

**Selling culture: HOW ENGLISH AND UZBEK PROMOTIONAL TEXTS  
FRAME UZBEKISTAN FOR DOMESTIC VS. FOREIGN AUDIENCES**

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**Abstract.** Tourism promotional texts rely heavily on metaphor to transform destinations into objects of desire. This article compares the metaphorical framing of Samarkand in one English-language text (Embassy of Uzbekistan) and one Uzbek-language text (Afisha.uz). Drawing upon cognitive metaphor theory, the analysis reveals systematic differences: the English text deploys metaphors of spectacle, timelessness, and fairy-tale orientalism, framing Samarkand as an exotic treasure for foreign discovery. The Uzbek text employs metaphors of vitality, organic wholeness, and sensory immersion, framing Samarkand as a living heritage for domestic reconnection. These contrasting metaphorical repertoires demonstrate how the same destination is linguistically constructed for different audiences, serving both promotional and nation-affirming functions.

**Key words:** metaphor, tourism discourse, Samarkand, Uzbek, English, cognitive linguistics, national identity.

### **Introduction**

When a tourist reads that a city is "the heart of the Silk Road" or "a pearl of the East," they encounter not neutral description but carefully crafted metaphor. Metaphor, as Lakoff and Johnson (1980) established, is not merely decorative language but a fundamental cognitive mechanism through which we understand and evaluate the world. In tourism promotional discourse, metaphors perform crucial persuasive work: they frame destinations within familiar and emotionally resonant conceptual domains, rendering unfamiliar places attractive, accessible, and memorable (Dann, 1996).

The Republic of Uzbekistan has invested significantly in tourism promotion, producing bilingual materials in English for international visitors and Uzbek for

domestic travelers. While broader research has examined the sociolinguistic construction of national identity across multiple texts, the present article narrows its focus to a single, revealing question: How do English and Uzbek tourism texts use metaphor to frame the same city - Samarkand - for fundamentally different audiences?

By isolating metaphor as the sole analytical lens and drawing upon two previously unanalyzed texts, this article offers a fresh contribution that complements rather than duplicates larger studies.

### **Theoretical Framework: Metaphor in Tourism Discourse**

Following Lakoff and Johnson (1980), this study adopts a cognitive semantic approach to metaphor. A metaphor is understood as a cross-domain mapping in which a target domain (e.g., a city) is understood in terms of a source domain (e.g., a living organism, a precious object). In tourism discourse, common metaphorical source domains include:

- Precious objects (jewels, pearls, gems) - conveying rarity and value
- Living organisms (heart, beating center) - conveying vitality and animac
- Spatial containers (treasure house, museum) - conveying curated experiences
- Temporal portals (step back in time) - conveying historical immersion

The choice of metaphor is never neutral. It positions the destination in a particular relationship to the reader and activates specific expectations and desires (Thurlow & Jaworski, 2010)

### **Data and Method**

The analysis compares two short promotional texts about Samarkand:

English text : Excerpt from the Embassy of Uzbekistan tourism page (source: [uzbekembassy.com.my/eng/tourism/](http://uzbekembassy.com.my/eng/tourism/))

Uzbek text : Excerpt from Afisha.uz, a domestic travel guide (source: [afisha.uz/uz/tourism/2025/02/27/48-soatda-samarqand](http://afisha.uz/uz/tourism/2025/02/27/48-soatda-samarqand))

This study employs a qualitative research approach to analyze the metaphorical framing of Samarkand in English and Uzbek tourism promotional texts, combining cognitive metaphor analysis, contrastive analysis, and cross-cultural discourse analysis methods. By integrating these analytical frameworks, the research aims to provide a comprehensive understanding of how figurative language constructs different destination images for different audiences.

To achieve this goal, we selected two promotional texts about Samarkand: one English-language text from the official tourism page of the Embassy of Uzbekistan and one Uzbek-language text from the domestic travel platform Afisha.uz. Both texts describe the city's historical monuments, cultural atmosphere, and tourist attractions, but address fundamentally different audiences - international versus domestic travelers.

The research was conducted with the following methodology:

**Cognitive metaphor analysis:** Following the Pragglejaz Group (2007) procedure, each lexical unit was examined to determine whether its contextual meaning differs from its basic meaning as a cross-domain mapping.

**Contrastive analysis:** To identify similarities and differences in the metaphorical repertoires of the English and Uzbek texts at the lexical, semantic, and stylistic levels.

**Cross-cultural discourse analysis:** To interpret metaphors within their broader cultural contexts, examining how source domain choices reflect different cultural values and communicative purposes.

**Functional analysis:** To determine how metaphors position the reader and construct the destination for different audiences.

The analysis focused on the following aspects:

1. Identification of all metaphorical expressions in both texts;
2. Categorization of metaphors by source domain type (anthropomorphic, object, spatial, temporal, etc.);
3. Comparison of metaphorical density and variety between the two texts;
4. Interpretation of how each metaphorical framing contributes to the overall image of Samarkand constructed for the intended audience. This methodological framework enables a detailed examination of the linguistic and cultural distinctions in the metaphorical repertoires of English and Uzbek tourism discourse, contributing to the understanding of how language shapes destination perception across different cultural contexts.

## Results

English Text: Metaphors of Spectacle, Timelessness, and Orientalist Enchantment

The English text deploys a dense and consistent metaphorical repertoire that frames Samarkand as an extraordinary object of aesthetic consumption.

Metaphor Type 1: Samarkand as a Living Being (Anthropomorphic)

"one city stands out as being 'the Heart of Great Silk Road'"

The heart metaphor positions Samarkand not merely as a location but as the animating, life-giving organ of the Silk Road. This anthropomorphic framing attributes vitality, centrality, and emotional significance to the city. Unlike a geographical designation ("central city"), the heart metaphor implies that without Samarkand, the Silk Road would die - a hyperbolic claim that elevates the city to indispensable status.

Metaphor Type 2: Samarkand as a Precious/Shining Object

"The Radiate Point of Globe", "The Jewel of Islamic Architecture", "The Mirror of the World"

These three epithets, presented as "oriental titles," work as a cluster of metaphors. "Radiate Point" frames the city as a source of emitted light, a beacon radiating outward across the globe. "Jewel" frames it as a rare, cut, polished treasure - valuable not for its utility but for its beauty and exclusivity. "Mirror" frames the city as a reflective surface

in which the world can see itself, suggesting that Samarkand encapsulates or represents global history. Together, these metaphors construct Samarkand as a passive but magnificent spectacle: it shines, it reflects, it is admired.

Metaphor Type 3: Samarkand as a Timeless Contemporary (Personification)

"A contemporary of Rome, Athens, and Babylon"

This metaphor personifies the city as a living being that coexisted with classical civilizations. The effect is to insert Samarkand into a canonical Western narrative of antiquity, legitimizing its historical significance for an English-speaking audience presumed familiar with Rome and Athens. The metaphor also compresses time: Samarkand is not merely old; it is an active survivor, a living contemporary of dead empires.

Metaphor Type 4: Samarkand as a Sensory/Atmospheric Presence

"one can feel the breath of history itself"

This metaphor animates history as a living entity that breathes. The visitor does not simply learn about history but physically feels it as a palpable force. The breath metaphor evokes intimacy and immediacy - history is not distant but exhaling around the tourist.

Metaphor Type 5: Samarkand as a Fairy-Tale Setting

"worthy of being the setting for any Scheherazade fairy tale"

This metaphor explicitly invokes the frame of One Thousand and One Nights, a Western orientalist trope that constructs the Islamic East as a realm of magic, storytelling, and exotic romance. By naming Scheherazade, the text aligns Samarkand with a literary tradition familiar to Western readers, framing the city as a stage for fantasy rather than a real, contemporary place.

Uzbek Text: Metaphors of Vitality, Wholeness, and Sensory Immersion

The Uzbek text employs a different metaphorical repertoire that frames Samarkand as a living, evolving, sensorially rich environment for personal experience.

Metaphor Type 1: Samarkand as a Permanent Yet Ever-New Entity

"Boqiy va hamisha navqiron Samarqand"

The juxtaposition of "boqiy" (eternal, everlasting) and "navqiron" (ever-young, ever-fresh) creates a paradox metaphor: the city is both ancient and perpetually renewed. Unlike the English text's emphasis on frozen antiquity ("breath of history"), this metaphor frames Samarkand as dynamically alive, aging but not decaying.

Metaphor Type 2: Samarkand as an Organic Whole

"ularning barchasi yaxlit bir kompozitsiyani, tugal bir me'morchilik asarini tashkil etadi" (all of them together form a single composition, a complete architectural work)

This metaphor resists fragmentation. The English text lists monuments as discrete attractions. The Uzbek text frames scattered mausoleums as unified into a single composition - like movements in a symphony.

Metaphor Type 3: Samarkand as a Container of Condensed History

"Samarqandning qariyib uch ming yillik tarixi mujassamdir" (nearly three thousand years of Samarkand's history are embodied/condensed here)

The verb "mujassamdir" (embodied, condensed, manifested) is a powerful metaphor. History is not merely located in the place; it is physically concentrated, made dense and tangible.

Metaphor Type 4: Samarkand as a Sensory Invitation (Taste)

"Samarqand oshini ko'hna shaharning o'zida tatib ko'rish ham sayohatning unutilmas bir qismiga aylanadi" (tasting Samarkand pilaf in the ancient city itself becomes an unforgettable part of the journey)

While not a metaphor at the word level, the framing of pilaf-tasting as essential to the experience constructs the journey as multi-sensory. The English text focuses on visual spectacle; the Uzbek text adds taste, implying that understanding Samarkand requires embodied, sensory immersion.

Metaphor Type 5: Samarkand as a Sequential Journey

"Sayohatni ham aynan shu yerdan boshlash mumkin" (you can start the journey exactly from here)

The text explicitly guide a traveler moving through space and time.

### **Discussion**

The contrasting metaphorical repertoires reveal systematic differences. The English text frames Samarkand as timeless and frozen - a "contemporary of Rome"-inviting the foreign reader to admire a preserved artifact. The Uzbek text frames it as both eternal and ever-new ("boqiy va navqiron"), inviting the domestic reader to experience a living heritage.

The English text positions the reader as an admiring spectator who gazes upon jewels and fairy-tale settings. The Uzbek text positions the reader as an active traveler who tastes pilaf and connects monuments into a coherent journey.

The English text invokes orientalism ("Scheherazade fairy tale") to render Samarkand exotic yet familiar through Western literary tropes. The Uzbek text invokes condensed history and organic wholeness to render the city authentic for those who already belong to its cultural world.

These differences reflect a dual-voiced strategy of cultural selling: to the world, Uzbekistan sells an exotic, fairy-tale spectacle; to its own citizens, it affirms a vital, integrated, and ever-renewable homeland.

### Conclusion

This comparative metaphor analysis has demonstrated that English and Uzbek tourism texts about Samarkand construct fundamentally different imaginaries of the same city. The English text, addressed to international visitors, deploys metaphors of spectacle, timeless antiquity, and orientalist enchantment. The Uzbek text, addressed to domestic travelers, deploys metaphors of vitality, organic wholeness, condensed history, and sensory immersion.

These differences are not accidental. They reflect a dual-voiced strategy of cultural selling: to the world, Uzbekistan sells an exotic, fairy-tale spectacle; to its own citizens, it affirms a vital, integrated, and ever-renewable homeland. Both metaphorical repertoires are effective for their respective audiences, but they raise an important question for tourism translators and marketers: when metaphor frames a city as a jewel, what aspects of lived culture are left unspoken? The answer, for Samarkand, is taste, movement, and the breath of a city that remains, in Uzbek metaphor, ever-young.

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