

WAYS TO CREATE A BRAND OF PILGRIMAGE TOURISM IN UZBEKISTAN

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Abstract. This paper studies the development of pilgrimage tourism in Uzbekistan and develops a tourism brand and route through the pilgrimage sites of the country. The paper analyzes the leaks of view on the relationship between the concepts of "tourism", "pilgrimage tourism", "religious tourism", "tourist", "pilgrimage" and "pilgrimage". In the course of the work, the history of the development of pilgrimage tourism in Central Asia is studied. A comparative analysis of the proposals for pilgrimage tours available on the country's market is carried out. The result of the work is the development of a pilgrimage tour to the shrines in Uzbekistan.

Key words: tourism, religious tourism, pilgrimage tourism, branding, Islam, tourism product.

Introduction

Over the past five years, even considering the pandemic, the tourism sector has become one of the main drivers of economic growth in the Republic: one dollar invested in the industry accounts for 5-7 dollars in related industries. The Government of the Republic of Uzbekistan has established a 30-60-day visa-free regime to attract guests - representatives of 90 countries.

Treasures of the Millennium. The ancient lands of Bactria, Kushan, Maverannahr-Transoxania, Khorezm, Sogdiana and others. The past four millennia have left so many monuments of material culture that even a part of them will not be enough to study in a lifetime. On a vast territory, old fortresses and religious and scientific buildings have been preserved from several hundred to thousands of years old. The buildings of the pre-Islamic, Horde and especially Islamic periods of history are pretty well preserved. The cities of Samarkand (Afrasiab-Marakanda), Tashkent (Shash), Bukhara, Karshi (Nakhshab), Shakhrisabz (Kesh), Urgench (Gurganj) and others have preserved an awe-inspiring number of old buildings, little touched by archeology.

The scientific study of monuments of material culture began only after the revolution of 1917, and the establishment of an accessible tourism system is calculated in just a few decades. Therefore, this land still keeps many exciting secrets and discoveries that are in demand among historians and tourists.

One of the oldest in Transoxia is the poly-confessional Termez, the same age as the Trojan War. There is a whole complex of surviving mausoleums of the descendants of the Prophet - Sultan-Saadat (more than 20). Buddhist monks built the monastery of Kara-Tepe, the fortress of Kyrk-Kyz was built by the Zoroastrians and the citadel near the village of Patta-Hissar was built by Orthodox Russians.

In the gray-haired Samarkand (VIII century BC, although the Upper Paleolithic identifies the oldest sites), its "heart" is well preserved - Registan Square with Ulugbek, Sherdor and Tillya-Kari madrasahs, many old mosques, mausoleums, the Timurid tomb Gur-Emir, the observatory of Ulugbek and others. The city itself is a substantial open-air monument.

Younger than him, Bukhara is the capital of the states of the Samanids, Sheibanids, Ashtarkhanids and Mangyts, the center of pilgrimage for Central Asian Muslims.

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The pearl of the Khorezmian oasis of Khiva, the well which, according to legend, was dug by Shem, the son of the biblical Noah. The positions of the Zoroastrians were strong here, resisting the Arab conquest to the last.

In Kokand, the main religious center of the Ferghana Valley, the last of the Central Asian khanates that fell into the sphere of influence of Russia, the palace of Khudoyar Khan - Urda was perfectly preserved. At one time, the city had 300 mosques and 40 madrasahs. According to the Hungarian traveler Arminius Vamberi, in the middle of the 19th century, the city was four times the size of Tehran and twice that of Bukhara.

The land of Sogdiana remembers the heroic resistance of the military commander Spitamen to the troops of Alexander the Great himself, who left behind here the most distant of the cities he founded - Alexandria Eskhata.

There are 8.2 thousand cultural heritage sites in Uzbekistan, some of which are included in the UNESCO World Heritage List. There is no end to the work of guides, archaeologists and historians. Moreover, for inquisitive tourists, it is a point of attraction.

Open gate. The change of elites in the second half of the decade also led to a change in the country's political course. Tashkent preferred openness and attraction of foreign investments to the economy urgently needing modernization.

Tourism has become one of the youngest and most dynamically developing sectors of the economy of Uzbekistan. Almost immediately, he showed the result - in 2016, about 2 million foreigners visited the Republic. The main share of tourists were Russians (22.4%), followed by residents of Korea (8.2% - a sizeable Korean diaspora lives in Central Asia), Germany (3.8%), France (3.6%) and other Western countries.

The Government of the Republic of Uzbekistan has launched a large-scale advertising campaign to attract tourists. Videos about the attractiveness of various locations in the country appeared on the world's leading TV channels (for several years, they were shown on the round-the-clock information channel EuroNews, covering almost 300 million consumers in 150 countries in 13 languages).

In January 2019, the Government of the Republic of Uzbekistan adopted a resolution "On measures to accelerate the development of the tourism industry", which stipulated tools for the intensive development of tourism, the creation and promotion of a national product to world markets based on the creation of favorable economic incentives and organizational and legal conditions.

In particular, for guests from 90 countries, a preferential 30- and 60-day visa-free period for visiting Uzbekistan (in addition to the visa-free regime for residents of the CIS) was established, and an electronic visa was issued in a simplified manner in two working days. A unique Silk Road Project platform has been opened to promote the tourism potential of the countries of the Great Silk Road and promising regional tourism products and routes. Personnel ready to work in new conditions and create an attractive image of the Republic came to the Uzbektourism company.

During the pandemic, the income tax rate for travel companies was reduced by 50%, and the right to carry forward losses was granted. Financial preferences were established for companies in the form of interest-free loans, full coverage of interest expenses on commercial loans, prolongation of the principal debt by up to 24 months and others.

Guide required. According to official data from the State Statistics Committee, in 2021, 1,158 tourist organizations, 1,226 hotels, tourist centers and campsites for 53.5 thousand people worked in Uzbekistan. The Republic was included in the ranking of the best places to travel in Asia, according to Lonely Planet, and ranks second after South Korea, ahead of Vietnam, Japan, Thailand, Nepal, Sri Lanka, China and Indonesia.

The critical factors for developing tourism in the next decade are the availability of better infrastructure, targeted marketing and promotion efforts, the liberalization of air transport and the growth of online travel portals.

Personnel in the tourism sector of Uzbekistan are trained by five universities, annually graduating over 500 students with a bachelor's degree and more than 40 with a master's degree. Another 3.5 thousand specialists leave the walls of 12 specialized colleges.

According to Naila Ibragimova from the Institute for Forecasting and Macroeconomic Research, "Large MICE events play a significant role in the development of the tourism industry in Uzbekistan. One of the most important annual events was the Tashkent International Fair, "Tourism on the Silk Road", where professionals meet under the Hosted Buyers program. A forum is being organized on topical issues of tourism development in Central Asia and the world. It allows us to conclude business contracts and develop international cooperation."

The institute believes that for the development of medical tourism, it is still necessary to create favorable conditions for the intensive modernization of medical infrastructure and management of the industry, which will increase the income of the regions and at the same time, stimulate the development of other areas, as well as improve the infrastructure of medical and recreational areas and strengthen the health of the population, preserve natural healing resources and cultural heritage. In addition, it is essential to conduct more research on the biomedical mechanisms of the influence of natural factors on health, to develop treatment standards for medical institutions that meet modern requirements. These activities are proposed to be combined with developing new combined tours: gastronomic (plov-tours), vitamin, archaeological, nomad tours and motorcycle tours.

Given the significant number of Muslim holy places in the region, the Government of Uzbekistan attaches great importance to organizing pilgrimage tours (ziyosat). First of all, this concerns the Bukhara region. In addition, they intend to attract tourists through the organization of the Bakhshi art festival, the Archaeological Forum (Surkhandarya region), the Games of Heroes (Khorezm region), the Muynak rally, the Element music festival (Republic of Karakalpakstan), the CIS tourism fair (Samarkand region), geotourism forum, pomegranate festival (Kashkadarya region), electronic music festival, gastronomic festival, World Influencers Congress forum in Tashkent.

As explained by the Government of the Republic of Uzbekistan, the presence of a modern material and infrastructural base plays one of the leading roles in ensuring the competitiveness of the tourism industry. When consuming a complex service, each guest of the Republic, by default, needs roads and other infrastructure facilities. It is also necessary to provide comfortable living conditions in the destination: engineering networks, communications, public transport, financial institutions, information portals and others.

Religious tourism is where believers travel individually or in groups for religious or spiritual reasons in search of meaning. It could be a pilgrimage missionary or recreation. Many of today's most popular tourist destinations are linked to ancient places of worship or places of apparent miracles. Also, pilgrimage, as part of religious tourism, is the act of moving from one place to another, often traveling through foreign lands, an orderly march by a group of people, usually with religious overtones. It is a ritual journey with a sacred purpose, every step along the way is meaningful and the pilgrim knows that the journey will be difficult and that life's problems will arise.

Mostly sacred sites and places of pilgrimage are associated with major religions: Christianity, Islam, Hinduism, Buddhism, Judaism and Sikhism.

At least three hundred million pilgrims visit the world's key religious sites annually. The study also presents the differences between pilgrimage from religious tourism. In terms of pilgrimage, its

inclusion conveys religious involvement in the journey. Pilgrimage motivation will be different from the motivation of religious tourism. Pilgrimage is not just a vacation but a transformational journey during which significant changes occur, new insights are given, a deeper understanding is achieved, new and old places in the heart are visited, blessings are received, healing occurs, and upon returning from the pilgrimage, life is seen with different eyes, and nothing will ever be the same.

The action strategy for the further development of the Republic of Uzbekistan from 2017 to 2021 emphasizes the importance of tourism in the country's economy, as it is a significant source of replenishment of budgets at all levels and contributes to the development of the socio-cultural environment. A unique role is given to the development of spiritual and educational values of citizens, according to which the development of pilgrimage tourism is recognized as a priority, including the diversification of tourism products.

Relevance Pilgrimage tourism in the Republic of Uzbekistan has been actively developing in the past few years, as well as the limited supply of Muslim pilgrimage tours in the tourist services market of this country.

The object of pilgrimage tourism in the Republic of Uzbekistan

The subject of conditions and factors is the development of Muslim pilgrimage tourism in the Republic of Uzbekistan.

The purpose of the work. Development of a pilgrimage tour to the Republic of Uzbekistan.

To achieve this goal, it is necessary to solve the following tasks:

1. Terminological analysis of the basic concepts of pilgrimage tourism;
2. Consider the genesis of pilgrimage tourism;
3. Determine current trends in pilgrimage tourism in Uzbekistan and foreign countries;
4. Identify the most important pilgrimage sites in the Republic of Uzbekistan;
5. Analyze the offer of pilgrimage tours, as well as religious excursion tours in the market of tourist services of the Republic of Uzbekistan;
6. Identify the competitive advantages of the Republic of Uzbekistan as a pilgrimage destination;
7. Create a tourist route within the framework of pilgrimage tourism, with elements of an excursion focused on essential pilgrimage sites of the Republic of Uzbekistan.

In the course of the work, the following methods were applied to achieve the goal of the study:

- Method of terminological analysis;
- Bibliographic method;
- Method of comparative analysis;
- Method of classification.

The structure of the work is determined by its purpose and objectives and consists of an introduction, three chapters, a conclusion, applications and a list of sources.

The history of the development of pilgrimage tourism in the Republic of Uzbekistan

The population of the Central Asian region professed different religions at different times. Buddhism and Zoroastrianism flourished here once, and Islam came at the beginning of the 8th century.

In addition to the most common religions, Greek pantheons of gods and cults of local heroes were also worshiped here. Buddhism came to this region in the 2nd century and spread widely, even being given the official status of this religion.

Some monuments and temples of that period have survived to this day. Zoroastrianism spread throughout the Central Asian region almost immediately from its appearance - in the 7th century

BC. To date, more than 30 monuments of Zoroastrianism have been preserved on the territory of Uzbekistan. However, this religion, like Buddhism, was forced out of the region in the 8th century when Islam came to these lands.

Speaking of the pilgrimage tourism in that period, one cannot help but touch upon the convenience created for pilgrims by the existence of the Great Silk Road, which lasted until the end of the 16th century. After the collapse of the Timurid Empire, the pilgrimage also declined due to constant internecine wars in the region. The situation had normalized by the beginning of the 18th century, and barriers for pilgrims, even during the period of subjugation of the Russian Empire, were few and had little effect on their general flow.

The population of Uzbekistan today is 33.5 million people, of which 94% profess Islam (93% are Sunnis, 1% are Shiites), 3% are Orthodox Christians and 3% are adherents of other faiths (Catholics, Jews, Buddhists, Hare Krishnas, atheists and others).) [29]. All of them peacefully coexist and there is no interfaith hostility. Even though most of the country's citizens are Muslims, Uzbekistan is a secular country where, under the Constitution, freedom of conscience is guaranteed and everyone has the right to profess any religion or none.

Thus, thanks to its multi-confessional population, Uzbekistan can be considered a host country for pilgrims and a sending country.

Conclusion. Based on the results of the studied material, we can conclude that pilgrimage tourism is the type of tourism that is gradually gaining popularity.

The growing interest in this type of tourism can serve the development of territories previously unnoticed by a broad audience. Religious tourism seems promising, especially in the country studied in this work - Uzbekistan, which is rich in pilgrimage sites.

Of particular importance are the opening opportunities for tour operators to establish mutually beneficial business relationships with local tour operators and travel agencies, both to send tourists to Uzbekistan and to carry tourists from Uzbekistan. Furthermore, in Uzbekistan, many Orthodox people would be interested in visiting Orthodox pilgrimage sites in Russia. Thus, pilgrimage is another area in which Uzbekistan has the opportunity to cooperate and in other areas successfully.

An analysis of proposals for pilgrimage tours in Uzbekistan showed their extreme limitations, and the programs' content is identical to each other. That there is the market for pilgrimage tourism in Uzbekistan has yet to be occupied. However, we also managed to study the state policy in this area, and based on the materials studied, we can conclude that tourism in the country will grow at a high rate soon. The attention paid by the government to pilgrimage tourism indicates a high probability of filling the market soon.

For the development of this direction with great potential, a tourist product for the country's most influential Muslim pilgrimage sites. The route of this tour passes through the territory of Samarkand, Navoi, Bukhara, Kashkadarya and Tashkent regions of Uzbekistan. When designing a tour, it is essential to note the following difficulties that have arisen: the need for more information about the history of the development of pilgrimage tourism in Uzbekistan and the location of shrines.

It is worth repeating that interest in the pilgrimage sites of Uzbekistan is growing. The author studied many government programs for developing these industries and initiatives of citizens seeking to preserve and improve these facilities. Thus, we can safely say that pilgrimage tourism is a new opportunity to unlock the tourism potential of Uzbekistan.

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