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Socio Demographic and Travel Related Variables Affecting Tourist Route Choice Behaviors. Case of Study Samarqand city, Uzbekistan.

Variabel Sosial Demografis dan Terkait Perjalanan yang Mempengaruhi Perilaku Pilihan Rute Turis. Studi Kasus Kota Samarqand, Uzbekistan

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Abstract

The development of routes in tourism has gained prominence in recent years. One key aim of these routes, apart from attracting tourists to an area, is to tie-up several attractions that would independently not have the potential to entice visitors to spend time and money. Using a cooperation effect promises to have greater pulling power, and it also disperses visitors' money among a larger number of recipients. Many cities promoting a different type of routes that, in some way, domesticates the gaze of tourists. The most famous routes across the world are the catalog of city resources and offer some of them, which are "consumed" in a homogenous way. The main question of this thesis is (1) how to identify routes in a designated area (2) which socio-demographic and travel related variables are influencing tourists route choice behavior. The questionnaire-based survey was conducted in Samarqand city among local tourists.

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Introduction

Tourist route choice behavior has become one of the key issues in tourism marketing system, given the fact that the flow of the tourists to attractive spots may be influenced by the route choice behavior. There are often multiple routes which bring tourist to a different type of tourist spots. Travelers usually choose different routes based on the individual preferences. Many factors may influence their route choice, such as distance, travel party, time spent in the spot, comfortableness, safety, etc. Most researchers assume that a decision-making of route choice reflects potential preferences for each available route and the traveler chooses the route with the highest utility.

Stated Preference (SP) survey which commonly used by researchers can collect the individual characteristics of respondents and their route choice preferences. Though, respondents must assume choice set instead of experiencing the route choice practically in SP survey. Actual tourist route choice behavior on real-world can be adequately investigated. Respondents may simply answer questions, by reporting their actual behavior at destination: where they go? how they go? how long do they stay? how much money do they spend? that they would not realistically pursue.

The subject of the case study is the Samarqand city in Uzbekistan, chosen for several relevant factors. The city has approximately 515.000 (www.stat.uz) citizens and its famous with a rich cultural and historical heritage. The famous heritage spots are located in two compact area which belongs to ancient and medieval times. Samarqand is considered an archetypal city of the places representing Uzbek history, a culture which explains its selection as the setting for our study. Four hundred questionnaires were distributed among local tourists at the different sites of the city and three hundred forty-seven were collected respectively. Base on the analysis the study find out (1) four cultural routes with an order of spots which is suitable to be a themed route at selected destination; (2) socio-demographic and travel related variables which are influencing tourists route choice behavior as a guide to understand who are the consumers.

Researchers argued that tourism routes bring together a variety of activities and attractions under a unified theme and thus stimulate entrepreneurial opportunity through the development of ancillary products and services (Gunn, 1979; Long et al, 1990; Greffe, 1994). To describe the concept of the route used terminology varies greatly such as "themed routes", "trails" and "tourism byways". In this research we describe and analyze conception of "themed routes". Many types of research were done "product" or "theme" based routes. As Us A. et.al. (Us, Us, Edition, & Deeper, 2013), cited the examples of these routes that have a strong product focus such as the Waterloo-Wellington Beer Trail in Canada, the Niagara Wine Route or Food Trails, such as Cheese Trail Bregenzerwald in Austria and the food trails around Niagara are generally developed to increase marketing and sales of the core product. This means that not only route itself the themed, but also the service and goods provided as part of that route (like accommodation, shopping, and catering). According to K. Nagy (Nagy, 2012), this kind of thematic routes development is not really built on professional bases, but rather according to available grant programs, and by the initiative of (sometimes external) experts and municipalities rather than local people and activists. She clarifies the mean of the thematic route that connects natural or artificial attractions, based on a certain theme, and that is accessible by a form of transport. Considering sustainability, thematic routes provide education and leisure at the same time. They play important role in common European programs, too, like the Cultural Routes Program of the European Council.

Research Methodology

Data used in this research, acquired from a survey that was conducted during August and September 2017, to develop a profile of local tourists traveling in Samarqand and to understand their actual behavior. All the data collected from direct asking the questions like tourist individual characteristics, the chronological order of their visited spots, travel party and their perception for evaluation of tourism resources in visited spots we categorize as a direct method of data collection (Figure 1). The results observed by analyzing existing data such as tourists chosen route (tourists' route was created by chronological order of their visited spots), function of the visited spots (internet) and the generalized type of the routes (base of the highest spots function located in travelled route) we categorize as an indirect data.

The indirect data were used (1) to define the tourists' routes by the chronological order of their visited spots. The individual characteristics of respondents obtained from direct data used (2) to understand who the routes consumers are, by using the MNL model. In this way, the methodological proposal combines the advantages of direct observation with the systematic collecting of the information obtained from the questionnaire.

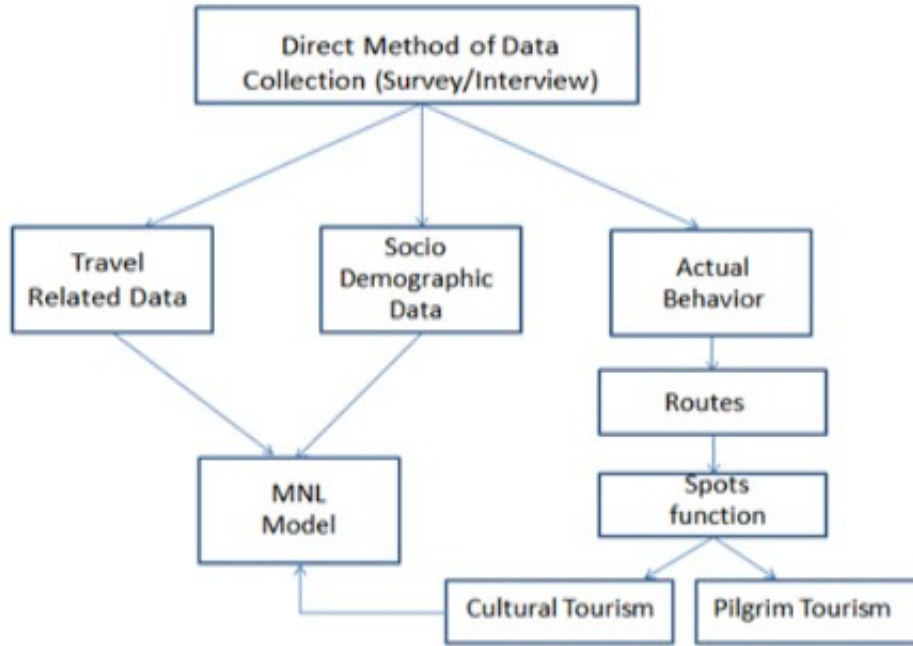


Figure 1. Methodology

Identifying Routes

To identify the routes eighteen tourist spots located in Samarqand city (architectural buildings, mausoleums, museums, local shops, art galleries, and parks) were chosen as a study object (Figure 2). The most complicated part of the questionnaire was to report visited tourist attractions in chronological order.

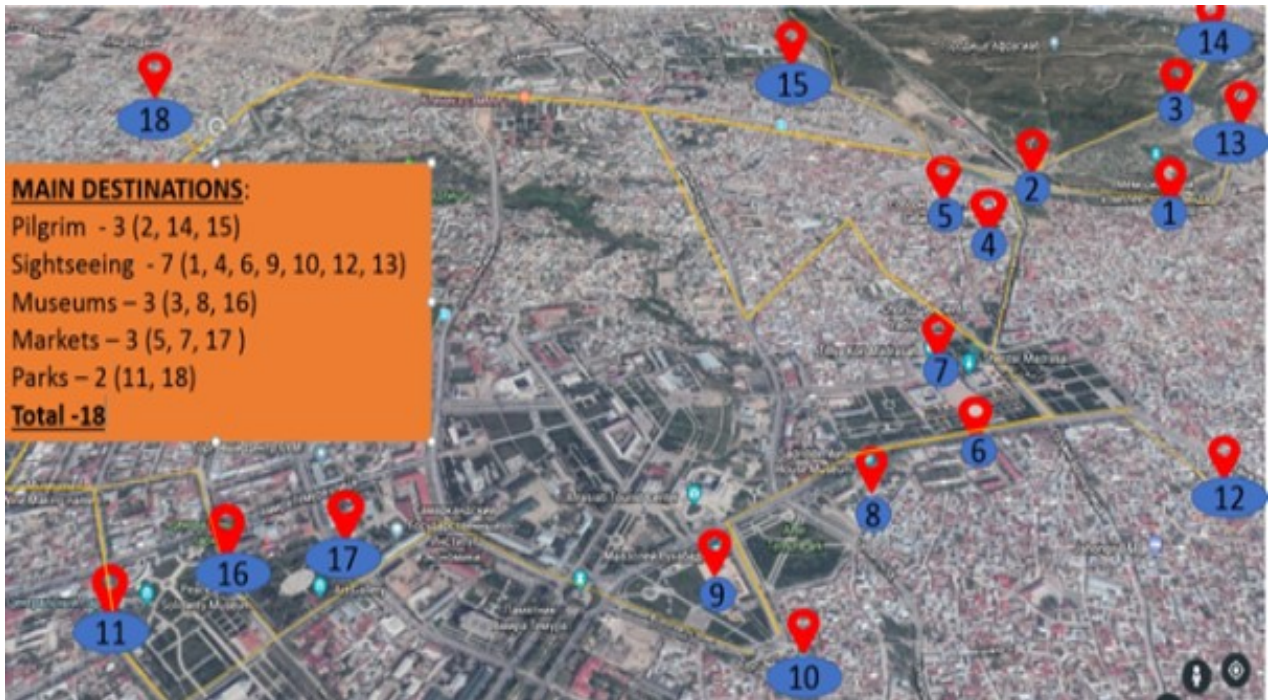


Figure 2. Selected tourist spots in Samarqand

By selecting the same start point and same continuous numbers in order of their visited spots in our analysis we could see the travel route of respondents. In many cases, the respondent's journey starts at the same attraction but the order of next visited spots is different. Due to this difference, we consider it as a different route. Total eight routes with maximum nine and minimum of four visited spots were found base of the respondents' answers. All nine routes by the functions of each attraction can group into two: to Cultural and Pilgrim Tourism (Figure 3).

Considering routes as our main findings we identify the individual characteristics of the cultural routes consumers.

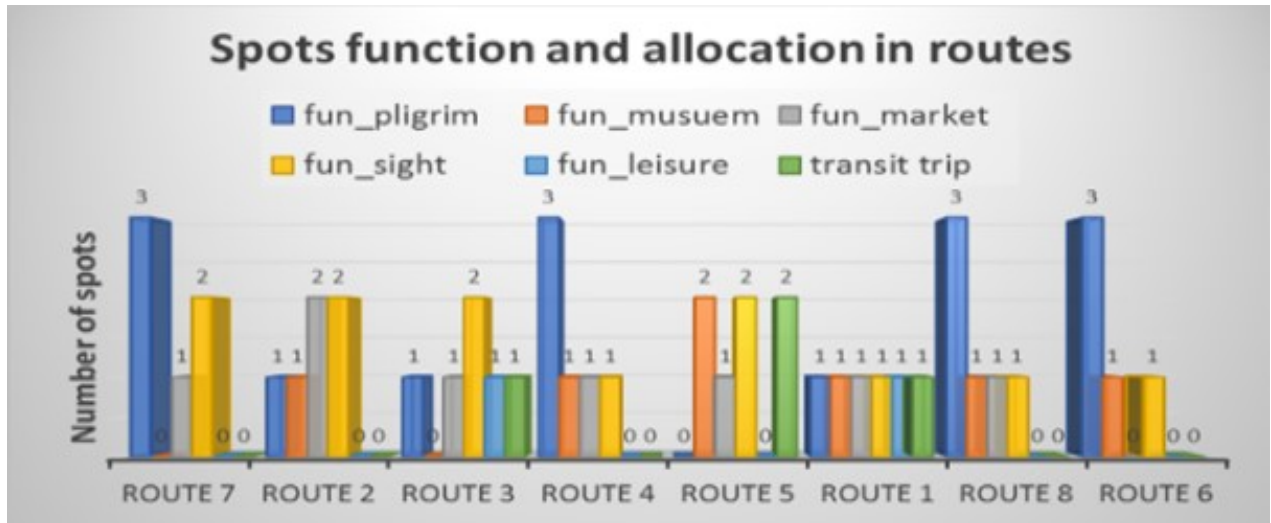


Figure 3. Spots function allocated in routes

Model Estimation . Identifying Cultural Tourism Route Consumers

The binary choice model was used to identify the consumers of cultural tourism. The socio-demographic and travel related data used for estimation. The dummy variables created to explain gender, 1-Male; 0-Female. Tourist trip characteristics presented by dummy variables: 1-if in a day trip, 0-if in trip with lodging and Travel Party, 1-Travel with family, 0-Travel alone. Model estimation shows positive high significance for variables: total household income, day trip, travel with family and travel distance. Gender with coefficients .8404943 shows lower significance (Table 1).

Table 1 . Estimation result

Number of obs = 347

LR chi2(5) = 101.42

Prob > chi2 = 0.0000

Pseudo R2 = 0.2553

Log likelihood = -147.91094

Binary Choice	Coef.	P>z	95% Conf. Interval
Gender	.8404943	0.011	.1895649 1.491424
Total Household Income	2.84e-07	0.000	1.60e-07 4.08e-07
Day Trip	2.821228	0.000	1.863548 3.778909
Travel with family	1.840191	0.000	1.137247 2.543135
Travel Distance	2.222658	0.000	1.574546 2.87077

Table 1. Estimation result

Findings

Considering the influence of tourists' individual characteristics on the tourism type choice the following outcomes were indicated for Cultural Tourism:

- Gender: Male tourists are likely to choose a cultural tourism while female tourists prefer to go to the pilgrim.
- Total Household Income: families with higher incomes will choose cultural tourism than those in the lower income category.
- Day trip: tourist with lodging likely to choose pilgrim tourism than those who are on a day trip.

- Travel distance: farther the distance from destination will push the tourists to explore the cultural tourism.
- Travel with family members: tourists who traveling with family members (include children) more likely to choose cultural tourism.

Conclusion

The types of tourism destinations serve the goal to meet tourists' needs and purposes according to geographical location environment and nature or man-made structures. The study showed considerable results which are substantial for the future development of tourism in Samarqand. Local tourism companies and governmental institutions of Samarqand city should pay attention to make tourism destinations available for tourists who travel for a different purpose. The routes which were found in this research will meet the different type of tourists' need. Implementation of policy recommendations given to all routes will help to attract more tourists and increase the local stakeholder's income.

From a marketing point of view this research helps to understand:

- the attractiveness of the theme around which the itinerary is built;
- what topology of tourists can be attracted by cultural routes;
- the present condition of the route attractiveness;
- the potential impact of the route on the local economy of the destinations.

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