THE TERRITORIAL STRUCTURE OF THE TOURISM ECONOMY IN SAMARKAND REGION: THE CORE–PERIPHERY GRADIENT AND THE SPATIAL ROLE OF FAMILY ENTERPRISE

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Abstract. *Regional totals state how much tourism activity Samarkand region has, but not where it sits or which organisational form carries it. Using the district enterprise register of the 2025 regional statistical bulletin and the national district unemployment series, this paper measures the territorial structure of the regional hospitality economy across all sixteen districts. Location quotients reveal a steep core–periphery gradient, which family enterprise reverses only within a middle ring of ten districts. In the four outer districts — a quarter of the region’s population — the family form is more under-represented than enterprises in general: the structure is concentric and three-zoned.*

Keywords: *tourism geography; location quotient; core–periphery gradient; family enterprise; Samarkand region; district-level measurement.*

Introduction. Tourism growth in Samarkand region is well documented in regional aggregates, and forecasting at national scale has established the sector’s broad trajectory [7]. Aggregates, however, answer a question of magnitude rather than of geography: they state how much accommodation and catering activity a region contains, but not in which districts it lies, through which organisational forms it operates, or whether its spatial pattern corresponds to anything in the regional labour market. This paper puts the geographical question directly. The unit of analysis is the district (*tuman*); all sixteen are covered. Enterprise data refer to 1 January 2026, service output to 2025, unemployment to 2010–2025.

Relevance of the topic. Presidential Decree PF-87 of 15 May 2025 sets out measures to expand tourist flows and the scale of tourism services in 2025–2026 [6]. Instruments of this kind are implemented at district level: master plans for particular districts, tourism villages in particular settlements — three of them in Samarkand region. Directing them presupposes knowing the existing territorial structure, which has not been measured at district scale.

Organisational form is the second consideration. The family enterprise (*oilaviy korxona*) is the principal legal form through which rural households enter the hospitality economy. Research on rural tourism has long treated the family firm as the characteristic unit of peripheral destinations [4], while the political economy of tourism has shown that the industry’s spatial organisation determines where its returns accumulate [1]. Whether the family form actually reaches the periphery is an empirical question regional totals cannot answer, since they do not separate legal forms in space — and it is the entry point to any assessment of inclusive tourism development [9].

Discussion and results. *Data and method.* Enterprise counts by district and legal form, service output and per-capita service output come from the regional statistical bulletin for 2025 [8]; district unemployment rates from the national open-data portal, indicator 2.02.01.2200 [5]. District population is not published there and is derived as service output divided by per-capita service output; for Samarkand city this yields 600,799 against 605,800 reported elsewhere in the same bulletin, an error of 0.8 per cent. The procedure suits relative intensity measures and is not offered as a population source. The principal measure is the location quotient (LQ): a district’s share of enterprises divided by its share of population, values above unity indicating over-representation.

The core–periphery gradient. Samarkand city holds 13.85 per cent of the region’s population and 43.21 per cent of its accommodation and food-service enterprises, an LQ of 3.12. Density falls from 25.58 enterprises per 10,000 residents in the city to 3.53 in Paxtachi, a gradient of 7.2; per-capita service output varies by a factor of 6.9, and the Gini coefficient of enterprises against population is 0.374. Only three of sixteen districts are over-represented — the regional centre, the second city, and the district surrounding the regional centre (Table 1). This is the configuration tourism geography has associated with peripheral destinations since Christaller [2] and with core–periphery development since Friedmann [3].

Table 1

The district structure of the hospitality economy, Samarkand region

District	Population share, %	LQ, all enterprises	LQ, family enterprises	Enterprises per 10,000	Family enterprises per 10,000	Unemployment 2025, %
Samarqand city	13.85	3.12	1.95	25.58	28.00	3.7
Samarqand district	6.48	1.16	1.71	9.50	24.55	4.1
Core (2)	20.3	2.50	1.87	20.46	26.90	3.83
Pastdarg’om	9.13	0.70	1.19	5.76	17.07	5.2
Jomboy	4.52	0.80	1.15	6.57	16.46	4.1
Toyloq	5.27	0.76	1.10	6.21	15.79	4.4
Payariq	6.51	0.60	1.09	4.96	15.62	5.3
Ishtixon	6.57	0.64	0.88	5.23	12.59	5.2
Bulung’ur	4.82	0.61	0.86	5.03	12.30	5.2
Kattaqo’rg’on district	6.97	0.59	0.81	4.86	11.70	5.1
Oqdaryo	4.13	0.72	0.78	5.92	11.17	4.8
Kattaqo’rg’on city	2.22	1.33	0.73	10.89	10.48	4.3
Narpay	5.38	0.57	0.70	4.67	10.06	4.9
Middle ring (10)	55.5	0.69	0.96	5.65	13.73	4.94
Paxtachi	3.59	0.43	0.52	3.53	7.45	5.3
Urgut	13.35	0.43	0.38	3.54	5.51	4.9
Qo’shrabot	3.36	0.52	0.34	4.26	4.94	5.8
Nurobod	3.86	0.52	0.20	4.24	2.93	5.8
Outer zone (4)	24.2	0.46	0.37	3.75	5.31	5.23
Region	100.0	1.00	1.00	8.20	14.37	4.7

Note. Enterprises as of 1 January 2026; population derived as in the text. Zone rows are population-weighted. Sources: [5; 8], author’s calculations.

Family enterprise reverses the gradient — but only in the middle ring. Measured on family enterprises alone, the distribution looks different. Samarkand city’s quotient falls from 3.12 to 1.95; six districts rather than three exceed unity; and in eleven of sixteen the family quotient exceeds the all-enterprise quotient (Figure 1).

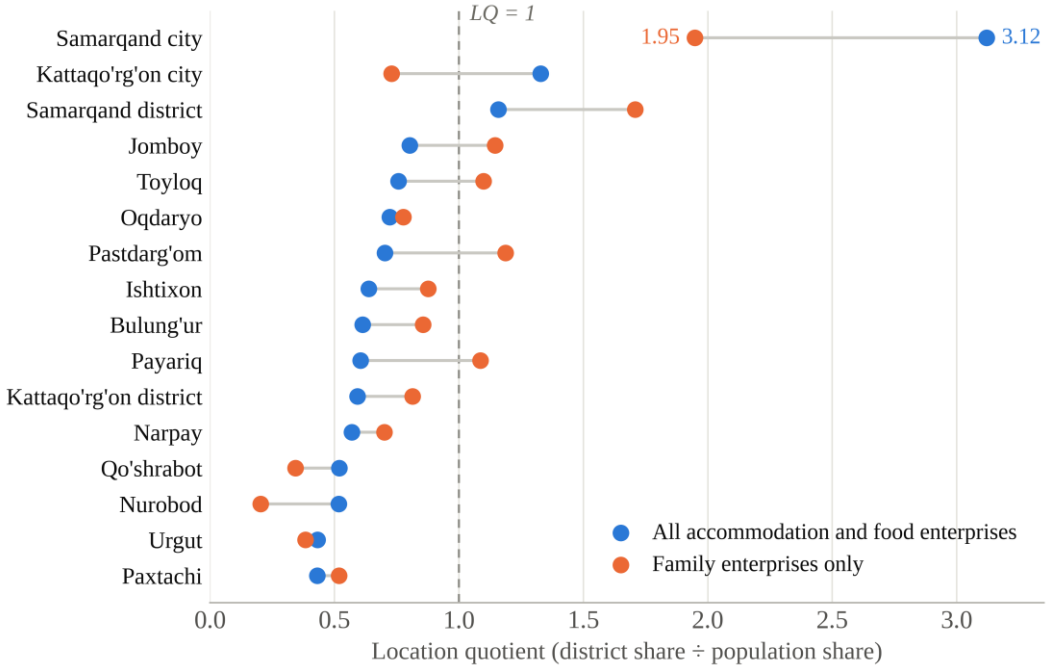


Figure 1. Location quotients for all accommodation and food-service enterprises and for family enterprises alone, sixteen districts, 1 January 2026. Source: [8].

The reversal is not uniform, and this is the central result. Grouping districts by family-enterprise density gives three zones, not two. The core — Samarkand city and Samarkand district, 20.3 per cent of the population — has an all-enterprise quotient of 2.50 and a family quotient of 1.87. A middle ring of ten districts, 55.5 per cent of the population, has 0.69 and 0.96: near-parity with population on the family measure alone. An outer zone of four — Urgut, Paxtachi, Qo’shrabot and Nurobod, 24.2 per cent — has 0.46 and only 0.37. Family enterprises form 25.8 per cent of the combined family-and-company stock in the ring, against 18.1 in the core and 11.9 in the outer zone.

Family enterprise is thus not the organisational form of the periphery but the form of the middle ring. In the core it is displaced by the company form; in the outer zone it is largely absent. The mechanism that compensates for core–periphery inequality in the ring fails in the zone where compensation would matter most — a zone holding a quarter of the region’s inhabitants. Urgut is the clearest case: second largest district by population (13.35 per cent) and a recognised craft and bazaar centre, it records quotients of 0.43 and 0.38, and an average wage in 2022 of 82.6 per cent of the regional mean.

Correspondence with the labour market. Across the fourteen rural districts, family-enterprise density and the 2025 unemployment rate are inversely associated ($r = -0.723$, $\rho = -0.592$); for enterprise density overall, −0.739 and −0.710. Excluding the high-leverage peri-urban Samarqand district weakens this without changing its sign (−0.611 and −0.656). Population-weighted unemployment rises across the zones: 3.83 per cent in the core, 4.94 in the ring, 5.23 in the outer zone.

The correspondence is reported descriptively, not causally, for a specific reason. Repeated on 2017 unemployment — before the 2018 transition to labour-force-survey methodology — the same calculation gives $r = -0.131$. Either the association emerged after the tourism liberalisation of 2017, or it is a property of the post-2018 district estimates rather

than of the district economies; separating the two requires the estimation procedure, which is not published.

Conclusion. The tourism economy of Samarkand region is organised around a steep core–periphery gradient: a 7.2-fold range in enterprise density, a Gini coefficient of 0.374 against population, and only three of sixteen districts over-represented. Family enterprise partially reverses that gradient, but only within a middle ring of ten districts, where its quotient reaches 0.96 against 0.69 for enterprises overall; in the four outer districts it is more under-represented than enterprises in general (0.37 against 0.46). The structure is concentric and three-zoned rather than dichotomous, and corresponds to district unemployment in the 2025 cross-section on the descriptive terms set out above.

For policy it follows that assessing territorial balance by enterprise counts alone understates participation in the middle ring, where family enterprises compensate, and conceals the outer zone, where nothing does. Instruments intended to improve territorial balance should be specified by organisational form rather than by aggregate enterprise numbers, since the two yield different maps of the same region.

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Research on the Development Path of Smart Tourism in Uzbekistan under the Background of Digital Transformation

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Abstract:*As a core hub of the Silk Road in Central Asia, Uzbekistan boasts abundant historical-cultural and natural tourism resources. In recent years, it has continuously promoted digital reform in the tourism industry, including establishing national-level digital tourism platforms, popularizing smart scenic-spot services, and optimising cross-border digital customs clearance systems for tourists. Taking the current situation of Uzbekistan’s tourism industry as the entry point, this paper adopts literature analysis and situational investigation methods to analyse the practical value, development achievements and existing problems of its smart-tourism construction. This study aims to facilitate high-quality and sustainable development of smart*