

Factors and directions of development of pilgrimage tourism

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ABSTRACT

The article examines the development of pilgrimage tourism, factors, and opportunities that affect it. Various approaches to defining the concepts of religious tourism, pilgrim tourism, Islamic tourism are analyzed. The study looks into the ways in the development of pilgrimage tourism in Uzbekistan. The article also described the content of the halal tourism category.

After our country's independence, the study of religious tourism received a lot of interest. It should be mentioned that any religious process was ignored during the old Soviet system. Even local visitors and pilgrims, for example, lacked sufficient knowledge about Imam Bukhari and his life. It should be remembered that the Center (Moscow) told the Uzbek leadership in 1956 that it planned to kidnap Sheikh Nadim Imam, a renowned Lebanese politician and public figure.

Tashkent authorities have urged the leaders of the Bukhara area to restore the shrine, which houses Imam Bukhari's grave, as soon as possible. The tomb, according to Bukhara residents, located in Samarkand. When the Samarkand leadership is assigned this assignment, they travel in search of the grave. It would be a dilapidated and abandoned area when they discover the tomb is located in the village of Khartang, Payarik district, some 15-20 kilometres from Samarkand. Samarkand will notify Tashkent, and Tashkent will notify Moscow, and steps will be taken to put an end to it. The sheikh would pay a visit to Hazrat Imam's mausoleum in the evening.

Keywords: religious tourism, pilgrimage tourism, religious excursion tourism, tourist infrastructure, the concept of tourism development, the halal standard.

INTRODUCTION

In 2020 the COVID-19 pandemic caused a deep crisis in the tourist sector of the world countries. The number of foreign visitors reached 1.5 billion in 2019 but dropped to 381 million in 2020, a 74 percent decrease. Tourism income decreased by \$1.33 trillion, the number of jobs in the sector reduced by 100,000 to 200,000 at the same time. (2020: A year in review, 2020). The World Tourism Organization (UNWTO) analyzed the policies of the governments of the countries on mitigation of the impact of COVID-19 on the tourism sector and the restoration of Tourism, as well as gave them recommendations on financial assistance, the study of the tourism market, and expansion of the public and private partnership, the preservation of jobs, the establishment of new tourist destinations. (UNWTO Tourism Recovery Tracker, 2021).

The issue of restoration of tourism, attracting investments in the field, creating new workplaces; as a result, turning it into one of the locomotive spheres of Uzbekistan's economy in

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the post-pandemic period is considered one of the most urgent tasks. (Абдуллаев, 2019). Also, Uzbekistan is a convenient destination for pilgrimage tourism. Many famous scholars in the Islamic world lived and worked in Uzbekistan. At the same time, there are historical places that are also dear to other religions. Khazrati Imam complex, in which it is kept one of the most valuable samples of the Qur'an, Imam Mahammad Al-Bukhari shrine, shrines of followers of the Naqshbandiya sect, and many other religious centers are excellent samples.

MATERIALS AND METHODS

The relevance of the rapid development of pilgrimage tourism becomes the basis for writing a scientific article. Necessary data was gathered during scientific analysis from foreign and Republican scientists' scientific works, Internet resources, the World Tourism Organization (UNWTO), and the International Travel and Tourism Board (WTTC). The study used theoretical methodologies, systematization concepts, problem-solving in economic processes based on statistical data analysis, and monographic research methods.

RESULTS

Experts point out that Uzbekistan has a high potential for all types of tourism development. According to the data of the State Committee of the Republic of Uzbekistan for Tourism Development, we can see that the indicators of tourism development grew in 2016-2019. The government took many financial and organizational-economic measures to improve the situation in 2020. As reflected in Figure 1, the number of tourists visiting the country increased 3,2 times in 2019 compared to 2016. Revenue from the tourism sector from 2017-2019 – the exports of services and their share in the country's GDP increased by 2.5 times. In 2019, the export of tourism services accounted for 2.3 percent.

Everyone knows that tourism generates a significant secondary demand in other economic sectors, including transportation, catering, handicraft, and trade.

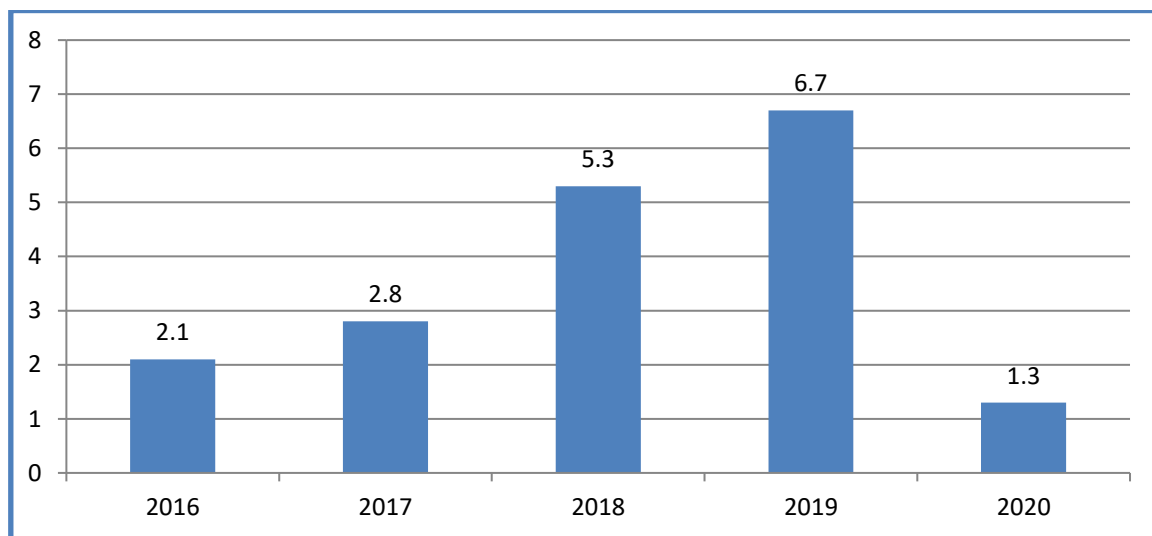


Figure-1. Number of tourists from abroad to Uzbekistan, (Tourism in Uzbekistan - 2016-2019, 2020)

According to the World Bank, tourism contributes an average of 4.3 percent to European and Central Asian countries (taking into account the multiplier effect). The closure of external

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borders completely stopped the arrival of foreign tourists in 2020. Besides, the introduction of quarantine restrictions throughout the country almost stopped domestic tourism. As a result, revenue from the export of direct tourism services in our country was reduced by more than four times than in 2019 (Figure 2).

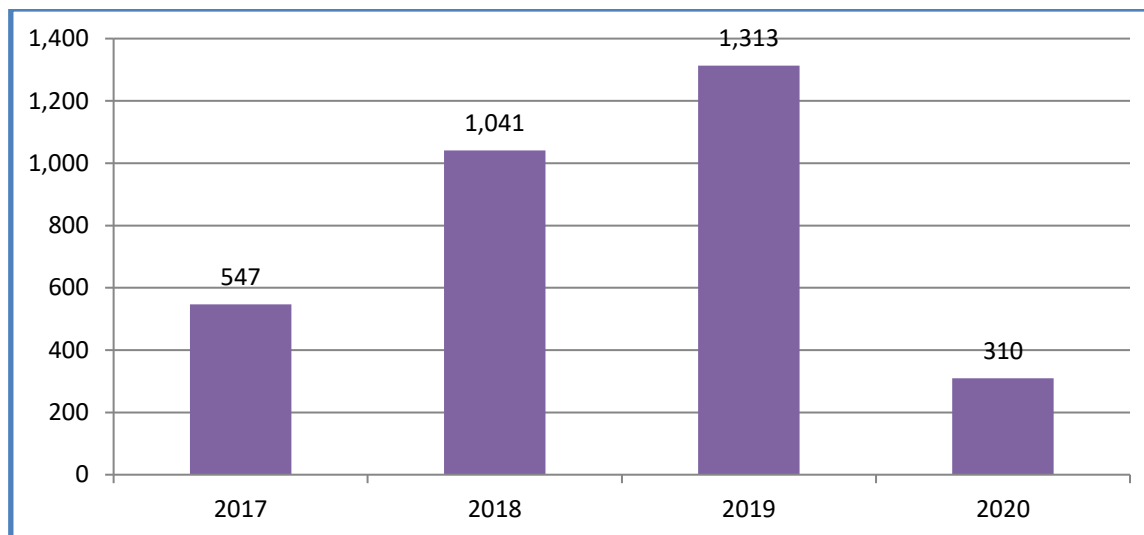


Figure 2. Revenues from the export of tourism services, (Tourism in Uzbekistan - 2016-2019, 2020)

The government also carries out consistent efforts to restore pilgrimage tourism. Uzbekistan's goal for 2021 is to attract 1,7 million foreign, 7,5 million domestic tourists and increase tourism service exports to 370 million dollars. The largest source in this regard is, first of all, pilgrimage tourism. There are many places for pilgrimage tourism, for example, monuments of Judaism and Buddhism in Uzbekistan. It is possible to attract 700,000 tourists and provide export services value 130 million dollars by taking advantage of this opportunity. (Mirziyoyev, 2021).

It's worth noting that many steps have been taken to boost Uzbekistan's attractiveness as a pilgrimage tourism destination. According to the decree (№ 5611) of the Head of the Republic of Uzbekistan, from January 5, 2017, a Pilgrim visa was implemented in Uzbekistan, allowing foreign citizens to study Uzbekistan's cultural, historical, religious-spiritual heritage, and traditions for up to two months. At the same time, it is necessary to note that there is not a package on the information on pilgrimage tourism in Uzbekistan. Therefore, tourists cannot learn or see the culture, customs, religious values of Uzbekistan. It hasn't worked the mechanism of using innovative factors.

It is essential to address the development of the necessary infrastructure facilities to develop pilgrimage tourism – the hotels' system, meeting the standards of visiting tourism in hotels, airports, and waiting rooms for guests. Several works were carried out in 2018-2019. As a result, there has been an increase in the number of foreign tourists visiting Uzbekistan. According to statistics, the number of tourists was 6,7 million in 2019. It was 126,2% compared to 2018. Following the decree of President Shavkat Mirziyoyev - "On additional organizational measures to create favorable conditions for the development of tourism potential of the Republic of Uzbekistan" on February 3, 2018, a visa-free regime was introduced for citizens of Indonesia, Malaysia, Singapore, Turkey, South Korea, Japan and Israel and a simplified visa regime for

tourists from 39 countries. Uzbekistan has implemented a simplified visa application process for citizens of 86 countries.

In cooperation with Crescent Rating Organization, the State Committee of the Republic of Uzbekistan for the Development of Tourism developed proposals and recommendations for tourism development in Uzbekistan. Based on these recommendations, the necessary conditions were created for the performance of worship at international airports. Malaysia's MS 2610: 2015-Muslim friendly hospitality services, on the standard of Requirements - UZ DST: 2018 tourism services, Muslim hospitality, for the first time in our country one of the critical events in the field of pilgrimage tourism – "halal" standard were introduced.

In 2019, Uzbekistan's position in the "Global Muslim Travel Index" ranking of international travel tourism increased to 10 points, and Uzbekistan took 22nd. Uzbekistan also entered the top ten among the member countries of the Organization of Islamic Cooperation on tourism insecurity and tolerance (Tourism in Uzbekistan - 2016-2019, 2020).

DISCUSSION

There is no unanimity on the concepts of religious tourism, pilgrimage tourism, their composition by specialists in tourism. According to many experts, religious tourism is a type of activity associated with the satisfaction and service of tourists who travel to holy places and religious centers outside their home territory (Khristov, 2005). It includes pilgrimage tourism, religious-excursion tourism, and spiritual, scientific tourism. Pilgrimage is a kind of activity in which people visit sacred places and perform specific actions.

Religious excursion tourism involves a trip to religious centers, where tourists can see religious monuments, museums, participate in religious events. This type of tourism is also closely related to scientific tourism. Scientists visit existing religious centers, countries with rich religious traditions and study religious heritage, objects of religious architecture. According to some authors, the fact that Muslims travel around the Earth for various purposes, for example, to perform spiritual prayers (Hajj and Umrah), sustenance, and in general for other reasons, led to the establishment of specific approaches and standards in the field of tourism (Hassib, 2020).

It is worth noting that tourism experts expressed their views on how Muslims should be named so that it is equally understandable for all to travel for any reason without leaving the religious requirements. Due to the problematic aspects of the proposed terms such as pilgrimage tourism, Islamic tourism, religious tourism, Sharia tourism, halal tourism, the word Muslim-friendly travel (favorable tourism for Muslims) is considered acceptable due to the controversy and debate, the opinions of experts in the field of religion and tourism (Kholkhujayev, 2020).

The Islamic center of tourism described Islamic tourism as follows: any event, meeting, visit carried out during the journey under Islamic rules is called Islamic tourism. Also, according to the definition of this center, the followings are defined as the directions of Islamic tourism:

- Muslims traveling in different directions;
- Muslims traveling to Muslim countries;
- Travel following Islamic principles;
- Muslims traveling to study Islamic heritage;
- Non-Muslims are traveling to study Islamic heritage.

All of the listed areas of pilgrimage tourism can develop in Uzbekistan. Every year, thousands of visitors from all over the world come to Uzbekistan to visit historical places.

In terms of halal travel, Uzbekistan was ranked 28th in 2017 by the Crescent Rating Organization. Uzbekistan was highly rated in the directions of safe travel (100 to 84 points), free

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entrance to the church (80), eating options, and guarantees (70). Our country took the middle and lower levels in the directions visa (50), airport options (48,3), - family vacation (44,4), living conditions (33,2), opportunities for Muslims (25), the arrival of tourists (21,2), communication opportunities (19). In 2018, attention was paid to the improvement of poorly developed directions.

CONCLUSION

In Uzbekistan, pilgrimage tourism made significant progress. The recognition of Uzbekistan as one of the centers of the pilgrimage tourism in the world community gives impetus to the development of the tourist infrastructure and a significant increase in tourists' flow. The religious shrines are not enough for pilgrimage tourism. In order to attract tourists, there must be suitable conditions for the performance of worship activities at the airport, hotels, a favorable visa regime.

The accumulation of Information Resources, summarizing the description of spiritual and material wealth available in the country, creating an integrated electronic platform providing complete information on visiting tourism is of scientific and practical importance.

CONFLICT OF INTERESTS AND CONTRIBUTION OF AUTHORS

The authors declare the absence of apparent and potential conflicts of interest related to the publication of this article and report on each author's contribution.

SOURCE OF FINANCING

This research didn't require any funding.

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