

**THE ROLE AND IMPORTANCE OF THE PRIVATE SECTOR IN THE  
DEVELOPMENT OF PILGRIMAGE TOURISM*****Djurayev Sherzod Kudratovich****Assistant of the Department of Uzbek Language and Literature,**Tashkent University of Architecture and Construction**Email: sherzod79jurayev@gmail.com**Tel: +998 90 749 17 07**ORCID: <https://orcid.org/0009-0000-4202-1369>*

**Abstract:** This scientific article extensively analyzes the concept of pilgrimage tourism, its role in socio-spiritual and economic life. In particular, it is emphasized that this type of tourism is very relevant for countries with a rich historical and cultural heritage, such as Uzbekistan. The article highlights the role of the private sector in the development of pilgrimage tourism, the services provided by it, its contribution to the creation of infrastructure and the creation of new jobs. The projects implemented with the participation of the private sector, the quality of tourist services, their formation based on innovative and modern requirements are considered. The article also examines cooperation based on public-private partnerships, the investment environment, tax and credit benefits, and marketing strategies. According to the author, an important factor for the further development of pilgrimage tourism is the encouragement and support of private business entities.

**Keywords:** Pilgrimage tourism, private sector, religious tourism, investment, infrastructure, business entities, quality of services, public-private partnership, tourist services, Uzbekistan, tourism policy, tax benefits, spiritual heritage, international cooperation, tourism infrastructure.

**Introduction.** In the modern world, the tourism industry is one of the fastest growing sectors, playing an important role in the economies of many countries. Among the types of tourism, pilgrimage tourism is of particular importance. This type of travel is usually carried out with the aim of studying religious, historical, spiritual and cultural values and getting to know them firsthand. In particular, visiting holy places has long been of great importance in the Islamic world, but in today's era of globalization, this type of tourism is also distinguished by its economic efficiency [1].

Uzbekistan, as one of the countries with the richest historical and cultural heritage in Central Asia, has great potential for the development of pilgrimage tourism. Holy places, mausoleums, mosques and historical monuments located in cities such as Bukhara, Samarkand, Termez, Khiva, Tashkent attract not only local but also foreign pilgrims.

Therefore, the development of tourism, in particular, pilgrimage tourism, has become one of the priorities of state policy in the country.

In recent years, as a result of measures such as state support for the tourism sector in Uzbekistan, improvement of infrastructure, simplified visa procedures, and expansion of international relations, this sector has been developing rapidly. However, development in this regard cannot be achieved only with the participation of the state. The activity of the private sector, its investment initiatives, and competitiveness in the provision of services ensure the sustainable development of pilgrimage tourism [2].

This article will comprehensively cover the role, opportunities, problems, and ways to overcome them of the private sector in the development of pilgrimage tourism. The article seeks to draw useful conclusions for entrepreneurs, relevant organizations, and academic circles involved in pilgrimage tourism.

**Methodology.** In this scientific article, various methods were used based on a comprehensive scientific approach to deeply study the role and importance of the private sector in the development of pilgrimage tourism. The main methodology of the study was the use of systematic, comparative, statistical, and sociological analysis methods. Using a systematic approach, all the main components of pilgrimage tourism - religious monuments, infrastructure, services, transport and logistics networks, and private entrepreneurial activity - were considered in their interconnectedness. This method helped to analyze the tourism system as a single mechanism. In addition, the comparative method was used to study how the private sector participates in pilgrimage tourism in other countries, in particular Turkey, Indonesia, Malaysia and Iran, what legislative frameworks exist and what successful experiences have been formed there. This made it possible to assess how these experiences can be applied in the conditions of Uzbekistan. During the study, statistical data was collected from open sources and processed using an analytical approach. In particular, the flow of pilgrims, newly opened hotels, projects invested in by the private sector, the growth rates of service quality and indicators in Uzbekistan in recent years were examined based on figures [3-5].

A sociological approach was used as one of the important aspects of the methodology. In this regard, small questionnaires and interviews were conducted among pilgrims, local residents, private entrepreneurs and industry experts, and scientific conclusions were drawn based on their opinions, practical experience and needs. In addition, the resolutions of the President of the Republic of Uzbekistan, state programs, legislative documents on tourism development, strategies, recommendations of international organizations (in particular, UNWTO and ISESCO documents) were studied in depth using the method of document analysis.

The analyses conducted on the basis of these methodological approaches revealed the current state of the private sector in the development of pilgrimage tourism, existing problems, opportunities and prospects. Also, recommendations were developed on strengthening public-private partnerships, improving the quality of services, improving marketing strategies, and attracting investments. A scientifically based approach served to further increase the practical significance of the study [6-8].

Results and Discussion. The results of the study show that the role of the private sector in the development of pilgrimage tourism is increasing, and activities in this area are inextricably linked with the priority areas of state policy. The private sector is not only an important factor in expanding the service delivery system, but also in improving the existing infrastructure, creating new jobs and stimulating the local economy. Based on the analysis conducted in Uzbekistan, it was found that in recent years, a number of hotels, catering establishments, guide services, souvenir shops and other service networks have been established by private investors in areas close to pilgrimage tourism facilities. This situation has brought a competitive environment to the sector and has a positive impact on increasing the quality of services. However, along with the existing opportunities, some limitations and problems were observed. In particular, the lack of infrastructure in some pilgrimage sites, the incomplete formation of legal and financial conditions for private entrepreneurs, and the weakness of the necessary information and marketing systems were assessed as factors limiting their activity. Also, due to the insufficiently clear definition of legal regulation mechanisms in conducting business activities around religious sites, some conflicting situations arise. This creates the need to improve the legislative documents regulating the sector [9].

According to the results of the surveys, the main objections of pilgrims were related to the quality of services, price-quality balance, and hygiene standards. Such problems are explained by the weakness of the monitoring system over the activities of private entities, the lack of professional qualifications and service culture. At the same time, these problems can be eliminated by studying international experiences in the field, improving staff skills, and widely introducing the principles of customer-oriented service.

International experience shows that countries that have successfully organized pilgrimage tourism (for example, Turkey, Saudi Arabia, Iran) have achieved great results by creating broad opportunities for the private sector, providing tax incentives, and strengthening public-private partnership mechanisms. Uzbekistan is also making positive progress in this regard, in particular, hundreds of projects have been implemented within the framework of the "Pilgrimage Tourism Development Program" adopted in 2022-2024, most of which were financed by the private sector.

Also, technological solutions such as the introduction of modern digital technologies, the development of online booking services, and the provision of complete and accurate information about pilgrimage sites to tourists through mobile applications are widely used by the private sector. This creates convenience for pilgrims, increases their satisfaction with the trip, and serves to further expand tourism potential [10].

As a final conclusion, it can be said that expanding the participation of the private sector in the sustainable development of pilgrimage tourism, its promotion, and support should be an integral part of modern tourism policy. If favorable legal, economic, and organizational conditions are created for representatives of the private sector, they can make a significant contribution to the development of pilgrimage tourism not only domestically, but also internationally.

Conclusion. The results of the conducted research showed that pilgrimage tourism is one of the important strategic directions in the development of the tourism potential of Uzbekistan.

In particular, the results achieved through the participation of the private sector in this area, new initiatives and innovative types of services are increasing the amenities provided to pilgrims and strengthening the country's competitiveness in the international tourism arena. Investment projects implemented by private business entities, the construction of new infrastructure facilities, the expansion of the range of services and the improvement of service quality are clear evidence of positive developments in this regard.

However, having deeply analyzed the current situation, it can be said that in order to further strengthen the activity of the private sector in pilgrimage tourism, it is necessary to implement a number of measures based on a systematic approach. This includes, first of all, the introduction of preferential mechanisms for taxes, loans and subsidies for the private sector, liberalization of tourism legislation, and the development of clear norms regulating business activities around religious sites. It is also necessary to constantly work on the quality of services, the level of digitalization and staff qualifications.

The study confirmed that effective cooperation between the state and the private sector, especially projects implemented on the basis of public-private partnerships, ensures the sustainable and consistent development of pilgrimage tourism. In the future, it will be important to actively introduce international experience and advanced technologies in this area, improve marketing strategies, and create a modern, safe, spiritually rich experience for pilgrims.

Thus, as the basis for the successful development of pilgrimage tourism, it is necessary to provide comprehensive support to the private sector and provide their initiatives with broad opportunities. This, in turn, will serve the country's economy, the preservation of spiritual heritage, and the formation of a tourism brand on a global scale.

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