

GASTRONOMIC TOURISM AS A FACTOR IN THE DEVELOPMENT OF TOURIST STREETS IN A MEGAPOLIS (THE CASE OF TASHKENT)

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Abstract

The article examines gastronomic tourism as one of the most dynamically developing areas of the modern travel industry, contributing to the formation of the tourist identity of megacities. Using the example of Tashkent, the study analyzes the influence of gastronomic tourism on the development of tourist streets, the enhancement of their economic and cultural attractiveness, as well as the role of gastronomic spaces in shaping the city's image. The authors emphasize that gastronomic tourism is becoming a factor in the sustainable development of the urban infrastructure and the local economy.

Keywords

gastronomic tourism, tourist streets, megapolis, Tashkent, sustainable development, culinary heritage.

INTRODUCTION

In recent years, gastronomic tourism has become one of the leading trends in the global tourism industry. According to the World Tourism Organization (UNWTO), around 30% of travelers worldwide choose their travel destination based on gastronomic preferences and the uniqueness of national cuisine [1]. For megacities, gastronomic tourism serves as an important tool for attracting tourists and investments, as well as a means of preserving cultural heritage. As the largest megapolis in Central Asia, Tashkent possesses significant potential for the development of gastronomic tourism. Over the past decades, gastronomic tourism has transformed into one of the fastest-growing segments of the global tourism

industry. It represents a form of cultural and educational tourism in which travelers seek to experience national cuisine, dietary traditions, and the local gastronomic characteristics of different regions. According to UNWTO (2024), more than 30% of international tourists identify gastronomic impressions as one of the key motivations for their trips, while revenues from gastronomic tourism grow annually by 8–10%. International experience demonstrates that gastronomic tourism can serve as a powerful tool for the development of urban spaces. Spain uses gastronomic festivals in San Sebastián and Barcelona to promote tourist streets and small restaurants. In Italy, culinary routes uniting the winemaking regions of Tuscany have evolved into independent tourist brands. In South Korea and Japan, the development of street food has become not only an economic but also a cultural phenomenon that shapes the city image at the international level. The experience of these countries shows that gastronomic streets can function not merely as catering points but as integral cultural spaces where tourists interact with local history, art, and lifestyle. Well-organized gastronomic tourism contributes to the revival of national traditions, the development of small businesses, and the creation of new jobs in the service and creative industries. In the context of Tashkent — the capital of Uzbekistan with its rich culinary traditions — gastronomic tourism acquires particular significance. It becomes a catalyst for revitalizing tourist streets where modern infrastructure is combined with traditional Uzbek cuisine, including plov, samsa, lagman, shurpa, and other dishes that have become national culinary symbols. The development of gastronomic routes and street spaces contributes not only to strengthening Tashkent's tourist image but also to promoting it internationally as a culinary center of Central Asia. Thus, studying gastronomic tourism as a factor in the development of tourist streets in a megapolis is an important task that makes it possible to examine the economic, cultural, and spatial aspects of urban development.

1. THE ESSENCE OF GASTRONOMIC TOURISM AND ITS SIGNIFICANCE FOR MEGACITIES

Gastronomic tourism is a type of tourism in which the main motivation of travel is to explore national cuisine, culinary traditions, and local dietary practices. According to UNWTO, gastronomic tourism promotes intercultural dialogue and sustainable regional development [2]. In megacities, gastronomic tourism performs a dual function: it contributes to shaping a positive urban image and stimulates the development of small and medium-sized enterprises. For example, the “Gastronomic Quarters” project in Moscow has become part of the city’s branding strategy, while in Istanbul, the Balat and Kadiköy districts have turned into major tourist attractions [3].

2. THE ROLE OF GASTRONOMIC TOURISM IN THE DEVELOPMENT OF TOURIST STREETS IN TASHKENT

Tashkent is actively forming new tourist spaces, among which gastronomic streets hold a special place. One example is Broadway (Sayilgoh) Street, where cafés and restaurants offering national cuisine are rapidly developing. The Chorsu district represents a combination of traditional Uzbek dishes and modern gastronomic formats. According to the Tourism Committee of Uzbekistan (2024), more than 27% of foreign tourists identified culinary impressions as a key reason for choosing Tashkent [4].

3. ECONOMIC AND CULTURAL POTENTIAL OF GASTRONOMIC TOURISM IN THE CAPITAL

The development of gastronomic tourism directly influences the city's economy. According to the Ministry of Tourism and Cultural Heritage of the Republic of Uzbekistan (2023), gastronomic expenditures account for about 18% of total tourist spending [5]. Gastronomic tourism supports the preservation of cultural heritage and the promotion of national dishes such as plov, samsa, and lagman. Festivals such as the Tashkent Plov Fest strengthen Uzbekistan's image as a gastronomic destination.

4. CHALLENGES AND PROSPECTS FOR DEVELOPMENT

Despite significant potential, the development of gastronomic tourism in Tashkent faces several challenges: insufficient infrastructure on tourist streets, low service standardization, and limited international marketing promotion. Promising directions include the creation of gastronomic routes, development of local culinary brands, and implementation of the "smart gastronomy" concept [6].

5. INTERNATIONAL EXPERIENCE IN THE DEVELOPMENT OF GASTRONOMIC TOURISM IN MEGACITIES

Foreign experience shows that gastronomic tourism has become a key tool for attracting tourists and establishing a sustainable urban brand in many megacities. Spain is considered one of Europe's leaders in gastronomic tourism. According to UNWTO (2023), around 15% of all tourists visiting the country travel specifically for its cuisine. San Sebastián is internationally recognized as the "gastronomic capital of Europe," with over 15 Michelin-starred restaurants per 10,000 residents [7]. France promotes the concept of "gastronomy streets," integrating cafés, artisanal shops, cheese boutiques, and wine stores. Rue Montorgueil in Paris exemplifies how gastronomy can be embedded in a historical urban environment, creating a unique tourist experience. South Korea actively promotes gastronomic tourism as part of its national cultural diplomacy. The K-Food Road project in Seoul brings together restaurants, street markets, and workshops on cooking

traditional dishes such as kimchi, bulgogi, and tteokbokki. In 2022, gastronomic tourism attracted over 6.2 million foreign visitors – 28% more than in 2019 [8]. Italy combines gastronomy with cultural tourism. Cities such as Florence and Bologna support local producers and artisanal cafés, forming well-known routes such as the Tuscany Wine Route and the Bologna Food Walk. International experience shows that the successful development of gastronomic tourism requires a comprehensive approach that integrates urban infrastructure, cultural initiatives, and marketing strategies. These models can be adapted for Tashkent, given its rich culinary heritage and growing tourism potential.

CONCLUSION

Gastronomic tourism is an important factor in shaping the tourist attractiveness of a megapolis. The example of Tashkent demonstrates that the development of gastronomic streets contributes to increased tourist flows, the strengthening of local identity, and the preservation of cultural traditions. Further development requires improving infrastructure, implementing innovations, and promoting Uzbek cuisine as a cultural asset of the country.

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