

SCIENTIFIC AND PRACTICAL FOUNDATIONS FOR THE DEVELOPMENT OF PILGRIMAGE TOURISM IN THE KASHKADARYA REGION

Erkayeva Barno Abdurahimovna

Lecturer, Karshi State University, Uzbekistan

Boypo'latova Lola, Second-year undergraduate student in Tourism and Hospitality,

Abstract. This article provides a comprehensive analysis of the scientific and practical foundations for the development of pilgrimage tourism in the Kashkadarya region of Uzbekistan. The study examines the tourism potential of sacred sites, religious monuments, and cultural heritage objects located in the region. Special attention is paid to the socio-economic role of pilgrimage tourism, its impact on regional development, employment, and preservation of cultural and spiritual values. Based on analytical and comparative methods, key challenges hindering the effective development of pilgrimage tourism are identified. The article proposes practical recommendations aimed at improving tourism infrastructure, management mechanisms, and promotional strategies to enhance the competitiveness of pilgrimage tourism at the national and international levels.

Keywords: pilgrimage tourism, cultural heritage, religious sites, Kashkadarya region, regional tourism development, tourism infrastructure.

Introduction. In recent years, tourism has become one of the strategic sectors of economic development in Uzbekistan. Alongside cultural and ecological tourism, pilgrimage tourism has gained particular importance due to the country's rich spiritual heritage and numerous sacred sites associated with prominent Islamic scholars, saints, and historical figures. Pilgrimage tourism contributes not only to economic growth but also to the preservation of national identity, spiritual values, and historical memory.

The Kashkadarya region occupies a special place in this context. As one of the ancient cultural centers of Central Asia, the region hosts a large number of religious shrines, mausoleums, mosques, and sacred places that attract pilgrims from different parts of the country and abroad. Despite its significant potential, pilgrimage tourism in the Kashkadarya region remains underdeveloped and requires a systematic scientific and practical approach.

Literature Review. Pilgrimage tourism has been widely studied by international scholars who emphasize its economic, cultural, and social dimensions. Researchers such as Morozov, Nikolaev, and Lvova highlight pilgrimage tourism as a specific form of tourism that combines religious motivation with cultural consumption and regional development. According to their studies, pilgrimage tourism stimulates local economies, supports small businesses, and encourages infrastructure development.

Uzbek scholars, including Pardayev, Tuxliyev, Navruz-Zoda, and To'rayev, have focused on regional tourism development, tourism economics, and the role of cultural heritage in sustainable development. However, most existing studies analyze pilgrimage tourism as a secondary component of cultural tourism rather than as an independent and strategically important tourism sector. Furthermore, the Kashkadarya region has not been sufficiently examined as a case study in international academic literature, which underlines the relevance of this research.

Methodology. The research employs a qualitative and analytical methodology based on a systematic approach. Methods include comparative analysis, descriptive statistics, and logical generalization. Data were collected from regional cultural heritage registers, tourism reports, and previous academic studies. The research focuses on identifying the current state of pilgrimage



tourism in the Kashkadarya region, assessing its potential, and determining key constraints and development opportunities.

Analysis and Results. The Kashkadarya region is home to 927 registered cultural heritage sites, including architectural monuments, archaeological sites, ancient artworks, and officially recognized pilgrimage destinations. Among them, approximately 20 sites function as major religious shrines visited by pilgrims throughout the year. These sites are concentrated mainly in the cities and districts of Karshi, Shahrisabz, Kitab, Kasbi, Guzar, and Qamashi. Prominent pilgrimage sites include Kok-Gumbaz Mosque, Odina Mosque, Abu Ubayda ibn al-Jarrah complex, Langar Ota shrine, Hazrat Sultan, Gumbazi Sayyidon, and several mausoleums associated with Islamic scholars and saints. These sites possess high historical, religious, and architectural value.

Despite this richness, the analysis reveals several persistent challenges:

- insufficient tourism infrastructure near pilgrimage sites;
- limited accommodation and transport services;
- lack of multilingual information and digital promotion;
- weak integration of pilgrimage tourism into regional development strategies.

At the same time, pilgrimage tourism demonstrates strong potential to generate socio-economic benefits. Its development can lead to job creation, growth of small and medium-sized enterprises, expansion of handicrafts, and increased income for local communities. Moreover, pilgrimage tourism plays a vital role in preserving spiritual traditions and strengthening cultural continuity.

Discussion. Pilgrimage tourism in the Kashkadarya region should be viewed as a multidimensional phenomenon that combines religious devotion, cultural heritage, and economic activity. Unlike mass tourism, pilgrimage tourism is relatively stable and less seasonal, which makes it a reliable source of regional income. However, achieving sustainable development requires coordinated efforts among government institutions, local communities, religious organizations, and tourism stakeholders. International experience shows that successful pilgrimage destinations rely on integrated planning, effective site management, and strong branding. Applying these principles in the Kashkadarya region would significantly enhance its attractiveness for both domestic and international pilgrims.

Conclusion. The study concludes that the Kashkadarya region possesses substantial historical, cultural, and spiritual resources for the development of pilgrimage tourism. However, the existing potential is not fully utilized due to infrastructural, organizational, and informational limitations. A comprehensive development strategy based on scientific analysis and practical measures is essential to transform pilgrimage tourism into a competitive and sustainable sector. Pilgrimage tourism can become a powerful driver of regional development, contributing to economic growth, employment, and the preservation of cultural heritage. Furthermore, it supports spiritual education and intercultural dialogue, thereby enhancing the region's image at the international level. To enhance the development of pilgrimage tourism in the Kashkadarya region, the following recommendations are proposed:

1. Develop modern tourism infrastructure around major pilgrimage sites, including roads, accommodation, and service facilities.
2. Create integrated pilgrimage routes linking key religious and cultural sites across the region.
3. Strengthen digital promotion through multilingual websites, mobile applications, and virtual tours.



4. Encourage active participation of local communities in tourism services and small business development.
5. Improve the protection, restoration, and sustainable management of pilgrimage sites.
6. Support academic research and professional training programs related to pilgrimage tourism.

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