



Foreign Experience of Developing Pilgrimage Tourism Destinations in Samarkand Region

Kholikov Nodirjon Abdukhalil ugli

Ph.D. student in “Silk Road” International University of tourism and cultural heritage.

nodirjon.kholikov@univ-silkroad.uz

n.xoliqov09@gmail.com

Abstract:

In this article, the author has studied and analyzed foreign experience in the development of pilgrimage tourism destinations, as well as the opinions of scientists. At the same time, some problems of the development of pilgrimage tourism in the Samarkand region are emphasized, and recommendations and comments on measures to eliminate them are presented.

Key words: Pilgrimage, Samarkand, tourism, CrescentRating.

Introduction

According to the data of the World Tourism Organization (UNWTO), the number of international tourist visits in 2021 showed a 4 percent increase compared to 2020 (415 million tourists in 2021, 400 million tourists in 2020) and the organization's initial estimates that, despite growth, international tourism remains 72 percent below pre-pandemic (2019) levels (compared to 2019). According to some estimates, the number of international tourists will reach 1.7 billion by 2025.

According to the information provided by the international agency CrescentRating, the number of international Muslim pilgrims will reach 110 million in 2022, which is 12% of all international visits. This is a significant increase, about 68% of the pre-pandemic level seen in 2019. CrescentRating predicts that the number of Muslim travelers will increase to 140 million in 2023 and return to the pre-pandemic level of 160 million in 2024. Forecasts show that the number of Muslim travelers will reach 230 million, and the expenditure will amount to 225 billion dollars by 2028.

Method of research

In this article, the author used methods such as statistical evaluation, data comparison, expert evaluation, and mixed methods. A number of practical proposals and recommendations have been developed for the development of pilgrimage tourism in Samarkand region.

Analysis and results

The international agency CrescentRating divides the objectives of the development of halal travel into the following five groups. They are:

- Integration, diversity and faith. This allows Muslims to be active citizens of the world community while maintaining their spirituality;
- Heritage, culture and connection. In this, Muslim travelers, local community, heritage and history are connected;
- Education insights and capabilities: expand academic and industry knowledge to increase mutual understanding between teams, as well as develop stakeholder capabilities;
- Industrial innovation and trade: creating new opportunities to drive growth and expand trade across multiple sectors;
- Well-being and sustainable tourism: recognizing the social impact and responsibility for the wider community, the environment and travellers.

The following 4 directions have been put forward by this agency to create a more acceptable destination for Muslims and to attract more Muslim tourists:

1. Access to destination. This includes factors such as visa requirements, connecting services and transport infrastructure.
2. Communication opportunities and efforts to adapt the destination to Muslim tourists.
3. Environment at the destination. Along with a safe climate, there are few religious restrictions and stable destinations.
4. Services provided by the destination. This includes meeting the faith-based service needs of travelers, providing core services at hotels and airports, or providing additional unique experiences to further differentiate.

Uzbekistan has a unique heritage of Islamic culture and historical monuments. The country has been paying more attention to pilgrimage tourism in recent years. An example of this is the decision of the President of the Republic of Uzbekistan No. PQ-3509 of February 6, 2018 "On measures to develop inbound tourism" and No. PF-6165 of February 9, 2021 "On We can cite Decrees on measures to further develop domestic and pilgrimage tourism in the Republic of Uzbekistan.

There are a few conferences related to ziyarah are being conducted in Samarkand. For example International Scientific and Practical Conference "The renaissance of the pilgrim tourism in the crossroads of the Great Silk Road", organized by the State Committee for Tourism Development, Samarkand State University and the "Silk Road" International University of Tourism on May in 2019, and The International Week of Pilgrimage Tourism "Ziyarah Tourism Week" was held in several cities of Uzbekistan: Samarkand, Khiva, Bukhara and Tashkent From November 1 to 3 in 2022. The purpose of the events above mentioned is to unleash the potential of pilgrimage tourism in the country, make Uzbekistan one of the most important centers of world civilization, gain high recognition from the world community and international organizations, as well as diversify pilgrimage tourism services and increase tourism exports.

Samarkand possesses such unique tourism sites as Al-Bukhariy Mausoleum, the Tomb of St. Daniel (prophet of three major religions), Ruhobod Mausoleum (burial place of Sheikh Burhanuddin Sagardji, the spiritual mentor of Amir Timur), the Shakhi Zinda necropolis, etc. Although the names of Islamic scholars as Imam Al-Bukhari, Imam At-Termizi, Imam Al-Maturidi,

Bahauddin Naqshbandi, Az-Zamakhshari are well-known in the world the quantity of inbound tourists who came to Samarkand for ziyarah is poor.

In recent years, there have been significant changes in the field of tourism in Samarkand region. Such as Silk Road Samarkand-Multipurpose Resort (8 world-class hotels, comfortable public spaces, parks, recreation, and sports areas, concept restaurants, cafes, and bars, as well as an international congress center and cultural sites), A new airport of the city that capable of serving 1,200 passengers per hour, and soon to be opened Memorial complex of Imam Al-Bukhari which a new large mosque with a capacity of 9,000 believers, as well as beautiful landscaped gardens with an area of 4,400 square meters.

According to the result of our conducted researches, the significant part of Islamic destinations in the region is not popular or their infrastructure is not good. In spite of, the works that purposed to increase pilgrim tourists in Samarkand city, the number of tourists is decreased which visited to Islamic destinations as "Khoja Abdu Berun" mosque shrine, "Imam Al Moturudi" shrine, "Makhtumy Azam", and "Khoja Abdu Darun".

Conclusion

Pilgrimage tourism is a type of tourism that will develop further in the future in Uzbekistan. There are many places of interest that are worth visiting in every region of our country. But these objects of pilgrimage have not yet been formed at the destination level.

Samarkand region has a great potential on enlarge ziyarah tourism. The region is N1 by the number of the objects of material and cultural heritage in Uzbekistan. There are a lot of Islamic ziyarah destinations in the area that did not researched yet. In order to develop these destinations, it is necessary for the local authorities to approach together with the scientific organizations operating in the field. It is important not only to repair the Islamic destinations, but also to be able to convey information about them to tourists. It is necessary to take into account the opinions of local residents.

Pilgrimage destinations in the Samarkand region are mainly considered historical and cultural objects, and most of them have Islamic verses or wise words written on them.

It is natural that visitors are interested in these objects for the purpose of pilgrimage. In order to increase the number of foreign pilgrims and improve the quality of services provided to them, the necessary legal documents are being adopted. Direct flights are organized from the countries where the majority of the population is Muslim, and the visa regime is simplified with them within the framework of the Umra+ programm.

Currently, tour companies and individual visitors in Samarkand region mainly visit historical and pilgrimage sites. There are relatively few visits to objects located in the districts.

According to the information provided by the Samarkand region administration of the public charity foundation "Vaqf" of the Republic of Uzbekistan, not a single foreign tourist visited our shrines such as "Khoja Abdu Darun", "Khoja Abdu Berun" for the last 4 years. One of our main tasks is to develop pilgrimage tourism and create comfortable conditions for pilgrims in the above-mentioned objects, to organize the visit of Muslim tourists to these places of pilgrimage. True, most of these objects are used as mosques, which may not be interesting for non-Muslims.

To fulfill the tasks specified in the Decision of the President of the Republic of Uzbekistan No. PQ-238 "On measures to further accelerate reforms in the field of tourism and effectively organize the state management system in the field", adopted on July 27, 2023, in particular:

- ...to increase the share of tourism in the country's gross domestic product to 5% by developing the necessary infrastructure and promoting the tourism potential of the republic in the world market, as well as attracting more than 11.6 million tourists by the end of 2026, including 2 million tourists from distant foreign countries;

- to attract broad segments of the population to the consumption of tourist-excursion services, to restore the popularity of domestic tourism, to develop tourism services "Travel across Uzbekistan!" improving the mechanism of program implementation, expanding the internal flow of tourists between regions, increasing their number to 20 million per year;

- to increase the flow of foreign tourists through international flights, including pilgrimage tourism, as well as to open new routes and take measures to increase the number of regular flights;

- Implementation of regular low-cost flights to Samarkand, Bukhara, Urganch airports;

- Organization of meetings for the implementation of flights from the European Union countries to the airports of Samarkand, Bukhara, Urganch;

- Implementation of activities aimed at increasing the number of transit flights to Samarkand airport.

At present, the period of stay of tourists in Samarkand region is 2.7 days, and the daily expenses are 65-250 US dollars. According to the statistics department of Samarkand region, the volume of export of services in the region is 32.7 mln. USD or 5.1% of the total export volume, increased by 119.2% compared to the corresponding period of 2021. Travel (tourism) services (28.9%), transport services (23.7%), financial services (22.7%) and construction services (3.7%) accounted for the main share of services exports. 9.2 million US dollars are earned from the export of tourist services, at the same time, other work-related services (11.1%) and other services (3.7%) are contributed in 2022. This is 478.2% more than the corresponding period of 2021.

Currently, tickets can be purchased at ticket offices in front of each facility or electronically. Tickets are sold separately for each object. Our proposal is starting to sell an entrance tickets to pilgrimage sites as a package of tickets. We recommend ziyarah objects to start business activities through public and private partnerships, and by organizing other additional services, funds will be saved for the maintenance costs of the object.

References

1. Decree of the President of the Republic of Uzbekistan dated February 9, 2021 No. PF-6165 "On measures to further develop domestic and pilgrimage tourism in the Republic of Uzbekistan".
2. "Ziyarah – Oxford Islamic Studies Online". www.oxfordislamicstudies.com Retrieved 2018-08-06. "Popular Religion – Oxford Islamic Studies Online". www.oxfordislamicstudies.com. Retrieved 2018-08-06
3. Бабкин А.В. //Специальные виды туризма// Ростов-на-Дону: Феникс, (pp. 252) 2008
4. Gannon, Martin Joseph; Baxter, Ian W. F.; Collinson, Elaine; Curran, Ross; Farrington, Thomas; Glasgow, Steven; Godsman, Elliot M.; Gori, Keith; Jack, Gordon R. A. (11 June

- 2017). "Travelling for Umrah: destination attributes, destination image, and post-travel intentions" (PDF). *The Service Industries Journal*. 37 (7–8): 448–465. doi:10.1080/02642069.2017.1333601. ISSN 0264-2069. S2CID 54745153
5. Guzik, Helena. "What is a pilgrimage?". National Trust / University of Oxford. Retrieved 4 December 2019
 6. Surayyo Usmanova. University of World Economy and Diplomacy. Ziyarah Tourism as a New Linkage for Tourism Development in Uzbekistan. // *New Voices from Uzbekistan*. NVFU ebook. Central Asia Program. The George Washington University. 2019. May 2019 In book: *New Voices from Uzbekistan* (pp.31-41)
 7. R. S. Amriddinova, T. Sh. Evadullaev// CONTENT AND ESSENCE OF THE CONCEPT OF PILGRIMAGE TOURISM // *Web of scientist, International scientific research journal*, ISSN: 2776-0979, Volume 3, Issue 2, Feb., 2022
 8. GMTI 2022 Reports Muslim Travel Market Growth Projection/ *Global Muslim Travel Index 2022*
 9. <https://www.crescentrating.com/magazine/all/4083/gmti-2022-reports-muslim-travel-market-growth-projection-global-muslim-travel-index-2022.html>
 10. Житенев С.Ю. Религиозные паломничество в христианстве, буддизме и мусульманстве: социокультурные, коммуникационные и цивилизационные аспекты. с.19.
 11. N.A.Kholikov "Prospects of developing ziyarah tourism in Samarkand region" *Journal of Management Value & Ethics August Special Issue*. 23 Vol. 13 No.02 / SJIF 8.001 & GIF 0.626 ISSN-2249-9512
 12. N.A.Kholikov " O‘zbekistonda halol turizmini rivojlantirish istiqbollari" *Service-scientific and practical journal*//2020 issue 2, pp. 112-115.
 13. N.A.Kholikov "Diniy ziyorat marshrutlarining turizmni barqaror rivojlantirishdagi ahamiyati" *Service-scientific, practical journal*//2022 issue 3
 14. N.A. Kholikov "Importance of routes for religious pilgrimage destinations in the development of tourism" *Collection of materials of the International Scientific Forum*//National University of Uzbekistan//June 22, 2022
 15. Mastercard-Crescenting, *Halal Travel Frontier Report, #HTF2019* (2019). Available from:
https://www.crescentrating.com/download/thankyou.html?file=HHv_kScb_Halal_Travel_Frontier_2019_-_Final_-_28th_January_2019%5B6564%5D.pdf
 16. Michael Lipka & Conrad Hackett (6 April, 2017). "Why Muslims are the world's fastest-growing religious group". *Pew Research Center*. Available from: <https://www.pewresearch.org/fact-tank/2017/04/06/why-muslims-are-the-worlds-fastest-growing-religious-group/>
 17. H.Conrad, G.Brian, S.Marcin, S.Vegard, P.Michaela, A.Guy (1 December 2012). *The Global Religious Landscape: A Report on the Size and Distribution of the World's Major Religious Groups as of 2010*. 10.13140/2.1.4573.8884
 18. Nik Fes (8 April, 2019). *UZBEKISTAN PLANS TO BECOME ‘THE CENTRE OF HALAL TOURISM*. Available from: <https://www.tourism-review.com/uzbekistan-to-develop-halal-tourism-news11012>
 19. O‘zA. (9 July, 2018). *Halol turizm uchun eng qulay mamlakatlar ro‘yxatida O‘zbekiston 28-o‘rinni egalladi*. Available from: <https://daryo.uz/2018/07/09/halol-turizm-uchun-eng-qulay-mamlakatlar-royxatida-ozbekiston-28-orinni-egalladi>.

20. Report//The Future of World Religions: Population Growth Projections, 2010-2050//
April 2, 2015
21. <https://www.pewresearch.org/religion/2015/04/02/religious-projections-2010-2050/>