KITOB DISTRICT TOURISM CAPACITY: VISITORSHIP, AGROTURISM AND SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT STRATEGY

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Abstract
This article analyzes the tourism potential of Kitab district based on pilgrimage and agrotourism. The natural, geographical, historical and cultural resources of the region are assessed, and strategies for their effective use and sustainable development are proposed. The issues of developing tourism infrastructure and increasing the participation of the local population are also covered.

Keywords: Kitab district, tourism potential, pilgrimage tourism, agrotourism, sustainable development, tourism infrastructure, local resources, regional development.

Introduction

Kitab district, with its natural and geographical conditions, ancient cultural heritage and scientific objects, is of strategic importance on the tourism map of Uzbekistan. Religious tourism (Hazrat Bashir shrine), agrotourism (Varganza), geotourism (Kitab geological reserve) and scientific tourism (Maydanak Observatory) can be developed simultaneously in the region. Currently, these resources are not sufficiently integrated and the economic benefit is low. Therefore, for the sustainable development of the region, its comprehensive development based on the scientific and tourist cluster model is an urgent issue. In particular, the creation of the Shakhrisabz-Samarkand-Kitab tourism ring and attracting international and local investments to this project are of strategic importance.

Kitab State Geological Reserve: The "Etaloni" Zinzilban section of the Devonian period is a unique geological object that has preserved 400 million years of historical layers of the Earth like the pages of a book. Unique fossils related to the evolutionary transition of life from water to land are stored here.

Pilgrimage tourism sites; Hazrat Bashir Shrine: This site is famous for its 700-year-old plane trees and the "Hot" spring. According to legend, Hazrat Bashir (Sultan Saodat) drew water here with his staff.

Foreign countries (Malaysia - Langkawi): In the Malaysian experience, such sites are interpreted as "Ecospiritualism". The tourist not only makes a pilgrimage, but also receives spiritual relaxation (wellness) in the bosom of nature.

Khoja Imkonagi Complex: The residence of this 22nd pir in the "Golden Chain" of the Naqshbandi Order is highly respected throughout the Islamic world.

Foreign countries (Turkey - Konya): Turkey sells the shrine of Mevlana Rumi to the world as the "Spiritual Center of Humanity". Khoja Imkonagi is also considered a "Strategic Pilgrimage Point" (i.e., a place that must be visited to learn the order) for Sufis from India, Pakistan, and Turkey.

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Analysis: If these two sites are combined, the Kitab district will become the center of not only the local but also the international "Sufi Trail" route.

Obstacles that prevent the full realization of the tourism potential of the Kitab district and proposals for their elimination:

Problem: The closed scientific system of the Maidanak Observatory and the lack of infrastructure. Currently, Maidanak serves only for scientific research, there is no center for providing astronomical knowledge or comfortable accommodation for tourists.

Solution: Apply the experience of Kitt Peak in the USA. Build the "Maidanak Astropark" center a few kilometers from the observatory, in an area free from "light pollution". Install a digital planetarium for tourists, night camping and open telescopes for amateurs here. Also, apply for inclusion of the area in the "Dark Sky Reserve" list.

Problem: The exhibits in the Kitab Geological Reserve are presented in a "lifeless" and dry scientific language.

The 400 million-year history of the Zinzilban section is difficult for an ordinary tourist to understand, and visual exhibits are not enough.

Solution: Use the model of China's Wulingyuan Geopark. Create a 3D museum on the territory and launch an Augmented Reality (AR) mobile application. When a tourist points his smartphone at the rock, the screen should show the Devonian ocean, ancient "Gracianolite" creatures swimming, and evolutionary processes in the form of animation. This will turn "Boring Geology" into "Exciting Adventure".

Problem: The shrines of Khoja Imkonagi and Hazrat Bashir have not reached the level of international brands. These places are mainly limited to local pilgrims, their place in the international "Sufi Tourism" market is not noticeable.

Solution: Apply the experience of the Turkish city of Konya. Promote Khoja Imkonagi internationally (India, Pakistan, Turkey) as the main connecting point in the "Golden Chain" of the Naqshbandi Order. Develop the "Sufi Trail: Samarkand-Kitab" pilgrimage route and introduce "Green Pilgrimage" (Eco-pilgrimage) standards in the Hazrat Bashir region, combining pilgrimage with nature treatment (wellness).

Problem: The seasonality of agrotourism and the low variety of services. In the villages of Varganza, Sumak and Qaynar, tourists are limited only to buying fruit, there is no system of participation in the processes.

Solution: Introduce the Italian Tuscan "Agriturismo" model. Create a "Fruit Trails" route for tourists. For example, organize master classes on "Pomegranate Juice Preparation" in Varganza, "Pear Drying" in Sumak, and "Grape Harvesting" in Kaynar. This will extend the tourist's stay in the village from 1 to 3 days and increase the income of the local population by 2-3 times.

Problem: The interruption of the "Samarkand-Kitab-Shahrisabz" tourist chain. When traveling from Samarkand to Shahrisabz, tourists pass through as a transit without visiting the main objects of Kitab. Solution: Create a single "Kitab Tourism Cluster" management office. Build modern information centers and "Stopovers" on the Takhtakaracha pass connecting Samarkand and Kitab. Offer international tour operators the "Triad: History, Science and Nature" package, which includes these three cities.

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CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

The conducted comprehensive research shows that the Kitab district has all the natural and historical resources to become a completely new and unique "Scientific-educational and ecological tourism" on the traditional tourism map of Uzbekistan. The district is the only region not only in the Kashkadarya region, but also in the entire Central Asian region that can combine astronomical, geological and pilgrimage tourism. The potential of the objects analyzed during the study confirms that the most optimal way to develop the region is to create a tourist ring "Samarkand-Kitab-Shahrisabz". In implementing this strategy, attracting investments is a priority, and it is necessary to form the following three levels of investment flows for the district's economy:

Investments based on public-private partnerships: Attracting international financial institutions and investors with experience from China and the USA to build modern "Astroparks" and "Interactive Museums" around state-of-the-art facilities such as the Maidanak Observatory and the Kitab Geological Reserve.

Foreign direct investments: Establishing a "Sufi Center" hotel chain with the participation of Turkish, Indian and Pakistani capital around the Khoja Imkonagi shrine, and financing "Eco-Glamping" (ecological luxury camps) projects based on the Swiss model in the Soqar and Chohak mountainous regions.

Local small investments (Agrotourism): It is necessary to introduce a system of preferential loans and "Green Grants" for the establishment of "Agrotourism houses" (Home-stays) and fruit processing workshops in the villages of Varganza, Sumak and Qaynar The potential of the Maidanak Observatory (the phenomenon of the 39th parallel), the Zinzilban geological section (a benchmark of the Devonian period), the Khoja Imkonagi and Hazrat Bashir shrines, and agro-tourism villages such as Varganza, Sumak, and Qaynar, analyzed during the study, confirms that the most optimal way to develop the region is to create a tourist ring "Samarkand-Kitab-Shahrisabz". This strategic "triangle" will enrich the historical attractiveness of Samarkand with the scientific and natural resources of Kitab, as a result of which tourists will spend an average of 2-3 days in the region.

The experience of foreign countries, in particular the USA, China, Italy and Turkey, shows that the object itself is not enough to attract a modern tourist. For this, the introduction of international standards such as 3D visualization, Augmented Reality (AR) and "Dark Sky Reserve" is a vital necessity. For the sustainable development of tourism in the Kitab district, the following strategic steps are proposed:

Integrated Cluster System: Uniting Maidanak, Zinzilban and shrines into the "Kitab Tourist Cluster" with a single logistics and information system. Digital Transformation: Creating interactive museums at geological and astronomical sites, launching virtual travel programs such as "Time Machine" and "Gateway to the Universe" based on foreign experience.

International Branding: Targeting marketing campaigns to the Indian, Pakistani and European markets under the brands "Maidanak - Center of Sky Clarity" and "Khoja Imkonagiy - Cradle of Sufism".

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Infrastructure and Human Resources: Bringing roads in mountainous areas to international standards and retraining local youth in special "Guide-astronomer", "Guide-geologist" and "Agrotourism manager" programs.

In conclusion, the sustainable development of the tourism potential of the Kitab district based on a scientific approach and innovative technologies will not only increase the flow of investments into the regional economy, but also bring Uzbekistan's prestige in the world tourism market to a new level. Kitab is not just a tourist destination, but a unique crossroads where the secrets of the universe, the ancient history of the Earth and the spiritual heritage of mankind meet.

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