

**DEMONSTRATING AND DEVELOPING TOURISM OPPORTUNITIES
THROUGH THE DIGITIZATION OF PILGRIMAGE SITE****Vayskulov Ramazon Alisher ogli**

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Abstract: The article deals with the creation of a tourist image and brand of regions in order to increase the potential of pilgrimage tourism in Uzbekistan.

Key words: visit, image, tourist brand, tourist resources, infrastructure, shrines, historical and cultural monuments, tourist site, cultural heritage.

Аннотация: В статье рассматриваются вопросы создания туристического имиджа и бренда регионов с целью повышения потенциала паломнического туризма в Узбекистане.

Ключевые слова: визит, имидж, туристский бренд, туристские ресурсы, инфраструктура, святыни, памятники истории и культуры, туристический объект, культурное наследие.

Introduction. Uzbekistan has a rich history of religious sites, sacred places, and unparalleled cultural monuments in the Islamic world. However, the promotion of these sites through tourism branding and the formation of a tourism identity, as well as the insufficient coverage of their scientific and theoretical foundations, indicate the necessity for scientific research in this area.

Materials and Methods. The role of pilgrimage sites in the tourism sector and the implementation of related scientific work have been carried out by many specialists, most of whom recognize this field as an integral part of religious tourism. According to our scholar A. Khudoyarov, pilgrimage tourism encompasses travels aimed at visiting sacred sites, paying respects to our great ancestors, becoming acquainted with their historical and cultural heritage, commemorating them, and participating in religious and secular ceremonies. A. Eshtayev has studied the prospects for developing domestic and pilgrimage tourism in the Republic of Uzbekistan, analyzing state measures for enhancing this sector, addressing problems, and exploring further development opportunities. Researcher N. Ibragimov has examined the scientific foundations of competitive tourist area branding and image, developing a theory on the process of

integrating market and consumer consciousness regarding tourist area branding and image. He has created a conceptual model for branding, as well as a methodology for distinguishing it based on the tourist area name, logo, and slogan. S. K. Boyjigitov has investigated the issues and development prospects of Uzbekistan's tourism brand as a crucial marketing tool in the promotion of tourist products.

The article examines existing theories and scholars' opinions on pilgrimage tourism, its object branding, and the formation of a positive image, as well as analyzes the development processes in our country.

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Results and Discussion. A tourist brand is a well-known object or a collection of natural sites that encompasses cultural and historical heritage, as well as sites located along the travel route, unique events, examples of craftsmanship, services, and engaging activities. Tourist brands facilitate the promotion and recognition of tourist sites in cities, regions, or countries. Tourist brands can be categorized based on various principles. One of the most promising areas in Uzbekistan is pilgrimage tourism. The creation of a tourist brand and the formation of its image (identity) are crucial for enhancing the potential of pilgrimage tourism across different regions. This is because a tourist area brand not only represents a unique name, logo, symbol, or mark specific to the area but also shapes unforgettable travel experiences associated with the tourist area in the minds of travelers, strengthening the emotional connection between tourists and the

destination. Meanwhile, the tourist image of a site is a collection of meanings and impressions that foster a positive attitude towards the tourist object through its promotion.

In Uzbekistan, a number of initiatives are underway to develop kim pilgrimage tourism in the near future. According to the Global Muslim Tourism Index report published in 2019, the number of Muslims traveling for pilgrimage purposes reached 140 million in 2018, and this figure is expected to rise to 230 million by 2026. Unlike other tourism sectors, pilgrimage tourism is not significantly affected by seasonality, indicating the need to develop this area and enhance existing opportunities. Each region of Uzbekistan has its own unique pilgrimage sites, historical landmarks, and cultural objects. Currently, pilgrimage tourism is rapidly developing in the Kashkadarya region.

Some of the most popular pilgrimage sites in the region include: “Odina Mosque” and “Kokgumbaz Mosque” in Qarshi city, “Abu Ubayda bin al-Jarrah,” “Imam Muhammad Sadr Islam,” “Murodbakhsh ota,” “Mirdevona,” “Hazrat Sultan Mirhaydar” in the Kasbi district, “Ishoq ota” in the Mirishkor district, “Hazrat Imam Muin,” “Shaykh Ali,” “Shaykh Ota Hulvoyi,” “Shaykh Shibliy,” “Abu Turob Nakhshabiy,” “Kok tonli ota,” “Imam Muhammad Hanafiy,” “Musofir ota” and “Mir Jandiy ota” in the G’uzor district, “Zaynulodiddin,” “O’g’lonjon ota,” “Langar ota” in the Qamashi district, “Kishmishtepa” and “Siypantosh rock” in the Chiroqchi district, “Khoja Ilgor” and “Tutak ota” in the Yakkabog district, “Oqsaroy architectural monument,” “Gumbazi Sayyidon,” “Hazrati Sultan” in the Shahrisabz district, “Shaykh Shamsiddin” and “Hazrat Bashir” in the Kitob district, “Khojai Pok” and “Beli Boyli ota” in the Dehqonobod district, “Khoja Muborak,” and “Khoja Roshnoi” in the Muborak district, among others. A tourist brand can be created for those sites that stand out due to their uniqueness and popularity among visitors.

International experiences indicate that the competitive advantage of regions in tourism is determined not only by the presence of specific sites but also by the overall composition of the tourism industry, which includes historical and cultural sites or architectural monuments, the quality of highly skilled specialists and tour services, the level of development of accommodation and transport infrastructure that provides convenience for visitors, and the availability of souvenir products. In this context, the uniqueness and originality of services are essential requirements.

Conclusion. In summary, pilgrimage tourism plays a crucial role in enhancing our country’s global reputation, attracting millions of Muslims to visit our sacred lands where great scholars and

thinkers once lived, and studying our Islamic heritage. To develop pilgrimage tourism in our country, the following tasks are essential for ensuring its sustainable growth:

- Conducting marketing analyses at the regional (province, district) level to enhance the potential of pilgrimage tourism and create a tourist image and brand.
- Implementing necessary measures to improve the surrounding areas of pilgrimage sites and ensure essential infrastructure for tourists.
- Selecting one historical-cultural heritage site in each region to promote as the region's tourist brand, involving and training qualified specialists in this process. Positive and innovative changes in the sector and the creation of a tourist image and brand can only be achieved through skilled professionals.
- Systematically utilizing mass media, the internet, and social networks for promoting tourism aimed at domestic and foreign tourists.
- Applying public-private partnership principles in developing pilgrimage tourism in regions, which can help address not only issues related to historical-cultural sites but also problems in adjacent sectors

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