

## POTENTIAL OF ISLAMIC TOURISM IN FOREIGN COUNTRIES

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**Abstract.** The article reveals the potential for developing Islamic tourism in foreign countries. At work, they consider approaches to distinguishing between the concepts of "Islamic tourism" and "Halal tourism," emphasizing their features and components, and also offer their approach to the definition of "Islamic tourism," which covers not only pilgrimage but also trips for other purposes, subject to Sharia requirements.

**Key words:** Islamic tourism, halal tourism, halal, pilgrimage, religious tourism.

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**Introduction**

After the events of September 11, 2001, according to several researchers, the world experienced a reorientation of tourist flows (Carboni, Perelli, Sistu 2017: 88). American and European tourists discriminated against Muslim-majority countries (Stephenson, 2014, p. 162), primarily due to fears for their safety. At the same time, Muslim tourists began to visit Muslim countries more often. Egypt, Lebanon, Turkey, Bahrain, and Malaysia have become the most popular destinations for Muslim tourists since 9/11 (Al-Hamarneh, Steiner 2004).

Some authors (Battour, Ismail, Battor 2011) call this reorientation the "Islamization" of tourism. In the scientific literature, such concepts as "Islamic tourism," "Halal tourism," and "Muslim tourism" began to be actively used tourism," "Sharia hotels," "halal hotels," and "halal hospitality." The word "halal" (translated from Arabic - free, unbound) in Islamic jurisprudence means actions or objects permitted by Sharia. The halal industry includes food, finance, pharmaceuticals, tourism, media, clothing and accessories, cosmetics, and others. [1]

The term "Islamic tourism" seems more accurate and universal than "halal tourism" since it includes travel aimed at rest, treatment, cultural or educational programs in compliance with Sharia requirements and a pilgrimage to holy places. Islamic tourism can also include so-called "halal-friendly" tourism. This type of tourism includes additional halal services at consumers' request, usually provided by hotels. For example, if a hotel sells alcohol, but there are no alcoholic drinks in the minibar in some rooms, and the hotel guests are offered a choice of halal food, then such a hotel can be considered halal-friendly, not a halal hotel.

The crisis in the tourism industry, caused by restrictions related to the spread of COVID-19, has also affected Islamic tourism. Annual tourism spending is expected to fall to \$58 billion, but experts suggest a gradual return to the indicators of 2018-2019. could start as early as 2023. [2]

During the coronavirus pandemic, some regions where Islamic tourism services are widely represented continued to receive tourists. Since May 2020, in Egypt, local residents have been allowed to check into hotels (25% occupancy, from June – 50%), and since August 2020, limited

international flights have been opened for tourists traveling to the resorts of the Red Sea provinces (Hurghada, Marsa Alam), South Sinai (Sharm El Sheikh)

and Mersa Matruh.[3]

Türkiye has also resumed flights with several countries since June 2020. Tourists from most countries can enter the country subject to certain conditions (availability of a vaccination certificate, a negative PCR test).[4]

However, some countries still retain entry bans. Malaysia lifted restrictions on domestic tourism on June 7, 2020. As of October 7, 2021, free entry for foreign tourists was prohibited, and entry was required to obtain a permit.[5]

Those travel agencies and operators that organize the Hajj and Umrah (minor pilgrimage) have been the most affected by the restrictions, as Saudi Arabia significantly limited the number of pilgrims in 2020-2021.[6]

The tourism industry's contribution to Saudi Arabia's GDP in 2019 was 9.8%, estimated at US\$79.2 billion. In 2020, this type of economic activity was estimated at 48.5 billion, 38.8% lower than the previous year. According to the World Travel and Tourism Council (WTTC), Saudi Arabia is one fastest-growing tourism sectors, driven by the Vision 2030 strategy to develop the sector and attract foreign tourists.[7]

The focus is on articles on developing the tourism industry in African countries. This type of tourism on this continent is represented unevenly. Several countries are the undisputed leaders in the standard segment of the tourism business: Egypt, Morocco, and South Africa have the most developed halal tourism infrastructure (hotels, catering) compared to other countries in the region.

Senegal, Morocco, annually attracts pilgrims from around the world to visit Islamic cultural heritage sites. Tunisia is engaged in a developed medical infrastructure and quality of services that attract foreign patients. In addition, Tunisia offers a halal-friendly destination according to the Crescent Rating.[8]

It may be available for the development of graduation services. Tanzania, Kenya, and Algeria are also marked in the rank of counts attractive to halal tourists.

#### Islamic tourism: on the issue of terminology

In the scientific literature, the term "religious tourism" has been used for a long time. The connection between religion and tourism is most often associated with pilgrimage, the oldest form of tourism.[9]

Religious tourism is closely related to other types of tourism, primarily cultural, recreational, and social tourism (Rinschede 1992, p. 65). Religious tourism includes pilgrimages to holy places and includes country or city sightseeing, possible optional excursions and educational programs. It is often carried out as part of a group, emphasizing its social component (Rinschede 1992:59–61).

Islamic tourism is one of the varieties of religious tourism. Research interest in it in the academic literature can be traced back to around the 1980s. Kadir Din (Din 1989: 547) notes that in Muslim countries, travel for, for example, pilgrimage is encouraged, and hedonistic forms of tourism are discouraged<sup>10</sup>. Also, at work, he introduces the "Islamic concept of tourism". He notes the importance of the following conditions for Muslim tourists during a tourist trip: the availability of places for prayer, halal food, the absence of alcohol and inappropriate entertainment (discotheques, casinos and others).

Some researchers share the concepts of "Islamic tourism" and "halal tourism." Some believe Islamic tourism includes trips exclusively with religious motivation (Ryan 2016: 121).

Other authors believe that travel does not have to be purely religiously motivated. Islamic tourism can include travel for any purpose and to any country, not just Muslim-majority countries (Battour, Ismail, Battor 2010: 7-8).

Joan Henderson (2016: 160) notes that Islamic tourism includes any Muslim tourism activity. Michele Carboni, Carlo Perelli and Giovanni Sistu (Carboni, Perelli, Sistu 2014: 2) define it as tourism, the services and attributes of which follow Islamic principles and are aimed at Muslims who seek to maintain their usual way of life during the trip.

Islamic tourism, as noted by Chris Ryan (2016: 121), includes travel to places of Islamic history and culture. In turn, Jafar Jafari and Noel Scott (Jafari, Scott 2014: 9) believe Islamic tourism may include pilgrimage and tourist trips for other purposes.

Hamira Zamani-Farahani and Joan Henderson (Zamani-Farahani, Henderson 2010: 81) do not separate the concepts of "Islamic tourism" and "halal tourism" and define them as a type of tourism aimed at meeting the religious needs of Muslims. Mohamed Battour and Mohammed Nazari Ismail (Battour, Ismail 2016: 150–151) also note that these terms are often used interchangeably and define halal tourism as a type of tourism that conforms to Islamic principles and allows Muslims to adhere to customary religious practices and lifestyles, during the journey.

Chris Ryan (2016: 121) sees health, entertainment and social components in halal tourism. This type of tourism is distinguished by the fact that the primary consumers are Muslims, and services

are adapted to their needs. M. Akyol and O. Kiliç (Akyol, Kiliç 2014: 5).

Represent halal tourism as an ecosystem that includes specialized hotels, transportation (airlines), catering places, tours and Islamic finance.

H. El-Gohary insists that the most justified term is "halal tourism," while the concept of "Islamic tourism" can give the false impression that these services are only addressed to Muslim clients (El-Gohary 2016: 127).

This statement, in our opinion, is only partially fair. There is a particular danger in using the term "halal tourism" universally. As the same El-Gohari notes, halal tourism in its purest form is a rare phenomenon, and in. In many, one can observe halal-friendly tourism rather than tourism that fully complies with Sharia requirements. So, suppose a hotel, along with halal services, provides those prohibited or not approved by Sharia. In that case, such a hotel cannot be classified as halal but can be characterized as halal-friendly (El-Gohary, 2016, pp. 127–128).

Thus, it is necessary to distinguish between "Islamic tourism" and "halal tourism."

The first concept has a broader meaning and includes both actual religious trips (pilgrimage - hajj, umrah, ziyarat[11];

missionary tours), as well as travel aimed at rest and treatment in compliance with Sharia requirements, education and others. The adjective "Islamic" in this case means that this type of tourism is based on Shariah regulations concerning the behavior of Muslims.

Thus, in practice, not only Muslims can use certain services in the segment of Islamic tourism.[12]

This article does not use the term "Muslim tourism" to avoid the misconception that this type of tourism is addressed exclusively to Muslims. It is no coincidence that in the history of such a segment of the halal industry, as in Islamic finance, two concepts have developed: "Muslim bank" and "Islamic bank." In the first case, we are talking about an institution whose owners and main clients are Muslims. An Islamic bank is a financial institution that uses various financing methods, and non-Muslims can be its owners and clients (Bekkin, 2020). The same applies to "Muslim tourism" and "Islamic tourism": the first refers to Muslim travel. At the same time, the second is a

type of active recreation during the organization and conduct of which the prohibitions and prescriptions of Sharia and the customs of the peoples who traditionally profess Islam are observed.

The question of whether non-Muslims can use the services of Islamic tourism deserves special attention, as there is no clear answer. In the case of a halal holiday, there are no restrictions. For example, if a non-Muslim accepts the rules established in a halal hotel, he cannot be denied accommodation and use of all available services; at the same time, no one will force him to perform a fivefold prayer. However, he must understand that some services may not be available during prayer. If he ends up in a halal hotel during fasting in the month of Ramadan, then the tourist should be prepared for a special diet in the restaurant at the hotel.[13]

It is complicated to say how much halal hotels are in demand among non-Muslims since no exact data exists on them.

Another thing is the pilgrimage. If, as a rule, non-Muslims (for example, researchers) can make ziyarat holy places, then in the case of Hajj and Umrah, there is a strict restriction: only followers of Islam are allowed into Mecca and Medina. The same can be said about halal medical tourism. For practicing Muslims, it is essential to comply with the requirements of Islamic ethics in providing medical services. Hence, hospitals, sanatoriums, and other institutions that comply with Sharia requirements are particularly interesting to them. Medical halal tourism is still underdeveloped, but this direction has excellent prospects.

Speaking about Islamic tourism, it is crucial to understand that, unlike, for example, Islamic finance, this area still needs to be sufficiently standardized. In many countries where Islamic tourism operators are present, there are no standards to characterize a particular tourism service as halal. However, even where such standards exist, not all Islamic tourism operators follow them (Junaidi 2020: 1755–1756).

The main components of Islamic tourism include halal hotels, halal transport, halal food and tours.

Halal hotel - a type of hotel that provides the following services: halal food, the absence of alcoholic beverages not only in the hotel room but throughout its territory, prayer rooms and separate recreation areas for men and women. The hotel room should have a Koran, a prayer rug, a pointer to Mecca, and a schedule of prayer times. The room has enough space for prayer and does not contain images of living beings. The bathroom has ablution accessories and hair and body care products that do not contain alcohol and animal fats. The hotel staff is predominantly Muslim, has a conservative dress code, and is familiar with halal standards. There is no gambling on-site; staff can provide information on nearby mosques and halal-certified eating places upon request.

Halal transport is mainly represented by airlines. For example, Emirates, Malaysia Airlines, Saudi Airlines, and Turkish Airlines provide halal services during flights.[14]

These services include halal food, the possibility of performing prayers during the flight, separate entertainment media content, and a special menu during the fast of Ramadan.

A requirement is the availability of halal catering places. In the host country, restaurants and cafes must be certified according to halal standards. This standard includes the absence of prohibited products and additives (pork; meat of dead animals; meat of animals killed without following specific rules; alcohol and products containing it) and special requirements for premises, equipment and personnel.

Halal package tours, in turn, include sightseeing tourism (visiting mosques and monuments of Islamic culture) and beach tourism with accommodation in a hotel offering halal services.

### Islamic tourism in Uzbekistan

Uzbekistan has great potential for tourism development. Although little attention has been paid to this area over the years, the country has changed significantly recently. It is increasingly paying attention to the development of this spectrum. Today, tourism is one of the most profitable industries. From year to year in the world, there is a steady upward trend in the number of international tourists. For example, in 2018, this figure reached 1.4 billion, and tourist exports amounted to 1.7 trillion. US dollars. Thus, a country with tourism potential is simply obliged to develop the tourism industry. Uzbekistan, of course, is one of these countries since it is in our country that all types of tourism can be developed, from ordinary mountain tourism to Silk Road tourism.

Currently, the process of cardinal reform of this industry has been launched in Uzbekistan. Its goal is to transform tourism into a strategic direction for the country's development, which will ensure the accelerated development of the regions. In his Address, President Sh.M. Mirziyoyev identified one of the main tasks in the social sphere in 2019 as "taking comprehensive measures to develop tourism, attract investment in the sphere, and increase the potential of personnel."

To implement the task, as well as to create favorable conditions for the development of tourism, the Concept for the Development of the Tourism Sector in the Republic of Uzbekistan for 2019-2025 was proposed and approved, which analyzes the current state of tourism sector, sets the main goals, defines the stages and directions of development industries.

**METHODOLOGY.** The adopted concept will be implemented in two stages:

1. 2019-2020 - institutional reforms to create a solid legislative framework for tourism development, modernize infrastructure and promote the country's tourism brand.
2. 2021-2025 - increasing the tourism industry's share in the country's economy. In this direction, the goal is to increase the share of tourism in the country's GDP by up to 5%.

Uzbekistan has a vast potential for tourism development. There are more than 7,400 cultural heritage sites in the country, 209 of which are included in the UNESCO World Heritage List. In addition, the country has 11 national parks and state reserves, 12 reserves, 106 museums, and many other objects that can attract tourists.

It should be noted that this goal is quite ambitious since, according to WTTC, the direct contribution of the tourism sector to Uzbekistan's GDP amounted to 0.9% or 2.22 trillion sums, and the total - 2.8%, or 6.7 trillion. sums.

It is possible to consider in more detail the main directions of tourism development presented in the concept and analyze the results.

**DISCUSSION.** New prospects for tourism are opening up in our country; large-scale projects are being implemented in various areas. In recent years, new tourist destinations such as mountaineering, horseback riding, camel riding, cycling, off-road travel, fishing, rafting, tourism, educational tourism, and medical tourism have been gaining popularity.

In a short period of time, 16 regulatory legal acts were adopted aimed at the comprehensive development of the tourism potential of Uzbekistan. Based

of these documents, tourism organizations were granted significant tax and customs benefits and other benefits.

In order to ensure that the tourism industry of our country meets the requirements of the International Organization for Standardization (ISO), two new state standards on tourism terminology and hotel safety requirements have been developed and registered.

In this direction, active work began in 2016. Since then, more than 55 legislative acts of various levels have been adopted, contributing to the industry's renewal as a whole. First of all, it was decided to transform the NC "Uzbektourism" into the State Committee for the Development of Tourism with a new organizational structure. The committee includes nine territorial departments and four tourism development departments. In addition, programs were adopted to accelerate the development of domestic and inbound tourism, aimed at the constant development of the tourism industry and smoothing seasonal fluctuations in tourism demand.

Today, the improvement of the regulatory framework in the field of tourism and the implementation of international norms and standards is an essential link in the development of tourism in general.

The critical result of the ongoing improvement of the legislative framework was the adoption of the "Law on Tourism," in which specialists directly interested in the development of this industry participated. Compared to the previous version of the law, the new one contains 45 articles covering all aspects of the tourism sector, indicating the new law's relevance.

To date, a visa-free regime has been established for citizens of 86 countries, and citizens of 77 countries have the opportunity to obtain electronic visas, of which more than 59,000 have already been issued. These measures have led to an increase in the number of tourists by 57% only during eight months of this year. Thus, Uzbekistan is becoming an increasingly open and attractive destination for foreign tourists.

However, despite significant positive changes in the legislation field, many tasks in this area still need to be addressed. In our opinion, this first concerns further improving the public-private partnership mechanism. After all, if a legal framework is created that protects and supports entrepreneurs, then they will be more actively involved in the investment process. The introduction of a mechanism for reimbursement of part of the investor's costs for the construction and equipping of the hotel at the expense of the state budget, provided for by the Decree of the President of 01/05/2019, is proof of the interest of the country's leadership in the development of this priority area.

The second important aspect of tourism development is the development of tourism infrastructure and related infrastructure in all regions of the republic, considering the needs and requests of tourists.

An analysis of the dynamics of the number of hotels and similar accommodation facilities allows us to speak of their almost stable growth. Only in 2019 and 2020 are negative figures compared to previous years due to the widespread covid (pandemic) worldwide.

Uzbekistan has favorable conditions for the development of pilgrimage tourism. Our country has historical monuments that are dear to representatives of other confessions.

Pilgrimage tourism in Uzbekistan has significant development potential due to its most important Muslim shrines:

The mausoleum of Khoja Bakhautdin Nakshbandi, the second most significant shrine of the Barak-Khan Madrasah, the Muslim shrine near Tashkent - Zangiata and the mausoleum of Imam Al-Bukhari near Samarkand.

The presence in Uzbekistan of more than 7 thousand objects of the material cultural heritage of different eras and civilizations, including the historical centers of Bukhara, Khiva, Samarkand, and Shakhrisabz, included in the UNESCO World Heritage List, turns pilgrimage tourism into an auspicious direction. The most crucial event in the field of pilgrimage tourism is the introduction of the Halal standard for the first time in our country.

Modern travel (and religious, not an exception) is directly related to the need to provide tourists with various services, the most vital of which are: food, transport, and paperwork. The characteristics of the organization of pilgrimage tours, as well as others, are the presence of the proper provision of tourists with all the necessary services, albeit sometimes particular ones. This speaks in favor that with the proper, strictly dosed saturation of the religious tour with a classic set of services for accommodation, meals, transport, paperwork and others, the tour's content does not suffer.

Conclusion. So, Today, creating a single national brand is an essential condition for developing tourism in Uzbekistan. Participation in international exhibitions and holding thematic festivals and forums contribute to the popularization of the country abroad. One of the proofs of the objective need for further development in this direction is publications about Uzbekistan and in foreign media more often. Also, significant achievements in this area are receiving various awards, such as the "Fastest Growing Tourist Destination" according to Wanderlust magazine, the "Gastronomic Tourism" nomination according to National Geographic Traveler and entering the top five safest countries for single tourists. In addition, it is necessary to continue to promote the tourism product to the external and domestic markets. To promote tourism, it is also necessary to organize events related to the specifics of each region of the republic. The create our opinion, then of digests, presentation videos, and a single annual calendar of cultural, entertainment, sports, exhibitions, and other events, in certainly be an effective means of developing halal tourism in our country.

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