

## The Role and Importance of Pilgrimage Tourism in the Economy of Uzbekistan

Anvar Aidjanovich Khudoyarov

International Islamic Academy of Uzbekistan, Associate Professor of "Islamic Economics and Finance, Pilgrimage Tourism", Ph.D

### Abstract

*This paper makes analyses of the role and importance of pilgrimage tourism in the economy of Uzbekistan. On this case, research has been pinpointed on the both theoretical and methodological views of the pilgrimage tourism and there comparison from economical points as the whole. In conclusion, it concludes with both outcomes and shortcomings of the tourism sector in Uzbekistan with vivid recommendations for the further research.*

**Keywords:** *Tourism, economics, research, analyses, pilgrimage, Uzbekistan.*

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### Introduction

It is necessary to study the methodological and practical aspects of this issue from the point of view of revealing the development features and trends of the market of pilgrimage tourism in the context of global economic innovation and improving the organizational and economic mechanism of its effective development.

In his Address to the Oliy Majlis in 2020, the President of the Republic of Uzbekistan stressed the need to accelerate the development of pilgrimage tourism, noting that there are more than 8,200 cultural heritage sites in the country, of which only 500 are included in tourist routes. The state program on the implementation of the Action Strategy for the five priority areas of development of the Republic of Uzbekistan in 2017-2021 in the "Year of Science, Enlightenment and Digital Economy" includes to improve their condition ”.

According to statistics, for most visitors, the purpose of visiting Uzbekistan is to visit acquaintances and relatives. This accounted for 88.1% of the total number of visitors. The second largest segment was 8.6% - those who came to Uzbekistan for vacation, leisure and leisure (travel). The next group is those who come to Uzbekistan for business and professional purposes (1.1%). Visitors for treatment and trade (medicine) to improve medicine and health account for 1%. The average duration of each visit is 6.9 nights, the majority of tourists visit (79%) from 1 to 9 nights, and 19.8% from 10 to 39 nights. Less than 2% of tourists spend more than 40 nights in the country.

According to the targets for the development of tourism in the Republic of Uzbekistan in the period up to 2025, the number of foreign tourists visiting Uzbekistan in 2025 will reach 11,810 thousand people (in 2018, exports amounted to 4,300 million US dollars in 2018, 5,300.0 thousand in 2018). It is expected to reach \$ 2,170 million a year.

Targets for the implementation of the Concept of tourism development in the Republic of Uzbekistan in 2019-2025.<sup>1</sup>

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<sup>1</sup>Ўзбекистон Республикаси Президентининг 2019 йил 5 январдаги ПФ-5611-сон Фармонида 1-илова. 2019-2025 йилларда Ўзбекистон Республикасида туризм соҳасини ривожлантириш концепцияси.

T/p	Name of indicators	2018 y.	2019 y.	2020 y.	2021 y.	2022 y.	2023 y.	2024 y.	2025 y.
1.	Number of foreign tourists visiting Uzbekistan (0 thousand people)	5 346	6 041	7 010	8 410	10 010	10 600	11 250	11 810
2.	Export of tourism services (million US dollars)	1 041	1 180	1 360	1 620	1 900	2 000	2 080	2 170
3.	Number of domestic tourists (thousands of visits)	15 493	16 100	17 230	18 806	20 317	21 867	23 404	25 010
4.	Number of hotels and similar accommodation (pcs)	914	1 100	1 620	2 200	2 600	2 800	2 900	3 050
5.	Number of rooms in accommodation facilities (thousand)	20,2	24	35	47	55	59	62	64
6.	Number of places in accommodation facilities (thousand)	41	49	72	95	110	122	124	128
7.	Number of tour operators (people)	983	1 100	1 190	1 250	1 320	1 390	1 420	1 450

In order to successfully fulfill this strategic task, in order to develop pilgrimage tourism, it is necessary to develop concrete and effective measures aimed at improving the suitability of the existing holy sites in our country for pilgrimage and the relevant infrastructure. At the same time, the training of mature specialists in the field is one of the important issues.

The objects of pilgrimage tourism are shrines, holy places, historical buildings, architectural monuments and other tourist facilities. In world tourism, the fact that consumers travel around the world for various purposes, such as pilgrimage, religious worship, food seeking, and so on, requires a unique approach and standards in the field of tourism.

According to the State Committee for Tourism Development, 6.75 million tourists visited Uzbekistan in 2019. In 2018, their number reached 5.35 million, which means that the number of tourists increased by 26.2% in a year. At the end of 2019, the export volume of tourism services amounted to 1 billion 313 million US dollars (1 billion 041 million in 2018). The total number reached 1,188 units, of which 833 hotels, 214 hostels and 141 other similar facilities.

Today, the services sector plays a crucial role in the economies of developed countries. In Uzbekistan, the so-called tertiary services sector is one of the fastest growing sectors of the economy. As of January 1, 2019, out of 323.5 thousand operating organizations and enterprises, about 213 thousand are operating in the service sector. In the total number of service organizations and enterprises, more than 153,000 are small businesses. As of January 1, 2019, their share was 72.2%

As of January 1, 2019, the largest share in the structure of enterprises and organizations operating in the field of services are enterprises and organizations engaged in trade activities (33.3%). The development of cooperation with countries near and far abroad, as well as in the field of tourism has contributed to the growth in the number of enterprises and organizations providing accommodation and catering services. Their share was 9.3%.

The share of operating enterprises and organizations engaged in transportation and storage in the total number of enterprises and organizations in the field of services amounted to 6.2%. The share of enterprises and organizations engaged in information activities and providing communication services amounted to 3.3%.

The share of enterprises and organizations providing services in the field of health and social services was 3.2%. 191.2 thousand enterprises and organizations operate in the services sector. The largest share in their total structure are trade services (33.0%), accommodation and catering services (9.0%), transportation and storage (6.3%), information and communication (3.3%), health and social services (3.1%).

At present, the world's economy, as well as Uzbekistan, is paying increasing attention to the tourism sector of the economy. People spend their free time productively, trying to relax, restore their health, get to know the world, customs and values of nations. In some countries, the tourism sector is developing very steadily, with an annual growth rate of 8-10%.

This shows how crucial the tourism sector is in the economic system of countries. Currently, Uzbekistan is in the process of forming a national model of tourism. According to experts, the annual flow of tourists in the country is expected to increase by 15%, which is twice as much as the World Tourism Organization estimates.

Tourist routes in Uzbekistan include trips to the ancient cities of the Silk Road and visits to more than 4,000 architectural monuments, many of which are protected by UNESCO. The economic and political reforms being carried out in our country today are showing their positive results.

It should be noted that in his address, the President stressed the need to pay attention to the development of pilgrimage tourism. The global development of the world economy and the provided statistics show that pilgrimage tourism is promising in the tourism markets.

Uzbekistan is a country of different nationalities, religions and cultures. It is a country with a rich historical heritage that lives in harmony with modern architecture and high-tech development. The fact that the geographical location of the Republic is extremely favorable, has a natural climate, is also important in the cultural development of mankind. Our country has a hospitable, tolerant people with unique, wonderful historical and architectural monuments, sweet fruits, a variety of national dishes, wonderful national traditions and customs.

One of the main factors in the development of tourism in Uzbekistan is peace, stability, mutual benefit and solidarity. At present, Uzbekistan has more than 8,200 cultural heritage sites, most of which are included in the UNESCO list. In addition, a total of 550 tourism companies and tour operators operate in the country. 110 international tourist destinations are served, covering most of the historical sites, architectural and urban monuments in the region.

Based on the above, it is advisable to develop projects that will introduce the basics and principles of integrated marketing in the development of tourism for businesses and local residents serving the infrastructure in the adjacent areas of all pilgrimage tourism facilities and monitor its implementation. The organization of these projects in cooperation with non-governmental non-profit organizations, universities and official bodies such as mahalla and district khokimiyats will contribute to the development of the sector.

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