

**THE ROLE OF LOCAL AND INTERNATIONAL MEDIA PROMOTION IN
PILGRIMAGE TOURISM (BASED ON THE EXPERIENCE OF UZBEKISTAN)**

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Abstract. This scientific article analyzes the role of local and international media promotion in the development of pilgrimage tourism using the example of Uzbekistan. The study examines the functional capabilities of mass media, digital platforms, social networks, documentaries, blogging activities, and international PR campaigns in popularizing religious and cultural heritage sites. Also, factors such as creating a national brand image, reliability and systematicity of information about historical and cultural sites, and targeting of the content strategy to the target audience in the formation of pilgrimage tourism are scientifically substantiated. This article analyzes the impact of media materials about the rich religious and spiritual heritage of Uzbekistan - historical shrines, shrines of scholars, and architectural complexes - on internal and external tourist flows. The interrelationship between strengthening the positive image of the country on the international scale, increasing the flow of pilgrims, and developing tourism infrastructure is revealed through media promotion. The results of the study show that the integrated use of modern digital communication tools is an important factor in the sustainable development of pilgrimage tourism .

Keywords: pilgrimage tourism, media promotion, international PR, digital marketing, religious heritage, tourist branding, image policy, communication strategy, Uzbek experience.

today's conditions of globalization and the rapid development of information and communication technologies, the tourism sector has become an important factor not only in economic, but also in socio-cultural development. In particular, pilgrimage tourism is gaining special importance as an effective direction for the international representation of religious and spiritual heritage, historical memory and national values. The cultural space formed around pilgrimage sites, the heritage of historical figures and architectural ensembles are important resources that represent the spiritual image of the country. However, the delivery of these resources to the world community, their correct interpretation of content and presentation to a wide audience largely depends on the activities of the media space.

In recent years, the systematic development of the tourism sector in Uzbekistan, in particular pilgrimage tourism, has become one of the priorities of state policy. This process is consistently supported by the strengthening of the regulatory and legal framework. In particular, the Decree of the President of the Republic of Uzbekistan No. PF-6165 dated February 9, 2021 "On measures for the further development of domestic and pilgrimage tourism" set out a comprehensive set of tasks aimed at the effective use of pilgrimage sites, improving infrastructure, and stimulating domestic tourist flows. Also, Decree No. PF-52 of January 15, 2022 "On creating additional conditions for the further development of tourism, culture, cultural heritage and sports" substantiated the need to develop tourism inextricably linked with the preservation and popularization of cultural heritage. Decree No. PF-60 , which set out the development directions for 2022-2026, recognized tourism as one of the driving sectors of the economy and set priority tasks related to regional development and strengthening the international image. In addition, the institutional mechanisms for managing the tourism and cultural heritage sector were improved by Resolution No. PQ-135 of February 18, 2022. Resolution No. 120 of the Cabinet of Ministers of February 15, 2018 and Resolution No. 100 of February 24, 2021 clarified the tasks of improving holy places, pilgrimage sites, and historical

and cultural sites and organizing them based on modern tourist requirements. These regulatory and legal frameworks allow us to view the development of pilgrimage tourism not as a random, but as a strategically planned process. Because pilgrimage tourism is not only a source of economic income, but also an important factor demonstrating the spiritual and cultural potential of the country. In world experience, religious and cultural travel is recognized as one of the fastest growing areas of sustainable tourism.

Uzbekistan's centuries-old historical heritage, the tombs of great scholars, sacred places and unique architectural complexes have great potential in this regard. In particular, historical and cultural objects concentrated in ancient cities such as Samarkand, Bukhara and Khiva are recognized not only as national, but also as world heritage. Their effective promotion within the framework of pilgrimage tourism will serve to strengthen the positive image of the country in the international arena. At the current stage, along with the improvement of pilgrimage sites, modernization of infrastructure, and improvement of the quality of services, the issue of their outreach to the general public and their promotion in the global information space is gaining particular relevance. It is from this perspective that there is a need to scientifically study the role and effectiveness of local and international media promotion. Because in modern conditions, tourist flows largely depend on the imagination and image formed in the information space. Therefore, the process of developing pilgrimage tourism cannot be limited to infrastructure or cannot be limited to organizational measures; its analysis in harmony with media, communication and branding policies is of scientific and practical importance. The relevance of this article is also determined by the need to substantiate this integrative approach.

Currently, local and international media platforms are emerging as strategic tools that directly influence the formation of tourism flows. Along with traditional media, digital marketing, social networks, blogging, multimedia content and transnational information channels play an important role in shaping the perception of pilgrimage destinations. Therefore, a scientific analysis of the role and effectiveness of media promotion in the development of pilgrimage tourism has become an urgent issue. Uzbekistan, as a country with a rich religious and spiritual heritage, is one of the important centers of pilgrimage tourism in Central Asia. The shrines of historical figures, ancient mosques and madrasas, and holy places determine the tourist potential of the country. In recent years, systematic measures have been taken to support pilgrimage tourism, improve infrastructure, and strengthen the country's image in the international information arena. In this regard, the priority is to properly implement media strategies, improve the quality of content, and develop promotional mechanisms aimed at the target audience. The purpose of this article is to scientifically analyze the role of local and international media promotion in pilgrimage tourism based on the experience of Uzbekistan, to identify the mechanisms of influence of media in shaping the flow of pilgrims, and to substantiate effective communication strategies. Within the framework of the study, the interrelationship between pilgrimage tourism and the media, branding processes, information policy, and the functional capabilities of digital platforms are examined based on a comprehensive approach. In this study, a comprehensive, systematic, and integrative methodological approach was used to analyze the interrelationship between pilgrimage tourism and media promotion. The theoretical foundations of the study were based on the scientific views of international and Uzbek scholars on tourism, communication, image policy, and promotion of cultural heritage.

In particular, currently, the world community is using a conceptual approach that interprets tourism as a socio-economic and cultural phenomenon. Among the foreign scholars who have contributed to the development of tourism theory on an international scale, The concept of the "tourist gaze" put forward by J. Urry served as a methodological basis for explaining the impact

of media-generated perceptions on travel motivation. Also, P. Kotler 's research on regional marketing and branding approaches has been expressed as an opportunity to justify the importance of communication strategies in promoting pilgrimage sites in the international arena . In particular, in highlighting the interaction between the media and the cultural industry, M. Castells 's research on the role of the media in the social-network society as an important theoretical basis for determining the place of digital platforms in the global information flow is emphasized.

Therefore, it is necessary to rely on the scientific views of local scientists on the development of tourism, the preservation of national heritage and its promotion through modern means of communication. Pilgrimage tourism, as a direction that reflects the spiritual and cultural potential of the country, is interpreted not only as an economic, but also as a socio-educational phenomenon. Therefore, in the study, we found it appropriate to dwell on the conceptual approaches of representatives of the national scientific school to the integration of tourism, culture and communication . In particular, the theoretical views on the interrelationship of “cultural heritage - individual - society”, developed by representatives of the Uzbek school of tourism, pedagogy and cultural studies, allow us to interpret pilgrimage tourism as a social institution. As is known, R. Djuraev emphasizes the increasing role of information and communication media in the popularization of national values in the process of integration of education and culture. This approach provides a methodological basis for considering the promotion of pilgrimage sites as a component of spiritual and educational policy.

In his scientific views, Sh. Mardonov evaluates the process of integrating national heritage into the modern social communication system as a strategic task. In his opinion, for the effective promotion of cultural values, the scientific basis of the content, its correspondence to historical reality and audience orientation are important methodological criteria. This approach justifies the need to apply the principles of reliability and systematicity in the preparation of media materials in the field of pilgrimage tourism.

Also, Uzbek tourism researchers, evaluating tourism as a factor of regional development, link branding and image policy with scientific management mechanisms. Their views emphasize the effective development of pilgrimage tourism in the context of the interaction of infrastructure, information policy and marketing communications. This requires the use of a systematic and comprehensive approach in research.

The following approaches should be considered in the methodological interpretation of the development of pilgrimage tourism:

A systematic approach - analyzing pilgrimage tourism, media platforms , and state information policy as a single functional system;

Cultural-axiological approach - interpreting pilgrimage sites in the context of national and universal values;

Communicative approach - studying information transmission channels and mechanisms of interaction with the audience;

Comparative analysis - identification of an effective model based on comparison of local media experience with international practice. At the empirical stage, methods of content analysis, analysis of official tourism portals and media materials, and interpretation of statistical data were used. Thus, the scientific views of Uzbek scientists on the preservation and promotion of national heritage, integration of education and culture, and communication strategies formed the methodological foundation of this study and served to substantiate the mechanisms for the harmonious development of pilgrimage tourism with the media space.

Table 1

The role of local and international media promotion in pilgrimage tourism

No.	Analysis criterion	Local media outreach	International media outreach	The resulting impact on pilgrimage tourism
1	Target audience	Domestic tourism participants, local pilgrims, religious communities	Foreign pilgrims, diaspora, international tourist market	Expanding tourist flow based on audience segmentation
2	Main platforms	National TV and radio, newspapers and magazines, official websites, Telegram and local social networks	International TV channels, global tourism portals, YouTube, Instagram, travel blogs	Geographical expansion of information coverage
3	Content direction	Explanation of historical and spiritual heritage, promotion of religious values	Image creation, cultural brand formation, presentation of travel itineraries	Strengthening the positive tourist image of Uzbekistan
4	Information style	Based on educational, educational, historical sources	Visual and marketing-oriented, with a strong emotional impact	Increase interest and motivation
5	PR and marketing mechanism	State programs, regional promotional campaigns	International exhibitions, forums, global PR campaigns	Promoting the tourism brand on the global stage
6	Reliability level	Highly based on official sources	Content that meets international standards is required	Information quality directly affects pilgrims' decisions
7	Economic impact	Increasing domestic tourism turnover	Increase foreign exchange earnings	Growth in tourism revenues
8	Strategic importance	Strengthening national identity and spiritual heritage	Building the country's image internationally	Creating a sustainable pilgrimage tourism model

Local and international media promotion is a two-level communication mechanism in the development of pilgrimage tourism. Local media is mainly focused on attracting the domestic audience in a spiritual and educational way. It highlights the religious, cultural and scientific significance of historical pilgrimage sites, and the function of strengthening national identity is a priority. Official TV channels, regional information portals and state tourism platforms play an important role in this process. As a result, the flow of domestic pilgrims stabilizes, local infrastructure develops and regional economic activity increases.

International media promotion is aimed at introducing Uzbekistan on the global tourism map, strengthening the country's image and attracting foreign visitors. Visual content, multimedia products, international exhibitions and global tourism platforms serve as the main tools in this direction. The content developed for an international audience emphasizes the universality of historical sites, cultural diversity and a safe tourist environment. Pilgrimage tourism will develop effectively only when the two levels of promotion are harmonized. While local media ensure internal stability, international media increase economic efficiency. Therefore, developing an integrated communication strategy is a pressing task from both a scientific and practical perspective.

Therefore, it can be concluded that local and international media promotion is a strategic factor in the development of pilgrimage tourism. The experience of Uzbekistan shows that the systematic, scientifically based and targeted promotion of historical and religious heritage through the media is of great importance in increasing tourist flows. Local media play a role in engaging domestic pilgrims spiritually and educationally, strengthening national identity and values. International media, on the other hand, serve to shape the country's global tourist image, create a positive image among foreign audiences, and elevate pilgrimage tourism to an economically viable sector.

Analysis shows that the following areas are of priority for the sustainable development of pilgrimage tourism:

- multilingual and professional media content;
- improving digital marketing and global PR strategies;
- ensuring the reliability and scientific validity of information about historical and religious sites;

- local and international media activities based on a unified communications policy.

Thus, media promotion is not only an information tool for pilgrimage tourism, but also an important mechanism for managing its development. A media policy based on an integrated and strategic approach will allow further expanding the potential of Uzbekistan's pilgrimage tourism and strengthening it as a competitive direction in the international tourism market.

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