



Article

The Essence, Resources and Experience of Foreign Countries in The Development of Pilgrimage Tourism

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Abstract: Background: Pilgrimage tourism, as a subset of cultural and religious tourism, plays a significant role in connecting spiritual practices with economic development. It has become a vital element of many countries' tourism sectors, offering both domestic and international travelers opportunities for faith-based travel. In recent decades, many nations have strategically developed pilgrimage routes, heritage sites, and supporting infrastructure to attract religious tourists and stimulate local economies. **Objective:** The aim of this study is to examine the conceptual foundations of pilgrimage tourism, evaluate the natural and cultural resources that support its growth, and analyze the successful experiences of foreign countries in organizing and promoting this form of tourism. By doing so, the research intends to draw practical lessons and strategic insights applicable to other regions seeking to develop this niche. **Methods:** A qualitative research methodology was employed, including a comparative analysis of pilgrimage tourism in selected countries such as Saudi Arabia (Hajj and Umrah), India (Varanasi and Bodh Gaya), Spain (Camino de Santiago), and Israel (Jerusalem). Data was collected from academic publications, tourism development reports, and government tourism policies. Site-specific case studies were analyzed to understand infrastructure development, stakeholder coordination, marketing strategies, and visitor management practices. **Results:** The findings indicate that successful pilgrimage tourism development hinges on the combination of authentic religious heritage, well-preserved historical sites, and effective infrastructure such as accommodation, transportation, and crowd control systems. Countries that integrated modern tourism management with respect for spiritual traditions saw sustainable growth in tourist numbers and local employment. Additionally, government support, international cooperation, and digital tools (e.g., mobile apps, online booking) were found to enhance the accessibility and attractiveness of pilgrimage destinations. **Conclusion:** Pilgrimage tourism serves as a unique convergence of spiritual enrichment and economic opportunity. The experiences of foreign countries demonstrate that with strategic planning, investment in infrastructure, and respect for religious customs, pilgrimage tourism can be transformed into a sustainable driver of regional development. Lessons from global best practices offer valuable guidance for countries aiming to unlock the potential of their own religious tourism assets while preserving the sacred essence of the pilgrimage experience.

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Keywords: tourism, pilgrimage tourism, religious tourism, science, education, culture, cultural-religious, ancient monument, Naqshbandi, income, economy, resource, population, Islam, Mecca, Jerusalem, Vatican, Christianity, recreation.

1. Introduction

At the current stage of social development, the tourism sector is becoming a relevant topic in the international arena, in line with the issues of improving the living standards

and well-being of the population, science, education, culture and international economic and social relations. In many leading countries of the world, the tourism services sector has formed as a factor influencing all sectors and branches of the economy and determining their socio-economic development. The reforms being carried out in the socio-economic sphere in the country and the new economic relations emerging as a result of strong policies have created great opportunities for the development of the tourism services sector. This sector is currently becoming an important sector in strengthening the country's economic stability, improving the well-being of the population and ensuring employment [1].

The "Concept for the Development of the Tourism Sector in the Republic of Uzbekistan in 2019-2025" adopted in our country sets the task of developing the tourism sector in 2019-2025 by transforming tourism into a strategic sector of the national economy, diversifying and improving the quality of tourist services, and improving the tourist infrastructure, including through attracting foreign investment and conducting effective advertising and marketing activities.

Uzbekistan is a favorable destination for pilgrimage tourism. Many famous scholars in the Islamic world lived and worked in our country. At the same time, there are historical sites in our country that are also dear to believers of other religions. There is the Hazrati Imam complex, where one of the most valuable examples of the Holy Quran in the Islamic world is kept - the book of the Holy Quran of Caliph Usman, the mausoleum of the great Islamic imam Muhammad Al-Bukhari, the mausoleums of followers of the Naqshbandi order, and many other similar religious centers. Thousands of tourists from all over the world visit Uzbekistan every year to visit and travel to such historical and sacred sites [2].

Analysis of literature on the topic

Today, the modern world economy is in the most important period of civilizational transition in its history, moving from a traditional social system based on the industrial type of production to a new, largely post-industrial society. This transition period was first covered by the American sociologist and publicist D.Byell in his research. That is, according to the researcher, a post-industrial society is a historical type of society formed on the basis of industry, the distinctive feature of which is the transition from a manufacturing economy to a service economy (production) [3].

"From an etymological point of view, the word "tourism" comes from the French phrase "tour" (also adopted in English), which means an excursion or journey that ends with a return to the place where the journey began". When translated from English, this concept means "to satisfy oneself..." and "to travel in order to broaden one's cultural outlook" [4].

However, these explanations do not sufficiently reveal the importance and essence of tourism. In our opinion, the theoretical issues of the tourism services sector have not been studied in depth and in detail from the point of view of a market economy, taking into account the specific characteristics of the country. So far, clear scientific views on the history of the emergence of tourism and tourism services, its definition and description have not been formed in the literature. Without a deep understanding of the essence of the concept of tourism services, its socio-economic significance and its place in human society cannot be scientifically substantiated.

"Based on the scientific definition of pilgrimage and religious travel, we can say that it is more related to tourism than to the spiritual activity of a person", and on this basis, we can safely speak of pilgrimage as an excursion.

In order to determine the specific features of pilgrimage tourism and determine the prospects for its development, it is necessary to understand the essence and nature of the term "pilgrimage" as a tourism object. This term has been defined in various ways in the literature, and its features have not yet been fully elucidated.

Scientists who have conducted numerous studies in the field of tourism, such as A.V.Babkin, M.B.Birzhakov, T.T.Khrstov, have emphasized that religious tourism consists of two main types. That is, they distinguish between pilgrimage tourism and religious tourism in the form of excursions for study.

A.V.Babkin's textbook "Special Types of Tourism" states that pilgrimage tourism is a type of activity related to providing services to tourists visiting holy places and religious centers and satisfying their needs.

L.V.Baylagasov and M.I.Goppa in their scientific article "On the Classification of Pilgrimage Tourism" consider pilgrimage tourism as a broader concept. According to scientists, "pilgrimage tourism is not only related to religion, but also includes visiting the graves or house museums of famous people, commemorating them".

M.A.Vinokurov states that "religious tourism (pilgrimage tourism) includes trips to participate in important religious ceremonies, trips to religious monuments or to get acquainted with the history and culture of other religions, as well as scientific trips of specialists related to religious issues" describes.

K.A.Mazin in his scientific article "Pilgrimage and religious tourism: a comparison across millennia of tourism" does not agree at all with the view of pilgrimage as tourism and emphasizes that tourism is much younger than pilgrimage. The division of religious tourism into two directions as pilgrimage and educational excursions is also based on economic indicators, since in religious tourism and pilgrimage tourists spend money on transportation, accommodation and food, but this criterion does not imply the possibility of combining them".

2. Materials and Methods

The study analyzed the periods of formation of the highway construction entrepreneurship, the specific features of the theoretical issues of efficiency and technological innovations.

In order to deeply analyze the problems within the framework of the topic, develop scientifically based conclusions and recommendations, the method of comparative analysis was used based on the data obtained through the study and analysis of foreign and domestic scientific research.

3. Results

During the study, when analyzing the number of tourists visiting the foreign countries under study, it was revealed that the largest number of tourists visiting in 2023 belonged to France (66.6 million people) and Mexico (38 million people), and the smallest to Germany (21.8 million people) and the UAE (17.9 million people) (Change in the number of visitors to countries in 2020 - 2023, million people).

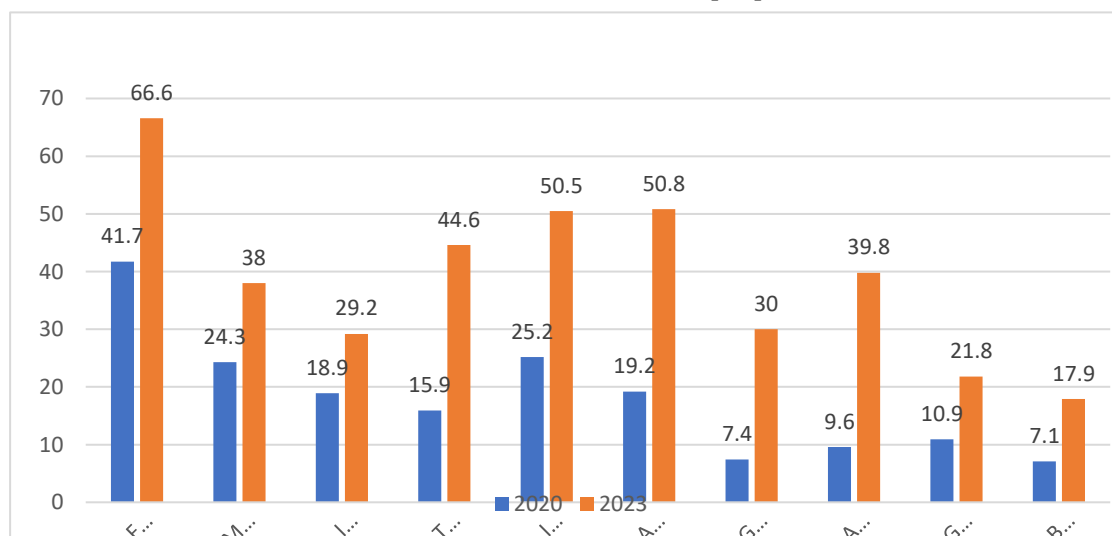


Figure 1. Change in the number of visitors to countries in 2020 - 2023, million people

However, if we consider the number of visitors compared to the previous year, the largest positive change will be for the countries of Turkey and Greece. It can be seen that between 2020 and 2023, the number of tourists visiting Turkey increased by 2.8 times, and the number of tourists visiting Greece increased by 4 times.

Thus, in 2022, the highest indicator of the share of the tourism sector in the country's GDP was formed by Greece, Turkey and Spain, while the lowest indicator was formed by France, the UAE, Mexico and the USA. However, among the countries where the share of tourism in the country's GDP grew at a high rate in 2020 - 2022, Greece, Italy and Turkey can be seen.

Among the oldest travelers, first of all, pilgrims should be included, who made a significant contribution to the development of travel. Any trip has a purpose (or set of purposes) and it largely depends on the motive. Throughout human history, the purpose of the traveler has often had a religious content. Such trips ultimately initiated the formation and development of pilgrimage tourism.

Pilgrimage tourism is a form of travel aimed at satisfying the spiritual and moral needs of people who believe in a particular religion, as well as viewing pilgrimage sites and processes. To this day, pilgrimage tourism has been defined in different ways, and the phenomenon of pilgrimage tourism is also associated with visiting long-standing pilgrimage sites for the purpose of spiritual purification. As a result of our research on pilgrimage tourism, we have studied various definitions given by scholars to the concept of "Pilgrimage Tourism".

We have combined these definitions in the following table (Table 1). Having studied the definitions given to pilgrimage tourism and based on our research, we can say that "Pilgrimage tourism is a form of travel aimed at satisfying the spiritual and moral purification needs of people who believe in a particular religion, as well as viewing pilgrimage sites and processes."

Table 1. Definitions of the concept of "pilgrimage tourism"

Barber (Barber. Pilgrimages. London : The Boydell Press.)	Pilgrimage is a religious journey that involves visiting sacred sites and is undertaken with the aim of achieving spiritual and inner conviction.
Smit (Smith. Introduction. The quest in guest. Annals of Tourism Research, 19(1), 1-17.)	The term pilgrimage means a religious journey, a pilgrimage, especially a visit to a tomb or holy place. However, since it is derived from the Latin word "peregrinus", it also means traveler, migrant, stranger, alien, and stranger.
Eickelman va Piscatori Eickelman&Piscatori Muslim travelers- Pilgrimage, migration and the religious imaginatio. London Routledge)	Pilgrimage is a form of travel and a type of population movement. "Movements" occur according to certain rules. This movement involves large-scale movements of people around the world and is related to everyday travel.
Islom ensiklopediyasi	Pilgrimage is the act of visiting holy places, tombs, and cemeteries and performing certain rituals. The ritual of pilgrimage usually consists of reciting certain surahs at the grave and praying for the deceased, as well as giving charity and alms.
A.V.Babkin	Pilgrimage tourism is a type of activity related to serving and meeting the needs of tourists visiting holy places and religious centers.

L.V.Baylagosov, M.I.Goppa	Pilgrimage tourism is not only related to religion, but also includes visiting the graves or house museums of famous people and commemorating them.
M.A.Vinokurov	"Religious tourism (pilgrimage tourism)" includes trips to participate in important religious ceremonies, tours to religious monuments or to get acquainted with the history and culture of other religions, as well as scientific trips of specialists related to religious issues.

Pilgrimage tourism is understood as a process of religious tourism associated with people visiting holy places and showing respect and reverence there. One of the main elements of pilgrimage tourism is an excursion. This includes not only visiting holy places, but also studying their history.

In our opinion, pilgrimage tourism services are a tourism activity that attracts tourists from all religious sects, regardless of their origin, to places and holy sites that are considered sacred for their religion and that generate income. Activities related to pilgrimage tourism can be carried out for the purpose of performing pilgrimage acts, participating in rituals and events related to religious acts, or studying them. In this process, it provides an opportunity for representatives of different religions and segments of the population to exchange not only pilgrimage, but also the historical, cultural and artistic values of the places they visit.

One of our country's scientists, I.S.Tukhliyev, in his textbook "Tourism: Theory and Practice", defines "tourist resources as natural, historical, socio-cultural and other objects that attract tourists to travel, are capable of restoring a person's physical, spiritual and mental strength and satisfying their development needs. Tourism resources are a set of natural-climatic, socio-cultural, historical, architectural, scientific and service-related, observational objects or phenomena that are capable of satisfying human needs for tourism purposes and in the tourism process". Having theoretically analyzed the views of the mentioned scientists, we have developed an author's definition of tourist resources.

According to him: "Tourist resources are a set of all objects and processes that meet the requirements for the use of a particular country (territory, region) for tourism purposes, can arouse interest in this area among tourists (have certain elements of attractiveness), and are aimed at improving the physical, mental and intellectual abilities of people."

The potential for developing the tourism sector in our country is very large, which can be seen in the following categories of tourist resources (Structural structure of Uzbekistan's pilgrimage tourism resources).

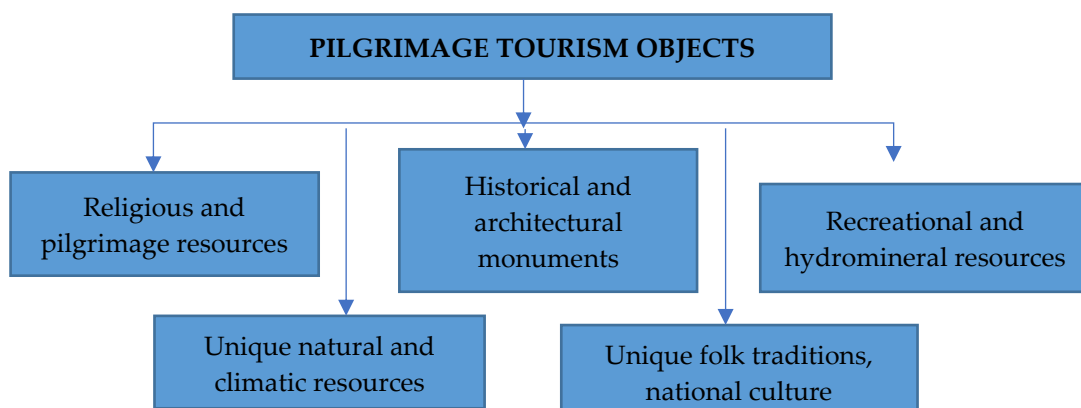


Figure 2. Structural structure of Uzbekistan's pilgrimage tourism resources

According to the characteristics of the use of tourist resources, they are divided into 2 types, namely direct and indirect. "Direct resources include natural and historical-cultural resources that are directly used by tourists themselves. Indirect resources include socio-economic, material, financial, labor, and information resources that directly serve as the basis for the use of tourist resources" [5].

The holy place is the Al-Haram Mosque, which houses the Kaaba - a sacred place in the form of a large cube made of gray granite blocks. It resembles a square, its diagonal is directed from north to south, and the other from west to east. A black stone is placed in one of the corners of the Kaaba. The main movement at the zenith of the Kaaba is to circumambulate the Kaaba counterclockwise and touch the black stone. Al-Haram is one of the largest mosques in the world. Up to 2 million pilgrims gather here every year in the first ten days of the month of Dhul-Hijrah.

There are other equally important components of the Hajj ritual, such as: stoning the devil, standing on Mount Arafat, making a sacrifice. The second most important for Muslim pilgrimage is the city of Medina, where the prophet himself is buried. There is a mosque here, where the Prophet Muhammad lived and the rice hut, which is his tomb, is surrounded. Many of the holy places of Islam are located in Jerusalem. This is the observatory called the Dome of the Rock, the octagonal mosque, the holy place that the Prophet Muhammad brought during his legendary night journey from Mecca to other mosques. The definition of tourism as an activity is no less important than the concept and essence of pilgrimage

However, there is one opinion that religious tourism is an integral part of pilgrimage. Scholars who insist on this point of view point out that pilgrimage arose long before tourism in its modern form. Some European researchers also agree with this view. However, in countries where important religious sites are located and where there is a large flow of pilgrims, there is a clear difference between pilgrims and tourists [6].

4. Discussion

Tourist attractions - cathedrals, mosques, religious museums, spiritual centers - are becoming part of the modern tourism industry, which are increasingly in demand. Religious, historical and cultural monuments play an important role in encouraging people to visit a city located in a particular region.

Pilgrimage is a trip to sacred places with clearly defined religious goals. Pilgrimage has been known since ancient times and is accepted in one form or another in almost all religions. Also known are secular and political pilgrimages, trips in the field of close or pseudo-pilgrimage - event tourism for religious holidays and ceremonies, as well as tourism organized for the purpose of worship with educational goals, more precisely characterized as cultural and religious. Currently, all types of pilgrims are widely using the services of the tourism industry, and special travel companies are being created to provide services and organize such tours with excursions on the spot. The rapidly increasing flow of pilgrims during religious events and holidays affects the formation of the transport industry [7].

Unlike cultural-religious cognitive (often entertaining) or cultural-historical trips, pilgrimage has its own goals that correspond to the foundations, pillars, dogmas and laws of religion, traditions formed over the centuries. The ritual, determined by faith, has a deep spiritual meaning. Religious pilgrimage has historically been and is still carried out by special pilgrimage services organized by religious centers of one or another denomination. Pilgrimage, as a special type of activity, is regulated, first of all, by religious legal norms, since the essence of the spiritual content is a religious ritual. At the same time, such a pilgrimage is often a long-distance journey, and both the pilgrim himself and the organizers of the pilgrimage are obliged to comply with the legal norms and rules of this state, both international and national, and to comply with others. (other states), if this journey is associated with visiting shrines in other countries, crossing state borders [8].

"Pilgrimage implies a certain attitude of a person to reality. The psychological characteristics of a pilgrim are very diverse. In most cases, a pilgrim is a deeply religious person with an already established system of values. He is ready to temporarily abandon

his usual way of life: social circle, pleasure, food, in order to achieve his spiritual and moral goals. The idea of pilgrimage implies obligations that he voluntarily takes on in order to be in a position to perform actions under certain conditions of difficulty. This means a person's readiness to sacrifice temporary and transient actions for the sake of the eternal spiritual name. In Hinduism, Buddhism, Christianity and other religions, pilgrimage on foot has developed, especially along already existing paths. People go on Hajj when they do not have enough ritual actions in their usual places of residence. They travel or visit holy places, they experience new religious places that are more meaningful for them. There are different types of pilgrimage. Depending on the number of participants and family According to their affiliation, pilgrimages are divided into individual, family and group pilgrimages. Pilgrimages can be long and short in duration. Previously, according to Russian Orthodox law, a journey lasting more than 10 days was considered a pilgrimage". Depending on the country in which the objects visited by pilgrims are located, they are divided into domestic and foreign trips [9].

In the context of international globalization, the rapid development of the tourism industry around the world is a major investment in it, considering the future. As is known, domestic tourism is the main driving force of the large tourism market. According to statistics, "in the world's major tourism economies, including the United States, China, Japan, Germany, and the United Kingdom, domestic tourism revenue accounts for a large proportion of total tourism revenue. In most of these countries, strong domestic tourism growth is driven by factors such as the growing incomes of a large middle class, economic development of the countries, the development of tourist destinations through government initiatives, improved transport infrastructure, and improved economic connections between different internal regions. In countries such as Spain, Turkey, and Thailand, tourism also accounts for a significant share of the economy, with tourism revenue coming mainly from foreign tourists. In Thailand, in particular, 80.2 percent of spending is accounted for by international visitors" [10].

Today, countries with a sustainable tourism development trend and a strong tourism economy are taking the necessary measures to develop all types of tourism. The development of pilgrimage tourism, one of the main types of the tourism industry, in national and international markets and ensuring its integration into the world economy is considered one of the urgent and necessary issues. "Developing countries dominate among the fastest growing countries in the world in terms of the contribution of tourism to GDP. Another distinctive feature of this sector is that it demonstrates the potential for redistribution of income throughout the world." Pilgrimage tourism, one of the traditional directions of tourism, is currently gaining great importance. In particular, the rapid increase in the number of Muslim peoples and the constant growth of their incomes contribute to the rapid development of tourism. Therefore, special attention is paid to the organization of travel destinations in accordance with Islamic Sharia not only in Muslim countries, but also in a number of countries in the world where tourism is developed. In particular, in Muslim countries such as Saudi Arabia, Turkey, Egypt, Malaysia, relevant reforms are being carried out to develop pilgrimage tourism based on halal standards and widely promote it among Muslim countries of the world. Also, in the USA, Germany, England, France, Spain and a number of other countries, types that meet halal tourism standards are rapidly developing [11].

There are two main directions of pilgrimage tourism in the world, and each of them has its own characteristics. In the first direction, pilgrims are associated with enriching their spiritual world, expanding their worldview and increasing their knowledge. Since religious buildings in many countries are also their main attractions, attractions clearly demonstrate the popularity of pilgrimage tourism. The first type of travel is most likely suitable for pilgrims traveling for spiritual reasons.

Pilgrimage tourism allows you to get closer to the world of spirituality and creates all the opportunities for self-knowledge. Therefore, countries around the world are focusing on developing this type of tourism. If we look at the development trends of pilgrimage tourism in different countries of the world, we can see that the Vatican, Jerusalem (Israel), Mecca (Saudi Arabia), Varanasi (India), Mexico City (Mexico), Santiago de Compostela

(Spain), Lourdes (France), Fatima (Portugal), Kyoto (Japan) and Aparecida do Norte (Brazil) are leading [12].

According to the Global Economic Impact Of Muslim Tourism And Future Growth Projection, the countries that benefit the most from Muslim tourists are in the Middle East. According to the results of the Global Economic Impact Of Muslim Tourism And Future Growth Projection study, by 2060, 3 billion people will consider themselves Muslims, which is one in three people on Earth. It is predicted that the global economic level of Muslims in the world will increase from 32 percent to 70 percent [13].

The Middle East is the region that benefits the most from Muslim tourism, according to the Global Economic Impact Of Muslim Tourism And Future Growth Projection. According to the Global Economic Impact Of Muslim Tourism And Future Growth Projection, by 2060, 3 billion people will identify as Muslim, which is one in three people on Earth. The global economic share of Muslims is expected to increase from 32 percent to 70 percent [14].

There are two main directions of pilgrimage tourism in the world, each of which has its own characteristics:

- tours to places of interest, the purpose of which is to visit monuments, temples, museums;

- organization of pilgrimage processes, which include visits to world religious centers, as well as to places that played an important role in the formation and spread of a particular religion [15].

People seek to enrich their spiritual world, broaden their horizons, and gain new knowledge about the history of religion. Since religious buildings in many countries are also their main attractions, attractions clearly demonstrate the popularity of pilgrimage tourism.

The Vatican is the world center of the Catholic religion and is one of the smallest states on the planet, located in the center of Rome. Pilgrim tourists go there to see the Pope, St. Peter's Basilica, the Vatican Museums, and the Sistine Chapel, the ceiling of which was painted by Michelangelo himself. Strict dress code is required to enter the Vatican. In particular, short skirts, shorts, and T-shirts are prohibited. There is also the opportunity to purchase museum tickets in advance online to avoid long lines [16].

Jerusalem is one of the most legendary cities in the world with developed pilgrimage tourism, attracting pilgrims for thousands of years. Here, tourists can find places sacred to representatives of the Abrahamic religions, namely Judaism, Christianity, and Islam. Here, tourists can see the Wailing Wall, the remains of the Second Temple built by Herod the Great, and the Church of the Holy Sepulchre, built on the site of the crucifixion of Jesus Christ. Also, the Dome of the Rock Mosque, where, according to legend, the Prophet Muhammad ascended to heaven, is one of the most important shrines in the Islamic world. Near the same rock is the place where Abraham, peace be upon him, prepared to sacrifice his son, which is revered by all three religions [17].

Mecca is the most important pilgrimage site in the Islamic world. Every true believer aims to make the Hajj pilgrimage to Mecca at least once in his life. In the center of the city is the sacred Kaaba, near which Muslims from all over the world gather to pray. Varanasi is a major holy city for Buddhism, Hinduism, and Jainism. According to legend, the city was formed by the tears of the god Shiva, who fell on the banks of the sacred Ganges River. The residents of Varanasi and many pilgrims consider the Ganges River to be a god. They believe that bathing in it cleanses the soul and body. Also, all of the above cities have the potential to develop their own pilgrimage tourism.

5. Conclusion

Significant work has been done to develop pilgrimage tourism in our country. The primary problems that need to be solved in the field have been solved. For the development of pilgrimage tourism, it is necessary to develop the necessary infrastructure facilities - the hotel system, and ensure that the waiting rooms for guests at hotels, airports and railway stations meet the standards of pilgrimage tourism. In this regard, it is of scientific and practical importance to collect information resources that are factors in the

development of pilgrimage tourism in Uzbekistan, summarize the description of the spiritual and material wealth available in the country, and create an integrated electronic platform that provides complete information on pilgrimage tourism.

In the research conducted by the World Travel and Tourism Council (WTTC) on the "Economic Results of the Travel and Tourism Industry", we can see that the tourism sector of our Republic is listed as one of the five countries that are experiencing rapid development. "Tourism has a significant impact not only on economic development and an increase in the volume of gross domestic product, but also on ensuring employment, improving the standard of living and quality of life, increasing foreign exchange earnings due to tourists visiting our country, and increasing the country's prosperity and development". According to expert estimates, every 30 tourists creates one new job in the country's tourism sector and two in related systems.

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