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OAJI (USA) = 0.350

SOI: [1.1/TAS](#) DOI: [10.15863/TAS](#)

International Scientific Journal Theoretical & Applied Science

p-ISSN: 2308-4944 (print) e-ISSN: 2409-0085 (online)

Year: 2020 Issue: 06 Volume: 86

Published: 18.06.2020 <http://T-Science.org>

QR – Issue



QR – Article



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PROSPECTS OF THE DEVELOPMENT OF PILGRIMAGE TOURISM IN UZBEKISTAN

Abstract: *this article discusses the measures taken for the development of pilgrimage tourism in the country, the work carried out for the development of the industry, the importance of the sphere and its role in public relations.*

Key words: *tourism, pilgrimage tourism, religion, “Halal tourism”, political tourism.*

Language: *English*

Citation: *Azimova, C. (2020). Prospects of the development of pilgrimage tourism in Uzbekistan. ISJ Theoretical & Applied Science, 06 (86), 89-91.*

Soi: <http://s-o-i.org/1.1/TAS-06-86-16> **Doi:**  <https://dx.doi.org/10.15863/TAS.2020.06.86.16>

Scopus ASCC: 3300.

Introduction

Tourism is an active form of social dialogue, which promotes the development of mutual understanding between peoples and the establishment of cultural and economic ties, as well as the development of cooperation between states and the improvement of the international situation as a whole.

Ancient tourism in Central Asia is associated with the emergence of the Great Silk Road. In the IX – XI centuries thanks to tourism, the scientific type of travel was created, which expands the knowledge of people, and pilgrimage tourism has developed widely.

Pilgrimage tourism (religious or pilgrim tour) it consists of trips and excursions for religious purposes. A pilgrimage for religious purposes is a historical journey that has its roots in history. The first of these travelers is the medieval believers. This type of travel is based on religious beliefs, interest in their own and other religions.

Uzbekistan is a convenient place for pilgrimage tourism. Many famous scholars of the Islamic world have lived and worked in Uzbekistan. At the same time, there are many historical monuments in the country that are also sacred to believers of other religions. It is known that religious sites alone are not enough for pilgrimage tourism. In order to attract tourists, there should be a well-organized propaganda work, favorable conditions should be created in relation to the visa regime, airports, transport and

communication systems, public catering, as well as religious rites in hotels.

In this regard, in the “Halal Tourism” rating compiled by the Crescent Rating organization (Singapore) in 2017, Uzbekistan took 28th place among 130 countries with 54.1 points [1.34]. In the ranking, Uzbekistan is highly rated in such areas as “safe tourism” (84 points out of 100), “free access to the church” (80), “opportunities and guarantees of food” (70). However, in such areas as “visa” (49.9), “conditions at the airports” (48.3), “family vacations” (44.4), “living conditions” (33.2), “conditions for Muslims” (25), “arrival of tourists” (21.3) and “conditions of communication” (19), the country took middle and low positions.

In 2018, attention was focused on improving the areas that were rated as low in the rating, as well as on the development of the sphere itself. The state Committee for tourism development in cooperation with Crescent Rating has developed proposals and recommendations for the development of pilgrimage tourism in the country. On their basis, the necessary conditions were created for performing religious prayers at international airports. In addition, a map of public catering places, national canteens, restaurants, and places for family visits is being prepared to meet the requirements of travel agencies and guests from a number of countries, such as Indonesia and Malaysia.

Religious and pilgrimage tourism, that is, visiting Holy places, consists of two main types,

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namely pilgrimage and religious tourism aimed at educational travel. In this sense, the potential of our country in this sphere of tourism is very high. On the initiative of President Shavkat Mirziyoyev, the first international forum of pilgrimage tourism was held in Bukhara and Samarkand on February 21-23, 2019.

As part of this international pilgrimage tourism, the Bukhara Declaration “On the Recognition of Uzbekistan as One of the Pilgrimage Tourism Centers” was signed, as well as a number of Memorandums within the framework of the “National PR Center” under the State Committee for Tourism and the “Global Muslim Traveler Index” between MATTA associations (Malaysia), “Crescent Rating” (Singapore), Jakarta Propaganda Fund (Indonesia). In 2020, an Islamic organization recognized Bukhara as the capital of Islamic culture.

It should be noted that tourism in Uzbekistan is mainly limited to ancient cities, historical and cultural monuments. However, the unique nature of our country, nature reserves, and mountain areas have great potential for tourism development. In particular, the development of medical, pilgrim tourism and ecotourism will give a great impetus to the development of not only the economy, but also social sectors. In this regard, the Cabinet of Ministers was instructed to develop and ensure the implementation of the National Tourism Development Concept for 2019-2025.

Today, tourism plays an active role in the daily lives of millions of people. For some members of the community organizes labor activities, and for others, social leisure activities and, as a result, contributes to the economic and social development of people's lifestyle.

The main purpose of tourism is recreation, entertainment, hospitality, sports, pilgrimage, business and others. It should be noted that the employment rate in this area is growing several times faster than in other sectors. According to the International Labor Organization, about 200 million people, or about 8% of the total number of people employed in the world, currently work in this area. According to the World Tourism Organization, the number of tourists is growing at 4-5% per year. This sector accounts for 10% of the world gross domestic product (GDP) [2].

The development of tourism is also associated with the emergence of various new tourist destinations. As a feature that allows us to classify tourism in our country, we can use the following motives that encourage people to travel:

- cultural tourism (tourism and pilgrimage).
- public tourism (club tourism, friends, acquaintances, relatives).
- sports tourism (trips for active or passive participation in sports competitions).
- economic tourism (travel from professional and business interests).

- political tourism (participation in congresses, political events, etc.).

As the main tourist destination for tourists in the Central Asian region, Uzbekistan has regional and strategic potential for the development of international and domestic tourism in the future. Uzbekistan is a favorable country for travel and pilgrimage. Because our ancestors, whom the whole world knows, have forever remained in our homeland. In the international arena, there is great interest in the rich spiritual and cultural heritage left by them. For further development of the industry, first of all, it is necessary to improve the necessary infrastructure. The first is transport and the second is logistics [3], – said the President sh. Mirziyoyev.

Indeed, the rich natural conditions and resource capabilities, availability of labor resources, political stability, and the available international airlines, as well as a communications network and communications create opportunities for developing all types of tourism.

Special attention is paid to the development of tourism in Uzbekistan, a number of benefits are provided to representatives of the tourism business, along with the creation of favorable conditions for the entry of foreign tourists to our country. For many years, strict control of the visa regime based on a closed policy has been one of the main reasons for the low flow of tourists to the country. In this regard, at the initiative of the President of our country, special attention was paid to significant changes in the system for obtaining entry visas for foreign citizens. In addition, taking into account the country's potential for pilgrimage tourism, in order to create the necessary conditions for pilgrims, a department for the support of pilgrimage tourism was created under the Committee on Religious Affairs.

By a decree of the President of the Republic of Uzbekistan dated January 5, 2019, a visa-free regime was introduced for an additional 45 countries from February 1, 2019, an increase in the number of countries where electronic visas are issued up to 76 was envisaged from March 15. As a result of the introduction of a visa-free regime for citizens of 86 countries and a simplified the visa regime for citizens of 57 countries last year was visited by 6.7 million foreign tourists. This is 4.7 million or 3.3 times more than in 2016 [4].

In order to develop pilgrimage tourism, active work is being carried out with representatives of the religious leaders of India, Pakistan, Indonesia, Malaysia, Kuwait and other Muslim countries, and visits of these citizens to Uzbekistan are being organized. It also contributes to a sharp increase in the number of tourists visiting our country.

Currently, a number of measures are being taken in Uzbekistan to promote the sustainable development of tourism, the efficient use of tourist facilities, improve the quality of services provided, and increase

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the flow of tourists visiting the country. The ultimate goal of these large-scale reforms is to further develop the country's economy, increase the well-being of our people, promote the existing tourism potential of our

country, especially in the field of pilgrimage, eco-tourism, and make our country one of the most developed countries in the field of tourism.

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