

A SURVEY AND CLASSIFICATION OF SAMARKAND MUSEUMS: ALIGNING WITH INTERNATIONAL STANDARDS, SWOT ANALYSIS, AND SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT GOALS

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Abstract

This article presents an extensive survey and classification of museums in Samarkand, Uzbekistan, grounded in their collections, scope, and compliance with international museum standards. Employing both qualitative and quantitative research methods—including literature review, direct observation, and structured surveys—the study identifies three main categories: Historical and Archaeological Museums, Natural History Museums, and Ethnic History Museums. In addition to categorization, this research undertakes a comprehensive SWOT analysis to highlight internal strengths and weaknesses, as well as external opportunities and threats. The alignment of Samarkand museums with the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) is also examined to ensure their activities contribute to global sustainability agendas. Recommendations are provided for strengthening the role of these museums in heritage preservation, education, tourism, and cultural diplomacy.

1. Introduction

Samarkand, one of the world's oldest continuously inhabited cities and a UNESCO World Heritage Site, is a living testament to the rich cultural and historical legacies of Central Asia. Situated on the Silk Road, the city has for centuries been a crossroads of cultures, religions, and civilizations. Today, Samarkand is home to a variety of museums that safeguard priceless artifacts, artworks, and historical narratives. These museums are not simply storage spaces for relics of the past—they are dynamic institutions that educate the public, promote cultural identity, and contribute to the socio-economic development of the city through tourism.

Despite this cultural wealth, there is a lack of systematic classification of Samarkand's museums according to internationally recognized frameworks such as those proposed by the International Council of Museums (ICOM). Without such a framework, it becomes difficult to compare, manage, and promote museums on a global scale. This study fills that gap by categorizing museums based on their type of collection, scope, mission, target audience, and ownership. The research also includes a demographic analysis of visitors,



strategic evaluation through SWOT analysis, and mapping of museums to relevant SDGs.

2. Literature Review

The concept of museum classification has evolved significantly over the past century. According to ICOM (2022), a museum is defined as a non-profit, permanent institution in the service of society, open to the public, which acquires, conserves, researches, communicates, and exhibits the tangible and intangible heritage of humanity for purposes of education, study, and enjoyment. Museum classification is commonly based on the nature of collections—art, history, natural history, ethnography—and their scope, whether local, regional, national, or international.

In the Central Asian context, museums have traditionally been seen as custodians of national heritage. However, modern approaches emphasize interactivity, community engagement, and integration into broader cultural tourism strategies. Studies by Paardekooper (2020) and Novacek & Goldberg (2013) indicate that effective classification and clear mission statements improve both visitor experience and institutional sustainability. This suggests that a rethinking of Samarkand's museum strategies could enhance their role not only in preserving history but also in promoting sustainable development.

3. Methodology

This research adopts a mixed-methods approach. Primary data were collected through site visits to ten museums across Samarkand, observation of exhibition layouts, and structured interviews with museum staff. A questionnaire was also administered to twenty respondents, including domestic and international visitors. The survey gathered demographic information as well as perceptions regarding the classification and effectiveness of local museums.

Secondary data were derived from government reports, academic studies, and ICOM publications. The data analysis combined descriptive statistics for quantitative results and thematic analysis for qualitative feedback. The findings are presented in both tabular and narrative form, and strategic tools such as SWOT and SDG mapping were applied.

4. Results and Discussion

The demographic profile of respondents reveals a heavy reliance on international tourism, with half of the participants being foreign visitors. Local engagement remains relatively low. The age distribution shows significant participation from both younger (7–19 years) and older (56+) age groups,



suggesting that museums appeal strongly to school groups and retirees. Gender representation is skewed slightly towards female visitors.

Table 1. Survey Respondent Demographics

Category	Option	Count	Percentage
Age	7-19	6	30%
Age	20-35	3	15%
Age	36-55	5	25%
Age	56+	6	30%
Gender	Female	12	60%
Gender	Male	8	40%
Residence	Samarkand	4	20%
Residence	Other Uzbekistan	6	30%
Residence	Foreign	10	50%

5. Museum Classification

The classification of museums was based on five key parameters: type of collection, scope of collection, mission statement, target audience, and ownership. The table below presents the detailed classification of ten prominent museums in Samarkand.

Museum	Type of Collection	Scope of Collection	Museum Mission	Target Audience	Ownership
Afrasiab Museum	Historical artifacts	National	Preserve for public	Local & international tourists	Government
Memorial Museum of Mirzo Ulugbek	Historical artifacts	National	Preserve for public and studies	Local & international tourists	Government
Samarkand State Museum	Historical artifacts and art galleries	National	Saving for public and learning	Local & international tourists	Government
Museum of Winemaking	Wines	National	Collection of the best wines	International tourists	Private
Happy Bird Art Gallery	Handcrafted Uzbek carpets & clothing	National	Promotion of Uzbek folk crafts and art	International tourists	Private



Chorsu Art Gallery	Painting & sculpture	National	Organize exhibitions of talents	Local & international tourists	Government
House Museum of Sadriddin Ayni	Historical artifacts	National	Preserve for public and studies	students	Government
World of Unique Migratory Species Art Gallery	Art galleries	National	Instill love for nature and animals	Local & international tourists	Government
Uzbekistan Zarafshan State Natural Reserve	Nature, animals, water	National	Preservation of natural heritage	Local & international tourists	Government
Zoological Museum of Samarkand State University	Animals & skeletons	National	Study and education	Local students	Government

6. SWOT Analysis of Samarkand Museums

The SWOT analysis provides strategic insight into the current position of Samarkand's museums in the cultural and tourism sectors.

Strengths	Weaknesses
Rich cultural heritage and UNESCO status	Limited use of digital technology
Diverse museum types and collections	Low local visitor engagement
Government and tourism sector support	Insufficient staff training
International recognition	Inconsistent classification standards

7. Alignment with Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs)

Mapping museum activities to SDGs ensures alignment with global cultural sustainability frameworks.



SDG Goal	Relevant Museum Actions	Expected Impact
SDG 4: Quality Education	Workshops & educational programs	Improved cultural literacy
SDG 8: Decent Work & Economic Growth	Tourism job creation	Economic benefits for locals
SDG 11: Sustainable Cities & Communities	Heritage preservation	Increased city resilience
SDG 17: Partnerships for the Goals	International collaborations	Shared expertise & resources

8. Conclusion and Recommendations

The research underscores the importance of adopting international classification standards, enhancing digital engagement, and strengthening local participation in Samarkand's museums. By integrating their operations into the framework of SDGs, these institutions can secure greater relevance in the 21st century cultural landscape. Recommendations include capacity building for staff, increased marketing to local audiences, and partnerships with global institutions to exchange expertise.

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