

ORGANIZATIONAL AND ECONOMIC MECHANISMS FOR THE FORMATION OF PILGRIMAGE CLUSTERS BASED ON TOURIST AREAS

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Annotation

This article explores the organizational and economic mechanisms for forming pilgrimage clusters based on tourist areas. The study highlights the importance of pilgrimage clusters in enhancing the competitiveness of the tourism sector, promoting regional economic growth, and increasing employment opportunities. The article provides a theoretical framework for cluster development, with a special focus on Porter's cluster theory. The organizational mechanisms include strategic planning, public-private partnerships, and management systems, while the economic mechanisms focus on investment, financing, and marketing strategies. The experience of countries with successful pilgrimage clusters, such as Italy and Spain, is analyzed to identify best practices that can be adapted for Uzbekistan. The article also discusses practical recommendations for forming pilgrimage clusters in Uzbekistan's historical cities like Bukhara, Samarkand, and Khiva. The study concludes that the successful implementation of pilgrimage clusters can significantly enhance tourism development and contribute to regional economic stability.

Keywords

pilgrimage clusters, tourism development, organizational mechanisms, economic mechanisms, cluster theory, regional economic growth, public-private partnership, investment and financing, tourism marketing, Uzbekistan's historical cities

In the modern economy, the tourism sector is not only a crucial factor for economic development but also plays a significant role in creating new jobs, improving local infrastructure, and enhancing the country's image on the international stage. From this perspective, the formation of pilgrimage clusters in tourist areas is considered one of the innovative methods for developing the tourism sector. Pilgrimage clusters are regional structures that integrate

interconnected tourist sites, infrastructure, services, and administrative management systems. The establishment of such clusters ensures the sustainable development of the tourism sector, strengthens the regional economy, and improves the quality of tourism services. Pilgrimage clusters create opportunities to increase tourist flows, diversify tourism services, enhance service quality, and boost economic efficiency.

In this regard, developing organizational and economic mechanisms for the formation of pilgrimage clusters based on tourist areas becomes particularly important. Ensuring the effectiveness of this process requires strategic planning, management mechanisms, funding sources, investment policies, marketing strategies, and competitiveness factors to be considered. Additionally, tourism services can be developed by introducing innovative technologies and digital marketing methods. This article presents scientific-theoretical approaches, international experiences, analytical perspectives, and practical recommendations for the development of organizational and economic mechanisms for the formation of pilgrimage clusters based on tourist areas.

Scientific research and theoretical developments on the formation of pilgrimage clusters have been extensively studied by international and local scholars. Research on clustering principles, the development of pilgrimage tourism, and increasing its economic efficiency have been conducted by several economists, marketing experts, and management specialists. Porter M. (1990) – Porter's "Theory of Competitiveness" serves as the theoretical foundation for the formation of pilgrimage clusters. According to Porter, clusters are a key tool for enhancing competition, promoting innovation, and increasing economic efficiency. Enright M. J., Roberts B. (2001) – These researchers examined the competitiveness of tourism clusters, highlighting the key benefits of clustering in the tourism sector. Their research suggests that clusters help improve the quality of tourism products and services, increase the number of visitors, and diversify the range of tourism services. Kotler P. (2006) – Kotler's marketing strategies emphasize the importance of marketing in the development of tourism services. Proper organization of marketing activities in tourism clusters plays a vital role in increasing tourist flows and strengthening competitiveness. Sharipov Sh. (2020) – Local scholars' research focused on Uzbekistan's strategy for developing tourism clusters, emphasizing the importance of improving local infrastructure, enhancing service quality, and introducing new technologies. Smith M. K., Robinson M. (2006) – Research on cultural tourism explores the relationship between clustering and cultural heritage sites, which play a crucial role in the formation of pilgrimage clusters. Their studies

emphasize how cultural sites contribute to the development of pilgrimage-based tourism. Dinnie K. (2008) – The branding and formation of a country's image play a vital role in cluster activities. This theory is specific to tourism clusters and helps increase their competitiveness in the international market. World Tourism Organization (UNWTO) (2021) – UNWTO reports present international experience and best practices in the development of pilgrimage clusters, providing a foundation for practical recommendations. The findings emphasize the importance of leveraging global practices to achieve successful outcomes in cluster formation. Berger S. (2011) – This study discusses the development of financial mechanisms for the organization of clustering. The research highlights essential tools for attracting investments in clusters, showcasing the significance of financial support in cluster development. Akhtamova R. R. (2023) – The author's research focuses on studying Uzbekistan's practical experience in organizing pilgrimage clusters. The study addresses the interconnection and cooperation between tourist sites, services, and administrative management, providing insights into cluster formation practices. This article presents an analysis of the organizational and economic mechanisms for the formation of pilgrimage clusters based on tourist areas. It highlights the importance of leveraging international experience, introducing marketing and innovations, improving infrastructure, and ensuring collaboration between clusters. The successful implementation of these processes will enable the sustainable development of tourism and increase the competitiveness of pilgrimage clusters.

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The theory of clustering was first developed by M. Porter, and it forms the theoretical basis for the formation of pilgrimage clusters. According to Porter, clusters are based on the collaboration of interrelated organizations, service

providers, infrastructure, and management bodies. The interconnection and coordinated activity of these elements play a crucial role in the establishment of pilgrimage clusters.

Clusters are based on the following key principles:

- Integration: Ensuring the integration of tourist sites, hotels, transportation, catering facilities, and other service providers.
- Cooperation: Strengthening cooperation between local business entities, government agencies, and tourism service providers.
- Innovation: Introducing modern technologies and utilizing digital marketing tools.

The organizational and economic mechanisms required for the formation of pilgrimage clusters include the following components:

1. Management and Planning:

- Developing a strategy for the development of the cluster.
- Assessing the regional tourism potential and planning the diversification of tourism services.
- Establishing an organizational management system to support the cluster's functioning.

2. Financing and Investment:

- Attracting investments from the state, private sector, and international organizations.
- Providing special government grants and subsidies for the development of the cluster.
- Effectively allocating financial resources to ensure the sustainable development of the cluster.

The creation of a tourism brand for the region and its promotion in the international market plays a significant role in the development of pilgrimage clusters. The implementation of convenient services for tourists, such as online booking and digital payment systems, is essential to enhance the customer experience. Marketing strategies are designed to increase the competitiveness of clusters, attract tourists, and strengthen the region's position in the international tourism market.

Infrastructure Development. The development of tourism infrastructure includes the construction and modernization of hotels, transportation, dining, and recreational facilities. It also involves improving the region's transport and logistics system, as well as the restoration and modernization of tourist sites. These efforts aim to provide high-quality services, ensure accessibility, and create a comfortable

environment for tourists, which ultimately increases the attractiveness of the cluster.

Training and Capacity Building. One of the essential mechanisms for cluster development is training and upskilling tourism personnel. This involves training highly qualified specialists in the tourism sector and creating opportunities for staff to participate in training sessions and seminars. Improving the skills of employees in tourism clusters enhances the quality of service delivery, which directly impacts tourist satisfaction and cluster competitiveness.

International Experience. Successful examples of clustering can be found in several countries. Italy, Spain, and Japan are known for their tourism clusters, which play a significant role in the economic growth of these countries. The experience of these countries highlights the positive impact of pilgrimage clusters on increasing tourist flows and promoting sustainable economic development.

Italy - Tuscany Cluster. The Tuscany cluster in Italy is one of the most successful tourism clusters in the world. This cluster plays a major role in developing cultural and gastronomic tourism. The cluster integrates hotels, restaurants, wineries, transport companies, and travel agencies, all of which are closely interconnected. Local cooperation facilitates the implementation of marketing strategies and the development of branding processes, which are key drivers for attracting tourists. The unique combination of high-quality service and cultural heritage in Tuscany significantly increases the flow of tourists to the region.

Spain - Andalusia Pilgrimage Cluster. The Andalusia region of Spain is recognized as a cultural heritage center and a hub for pilgrimage tourism. This cluster includes major attractions such as the Alhambra and the Mezquita, which draw large numbers of tourists annually. To develop and promote this cluster, marketing and management strategies are implemented to increase tourist flows. Regional tourism councils, local communities, and business entities work together to boost the competitiveness of the cluster. Participation in international tourism fairs and the use of online platforms for marketing campaigns are key strategies for increasing Andalusia's visibility in the global tourism market. These international examples demonstrate that the successful development of pilgrimage clusters requires effective marketing, infrastructure development, human resource capacity building, and collaboration among key stakeholders. The experiences of Italy, Spain, and other countries serve as valuable models for other nations aiming to establish and develop tourism clusters.

Japan - Kyoto Pilgrimage Cluster. Although Tokyo is Japan's capital, Kyoto is one of the country's most famous pilgrimage centers. The Kyoto pilgrimage cluster includes significant sites associated with traditional Japanese culture and religious rituals. The development of this cluster has been strongly supported by both the Japanese government and the private sector. The integration of hotels, transportation, and service sectors has contributed to improving the quality of services provided to tourists. Technological solutions such as online booking systems, special excursion programs, and audio guides have played a significant role in enhancing the attractiveness of tourism in the region.

Turkey - Istanbul Pilgrimage Cluster. While many tourism sectors are developed in Istanbul, pilgrimage tourism holds a special place. Iconic landmarks such as Hagia Sophia, the Sultan Ahmed Mosque (Blue Mosque), and Topkapi Palace are the central objects of the Istanbul pilgrimage cluster. Efforts to integrate tourism services and improve marketing have been key to attracting more tourists. Participation in international tourism fairs, conducting advertising campaigns, and utilizing digital marketing tools are the primary mechanisms for developing the Istanbul pilgrimage cluster.

Pilgrimage Clusters in Uzbekistan Uzbekistan's historical cities such as Bukhara, Samarkand, and Khiva are ideal locations for forming pilgrimage clusters. The development of cultural and religious tourism in these areas can significantly increase the flow of tourists, improve regional infrastructure, and create new job opportunities for the local population. Significance of Pilgrimage Clusters in Uzbekistan

The formation of pilgrimage clusters plays a critical role in enhancing the competitiveness of Uzbekistan's tourism sector. Through clustering, the diversification of tourism services, the development of infrastructure, the creation of new jobs, and the increase in investment volume are achieved.

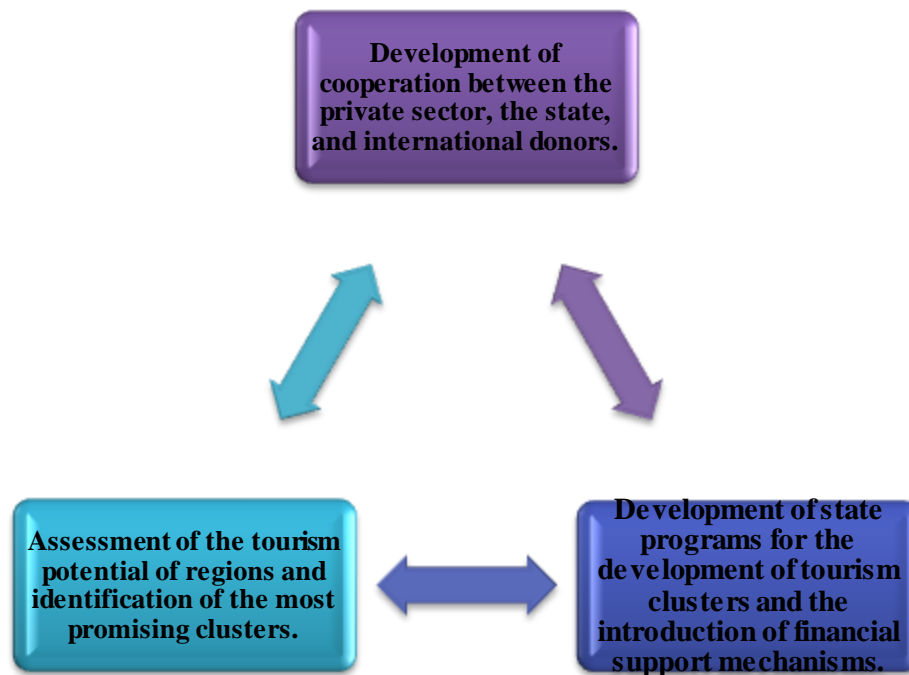
Measures to Ensure the Effectiveness of Pilgrimage Clusters To ensure the effectiveness of this process, the following measures should be implemented:

- Integration of tourism services: Connecting hotels, transport, catering, and tourism-related services into a single network.
- Modernization of infrastructure: Upgrading roads, airports, and tourism facilities in pilgrimage areas.
- Use of technology and innovation: Implementing digital marketing, online booking systems, and modern payment methods.

• Training and capacity building: Training and developing highly qualified tourism specialists and guides.

• Attracting investments: Encouraging public-private partnerships (PPP) and attracting domestic and foreign investment to improve tourism infrastructure and service quality.

These measures will significantly contribute to the growth and development of Uzbekistan's tourism sector, making its pilgrimage clusters more competitive in the global market:



In conclusion, the development of organizational and economic mechanisms for the formation of pilgrimage clusters has a positive impact not only on the growth of the tourism sector but also on regional economic development. This, in turn, strengthens Uzbekistan's position in the international tourism market.

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