

METHODOLOGY OF DETERMINING THE SUITABILITY OF HOLY PLACES OF UZBEKISTAN FOR THE PILGRIMAGE CLUSTERING

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Abstract: The article explores the term "holy place" as the foundation for the formation of a pilgrim-tourist cluster, and also develops a methodology and criteria for measuring the degree of cluster formation of pilgrimage destination. The purpose of this article is to describe in detail the following five successive stages of forming pilgrimage clusters based on sacred sites: 1) forming the level of "Etalon pilgrimage cluster suitability of the holy places"; 2) develop criteria for determining the degree of pilgrimage cluster suitability of the holy places; 3) formation of assessment indicators on the criteria that realistically characterize the pilgrimage cluster suitability of the holy places; 4) expressing the attitude of experts in points to the indicators of assessing the degree of pilgrimage cluster suitability of the holy places; 5) determining the level of real pilgrimage cluster suitability by comparing it with the reference value of the total sum of expert assessments.

Following the above algorithm, on the basis of the author's methodology of determining the suitability of holy places for the pilgrimage clusters, four qualitative degrees of Islamic holy places on the example of the Uzbekistan are identified:

-  "Place of worship".
-  "Remarkable holy place".
-  "Attractive pilgrimage destination".
-  "Suitable pilgrimage destination for the clustering".

In the article we determined the real level of pilgrimage clusters' suitability of 40 Islamic holy places by an expert method based on the author's "Survey for evaluation of the degree of pilgrimage cluster suitability of holy places". The diagnostic survey showed that out of 40 studied holy sites, only seven are classified as "Suitable places of pilgrimage for the clustering". This quality level of the holy places includes three memorial complexes - Imam al-Bukhari, Al-Hakim at-Termizi, Bahauddin Naqshband; two mausoleums - Imam Abu Isa at-Termizi, Khoja Abdukhaliq Gijduvani and one architectural complex - Shah-i-Zinda. In the final part of the article it is recommended to create two new pilgrimage clusters in Uzbekistan as "Minor Hajj" and "Seven Sufi Saint of Noble Bukhara".

Keywords: pilgrimage, pilgrimage tourism, holy place, cluster, clustering, suitability of the pilgrimage cluster, place of worship, remarkable holy place, attractive pilgrimage destination, suitable pilgrimage destination for clustering.

Introduction

Addressing the Oliy Majlis (Parlament) in 2020, President of the Republic of Uzbekistan, Shavkat Mirziyoev emphasized the necessity of the intensive development of the pilgrimage tourism and reported that there are more than 8 thousand 200 cultural heritages but only 500 of them are included into the touristic routes (Sh.Mirziyoev, 2020). During the implementation of the “Year of sciences, education and digital economy development”, under “Actions Strategy” state program, which includes five priorities for progression of the Republic of Uzbekistan (Fig.1) in 2017-2021 years, it's placed to increase the number of cultural heritages and architectural objects till 800 on the routes which can develop traditional and pilgrimage tourism and through this to improve their conditions (Decree of the President of the Republic of Uzbekistan, 2020).

Figure 1. Tourism map of Uzbekistan¹



Successful implementation of this strategic task requires the development of clear and effective measures aimed at enhancing suitability of the holy places in our country for visiting and pilgrimaging with the purpose of developing pilgrimage tourism. Because, the objects of the pilgrimage tourism are those holy places.

Pilgrimage is a religious cult and praying of the people to the holy places for healing their body and soul, for blessing their loved ones and for showing devotion to their faith. This tourism type is one of the religious tourism which expresses travel of the people with different religions to the holy places with purpose of praying. The more holy places are suitable for visit, the more flow of the visitors become stable.

¹ http://www.200stran.ru/maps_group2_item989.html

As a result of organization pilgrimage tourism through cluster approach, visitors flow to the holy places can be increased. Therefore, identifying the suitability of the pilgrimage tourism cluster formation is the most essential stage of the pilgrimage tourism development.

Literature review

There are different interpretations of the concept of "cluster" in the literatures. From a pedagogical point of view, "cluster is a graphical method of systematization of learning materials in one form" (Instruction "Creating Clusters", 2015). Michael Porter (1998), Harvard University professor, describes the economic cluster as "the geographical concentration of companies and institutions of a particular sphere". "Tourism Cluster" is a combination of enterprises, organizations and institutions providing tourism services. There are different interpretations of this phrase. A group of scientists consider the tourism cluster as a "regional tourist-recreational system" (Lysikova O.V., 2009), while others describe "a regional management mechanism aimed at enhancing the interests, independence, competitiveness and sustainable development of the region" (Petrova O.N., 2010).

Scientists studied the organizational structure of the cluster. A. Morozov (M. A. Morozov, N. S. Morozova, G. A. Karpova, L. V. Khoreva, 2014) proposes cluster to include tourist resources, tourist and general infrastructure, industry personnel, tourist centers, educational institutions, sources of information about the region, state and local support mechanisms.

The cluster in tourism is, in essence, a "localized production system by region and sectors" (Ulyanchenko L.A., 2012), which is related to the "territoriality" and "value added chain" of the service providers within the cluster.

The literature describes the cluster approach as a tool to enhance the competitiveness of tourist areas, and a cluster model of tourist areas has been developed (Korobenko Y.V., 2018). The components of this model serve as the basis for the formation of pilgrimage clusters. According to the clustering model of the touristic areas by A. Malakauskaite, V. Navickas, the main attention is focused to the touristic destinations as a tool of nucleus formation of the clusters (Rubtsova N.V., 2014). There are three stages of the tourist cluster formation: identification of tourist destinations; identification tourist cluster; projection of cluster design (Margarita Boiko, Myroslava Bosovska, Nadiia Vedmid, Svitlana Melnychenko and Alla Okhrimenko, 2017).

The analysis of cluster approach of pilgrimage tourism organization requires a new issue – to make the holy places attractive praying areas and form pilgrimage tourist clusters. Considering that holy places serve as a base clusters formation, it's important to develop a methodology and criteria for determining suitability of the areas for clusters.

Research methodology

For research, systematic analysis method has been used and holy places has been categorized by 4 quality degrees - "Place of worship", "Remarkable holy place", "Attractive pilgrimage destination" and "Suitable pilgrimage destination for clustering". Using the method of logical analysis, it was found that the two prime criteria for forming clusters are "belonging to the geographical area" and "value added chain". Through grouping method the real and etalon

degrees of the clustering of the holy places were separated. TRIS-EFQM, evaluation model of business quality abroad, used for real formation of the evaluation indicators and determination of their mass. Using the method of comparative analysis, the index analysis of many holy places' suitability was carried out with a multidimensional evaluation methodology. The use of the above methods allowed to substantiate the scientific results and effectiveness of the article, to provide scientific conclusions and recommendations.

Analysis and results

One of the important conditions for the development of pilgrimage tourism is the transformation of holy places into pilgrimage clusters. In order to form regional pilgrimage clusters, it will be necessary to determine the suitability of the holy places. "Suitability of the cluster" means the possibility of forming a cluster, and "Suitability of the pilgrimage clustering" means the ability to form an cooperation of the holy places with tourism agencies in order to diversify and improve the quality of pilgrimage services.

The formation of competitive pilgrimage clusters requires the evaluation of holy places, sacred areas and attractive places of pilgrimage that are objects of the pilgrimage cluster. In order to accelerate the development of pilgrimage tourism, it will be possible to determine the cluster suitability and quality of the holy places assessing the sacred places of the region. To achieve this goal, we have developed a "Criteria of evaluation the suitability of holy places for the pilgrimage clustering and the procedure classifying their quality". According to that, it is recommended to assess the cluster suitability of pilgrimage and holy places on the basis of the 10 criteria.

In order to determine the cluster suitability of pilgrimage and holy sitesplaces, we used a comparative method of scientific research. We distinguish the following five stages of the algorithm (methodology) for the assessment (calculation) of the indicator, which reflects the level of "Pilgrimage cluster suitability of the holy places":

1. Forming the level of "Etalon pilgrimage cluster suitability of the holy places".
2. Develop criteria for determining the degree of pilgrimage cluster suitability of the holy places.
3. Formation of assessment indicators on the criteria that realistically characterize the pilgrimage cluster suitability of the holy places.
4. Expressing the attitude of experts in points to the indicators of assessing the degree of pilgrimage cluster suitability of the holy places.
5. Determining the level of real pilgrimage cluster suitability by comparing it with the reference value of the total sum of expert assessments.

We will look in details at each stage of determining the degree of cluster suitability of pilgrimage and holy sites.

First stage. Forming the level of "Etalon pilgrimage cluster suitability of the holy places". The ideal level of pilgrimage cluster suitability of holy places is, in our opinion, reflected in the harmonious unity of the following 10 qualities of this place (Fig. 2).

Figure 2. Etalon suitability of the holy places for pilgrimage clustering²



We can consider the etalon suitability of the clusters as follows: popularity in the Islamic world; beautification; prestige among Muslims; prodigy; the level of holiness, scientific potential, complexity of monuments; historicity; suitability for worship; usefulness and manageability of the holy places. If there are such characters in holy places, it will be possible to form pilgrimage cluster. But, in fact, as each sanctuary moves further away from the footsteps of the prophet, because of the the lack of certain qualities and the specific problems which may occur ideal suitability of the pilgrimage cluster may be low.

The Haram Mosque and the Kaaba pilgrimage complex in Makkah, as well as the Prophet's Mosque in Madinah, are the etalon suitable holy sites for clustering. This is because 4 million people go to Saudi Arabia for Hajj every year on the eve of Eid al-Adha and 15 million during the other times of the year for Umrah. Hajj and Umrah have become a kind of pilgrimage industry, which annually contributes 12.0 billion dollars to the state budget (Mecca is visited by 15 million pilgrims. 2016).

Second stage. Develop criteria for determining the degree of pilgrimage cluster suitability of the holy places. For this purpose, we have developed the following 10 measurement criteria that

² Source: author's work

allow us to assess the quality of holy places on the level of «Etalon suitability of the cluster»:


- 1) wide information about holy places comprehensive information about the holy places;
- 2) development of the pilgrimage cluster's infrastructure;
- 3) the prestige of the holy places;
- 4) the suitability of the holy places for worship;
- 5) level of the holiness of the places;
- 6) the scientific potential of holy;
- 7 type of monuments in holy places;
- 8) historicity of sacred places;
- 9) prophecy of the holy places;
- 10) the usefulness of the holy places and the possibilities of managing them.





The details information about characteristics of each assessment criterion is presented in the Survey for evaluation of the degree of pilgrimage cluster suitability of holy places developed by us (see column 3 of the Survey).

The combination of these criteria serves as a unit of measurement for determining the level of “Suitability pilgrimage clusteriness” currently achieved during the visit. The consistency of the proposed criteria serves as a unit of measurement to determine the level of “Real suitability of the pilgrimage cluster” currently achieved in holy sites.

Third stage. Formation of assessment indicators on the criteria that realistically characterize the pilgrimage cluster suitability of the holy places. For each of the criteria listed above, we recommend developing and evaluating with appropriate scoring system by developing detailed indicators that represent 5 quality levels that characterize the suitability of the pilgrimage tourism. In this case, we used the evaluation model of business quality abroad "TRIS-EFQM", which allows to determine the level of quality (B.Navruzzoda and Dr. K.Macado, 2008).

According to this model of quality evaluation, each criterion is determined at 5 quality levels with a score of 10 points. In order to determine the level of real suitability of the pilgrimage clusters, we considered it expedient to establish a scale of evaluation of each of our 10 developed criteria on the basis of the following points on the basis of individual indicators as a unit of measurement:

 0-1 very low level of pilgrimage cluster suitability for each criterion;

-  2-4 low level of pilgrimage cluster suitability for each criterion;
-  5-6 an average level of pilgrimage cluster suitability for each criterion;
-  7-8 standard level of pilgrimage cluster suitability for each criterion;
-  9-10 high level of pilgrimage cluster suitability for each criterion.

Fourth stage. Expressing the attitude of experts in points to the indicators of assessing the degree of pilgrimage cluster suitability of the holy places. The expert, Imam of the holy place or someone who knows the place, taking into account place's real condition, evaluates the points based on the general criteria and physical parameters described above, using the author's "Determination Methods of Pilgrimage cluster suitability' degree". The expert based on the evaluation scale indicated at the top of the Survey and the holy place scores from 0 to 10 points. The evaluation score is recorded in column 4 of the Survey.

Fifth stage. Determining the level of real pilgrimage cluster suitability by comparing it with the reference value of the total sum of expert assessments. In comparison with the benchmark estimation of the total sum of expert assessments (100 points), the real degree of pilgrimage cluster suitability is chosen. The total amount of points collected by the Surveyed holy site, indicated at the bottom of the Surveyed, is the basis for determining its quality level. In order to form pilgrimage clusters, the levels of pilgrimage that characterize holy sites are determined to correspond to one of the following 4 quality levels:

- ❖ From 0 till 40 points - "Place of worship" (low quality level of holy place).
- ❖ From 41 till 70 points - "Remarkable holy place" (an average quality level of holy place).
- ❖ From 71 till 85 points - "Attractive pilgrimage destination" (standard quality level of holy place).
- ❖ From 86 till 100 points - "Suitable pilgrimage destination for clustering" (high quality level of holy place).

The "Holy Place" quality level of the pilgrimage cluster is characterized by the fact that the pilgrimage has the character of holiness, but the tourist infrastructure is not yet developed and the necessary conditions for the performance of pilgrimage rituals are not available.

In holy places with level "Remarkable holy place" efforts will be made to create appropriate conditions for pilgrimage and to turn it into a holy place through the development of primary tourism infrastructure in order to meet the needs of visitors.

In order to improve infrastructure of the pilgrimage tourism, provide the visitors reliable information, expand conditions for worship, increase the economic potential of the region of the places with level of "Attractive pilgrimage destination", measures will be taken.

Efforts should be made to create "competitive pilgrimage clusters" on the basis of "pilgrimage destination" in the level of "Suitable pilgrimage destination for clustering". It would be expedient to separate the two main criteria that form clusters. The first is "territory" and the second is "value". The "territory" aspect of pilgrimage clusters is reflected in the efforts to

transform holy places into sacred places and raise them to the level of attractive pilgrimage destinations and to form pilgrimage clusters with a competitive advantage.

In terms of “value” aspect, technological chain of tourist services for visitors in the attractive pilgrimage areas will be created and integrated links between the tourist facilities will be established.

We determined the real level of pilgrimage clusters’ suitability of 40 Islamic shrines in Uzbekistan during the January-February 2022 using an expert method based on a questionnaire survey developed by us, which is presented below in the article (See Survey).

SURVEY³ FOR EVALUATION OF THE DEGREE OF PILGRIMAGE CLUSTER SUITABILITY OF HOLY PLACES

1. Name of the holy place. _____.
2. Location region: _____.
- 3 The name of the expert. _____.
4. Type of activity of the appraiser: _____.
5. _____.
- Evaluation date: _____.
6. Signature: _____.

Evaluation scale:
0 point (worst position of criteria) \longleftrightarrow **10 points (the best position of criteria)**

№	Criteria for determining pilgrimage cluster suitability of the holy places	Details information about criteria	Expert evaluation (from 0 to 10 points for each criterion)
1	2	3	4
1	Wide information about holy places comprehensive information about the holy places	availability of catalogs, booklets, photo albums and other information as well as the opportunity for guides to give information about holy places to the visitors	
2	Development of the pilgrimage cluster's infrastructure	repaired, restored beautified holy places and the smoothness of the roads	

³ Survey prepared by author.

3	The prestige of the holy places	the prestige of the holy places among the public, their popularity	
4	The suitability of the holy places for worship	the presence of conditions for the performance of religious rites in shrines, including the presence of a mullah, the possibility of ablution, the presence of a mosque for sitting and praying in front of the grave	
5	Level of the holiness of the places	Saint's rank of the holy places is determined: Prophet, Sayyid, Murshid, Awliya, Wali, Hazrat, Sheikh, Imam, Pir, Ota, Arif, Khoja, Sufi, Amir, Axun, Eshan, Olim, Mullo	
6	The scientific potential of holy places	they will be evaluated on the basis of the scientific potential of the founder, published and existing works and scientific heritage	
7	Type of monuments in holy places	mosque; mausoleum; ensemble; memorial complex; room; complex, etc.	
8	Historicity of sacred places	according to the time (period) of construction of monuments in the holy places, the old ones are evaluated with high mark and new ones with a lower	
9	Prophecy of the holy places	It is recommended to divide the holy places into several groups according to their educational significance, the secular significance, its prophecy and the impact on the human behavior	
10	The usefulness of the holy places and the possibilities of managing them	we can divide the holy places according to their efficiency like follows: benefitless, harmless, Profitable and high profitable and dividing them into 3 categories according to their management capabilities: non-existent; available but unsystematic; available and systematic	
Amount of points:			
The degree of real pilgrimage cluster suitability of holy places (written from the note selectively):			
Note: The quality level of the pilgrimage cluster suitability of holy places: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ❖ From 0 till 40 points - "Place of worship" (low level) ❖ From 41 till 70 points - "Remarkable holy place" (an average level) ❖ From 71 till 85 points - "Attractive pilgrimage destination" (standard level) ❖ From 86 till 100 points - "Suitable pilgrimage destination for clustering" (high level) 			

The results of the expert assessment and comparison with the etalon value of the indicator cluster

forming the state of holy places are presented in table 1. The data in this table shows that 8 (20%) of the 40 holy places surveyed have a low level of pilgrimage cluster - with "Place of worship". The majority of the studied holy places have an average level. The number of "Remarkable holy place" is 18 (45%). A standard level of pilgrimage cluster - with "Attractive pilgrimage destination" was not very much. Their number is only 7 or 17.5 %.

Seven of the surveyed holy sites were found to be at a high level of pilgrimage cluster - with "Suitable pilgrimage destination for clustering", which includes the following holy places (Fig. 3):

Table 1. Assessment results of the level of pilgrimage cluster suitability of 40 Islamic holy places in Uzbekistan⁴

No	Indicators status of the pilgrimage cluster suitability for the holy places (in points)	Quality of the pilgrimage cluster suitability for the holy places	Number of holy places suitable for quality of the pilgrimage cluster	Their share in the total evaluated holy places, %
1	0 - 40	"Place of worship"	8	20.0
2	41 - 70	"Remarkable holy place"	18	45.0
3	71 - 85	"Attractive pilgrimage destination"	7	17.5
4	86 - 100	"Suitable pilgrimage destination for clustering"	7	17.5
	Total:		40	100

- ❖ Imam al-Bukhari memorial complex in the Samarkand region,
- ❖ Pahlavon Mahmud mausoleum in the city of Khiva,
- ❖ Al-Hakim at-Termizi memorial complex in Termez region,
- ❖ Mausoleum of Imam Abu Isa at-Termizi in Termez region,
- ❖ Architectural complex Shah-i- Zinda in the city of Samarkand,
- ❖ Mausoleum of Khoja Abdukhaliq Gijduvani in Bukhara region,
- ❖ Bahauddin Naqshband memorial complex in Bukhara region.

Our survey showed that on the basis of the above-mentioned holy places in Uzbekistan, it is possible to form pilgrimage clusters that will be able to attract millions of Muslim pilgrims from all over the world

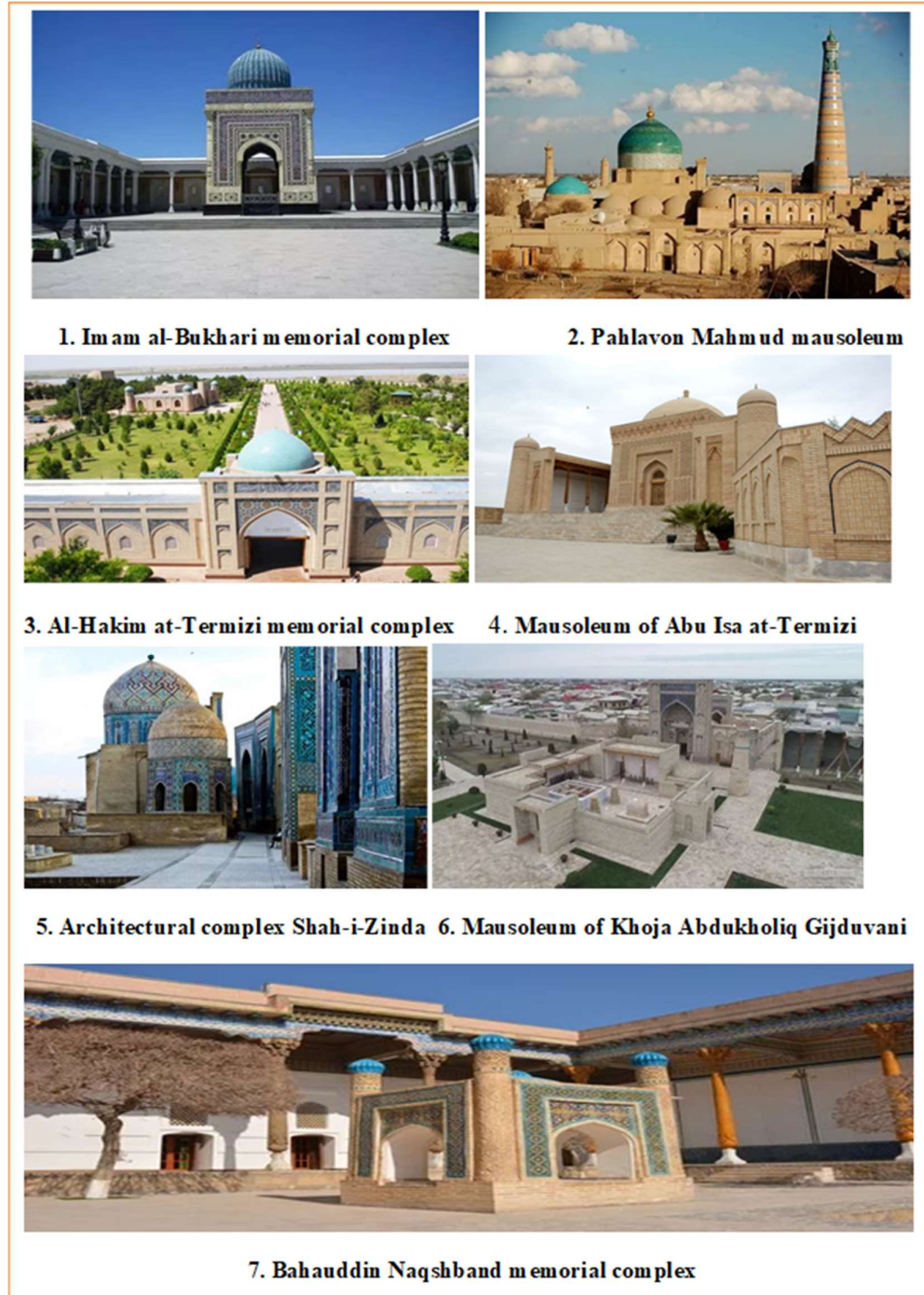
Calculations of the pilgrimage cluster suitability for the holy places indicator show that there is

⁴ Prepared by author.

a basis for the development of pilgrimage tourism in Uzbekistan through cluster approach.

Thus, the calculation and analysis of the indicator “Suitability of the pilgrimage cluster of holy places” which characterize the opportunity of the pilgrimage cluster formation in holy places serves to strengthen and increase the effectiveness of ongoing works.

Figure 3. Suitable pilgrimage destination for clustering in Uzbekistan⁵



⁵Prepared by authors.

attractive pilgrimage destinations will take place, which can serve as the fundamental basis on which the core of the tourist-pilgrimage cluster can be formed. At the same time, "local concentration", "horizontal cooperation", "vertical integration", "cost increment" and "competitive benchmarking" can serve as key cluster mechanisms.

Conclusion and suggestions

Based on the results of the above research, we came to the following general conclusion:

1. A tourist trip with a pilgrimage purpose is carried out to a certain holy place. This holy place is the main object of pilgrimage tourism. The flow of pilgrims is directly related to the degree of remarkability and attractiveness of the holy places. Therefore, in order to effectively organize local pilgrimage tourism, measures should be taken to turn holy places into attractive pilgrimage destinations, followed by the formation of competitive pilgrimage clusters on their basis.

2. As pilgrimage-tourist destinations become established and develop, a new destination model of the pilgrimage cluster will be formed in the tourism sector. The methodological basis of this model consists of two theories: the theory of tourist destination and the theory of cluster development of the region. As a result of the integration of these two theories, the process of turning holy places into attractive pilgrimage destinations will take place, which can serve as the fundamental basis on which the core of the tourist-pilgrimage cluster can be formed. At the same time, "local concentration", "horizontal cooperation", "vertical integration", "cost increment" and "competitive benchmarking" can serve as key cluster mechanisms.

3. On based Imam al-Bukhari memorial complex we recommend forming new pilgrimage cluster - **"Minor Hajj"**, which geographically covers holy sites situated in the territories of Uzbek cities - Samarkand and Bukhara. If every year more than 4 million people perform the **"Major Hajj"** ritual (visiting Mecca and Medina) at a certain time, most of them, provided they have sufficient and reliable knowledge and have an established service system, can perform the **"Minor Hajj"** in Samarkand and Bukhara at any time suitable for them. The capacity of this pilgrimage market is estimated at 1 million people per year. Here it would be useful to use the "Five-day tourist program of the pilgrimage tour "Minor Hajj" with the slogan "Pilgrimage in the Motherland of Imam Al-Bukhari", developed by Bukhara state university professor Bakhtiyor Novruz-Zoda (2007).

4. On based two high level holy places such as Bahauddin Naqshband memorial complex and mausoleum of Khoja Abdulkholiq Gijduvani it is proposed to create in Bukhara region the new pilgrimage cluster - "Seven Sufi Saint of Noble Bukhara". The structure of this cluster should also include the holy places of the next five followers of Sufism: Muhammad Arif Revhari, Mahmud Anjir Fagnavi, Khoja Ali Romitani, Muhammad Boboi Samosi and Sayyid Amir Kulol. Since these seven saints are united by a golden chain the concept of Naqshbandi. At the organization of pilgrimage tourism in the framework of the cluster you can use a seven-day pilgrimage program **"Sufi Tour Through Sufi Shrines in Uzbekistan"** with the slogan **"Travel to the Holy Bukhara –Motherland of Sufi Sultan Baha-ud-Din Naqshband"** (Bakhtiyor Navruz-Zoda, Zebiniso Navruz-zoda, 2016 and 2018).

5. Creating a database of all holy places, unique objects, and architectural monuments, cultural, spiritual and material resources in our country and entering them into the electronic platform of pilgrimage tourism.

6. Establish training of specialists in the field of tourism education and master's specialties in higher education institutions; organizing master classes on pilgrimage tourism for imams-khatibs working in the holy places.

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