
RELIGIOUS AND HALAL TOURISM ORGANIZATION PECULIARITIES IN MUSLIM REPUBLICS

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(Received 16 October 2018, revised 9 March 2019)

Abstract

The research relevance of certain types of tourism dedicated to organizational characteristics in the republics in which Islam is predominant is explained by the high rate of Muslim population growth throughout the world. It is important to understand both Muslim tourists' requests and the factors determining local population attitude towards tourists visiting religious Islam sites. In this regard, the purpose of this article is to identify factors that have a positive and negative impact on tourism development, to determine the characteristics of halal tourism in the Muslim republics. Leading methods in the study of this issue were the bibliographic search method, theoretical and empirical method, i.e. consolidation method and generalizations of the research results, methods of expert assessment, complex issue analysis, the method of vector preferences. Also, a criterion method was used to study the religious phenomenon and the method of reconstructing the cultural and religious landscape in the Muslim republics. In the article, we explained the difference between religious tourism, pilgrimage, and halal tourism, factors that caused the rapid growth of halal tourism in the world. We present the results as religious and halal tourism organization features on the example of two countries - Republics of Uzbekistan and Tajikistan, as well as one of the subjects in the Russian Federation – the Republic of Tatarstan. The authors provided positive examples of religious and halal tourism development in the Republic of Tatarstan in the Russian Federation, formation of tourist services and products aimed at the Muslims (Muslim-friendly travel), and also identified problems that prevent the Republic of Uzbekistan and the Republic of Tajikistan from tourist flow increase in the direction of religious tourism.

Keywords: religion, Islam, Muslims, religious tourism, pilgrimage

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1. Introduction

The problems of religions influence, both on an individual and social levels, have never lost their relevance. Change in the well-known system of values, social and ideological realities transformation leads to status transformation and different religious confessions influence social consciousness and socio-psychological climate in society [1]. There is a religious heritage and traditional denominations' rethinking, which makes it possible to look freshly at the past, present and, to a certain extent, imagine the future.

In modern society, religious canons comprehension is a subject of curiosity, not only for religious school students but also for the whole society [2]. It contributes to civil identification formation in the educational environment of the globalized space [3]. One of the ways to satisfy the need to study various religious denominations' cultural heritage is to get acquainted with religious tourism objects [4].

The tourism and hospitality industry is one of the most dynamically developing industries in the modern world. According to UNWTO in 2017, the growth in the number of tourist arrivals in Asia alone amounted to 6%, reaching 321 million tourists, and industry income amounted to 390 billion dollars (an increase of 3%). It should be noted that tourists increasingly prefer to travel outside their native country, and this trend has spread even to US citizens. Recreation (55% of all travels), business (13%), as well as a fairly large portion that includes visiting friends, healing, or traveling for religious purposes (27%), prevail among the main trip goals [UNWTO Tourism Highlights 2018 Edition, 2018, <https://www.e-unwto.org/doi/pdf/10.18111/9789284419876>].

One of the most promising types of tourism is religious and halal-tourism. Statistical analyses make it clear why more and more countries are creating the conditions and infrastructure for religious tourism development. In 2017, followers of the Islamic faith alone made 131 million tourist trips around the world. According to forecasts for 2020, their tourist flow will increase to 158 million, or 10% of its total volume in the world. Muslims account for 11% of all tourism spending in the world. It is expected that this figure will reach \$ 233 billion in 2020 [Global Muslim Travel Index, MasterCard, Crescent Rating, 2018, <https://www.crescentrating.com/reports/mastercard-crescentrating-global-muslim-travel-index-gmti-2018.html>].

2. Methodological framework

To reach an essential definition of the 'religious tourism,' 'pilgrim tourism' and 'halal tourism' concepts, we used appropriate bibliographic search methods, theoretical and empirical methods, consolidation and research results generalization and we summarized scientific and theoretical approaches to the subject. The approaches to defining the essence of the studied concepts are interpreted differently by different scientists - from understanding them almost as synonyms to postulating the complete absence of any intersections.

For the existing trends and approaches analysis and systematization in understanding religion role in socio-humanitarian knowledge, the development of tolerance in contemporary society, and determine the cause of the intensive growth of halal tourism in the world, we used statistical analysis methods, methods of expert evaluation and vector preferences method. Statistical methods application allowed to assess Islamic economy current state, to substantiate Muslim population growth forecast, changes in its structure (in regards to age, income, etc.). Methods of expert evaluation and preference vectors were used to substantiate Muslim tourists' consumer behaviour, information and communication technologies role in Halal tours formation and promotion.

To study the features and problems in the organization of religious and halal tourism in countries such as the Republic of Uzbekistan and the Republic of Tajikistan, we used methods of process optimization, a comprehensive issue analysis, and the structural-functional analysis method. Using these methods, we implemented a comprehensive assessment of factors which affect halal tourism development in these Muslim republics; explored functional tourism forms, which can have great potential in these three republics; and finally identified and structured problems in tourism organization in Uzbekistan and Tajikistan.

In addition, a criterion method was used to study the religious phenomenon [5] and its role in religious, pilgrim and halal tourism development. Using this method, the authors of the article justified the main criteria for the travel destinations choice made by Muslim tourists. Employing such cultural and religious landscape reconstruction method in the Muslim republics (the example of Tatarstan, Uzbekistan, and the Tajikistan Republic) [6] allowed to substantiate religious tourism development perspectives in the Muslim regions, to determine religious beliefs and values' role in shaping local population attitude towards tourists coming to the Muslim republics.

3. Literature review on scientific and theoretical approaches to the essence definition of 'religious tourism', 'pilgrim tourism' and 'halal tourism' concepts

To achieve the stated scientific research objectives, it is important to distinguish between different tourism forms associated with visits to various religious sites: the religious tourism, pilgrimage and halal-tourism.

Based on available research studies [7-9] it can be concluded that, from the point of view of the targeted audience, the most extensive of these concepts is religious tourism. V.S. Senin [10] defines three forms of religious tours: tours to religious subjects; tours with the purpose of pilgrimage; specialized tours in which pilgrims and sightseers join. S.Y. Zhitenev [11] considers religious tourism exclusively as a secular journey, which is carried out with cultural and educational purposes and in the form of excursion and educational tours to religious objects, historical, cultural and natural objects, but its participants do not make sacred rituals compulsory for pilgrims. During such tours, tourists get

acquainted with holy places, architecture, and church art as elements of culture and history.

Pilgrims also pursue specific goals: committing religious rites, self-affirmation, and spiritual condition, increasing their status in the religious community, worship, holy place, temple relics. Therefore, pilgrim tourism is essentially a traditional type of religious activity, consisting of the travels of believers with the aim of visiting and worshiping shrines that are outside their permanent place of residence.

With respect to halal tourism, as a relatively new independent direction in tourism, there are different points of view, similar to the above definitions, both religious and pilgrimage tourism, but only in relation to Muslims. For example, N.M. Biktimirov et al. [12] give the definition of halal-tourism as a type of tourism, aimed for Muslims, and providing the opportunity to rest in accordance with the Islamic rules. In fact, halal tourists are ordinary tourists, who went on a trip with the aim to relax, see the world, to join the world of cultural values, all of which, however, must be consistent with the Muslim faith. For this category of travellers, the religious aspect is a necessary element in organizing a tourist trip.

4. Results

4.1. The main factors determining halal tourism development in the world

Based on available scientific research analyses in the field of halal tourism [13-15] a number of factors contribute to the accelerated halal tourism growth in the world, among which the main ones are:

1. Muslim population increase in the world. Today, about one in four people in the world is a Muslim. By 2050, their number will increase to 2.8 billion people [https://www.crescentrating.com/reports/mastercard-crescentrating-global-muslim-travel-index-gmti-2018.html]. Most of them will reside in the Asia-Pacific region.
2. Islamic economy growth. In 2016, the Islamic economy volume was estimated at \$ 1.9 trillion, and the Islamic finance sector at \$ 2 trillion. By 2021, it will increase to \$ 3 trillion and \$ 3.5 trillion, respectively [Dinar Standard, State of the Global Islamic Economy Report 2016/17/ Thomson Reuters, 2016, https://www.salaamgateway.com/en/story-/report_state_of_the_global_islamic_economy_201617-salaam03102016111130/].
3. The middle class and free disposable income increase. There has been an increase in the middle class among Muslims in countries with a high Muslim population - the countries of the Persian Gulf, Indonesia, and Malaysia, as well as the number of qualified Muslim specialists in Western Europe and North America. In addition, the proportion of Muslim women in the urban population is increasing. All this leads to Islamic consumer market expansion, including in tourism.

4. Young population. Young population proportion among the followers of Islam is higher than in other religions. The average age of Muslims is 24 years (2015). Millennial Muslims and young parents are a new promising segment of the tourist market with unique desires and demands.
5. Access to tourist information improvement. Social media allows you to quickly get the information needed by Muslim tourists. Their loyalty as consumers and choice in tourism in the future will depend even more on information and communication technologies.
6. Improving tourist services and products availability designed for Muslims (Muslim-friendly travel). With halal tourism market growth, more and more tourism industry enterprises and destinations are adapting offers to Muslim tourists' needs.

4.2. Religious and halal tourism organization features in the Muslim republics

In the given research, we reviewed particular religious organization and halal tourism on the example of two countries - the Republic of Uzbekistan and the Republic of Tajikistan, as well as one of the Russian Federation objects - the Republic of Tatarstan.

The Tatarstan Republic territory in the Russian Federation from ancient times was the place of intersection of trade routes and a kind of connecting link between the East and the West. According to studies in the 10th century, Islam was adopted in this region, which developed until the middle of the 16th century, when in 1552 Ivan the Terrible conquered the Kazan Khanate and ordered the destruction of all mosques. From that moment on, active Christianization of the local population began, which lasted about 200 years until Catherine II issued a decree allowing the Tatars to build mosques again. Thus, historically, a situation arose when two religions began to coexist on the same territory, and an Orthodox church coexisted with a mosque. Practically in any family in Tatarstan now there are representatives of both religions [16]. According to Public Opinion Foundation survey in 2013, using the criterion of self-identification among the republic population, just over 50% of Muslims and 39% of Orthodox, 53% of Tatars and 40% of Russians live in Tatarstan [17]. The survey results of Tatarstan Republic residents regarding faith, conducted by the Public Opinion Foundation are presented in Table 1.

Table 1. Survey results of Tatarstan Republic residents regarding faith matter.

Faith matter	Orthodox (%)	Muslims (%)
Believe in God	74	78
Pray daily	18	21
The rite of baptism/naming required	67	80
Religious affiliation is important	28	56
Follow the religious rules	41	52

As can be seen from the data in Table 1, the proportion of those who pray daily is not high in either of the religions, Orthodox Christians and Muslims (18% and 21%, respectively). However, the proportion of believers in God is large, and high is also the percentage of practicing believers (74% and 78% respectively). Religious affiliation is important for Muslims and holding the naming rite is of great importance (56% and 80% respectively of all respondents from among Muslims residing in Tatarstan).

It is a rare occurrence in today's world where religion is often used to incite conflicts to see such peaceful religious coexistence [18, 19]. Tatarstan thus attracts increased attention from many international organizations, in particular UNESCO, and also contributes to various forms of tourism development.

Religious and halal tourism development experience in Tatarstan is of great interest, as it managed to increase tourist flow several times within 10 years. Since 2010 the Republican Foundation of Tatarstan Republic history and culture monument revival exists in the region, which is headed by the first President of Tatar Republic M.S. Shaimiev. The main task of the foundation was the restoration and development of the two largest and historically significant objects, particularly the Ancient Bolgar [20]. Bolgar is a city located 2 hours drive from Kazan, which was the medieval capital of Volga Bulgaria. It is from this territory where Islam started to spread in this region in the 10th century.

Only 10 years ago, Bulgarians were of little interest to tourists, since the infrastructure was almost completely lacking, and the monuments themselves were in a deplorable state. In just a few years, a great deal of work was done on the religious and historical monuments restoration, territory arrangement, roads laying and much more [21]. This Bolgar transformation had an immediate impact on tourist flow dynamics (Figure 1).

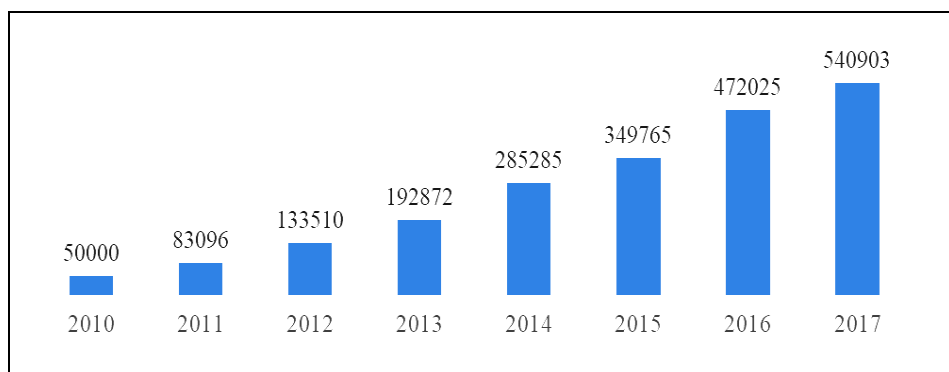


Figure 1. Dynamics of visiting the Great Bolgar 2010-2017 (persons).

The most significant increase in tourist traffic to Bolgar was observed in 2016 after some major events that took place in Kazan in previous years. In addition, the growth in the number of visitors from the category of foreign tourists was also influenced by the fact that in 2015 Bolgar was included in the UNESCO list of cultural heritage.

A large number of tourists come to Bulgaria to participate in various events, from which we can point out the medieval battle festival ‘Great Bulgaria’. In 2018 over 40 thousand people visited this event. Bolgar is also popular on Muslim holidays; however, in this case, there is a category of tourists who are simply interested in the religious ceremonies held on these days.

Another factor in the halal-tourism development in Tatarstan was the decision to build a network of clinics for Muslims. The main features of such clinic are as follows:

- examination of patients by doctors of the same sex;
- Sharia-appropriate clothing for medical professionals;
- the use of drugs without extracting from the liver of the pig or alcohol-containing drugs (the use of such drugs is only as a last resort);
- treatment and rehabilitation additional programs, taking into account the knowledge and methods of Islamic medicine of the Prophet (treatment by the Quran, Hijama, the use of cumin and other medicinal herbs);
- the presence of prayer rooms with a separation screen for persons of both sexes, and a special room has been allocated for the ablution;
- Halal food in the buffet (if it is provided in the clinic).

First of all, such medical institutions are built for local residents but, given the relatively low cost of medical services in Russia, treatment may be the reason for foreigners to visit the country and the region. Currently, there are five such clinics in Tatarstan, and there is a plan to create a medical halal tourism centre. Investments in this project are estimated at \$ 75 million [Investment Promotion Agency of Naberezhnye Chelny, 2019, http://www.chelny-invest.ru/novosti/novosti_483.html].

Thus, it can be concluded that the Tatarstan Republic in the Russian Federation will continue to increase the inbound tourists flow, which will continue to be promoted through the active introduction of Halal services.

4.3. Religious tourism development problems and prospects in the Uzbekistan and Tajikistan Republics

In 2016, the Uzbekistan Republic Government announced its plans to develop tourism and hospitality industry. A state program has emerged in the country to accelerate tourism development as a national economy strategic sector. It should be noted that the Uzbekistan Republic has a huge tourist potential, which allows forming various tours.

Since 2016, tourist flow to Uzbekistan has been growing by about 30% per year primarily due to an existing open borders policy (cancellation of entry visas, or issuance of electronic visas upon arrival of tourists). According to the State Statistics Committee of the Republic, from January to September 2018, 4.6 million foreign citizens visited Uzbekistan, out of which only 7% (327 thousand) indicated the purpose of the visit to the country as ‘tourism’. The citizens of Kazakhstan accounted for 40.2% of the total number of travellers. Next on the list are citizens of Tajikistan (24.8%), Kyrgyzstan (16.7%) and Russia (7.4%).

The low percentage of arriving ‘tourists’ is due to the fact that the majority of people crossing the border do not indicate the purpose of their trip.

The President of Uzbekistan has assigned each region of the country to a particular region or country in the world for bilateral relations and tourism development. Samarkand region is responsible for relations with the Republic of Tatarstan, as one of the constituent entities in the Russian Federation, since this is a Muslim region and there are prerequisites for religious tourism development. The first step was the opening of direct flights on the Samarkand-Kazan-Samarkand route in 2018, as well as the visit of a delegation from the Samarkand region to Tatarstan to establish possible areas of cooperation, including tourism and hospitality.

When assessing the situation of the tourism sector in Uzbekistan, it should be noted that the country is primarily attractive for tourists who come to the country for religious purposes. Ancient Samarkand, Bukhara, Khiva are cities with more than 2.5 thousand-years of history and beautiful Muslim monuments of the XIV-XVI centuries. In the Republic of Uzbekistan, there is a route Bukhara - Samarkand, which is called Small Ha Jam. In particular, tourists visit the complex of Imam Muhammad al-Bukhari, who during his life collected more than 7 thousand cells of authentic hadith about the life of the prophet.

In the Tajikistan Republic, tourism is also viewed as a promising economic investment, capable of creating new jobs, and, consequently, improving the life quality of the local population. Thus, among the most promising types of tourism in the Tajikistan Republic, one can single out mountain, cultural, health, and fitness, ecological, sports, ethnic gastronomic and educational tourisms.

Scientific publications research, as well as statistical data on religious and pilgrimage tourism development in the Uzbekistan and Tajikistan Republics [22-28], as well as conducting original research allowed to identify and summarize a number of common problems, which impede an even more intensive tourist flow growth in these regions. Among them, the following problems should be highlighted:

- low level of hotels and public catering enterprises service (there are almost no hotel chains with long-established quality management);
- a narrow selection of possible excursion programs and individual excursions (as a result, tourists arrive on average for 2-3 days);
- lack of qualified personnel, including guides and guide-interpreters (including specialists deeply versed in matters of religion);
- high transport component in the price of tours (high prices for airline tickets).

In addition to the above factors, there are even more important issues in Tajikistan, such as region safety and attractiveness from the tourist point of view, as well as the population preparation to receive tourists. According to the associate professor of the Tajik State University of Law, Business and Politics N.Y. Blinichkina, “history taught the Tajiks to fear outsiders, and all tourists, in fact, are strangers. In this regard, there may be a problem of non-acceptance of

foreign tourists by the population and the passive opposition of society will eventually nullify all the efforts of the state to develop the economy in this direction.” [29]

All of the above tourist infrastructure elements ultimately affect tourist choice of travel destinations. Modern religious tourists, in addition to the main goal of the journey, require a well-developed halal infrastructure to satisfy any request. Especially important is the presence of a wide range of additional services for visitors who do not come alone.

5. Discussion

The authors have repeatedly carried out researches on factors influencing sustainable tourism development in the regions, including Tatarstan [30, 31]. Among them, much attention was paid to the willingness of the local population to receive a large number of tourists, hospitality, food and other tourism sectors readiness for quality service for guests of the region.

As part of this study, high tourist flow to Bolgar growth analysis, it should be noted that, given the comparatively large distance (200 km) to Bolgar from Kazan, the increase in the number of tourists indicates an effective promotion of this tourist product to different targeted audiences. According to the authors, visiting Bolgar can be attributed more to the halal-tourism, although attempts are being made to attract pilgrims. In particular, in the media and promotional materials, the thesis is actively promoted that a threefold visit to the Bolgar is equal to Hajj.

It is difficult not to agree with the A.N. Vasyakin and S.S. Galimova [21] that since it is rather difficult to identify pilgrims from the total number of visitors to this tourist destination, therefore it is important to create conditions for different categories of travellers. It can be stated that conditions for halal tourists began to be actively formed in Bolgar. In 2018, the new hotel Kol Gali Resort & SPA 5* was opened, built in an Oriental style. It has become a Halal Friendly Certified Hotel designed to provide Muslim tourists with everything they need, taking into account their religious specifics. However, tourists who profess other religions can also stay at the hotel.

Currently, visiting Bolgar is included in most tour packages for tourists coming to Tatarstan Republic for more than three days. It is also an optional excursion that tourists can buy while already in the country. Bulgarians can be called a classic example of a place with a developed halal industry, but to a lesser extent attracting religious tourists.

Besides, according to the authors of the article, which generally coincides with the opinion of N.N. Akdodova [27] and A.Y. Aleksandrova [15], tourists traveling for medical purposes, together with the tourists following their business objectives, are among those ‘spending’ the most amount of money, since the healing process usually takes a long time (on average about two weeks). In addition, those traveling for medical purposes usually require an accompanying person. Often, after the treatment process itself, rehabilitation is

necessary, which can also lengthen the time spent at the destination. Therefore, one of the prospects for the Tatarstan Republic is the resort chain construction, including those working under the Halal system.

6. Conclusions

The results of this study show that in the Tatarstan Republic, which is a subject of the Russian Federation, much has already been done for religious and halal tourism development, both in terms of appropriate tourism infrastructure availability, qualified personnel specializing in religious tours, and in terms of local population readiness to accept Muslim tourists. Unfortunately, this is not the situation in the Uzbekistan and Tajikistan republics. At present, given a wide variety of leisure facilities and opportunities, traveling for religious purposes requires much work on building a holistic national tourist product.

Summarizing certain tourism types organization features in such Muslim republics as Tatarstan, Uzbekistan, and Tajikistan, there are several main features:

1. Due to the large number of Muslims who believe in God (more than 78% in Tatarstan) religious Islam values and shrines are attractive objects for visiting by tourists. Therefore, the inclusion of such sites and objects in the regional tourist product increases its competitiveness compared to other, similar tourism types - historical, cultural and educational, etc. [32].
2. In modern conditions, it is impossible to develop tourism only through religious tourism, since according to the UNWTO data, the most popular tourism types are recreation tours (55% of all travel) and business (13%). However, Muslim countries can attract additional tourist flow in the direction of 'halal tourism' if they carefully employ certain image formation in their tourist territory (for example - the promotional media and materials of Tatarstan and promoting the rule that a threefold visit of Bolgar is equivalent to Hajj).
3. A tourist product focused on Muslim tourists should be comprehensive, which will contribute to an increase in the stay duration of tourists in the Muslim republics, and, consequently, an increase in income from this tourism type. As an example of expanding services for Muslim tourists, one can cite medical tourism development through the construction of Muslim clinics in Tatarstan.
4. Halal tourism and religious tourism development as a whole is impossible not only without the creation of modern industry, bed and breakfast accommodations, with which even now there are many problems in the Uzbekistan and Tajikistan Republic; but also without a change in local people's attitude towards the tourists of various religions. Tolerance and openness are necessary attributes of any society that hopes for an increase in tourist revenues.

In general, it can be concluded that modern halal industry is an indispensable element of any tourist destination, even in the absence of any significant religious sites. Given the rapid growth in demand for halal services, as well as the overall increase in the number of Muslim tourists, appropriate changes must take place soon. While developing programs for receiving this category of tourists, their religious characteristics and preferences, including their preferences of accommodation and food should be taken into account. Religious and Halal – tourism development could become an additional source of revenue for the state budget. It will help businesses in the tourist destination sites, contribute to traditional denominations' cultural heritage restoration, preservation, and development.

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