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UZBEKISTAN ON THE WAY TO THIRD
RENAISSANCE: HARMONY OF ETHNOCULTURAL,
HISTORICAL AND ECONOMIC ASPECTS

O'ZBEKISTON UCHINCHI RENESSANS SARI HARAKATDA: ETNOMADANIY, TARIXIY VA IQTISODIY ALOQALAR UYG'UNLIGI

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O'ZBEKISTON UCHINCHI RENESSANS SARI HARAKATDA: ETNOMADANIY, TARIXIY VA IQTISODIY ALOQALAR UYG'UNLIGI

THE REFORMATIONS IN THE FIELD OF TOURISM AND ITS ROLE IN THE DEVELOPMENT OF THE REPUBLIC OF UZBEKISTAN

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ARTICLE INFORMATION	ABSTRACT
<p>Received: August 02, 2021 Accepted: September 22, 2021 DOI: https://doi.org/10.54613/001047</p> <hr/> <p>KEYWORDS</p> <p>Tourism, cultural and historical heritage, travel destinations, gross domestic product, investments, international standards, pilgrimage tourism</p>	<p>Tourism is one of the fast-growing and high income-generating industries in the world, which contributes to the strengthening of international socio-economic, cultural and spiritual relationships. Uzbekistan pays considerable attention to the development of tourism as one of the leading countries in the world, having rich cultural and historical potential. In this article, the changes done on the way for the development of tourism industry are attempted to be explained.</p>

Tourism is an integral source of foreign exchange profit and has a positive effect on the development of international cooperations, along with a significant role in national economies. This sector also promotes new multilateral networks, advancing the economic, social, legal, and political development of the country.

The annual increase in the number of tourists and the tourism industry's substantial share of gross domestic product (GDP) of different states confirms the relevance of tourism in today's economy. Taking those into consideration, in recent years in Uzbekistan, particular emphasis has been put on the modernization of the tourism industry, the development and improvement of the regulatory framework for the sustainable development of the industry, and the organization of tourist services in accordance with international standards.

The current policy of the government of the republic of Uzbekistan is targeted at the modernization of tourism, so that this area, in the future, ought to become one of the major drivers for accelerating the integrated development of regions and their infrastructure, helping to solve such important socio-economic duties as creating hundreds of thousands of new jobs, ensuring diversification and rapid development of regions increasing incomes, the level and quality of life of the population, increasing the volume of foreign exchange earnings, improving the image and investment attractiveness of the country.

Looking at the statistics of the past years' developmental reformations in tourism industry, it is noticeable that the average annual growth rate of foreign visitors to 2016 over the past five years was 8%. In 2017, this figure is 32.7% more than in 2016.

For eleven months of 2018, the number of foreign tourists exceeded the figures for the same period in 2017 by almost 2 times. Potential of Islamic Pilgrimage Tourism in Uzbekistan Uzbekistan is located at the crossroads of Central Asia, bridging north, south, east, and west. The republic, which has a rich cultural, historical, and natural heritage of more than 4,000 architectural and cultural-historical monuments, including 20 on UNESCO's list of world cultural heritage [1], is currently looking to attract more foreign and national tourists and find its place in the global tourism market. Considering that the Hanafi madhhab followed in Uzbekistan also predominates in the rest of Central Asia, Pakistan, Turkey, Albania, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Greece, and Bulgaria, [2]

Uzbekistan has good potential to attract pilgrimage tourists. Furthermore, Islam is the fastest-growing religion in the world: it is projected that there will be 2.2 billion Muslims by 2030. [3]

As such, Muslim pilgrims who want to avoid "tourist traps" will increasingly seek out undiscovered destinations. Through an analysis of ongoing reforms in the sphere of ziyarah tourism in Uzbekistan, this paper identifies numerous ways to develop Islamic pilgrimage tourism in Uzbekistan. First, it explores two regional institutional frameworks—the Organization of Islamic Cooperation and the Shanghai Cooperation Organization—and their potential role in improving ziyarah tourism in Uzbekistan. Next, it looks at the implementation of institutional and legal best practices in relation to Muslim-friendly tourism.

Uzbekistan has a unique heritage of Islamic culture and historical monuments. As such, it should be of great interest to tourists from Muslim countries and has strong potential to attract them. The country is home to important cities for the Muslim world, especially Bukhara and Samarkand. The names of such scholars as Imam Al-Bukhari, Imam At-Termizi, Imam Al-Maturudi, Bahaud-Din Naqshbandi, and Az-Zamakshariy, all from present-day Uzbekistan, are well-known. Baha-ud-Din Naqshbandi is now recognized as the "Sultan of Sufism," [4] potentially making him an important draw for Sufi pilgrims. 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 Shakhii Zinda necropolis, etc. Tourism and management researchers have already organized a 7-day tour for pilgrims that visits more than 30 destinations from Tashkent to Bukhara. [5]

Since Shavkat Mirziyoyev became president in December 2016, there have been ongoing reforms and changes in the tourism sector. Already, more than 50 laws and bylaws have been adopted. [6]

Upon the adoption of the "Action Strategy for Further Development of the Republic of Uzbekistan," dated February 7, 2017, tourism became a strategic sector of the national economy. The Decree of the President of the Republic of Uzbekistan "On measurements for intensified development of the tourism industry in the Republic of Uzbekistan" and the continuation of these reforms [7] has been an important step toward further reforms in this sector. The most recent important policy document on this issue is the "Concept of tourism development in the Republic of Uzbekistan in 2019-2025," produced by the State Committee for Tourism Development of the Republic of Uzbekistan.

Using the Organization of Islamic Cooperation to Develop Ziyarah Tourism The Organization of Islamic Cooperation (OIC) has prepared a strategic roadmap for the development of Islamic tourism among its member states. The roadmap

provides a methodological framework for enhancing cooperation between member-states in the field of tourism. Cooperation in Islamic tourism is comprised of five areas: data and monitoring; policy and regulation; marketing and promotion; destination and industry development; and capacity development to promote inter-Islamic cooperation and improve the ecosystem of Islamic tourism in OIC member-states.

[8] Uzbekistan was admitted to the Organization of Islamic Cooperation (OIC) as an observer in October 1995. It became a full member of the Organization on October 2, 1996. The promotion of ziyarah tourism has been featured in several bilateral agreements over the past two years between Uzbekistan and other Muslim countries. For example, agreements on the organization of special pilgrimage tours in Uzbekistan have been made with Pakistan, Malaysia, Indonesia, and Turkey. Recent Developments of the Tourism and Travel Industry in Uzbekistan Considering the importance of the tourism and travel industry, the President of the Republic of Uzbekistan Sh.M.Mirziyoyev's Decree "On Measures to Ensure Rapid Development of the Tourism Industry of the Republic of Uzbekistan", signed on December 2, 2016, serves as the foundation and implementation of this decree will ensure the empowerment of the tourism industry of Uzbekistan. Transformation and economic growth of the industry is supported by a number of legislative and regulatory actions including simplification of the procedure of visa, increase in the number of visa-free countries and convenience for transit passengers.

In addition, attention is given to quality and service levels at the hotels and similar accommodation facilities (The State Committee of the Republic of Uzbekistan for Tourism Development: Tourism in Uzbekistan, 2018). Furthermore, there was a concentrated attempt to enhance international cooperation in the field of tourism with agreements initiated with countries such as France, India, Egypt, Belarus, Spain,

Kyrgyzstan, Tadjikistan and numerous meetings and international investment forums dedicated for the travel and tourism industry (The State Committee of the Republic of Uzbekistan for Tourism Development: Tourism in Uzbekistan, 2018).

It is also worth mentioning that more active approach has been implemented to promote Uzbekistan as a tourist destination with TV programs in 14 countries, widely distributed informational brochures such as "Visit Uzbekistan" and "10 Reasons to Visit Uzbekistan" through diplomatic missions and info-tours arranged for international mass-media agencies including CCTV, National Geographic, Heads and Tails, Press-corpus and others (The State Committee of the Republic of Uzbekistan for Tourism Development: Tourism in Uzbekistan, 2018). Conclusion and recommendations This article illustrated the role that tourism industry takes in the development of economy in the country. Acknowledging the current status and recent developments of the travel industry in Uzbekistan, further studies by academics and initiatives to be implemented by both private and public sectors are recommended in the following areas [9]

Cultural and Heritage Tourism - to continue the effort to brand Uzbekistan as a preferred destination for cultural and heritage tourism as national heritage is a substance attraction for international tourism. (2) Creative Marketing - to continue engaging social media and documentary/film production to generate interests for the rich cultural heritage and medieval lifestyle of Uzbekistan. Nevertheless, it is of crucial importance to consider balancing the expected economic merits and the likely adverse impacts on the residents when formulating sustainable policies and considering further investments in tourist destinations and supporting infrastructures. In conclusion, the tourism and travel industry is itself a very complex with diverse and versatile demand and supply sides. The potential of Uzbekistan is infinite with more attention given to the possibilities in cultural and heritage tourism.

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