors were between the ages of 31 and 40, and one responder was between the ages of 51 and 60, he was 56, and no one was beyond the age of 60. About 73 percent of tourists visited the tourist location for the first time, while 11 passengers visited the location more than twice. The surveys were completed by 35 domestic tourists. Only four people were Christians among the 90 percent of tourists who were Muslims. Traveling with family came in first position with 48.8%, followed by traveling with friends in second place with 36.6 percent, and four tourists decided to go alone. The average length of a visitor's journey is one day, which accounts for around 65 percent of all visits. Tourists did not remain for more than 30 days or during 8-30 days. Only one responder traveled for health, while nearly half of the visitors (48.8%) opted to go for pleasure. When it came to picking a place, 20 of the survey participants had some issues with dependability, and over 10% of visitors experienced linguistic barriers.

4.2 *Service quality of Koni Ghil Meros*

Table 3

Agreement of service quality in tourist destination	Mean	Median	mode	SD
Positive opinion about Koni Ghil Meros	3.439	3	3	0.976
Friendly staff	3.756	4	4	0.888
Having unique image	3.488	3	3	1.003
Popularity	3.488	3	3	0.898
Putting guest first	3.634	4	3	1.019
Respecting natural environment	4	4	4	0.866
Quality of service	3.634	4	3	0.733
Booking	3	3	3	0.806
Price	3.341	3	3	1.039
Price of additional offers	3.512	3	3	0.746
Valuable	3.171	3	3	1.202
Gaining new knowledge and experience	4.073	4	5	0.848
Being worth every Euro paid	3.439	3	3	0.95
Overall satisfaction	3.7561	4	3	0.8597
Deciding again to choose	3.61	3	3	0.997
Recommending to relatives and friends	3.537	4	4	0.951
Returning	2.95	3	3	1.14
Feeling at home	3.293	3	3	1.031

The term “quality” is a topic that gets a lot of attention. The quality can be judged from a variety of perspectives. It is really difficult to define this phrase. It is usually based on a consumer’s point of view; it is frequently a subjective assessment of services. As a result, the purpose of this article is to look into how travelers use the tourism destination service.

Visitors were asked to rate how enthusiastic they were about 18 different characteristics of the tourism site. Table 3 compares the service elements using means, medians, modes, and standard deviations. The majority of tourists seems to disagree with the offered assumptions regarding Samarkand's tourism destination offerings. Table 3 shows that 18 service characteristics have a 3.5 rating (either no opinion or disagreed). Returning, booking, feeling at home, price, and having a unique image received the lowest rankings. Only the ticket price was appreciated as a feature of Samarkand's public transportation. In response to the question concerning their general satisfaction with the tourism destination's service quality, respondents stated that they are neither agreeing nor disagreeing.

5. Implication

5.1 Theoretical implication

We can deduce, from table 1 that Covid19 had a significant impact on travelers to Uzbekistan. Facts show that the majority of all tour packages include travelling in Samarkand, Bukhara, Khiva, and Tashkent, as well as a number of domestic tourists who select to travel in Samarkand. The Tourism Department of Uzbekistan is working to develop rural tourism in order to strengthen the tourism business. It is some how a great way to improve tourism industry in Samarkand after Covid19.

5.2 Practical implication

From the table 3 we can conclude that tourists' agreement of offering service is not good enough and more than half of service aspects should be improved in the near future.

Because the last question was open-ended, participants were encouraged to provide their own recommendations. As a result, several comments and suggestions were provided by survey participants. “It

is very excellent that the Koni Ghil prepares the paper in the ancient fashion, and we come to buy it and see how it is made,” one of the tourists stated. It would be fantastic if it could be purchased online or at stores, and it would help other tourists recognize Koni Ghil. Before I came to Koni Ghil, I knew absolutely nothing about it.” We can conclude from the idea that the marketing plan is insufficient, and that not only the visitor, but also others, had not previously heard Koni Ghil Meros. Following that, there are some recommendations and issues that travelers encountered when visiting the destination:

- Infrastructure is not good enough;
- Language difficulties;
- Online booking;
- Online shopping;
- Advertisement;
- Improvement knowledge of locals;
- Wi-fi, internet connection.

Some discussed issues and suggestions were conducted with each other, for example, when Wi-Fi, internet connection is faster and higher quality, visitors can post photos and videos taken at the destination to their personal accounts on social media sites such as Instagram, Facebook, Twitter, which can be the most cost-effective way of advertising and introducing the destination to the world.

6. Conclusion

After Covid19, the major objective is to strengthen the tourist business in a cost-effective manner, as many people are bored at home. To boost tourism in Samarkand, Uzbekistan, the government is attempting to develop rural tourism in the Koni Ghil Meros tourism hamlet, which is expected to be more successful.

After Covid19, we can infer that rural tourism is one of the finest ways to grow the tourist business in Samarkand, Uzbekistan. True, there are certain issues, such as internet connectivity, infrastructure, and language barriers, but if we can address them in the near future, we will be able to achieve more tourist success.

Future study might look at the impact of Covid-19 on various rural tourist lodgings and/or other rural tourism enterprises in different nations through time, as well as the factors that influence travelers' choice of rural destination/accommodation during pandemics.

7. References

1. Hall, C. Michael, Scott Daniel, and Stefan Gössling. 2020. Pandemics, transformations and tourism: Be careful what you wish for. *Tourism Geographies* 22.
2. Sheresheva, Marina Y. 2020. Coronavirus and tourism. *Population and economics* 2: 72-76.
3. Gössling, Stefan, Daniel Scott, and C. Michael Hall. 2021. Pandemics, tourism and global change: A rapid assessment of COVID-19. *Journal of Sustainable Tourism* 29: 1-20.
4. Ochilov, A. (2012). Education and economic growth in Uzbekistan. *Perspectives of Innovations, Economics and Business, PIEB*, 12(3), 21-33.
5. Ochilov, A. (2014). Is higher education a driving force of economic growth in Uzbekistan?. *Perspectives of Innovations, Economics and Business, PIEB*, 14(4), 160-174.
6. Jurakulovna J. G. The Necessity and Theoretical Basis of Financial Statement Analysis in Modern Management //Academic Journal of Digital Economics and Stability. – 2021. – T. 7. – C. 89-95.
7. Ochilov, A. O. (2017). The Higher Education Dynamics and Economic Growth: The Case of Uzbekistan. *Journal of Management Value & Ethics*, 7(2), 46-53.

8. Ochilov, A. O. HIGHER EDUCATION IS AN IMPORTANT FACTOR IN STIMULATING ECONOMIC GROWTH. *GWALIOR MANAGEMENT ACADEMY*, 23, 133.
9. Alonso, Abel Duarte, Seng Kiat Kok, Alessandro Bressan, Michelle O'Shea, Nikolaos Sakellarios, Alex Koresis, Maria Alejandra Buitrago Solis, and Leonardo J. Santon. 2020. COVID-19, aftermath, impact, and hospitality firms: An international perspective. *International Journal of Hospitality Management* 91: 102654.
10. Laato, Samuli, Najmul Islam, Ali Farooq, and Amandeep Dhir. 2020. Unusual purchasing behavior during the early stages of COVID-19 pandemic: The stimulus-organism-response approach. *Journal of Retailing and Consumer Services* 57: 102224.
11. Sheth, Jagdish. 2020. Impact of Covid-19 on consumer behaviour: Will the old habits return or die? *Journal of Business Research* 117: 280-83.
12. What is rural tourism? <https://tourismnotes.com/rural-tourism/>
13. State Statistics Committee of the Republic of Uzbekistan www.stat.uz
14. <https://telegra.ph/SAMARQANDDA-YANGI-TURISTIK-QISHLOQ-TASHKIL-ETILADI-02-11>
15. <https://telegra.ph/SAMARQANDDA-KONIGIL-SAYYOHLIK-QISHLOGINING-OCHILISH-MAROSIMI-BOLIB-OTDI-10-16>