

THE DESTINATION MARKETING TOOLS FOR “SEVEN SUFI SAINTS OF NOBLE BUKHARA” PILGRIMAGE CLUSTER

Navruz-Zoda Bakhtiyor

Bukhara State University, Uzbekistan

bnzoda@mail.ru

Ibragimov Nutfillo

Bukhara State University, Uzbekistan

ibragimov.nutfillo@mail.ru,

Rakhmanov Akmal

tour expert jahongashta.uz, Klassik-Tur LLC Uzbekistan

rakhmonovakmal@yahoo.com

Biographies

BakhtiyorNavruz-Zoda is the professor of the Department of Tourism Bukhara State University. He received his doctor's degree in Economics Science in 1991. He has been awarded by the Gold medal of the International Biographical Centre of Cambridge, England in nomination of “International Professional of the year 2005” for achievement in the field of Economics.

NutfilloIbragimov is the senior researcher of the Department of Tourism Bukhara State University. He received his PhD in Economics in 2007. He is the author of more than 30 articles, and the monograph “Destination management: the art of the management of internal tourism”.

RakhmanovAkmal is the professional tour-operator, travel expert and specialist in religious, cultural, historical, gastronomy tours He graduated his Bachelor degree in Economics in 2004. As the co-founder of Klassik Tur LLC, jahongashta.uz, operating in incoming and internal/local tourism, he also manages MICE services.

Abstract

As the one of religious doctrines in Islam, Sufism, has aimed to strive in perfection. Taking into consideration intensive connection of cultures through trade and communication in Middle Ages, the territory of Central Asia became crossroad of

civilization. Considered as one of the primarily philosophies, Tasavvuf (mysticism) school, its material and non-material heritage had begun from the territory of current Uzbekistan, where esteem of educational ideas have been continuously used for inter-cultural and inter-religious relationships. Particularly, Bukhara, known as the noble city, for being homeland of great thinkers, including seven holy Sufi saints. This paper will look at practical implantation of innovative technologies from the perspective of international practice on branding, SMM and management of pilgrimage clusters.

Introduction and Literature Review

Due to privileged attention, the decree “On measures on ensuring rapid development of tourism industry”, given from the new Administration of Republic of Uzbekistan, has founded legislative and regulatory base sustaining development of pilgrimage tourism. The evolution of spiritual studies within the religion brought many contributors in different parts of our continent. Taking into consideration intensive connection of cultures through trade and communication in Middle Ages, the territory of Central Asia became crossroad of civilization.

Already from 9th century Islam dictates in politics, calligraphy and architecture by providing enormous perspectives in science and education. Considered as one of the primarily philosophies, Tasavvuf (mysticism) school, its material and non-material heritage had begun from the territory of current Uzbekistan, where esteem of educational ideas have been continuously used for inter-cultural and inter-religious relationships. Along with the architectural monuments, historical and archeological sites of cities Tashkent, Samarkand, Bukhara, Khiva, Termez, the pilgrimage plays remarkable role of domestic and international tourism.

Particularly, Bukhara, known as the noble city, for being homeland of great thinkers, including seven holy Sufi saints. Sustainable using of tourism potential assures an achievement of territorial growth. The aim of this paper is to introduce the scientific and practical substantiation of Destination Marketing tools, in order to improve competitiveness of “Seven Sufi Saints” as the destination.

British scientists Wahab, Crampon and Rothfield offered the first definition of destination marketing (Wahab S., Crampon L.J. and Rothfield L.M. 1976): The management process through which the National Tourist Organizations and/or tourist enterprises identify their selected tourists, actual and potential, communicate with them to ascertain and influence their wishes, needs, motivations, likes and dislikes, on local, regional, national and international levels, and to formulate and adapt their tourist products accordingly in view of achieving optimal tourist satisfaction thereby fulfilling their objectives.

While Uzbekistan's scientists gave the following definition of destination marketing "regional management method of tourism demand ... deals with determination of formulation time of tourism demand as well as forms of demand level and content to travel services in destinations" (Navruz-Zoda B.N., 2006).

Owing to above mentioned descriptions, following main features of destination marketing could be extracted:

- Operating process;
- Demand prognosis in advance;
- Marketing policies corresponding to market segments;
- Regional management of tourism supply system, which integrates supply and demand;
- Acting on local, regional, national and international levels.

There are direct, indirect and replacement types of competition, which take place at local, national and international scales. Direct competition occurs among touristic zones that have all infrastructures adapted for satisfying touristic needs (world destinations are in a mutual competition), while indirect competition depicts a competition among touristic regions having infrastructures, which are designed to satisfy similar touristic purposes (cultural tourism, pilgrimage tourism, nature tourism). In replacement competition, destinations appear in two types of a product unit, either as a tour package composed by tour operators for organized tourist segments or formed by local, national and international destination management companies adapted for unorganized tourist segments (Ibragimov, N., & Xurramov, O. 2015).

Methodology

Understanding the structure of shrines in Uzbekistan underperforms that majority of pilgrims are local citizens. Few foreign travelers visiting pilgrimage centers plan to those sights additionally, mostly location wise, "tackle" it as the part of cultural tourism. The quantity of visitors who intend to visit especially with the purpose of pilgrimage are negligible.

One of the reasons impeding development of incoming religious tourism is insufficient awareness of Muslims - potential pilgrims of other countries about the noble places of Uzbekistan. I believe, not every Muslim has a knowledge about the shrine of Imam al- Bukhari, the founder of science on Khadises.

It also needs to be mentioned, that holy places before gaining independence had been left unknown even for local people. For example, during official visit of Ethiopian President to USSR in 70th, he requested to bring him to Imam al-Bukhari's tomb. Former higher Soviet administration wondered: who is it and where he was buried? After the immediate assignment that was given to the Administration of Soviet Uzbekistan for determination of the sacred place, a very modest gravestone was found in a country-side, with the help of local people. Until then, it had been used as the storehouse in one of the rural collective farms. Through the night they cleaned the territory and laid a new asphalt road, with the guest visiting the place the following day. Consequently, the interest grew in the works of the Sultan of Hadith and the re-opened shrine respectively.

Another reason is the fact that there are minor tour operators specializing in organization of religious tourism. The main attention in local incoming market is given to historical, ecological, cultural, archeological, ethnographic and educational tourism.

As the third reason we name the visa procedure. Nowadays, the only way to obtain visa upon arrival in Uzbekistan might be available for travelers, in whose country of origin there is no Consulate of Uzbekistan. There are no representatives of Ministry of Foreign Affairs in any other cities except Tashkent.

The forth reason is related to high prices of airfare, services at the airport, customs, gastronomy and its specialization for Muslim pilgrims has never been further advanced, the lack of quick access to exchange offices and to ATM machines.

In order to increase the stream of incoming pilgrims to Uzbekistan it is necessarily to use the destination concept of marketing for religious tourism industry.

The realization of Destination Marketing tools for “Seven Sufi Saints of Noble Bukhara” pilgrimage cluster are 24/7 Informational supply, formation of Tour-Experts, networking with international organizations and high schools, formation of tourist portal, upgrade of skills and qualification of human recourses involved in the tourism supply system.

Results

According to "Uzbektourism" National Committee there are 559 tour operators and 477 hotels. The amount of employed people in this industry is 111 000, which makes around 0,8% of the total population. Taking into account the part time employment it reached 368,5 people, more or less 2,6% population of Uzbekistan (Nilufar Safarova, "Chain reaction of Tourism. "Economic Review"). The current statistics implies to

one of the fast growing industries of Uzbekistan. By using formed infrastructure with higher effectivity and including providing regular creation of new job positions, it is appropriate to increase competitiveness of travel regions of Uzbekistan.

The first category of competitiveness (access) requires developed actions in coordination of visitor's segments, for the travelers who intend to come to "Seven Sufi Saints of Noble Bukhara" pilgrimage cluster" via reformed transport infrastructure without a need for guiding or tour- operator services, including individuals arranging separate trips

The second category of competitiveness (accommodation), is the variety of overnight options in the territories with major tourist recourses. Regardless mentioned point, only in Bukhara in last 20 years, as a result of tremendous work, the number of hotels reached 80, based on license of "Uzbektourism" National Company.

The forth category of competitiveness (amenities), the formation of extra services like: food courts, trade centers(Malls), theaters, cinemas, sport complexes and their competition with each other. Creating the channel of commercialization for new tourist packages

The fifth category of competitiveness(ancillary services) means organization of tours and excursions to "Seven Sufi Saint of Noble Bukhara" pilgrimage cluster, providing travelers full support of state and national organizations (telecommunication, post, medical services).

The last category of competitiveness (assemblage) differentiates with its formation of both vertical and horizontal cooperation with all companies related to "Seven Sufi Saints of Noble Bukhara" pilgrimage cluster, that all together as the system of tourist offer along with tour-operators and organization of destination management providing packages to "Seven Sufi Saints of Noble Bukhara" pilgrimage cluster.

Conclusion and Discussion

More than two millenniums long the territory of Central Asia ignited the political, economic interests. Not mentioning about the curiosity of many other travelers who spent years to reach the part of world that could impress in any epochs. Probably with lots of the value of the Great Silk Road, or perhaps with the formation of big new religious and educational centers the time stopped in a small distance that used to connect East and West in the former times. In fact, living history, achievements of ancestors and the deepness of thoughts are carried proudly and definitely can be performed more widely.

Nowadays, when the access to any destination on the globe could be measured within the couple of minutes, precisely counting an approximate time of spending in every activity, there are definitely solutions in re-popularization of some forgotten or familiar places.

A general modernization activity in tourism committee of the Republic of Uzbekistan also includes study of markets for new segments. To analyze current tendency of travel business and its potential value as an industry impacts to further development of the field. A significant investment projects run into infrastructure of the country last years, particularly the transportation was encouraged both locally and internationally. Since a lot of actions have been made, there are still some appropriate improvements to be taken. For-instance, online booking for internal flights and trains, information/tourist centers at the airports and railways stations, exchange offices along with ATM machines is one of the primarily steps to simplify the traveler's needs.

Obviously, the number of recessions, ruined monetary policy, including reformation of new system brought serious obstacles that appeared naturally. Besides, missing competition among players of each segment of tourism industry or that very small challenge existing mostly in rendering minor services could never flush the proper growth. Therefore, different categories of competitiveness that created locally and federal among destinations of Uzbekistan would help involving even more investments. In a result of promoting secondary popular sites like religious or pilgrimage centers and their clustering extends the quantity of stays for traditional sellers. And the quick growing interest in other amenities of new packages offers tour operators and individual entrepreneurs to enhance their customer groups.

Thus, the new pilgrimage cluster "Seven Sufi Saints of Noble Bukhara" with its separated complexes located in outskirts of Bukhara region suggested as a new concept.

One of the mentioned seven shrines belongs to Bohoddin Nakshband, the most famous Sufi Teacher among all and the founder of Nakshbandia order in Sufism, is the most visited ones among the all. The huge complex was recently reconstructed.

So, along with the realization of Destination Marketing tools for "Seven Sufi Saints of Noble Bukhara" pilgrimage cluster like 24/7 Informational supply, formation of Tour-Experts, networking with international organizations and high schools, formation of tourist portal, upgrade of skills and qualification of human recourses involved tourism supply system, also, as the part of celebration 700 years anniversary of Bokhouddin Nakshband, the arrangement of conferences by inviting retreats, schools, Nakshbandi and other sufi order followers for better promotion.

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