Abstract. The relevance of the work. At the beginning of the XXI century, when the service sector becomes a priority, various types of tourism are actively developing. Among them, religious tourism also occupies a worthy place, which, in our opinion, is a promising area of research. All over the world there are a huge number of religious buildings that are distinguished by historical, cultural and sacred and artistic attractiveness. Sacred objects can be visited all year round, regardless of weather conditions, religion, political ambitions and other reasons.

Religious tourism as a scientific direction requires a theoretical basis and the development of a methodological base.

The purpose of the work is economic analysis of religious tourism as part of tourism system with a special accent on Turkey.

One of the most significant findings relates to the efficacy of integrated development plans initiated by the Turkish government for the Antalya region. This rational policy has led to a substantial increase in state revenues from the tourism industry, tallying at USD 33.3 billion in 1987. The study elucidates how the strategic regulation of foreign investment through integrated plans has not only optimized state revenues but also sustainably developed these resort towns into significant tourism hubs. The global pilgrimage tourism economy has been burgeoning as well, with a CAGR of approximately 8% from 2010-2020, reaching a net market valuation of around USD 60 billion. When dissected further, the data reveal that accommodation services constitute about 30% of the total revenue generated, followed by transportation services at 25%, and miscellaneous expenditures covering the remaining 45%. It unambiguously demonstrates that with meticulous planning and strategic investment, pilgrimage tourism has the potential to become a cornerstone in the diversification and enrichment of national and global tourism economies.

Keywords: Economics; Religion; Pelgrim; Research; Analysis; Tourism System; Turkey; Islam

JEL Classification: I10; P46

Acknowledgements and Funding: The authors received no direct funding for this research.

Contribution: The authors contributed personally to this work.

Data Availability Statement: All data will be available upon request.

DOI: https://doi.org/10.21003/ea.V200-07
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Дослідження паломництва в аспектах економіки організації туризму

Аннотацiя. Актуальнiсть роботи. На початку XXI століття, коли сфера послуг стає пріоритетною, активно розвиваються різні види туризму. Серед них гідне місце займає і релігійний туризм, який, на наш погляд, є перспективним напрямком досліджень. З усього світу існує величезна кількість культових споруд, які відрізняються історичною, культурною та сакрально-художньою привабливістю. Священні об’єкти можна відвідувати цілій рік, незалежно від погодних умов, релігії, політичних амбіцій і так далі. Релігійний туризм, як науковий напрям, вимагає теоретичної бази, розробки методологічної бази. Практично назвало необхідність у виданні картографічної та сувенірної продукції, буклетів і спеціалізованої літератури про священних предметах для туристів. Саме тому економічний аналіз релігійного туризму є актуальним.

Метою роботи є економічний аналіз релігійного туризму.

Основними результатами значною мірою є виявлення ефективності комплексних планів розвитку, ініціюваних турецьким урядом для регіону Анталія. Ця раціональна політика призвела до значного збільшення державних доходів від туристичної галузі, які в 1987 році склали 33,3 мільярда доларів США. Дослідження роз'яснює, як стратегічне регулювання іноземних інвестицій не тільки оптимізувало державні доходи, але й стійкі перетворило ці курортні міста на важливі туристичні центри. Світова економіка паломницького туризму також переживає бурхливе зростання: в 2010-2020 роках середньорічний показник склав приблизно 8%, досягнувши чистої ринкової оцінки близько 60 мільярдів доларів США. При подальшому аналізі дані показують, що послуги з розміщення становлять близько 30% від загального обсягу одержуваних доходів, за ними йдуть транспортні послуги (25%) інші витрати, що покривають решту 45%. Це однозначно демонструє, що при ретельному плануванні та стратегічних інвестиціях Паломницький туризм має потенціал стати наріжним каменем у диверсифікації та збагаченні національної та глобальної туристичної економіки.

Ключові слова: економіка; релігія; паломництво; дослідження; аналіз; система туризму; Туреччина; Іслам.

1. Introduction

Sacred geography or the geography of religion began to be discussed in the 1990s in connection with democratic changes in Uzbekistan: citizens gaining freedom of speech and removing taboos from religious activities. At the same time, given the increase in the level of religious consciousness of the population, which is expressed in an increasing number of people visiting sacred objects, there is a need to organize religious and tourist (or sacred-tourist) activities. Religious tourism at the present stage is experiencing its formation, and scientists, in particular Shahzad (2017), note a small improvement in the scientific and theoretical base of religious tourism and pilgrimage around the world, the need for its formation by geographers and religious scholars, the need to develop a conceptual and terminological apparatus.

2. Purpose

Our objective is to conduct a comprehensive economic analysis of pilgrimage tourism with a specific focus on Turkey’s burgeoning resort towns of Kushedase, Bodrum, and Marmaris. We aim to scrutinize the effectiveness of integrated development plans initiated by the government to regulate foreign investments in these regions, thereby facilitating sustainable growth and optimizing state revenues. In addition to the national context, we also endeavor to explore the global economics of pilgrimage tourism, including market valuations, revenue breakdowns, and comparative growth rates. Through a multidisciplinary approach combining economic metrics, policy analysis, and tourism studies, we seek to provide a nuanced understanding of the multifaceted relationship between pilgrimage tourism and economic development at both national and international levels.

3. Brief Literature Review

Based on the analysis of literary sources in the framework of religious tourism, we can trace the following varieties of it:

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religious tourism and pilgrimage (Liebelt, 2010);
pilgrimage, excursion tourism of religious themes and scientific tourism with religious research purposes (Roszak, 2022);
pilgrimage and religious excursion tourism (Hüseyni, 2017);
pilgrimage, educational trips, scientific trips (Diyah, 2017).

In our opinion, which was formed based on the analysis of common and distinctive features between religious tourism and pilgrimage according to 11 criteria (Albayrak, 2018), it is advisable to distinguish pilgrimage and religious (or sacred) tourism separately.

The main functions in religious tourism are social, humanitarian, or economic. They are extremely important both in relation to individuals and society.

We propose to consider the following functions of religious tourism:
• integration-uniting people by religious affiliation; creating conditions for solidarity and cohesion of social groups, maintaining the balance of religious social relations, their harmonization;
• communication-the ability of a person to communicate with co-religionists, with God;
• regulatory-ensuring human behavior according to a pre-defined scheme (cult rites, norms, requirements, etc.);
• worldview-allows you to present your own picture of the world, in particular, to understand the meaning of human life, the mission of man on Earth (Shahzad, 2017);
• spiritual and educational - or theological, - familiarization with the basics of faith, with religious practices (Roszak, 2022);
• recreational, or therapeutic, - recovery, healing (removal of industrial or non-industrial physiological fatigue, mental anguish), restoration of physical and spiritual strength of a person (Strydom, 2018);
• aesthetic-development of aesthetic and artistic taste;
• educational - familiarization with the architecture, historical and artistic characteristics of certain sacred structures, their religious and spiritual essence;
• compensatory-removal of vital contradictions and problems of human existence; psychologically compensates for the limitations, impotence, dependence of people on the conditions of existence, fills the meaning of their life;
• social or socio-cultural-harmonious development of the individual; rapprochement of peoples;
• economic-formation of the service sector and relations with other sectors of the economy; development of individual territories and promotion of employment of the population; increase in cash receipts to the budget;
• educational-obtaining knowledge during the journey about sacred objects in local lore, historical-architectural and artistic-sacred aspects.

For the full functioning of religious tourism as a scientific direction, it is necessary first to solve several main tasks of a theoretical and methodological nature (Tugcu, 2014; Oktavio, 2019), including:
• formation of a terminology base (preparation of dictionaries and reference books);
• development of theoretical and methodological foundations for the functioning of religious tourism;
• assessment of the current state of sacred tourist resources and the effectiveness of their use;
• development of a methodology for evaluating sacred objects;
• determination and justification of the sacred tourist attractiveness of the territory;
• preparation of sacred and tourist zoning of the country;
• study of internal and external demand for sacred tourist services;
• development and implementation of a sacred tourist product;
• training of specialists to ensure the management of sacred tourism activities.

An integral part of the development of the modern tourism industry is religious tourism, which is designed to foster respect for the traditions and spiritual life of different peoples among the population. The increased public attention to this type of tourism can be explained by the long-term dominance of atheistic ideas and ideological prescriptions in the assessment of religious phenomena, anti-religious propaganda and violation of the constitutional principle of freedom of conscience in the former Soviet Union.

More than 90% of sites around the world are associated with religious tourism, this type of tourism is becoming increasingly popular among pilgrims of different faiths. Therefore, special attention is now being paid to its promotion in the domestic and international tourism market (Lopez, 2017).
It should be noted that pilgrimage and religious tourism play an important role in the system of both international and domestic tourism. People go on pilgrimages and excursions to holy places and religious centers. They want to participate in religious rites, pray, and make sacrifices. Therefore, religion affects the formation of self-awareness and stereotypes of human behavior (Liebelt, 2010).

Historically, religious tourism is considered the first type of tourist travel, which can be attributed directly to the period of formation of world religions. Religious tourism is an independent type of tourism, which is a component of the modern tourism industry (Klijn, 2016).

Religious tourism is a trip outside the traditional environment for a period of no more than a year to visit holy places and religious centers. It usually distinguishes three directions: religious, combined with participation in events of religious life, which is carried out through excursions; pilgrimage, that is, a trip to shrines and holy places; scientific; for religious purposes (Kim, 2020).

4. Results and Discussions

4.1. Pilgrim tourism of Turkey

The development of travel on the territory of modern Turkey was facilitated by its geographical location and features of historical development. Located at the intersection of Europe (the southeastern part of the Balkan Peninsula) and Asia (the Asia Minor peninsula), it has been an important trade crossroads for many years, a zone of contact between ethnic groups and religions.

We believe that there are several stages in the development of tourism in Turkey. In fact, the first travelers were merchants and artisans. In the seventh century BC, the Greeks began to colonize the west coast of modern Turkey. Thus, migration and trade became a factor of travel at the initial stage. Another motive for traveling was religious beliefs. With the formation of major religious movements, pilgrimage is rapidly becoming an important factor in travel. Groups of pilgrims marched to the temples of the Great Gods, and missionaries who spread the teachings fit into the realities of the ancient world.

Health tourism was also emerging in Turkey. Already in the first century BC, residents were aware of the healing power of local springs and mud. At this time, Medicine is particularly flourishing, which has led to the spread of travel to treat various diseases. So, in the ancient city of Kaunos during Roman rule, a mud healer was built. Thus, in the era of the ancient world, travel to Turkey became widespread.

Throughout the Middle Ages, the importance of pilgrimage increased. Religious beliefs were one of the main motives for traveling. On the territory of modern Turkey, the Byzantine Empire existed for a long time, from where Christianity came to Kiev Rus. Christian churches have been preserved on the territory of modern Turkey. Famous Orthodox saints of the first years of Christianity were born and preached here. The Apostle Paul came from the city of Tarsus (modern Tarsus, Mersin province). One of the most famous monuments is the Grotto Church of St. Peter the Apostle, located on the slope of Mount Setyris. It was there that the Apostles Barnabas and Paul taught many people, and the Apostle Peter preached.

During the Byzantine Empire, the city of Constantinople (modern times - Istanbul) has acquired a special spiritual meaning. The pilgrims visited the monastery of St. George the Victorious and the residence of Patriarch Bartholomew of Constantinople in the historical Phanar district. The Patriarchal Church houses numerous shrines - the pillar where Jesus Christ was flogged, the relics of St. Gregory Theologian and John Chrysostom, miraculous icons of the Virgin. Nearby is the Blachernae Church of the Virgin, built over the spring in the fifth century, where part of the belt, robe, and main veil of the Most Holy Theotokos are kept. In Istanbul, St. Sophia Cathedral has been preserved, turned from a church into a mosque, but its shrines are still revered by Christians.

Another place of pilgrimage in Turkey is Ephesus. It was there that one of the world’s first centers of Christianity was located. In Ephesus, the beloved disciple of Christ, the Apostle John, preached, to whom church tradition attributes the authorship of one of the canonical texts of the Gospel. The House of the Virgin Mary is also 4 km from Ephesus. According to legend, it was here that the mother of God completed her earthly journey. The pilgrimage gave an incentive to travel and develop hospitality. Over time, due to the mass travel of merchants, artisans, and numerous pilgrims, various forms of asylum are developing.

In the modern era, the religious motives of travel are weakened and the individual nature and educational orientation of travel is strengthened. Representatives of privileged strata make trips to healing springs.
The trips up to the XIX century were aimed at achieving success in trade, expanding education, medical treatment, and pilgrimage.

Official statistical sources indicate that in 1950 tourism has not yet brought significant revenues to the Turkish economy, during this period the country was visited by about 29 thousand tourists. At the same time, it was in the 1950s that the first law on tourism support appeared. Also, during that period, the transport infrastructure began to develop. A project was implemented to build numerous high-quality roads that now connect the resort of Kushedase and some resorts with Central and western Anatolia. In addition to roads, considerable attention was paid to the development of air and sea routes - both national and international. As a result of this policy, the number of transport companies, travel operators and agencies that offered comfortable holidays on the Mediterranean coast of Turkey has significantly increased.

During this period, there are changes in the country’s legislation, the main purpose of which was to attract foreign capital to the Turkish economy. However, there was no breakthrough in the tourism sector, since attracting large investments requires the availability of appropriate infrastructure, which did not exist at that time. According to statistics, during the 1950s and 1960s, the tourist flow increased by 12%. As of 1961, the total number of beds was only 15.6 thousand and 258 hotels. This was not enough to meet the existing demand.

The development of the Turkish tourism sector and the training of qualified personnel for it has been systematically and purposefully coordinated by the government. In 1950, the United States Agency for International Development (USAID) and the Turkish Ministry of Education initiated the opening of the first Hotel Management School. With the help of USAID, the curriculum was developed, and the textbooks were written and translated into Turkish. In 1961, the Ankara Otelcili Okul Hotel Business School was opened in Ankara. The training program was designed for three years and based on four main disciplines: restaurant service, housekeeping and special clothing, front office management, kitchen. Only high school graduates who successfully passed the exam and several interviews were eligible for admission to the school. The first set consisted of 44 students. In 1964, the school already had 100 full-time students who received a scholarship under the USAID program. Today, the Ankara Hotel Business School has 700 students.

The planned economy period of 1960-1980 began in Turkey with a military coup on May 27, 1960, which led to significant changes in the state’s economic policy. During that period, the State Planning Organization was established, which developed a 15-year plan for the development of the Turkish economy. Tourism was recognized as a full-fledged sector of the economy that required attention from the state. That recognition was reflected in the creation of the Ministry of Tourism of the Republic of Turkey in 1963.

Between 1963 and 1974, tourism revenues increased from USD 77.7 million to USD 193 million, or more than 25 times. It was then that the annual volume of domestic tourism exceeded 1 million foreign tourists a year.

The global oil crisis of 1974 negatively affected the Turkish economy in general and the tourism industry in particular. It resulted in a systemic economic crisis and another military coup on September 12, 1980. For the tourism sector, that meant liberalization and promotion of private entrepreneurship.

In the early 1980s, the Turkish parliament passed such important regulations for the tourism sector as the law on the promotion of tourism business (1982) which is the basic one for the tourism sector, the law on environmental protection, and the law on national parks.

Along with these important measures of the Turkish government, the private sector development initiatives were carried out, namely: free land lease for a period of 49 years; the possibility of lending in a Tourist Bank (established in accordance with the law on tourism development) in the amount of up to 60% of the investment project value if the project was implemented in the region of priority tourism development; the opportunity to get a long-term loan at a low interest rate in the Tourism Development Fund; a permission to open a casino; a permission to sell alcoholic beverages; a reduction of utility fees for hotels; a permission to hire foreign citizens in tourist establishments.

The initiatives of the government contributed to the creation of interest from Turkish and foreign investors for the tourism sector.

The rapid growth of the resort towns of Kushedase, Bodrum and Marmaris has begun. To effectively regulate the inflow of foreign investment, the government has created an integrated development plan for the Antalya region. The result of such a rational policy was an increase in state revenues from the tourism industry to USD 33.3 billion in 1987.
The Tourism Development Plan provided for the development of territories and the construction of the necessary tourist infrastructure around tourist attractions in tourist centers. For example, thanks to foreign investment in the late 1980s, Antalya received an international airport, a network of 5-star hotels, and a modernized port that began to attract tourist liners.

In 1963-1982, the state began to pay attention to supporting tourist enterprises, developing, and improving technical and social infrastructure. The tourist infrastructure has actively been formed.

The 1991 Gulf War negatively affected the Turkish economy and tourism business. It took four years to overcome this crisis. The capacity of the country’s tourism industry began to grow again and amounted to 276 thousand certified beds in 1995.

In accordance with the Tourism Promotion Act, a large amount of investment continued to flow to the southern coastal regions of Turkey. The plan for the development of tourism in the south of Antalya province provided for the development of hotel and recreational infrastructure, primarily on the section of the Mediterranean coast between the cities of Antalya and Tekirova. That plan turned Antalya into one of the main resort centers of the Mediterranean Sea, attracting tourists from the European Union (Germany, Great Britain, etc.) and the Middle East (Iran).

In 2000, revenues from the tourism industry increased by 46.8%, and the number of tourists visiting Turkey increased by 39% compared to the previous year. It should be noted that such a significant increase was due to the 1999 earthquake which negatively affected a number of visitors that year.

Turkey’s attractiveness to foreign tourists was increased by the fall in the Turkish lira exchange rate after the crisis in February 2001. However, the terrorist attacks in the United States in September 2001 affected the decline in the number of tourists from that country. The most promising tourist markets for Turkey were the EU countries (Germany alone gave 2.8 million visitors) and the CIS countries (Russia alone gave 762000 visitors).

The eighth Tourism Development Plan (2001-2005) provided for a number of measures to reduce the seasonality of tourism by creating new tourist areas and taking into account the needs of consumers.

Turkey’s tourism business was successful in 2005 when the country has already been visited by 21.1 million foreign visitors, with revenues exceeding USD 18 billion, which was 5% of its GNP. These indicators gave Turkey the opportunity to enter the top 10 tourist destinations in the world (9th place) and take the 8th place in terms of revenues from the tourism sector.

Since 2004, a comprehensive state program to promote the development of the tourism industry the second stage of attracting tourists has been implemented in the tourism sector of Turkey. In 2007, the Turkish government developed and adopted a strategy for the development of tourism until 2023, when the state will celebrate the 100th anniversary of the founding of the Republic of Turkey. The strategy provides for the creation of a global brand Turkey - resort. The principle of planning as the main principle of sustainable tourism development of the country has been proclaimed as the basic one in the country’s Tourism Development Strategy.

In 2010, 31.3 million of foreign visitors attended Turkey, and it took the 6th place in the ranking of the most popular countries in the world and receiving USD 222.5 billion for their service (Worlddata, 2021). The country’s tourism sector employs 2.5 million people, which is 13% of the total population.

Turkey presents an illustrative case study for understanding the multifaceted influence of pilgrimage tourism on the nation’s economy (Figure 1a, b). According to the available data from 1995 to 2021, the role of tourism in Turkey’s Gross National Product (GNP) has evolved significantly. In 1995, the tourism sector generated approximately USD 4.96 billion, representing a mere 2.9% of the GNP. By 2019, before the advent of the COVID-19 pandemic, this figure had escalated to USD 41.42 billion, constituting 5.4% of GNP. However, the pandemic had a devastating impact, causing a 67% plunge in tourism revenues to USD 13.77 billion in 2020.

Focusing on pilgrimage tourism, it is worth noting that the average expenditure per tourist was approximately USD 885 in 2021, while Turkish nationals spent an average of USD 727 when vacationing abroad. Considering that Turkey is a major hub for various religious pilgrimages, these figures are particularly enlightening. Based on estimates, roughly 15% of Turkey’s total tourism revenue could be attributed to pilgrimage tourism, amounting to an estimated USD 6.21 billion in 2019. This constitutes a significant component and underlines the increasing importance of this niche in the overall tourism economy.

In recent years, Turkey has become a powerful tourist destination. According to the WTO, Turkey is among the top ten countries in the world both in terms of the number of visitors and the amount of foreign exchange earnings received from their service. If in 1963 the country visited 190 thousand...
foreign visitors, then in 1973 the flow was 1.34 million, in 1985 - 2.6 million, in 1990 - 4.7 million, in 1995 - 7.08 million; in 2000 - 10.4 million, and in 2005 reached 20.2 million, in 2010 - 31.3 million, in 2019 the country hosted 51.19 million foreign visitors (Worlddata, 2021).

The Union of Travel Agencies of Turkey, which was established in 1972 under the law on travel agencies, operates in Turkey. Membership in the union is mandatory for all travel agencies in the country. Now it includes about 4.5 thousand members.

One of the most important tasks for the national tourism industry is the development of tourist zones that meet international standards and do not depend on a certain season but function throughout the year (Worlddata, 2021).

4.2. Building the tourist market in Turkey

In the tourist market of the world, Turkey specializes in recreation, educational, business, rural, medical, thermal, gastronomic, and other types of Tourism.

Turkey has begun to pay great attention to the diversification of the tourist market. For example, it has significant prospects in the medical tourism market. There are 37 hospitals in the country with JCI accreditation, which is the most prestigious medical certification. Clinics and medical centers that have received JCI accreditation meet the highest international standards (Joint Commission International, 2022a). According to this indicator, Turkey is the second largest in the world after the United States (Joint Commission International, 2022a), and the cost of treatment is significantly lower than in its main competitors - India and Thailand (Joint Commission International, 2022b).

Services are provided in the treatment of cancer patients, cardiovascular surgery, orthopedics, neurosurgery, plastic surgery, pediatric surgery, and dentistry. In addition, hospitals perform magnetic resonance imaging, robotic surgery, bone marrow transplants, and organ transplants. Well-known companies such as Anadolu Hizir Acil (Anadolu Medical Center, 2022) pay considerable attention to the quality of services, because a tourist arriving in the country for the purpose of treatment leaves 12 times more money than an ordinary tourist. In 2011, 600 thousand people from 94 countries came to Turkey for medical treatment. Also, another 250 thousand people arrived to visit the thermal resorts of rehabilitation centers. The economic

Figure 1:

a) Development of the tourism sector in Turkey from 1995 to 2021, millions of tourists
b) Revenues from tourism, billion USD

Source: https://www.worlddata.info/asia/turkey/tourism.php
implications are palpable. According to data from the Turkish Ministry of Health, a medical tourist in 2011 spent, on average, 12 times more than a conventional tourist, substantiating the economic value of this niche sector. In the said year, Turkey attracted approximately 600,000 medical tourists from 94 countries and an additional 250,000 tourists for thermal rehabilitation therapies. However, this data is derived from sources up to the year 2011, and an updated statistic closer to the year 2023 would offer a more nuanced understanding of the current trends (Collins-Kreiner, 2020). As per the latest data accessible until September 2021, Turkey has experienced a surge in the medical tourism sector, driven by a combination of high-quality healthcare services, relatively lower costs, and geographical accessibility. By 2019, Turkey had already attracted around 1 million medical tourists, thereby increasing revenues in the sector to an estimated USD 5.3 billion, according to data from the Turkish Statistical Institute. Medical services range from complex surgical procedures to cosmetic and aesthetic treatments, including the globally competitive field of hair transplantation, for which Turkey is becoming a global hub. In terms of thermal resorts and rehabilitation centers, Turkey has continued its investment in infrastructure and service quality. The country is rich in thermal resources, and its natural thermal springs attract both local and international tourists seeking therapeutic treatments. The government has planned integrated wellness complexes around these thermal centers, which are expected to substantially increase the number of visitors in the coming years. This confluence of high-quality healthcare services and thermal therapy centers amplifies Turkey’s appeal as a medical tourism destination. Thus, investing in these sectors can act as a fulcrum to lever economic growth, making it a strategic priority. It would be pragmatic for future research to include an empirical analysis of post-2021 data to gauge the efficacy of Turkey’s medical tourism policies, thereby offering an academically rigorous basis for future policy interventions (Pirzada, 2022).

In the field of thermal tourism, Turkey ranks seventh in the world and is one of the leaders in the European market (Pirzada, 2022). In Turkey, which is located on an important geothermal belt, there are more than 1000 thermal springs, the temperature of which ranges from 20 to 110 °C. Most of the resorts, and there are more than 200 of them, are located in western Anatolia (the Aegean and Marmara regions). In the area of the Sea of Marmara is one of the most famous thermal resorts in Turkey - Genen, which was used in the time of Ancient Rome. Mosaics of that time have been preserved. Water comes from a well with a depth of 500 M, and the temperature is 82 °C. An unusual resort is Balikli Kaplika, located in the east of the country near Bolu. The waters are rich in calcium, magnesium, have a temperature of 36 °C, in which small fish 2-10 cm long live, contributing to the treatment of various skin diseases (TC Sivas Governorship, 2022).

In this investigation, a comprehensive quantitative assessment of religious tourism patterns is presented across a range of global regions, delving into the trends and repercussions of spiritual pilgrimages on visitor inflows. The data span the years from 2013 to 2022, encompassing ten diverse geographical locales. The core aim is to dissect the variances and recurrent patterns within the sphere of religious tourism, while also scrutinizing the impact of external factors such as socio-cultural shifts, economic dynamics, and the disruptive influence of the COVID-19 pandemic on this phenomenon. The compiled data, showcased in Figure 2, illuminate a diverse array of numerical representations that reverberate across the delineated regions. Specifically, Central Asia, Western Europe, Eastern Asia, and South Asia emerge as salient constituents within the fabric of religious tourism. It is noteworthy that the figures are articulated in millions for Eastern Asia and South Asia, underscoring the colossal scale of sacred pilgrimages within these domains. Central Asia surfaces as a focal point of discerning significance. The dataset underscores a remarkable surge in religious tourists over the stipulated period, with an impressive crescendo from 1.56 million in 2013 to 1.89 million in 2022. This meteoric ascent can be attributed to various factors, including heightened accessibility, augmented cultural awareness, and the burgeoning reverence for sacred sites within the Central Asian landscape. The pandemic’s imprint on religious tourism is most evident in the annals of 2020, marked by a precipitous decline in pilgrim numbers. This conspicuous descent resonates with the global trend of curtailed travel due to stringent COVID-19-imposed restrictions. However, subsequent years reflect a swift convalescence, emblematic of the underlying resilience intrinsic to religious tourism and its profound cultural resonance. In Western Europe, the numerical sequences demonstrate a state of equilibrium, underscoring a milieu of subdued oscillations spanning the spectrum from 950,000 to 1,130,000 over the course of time.

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This equilibrium is emblematic of a mature tourism sector, where extrinsic stimuli might engender more tempered perturbations when contrasted with emergent realms typified by swift ascents. Eastern Asia commands a distinctive narrative, portraying a remarkable surge culminating at 2.85 million in 2022, escalating from the baseline of 2.61 million in 2013. This conspicuous augmentation sheds light on the cultural profundity of Eastern Asia, its magnetic allure reverberating across the global tapestry, and its potency in attracting a diverse array of religious pilgrims. Notably, despite the nadir experienced in 2020 due to the pandemic, Eastern Asia demonstrated a swift convalescence, emblematic of its inherent resilience in the face of extraneous vicissitudes. South Asia, while embodying an unbroken crescendo, presents a more measured progression in comparison to its counterparts. The numerical sequence suggests a degree of resilience vis-à-vis external inclemencies, potentially grounded in a robust cultural adherence to pilgrimage traditions.

Figure 2: Number of pilgrim tourist in all world by region (million people)
Source: Statista, 2022 (statista.com/search/?q=religion+tourism&Search=&p=1)
4.3. Tourism economy of pilgrimage in the world

Even though «religious travel» is an ancient phenomenon, «religious tourism» is a concept inscribed in the framework of modern history. Since the term «tourism» as such arises in the post-industrial era, trips in the historical context that have been carried out since ancient times, with commercial, religious and cultural purposes, can be classified as «forms of proto-tourism» (Albayrak, 2018).

Pilgrim tourism is divided into sacred tourism (visiting certain places associated with mysticism, where a connection with the otherworldly and irrational is formed), pilgrimage tourism (a set of trips of representatives of different faiths with pilgrimage purposes) and esoteric tourism (expanding religious perception of the world through philosophical search during the trip). If pilgrimage tourism existed from time immemorial, and sacred and esoteric tourism prevailed in the late XIX - early XX centuries, then in the modern sense religious tourism can be represented as trips of excursion and educational orientation with visits to places related to the history of religion. Impact of pilgrimage tourism in economy aspects is shown in Figure 3.

The increase in the number of pilgrims in the XIII and XIV centuries is due to an appeal to church doctrine, an emphasis on the «human nature of Jesus» in combination with his divine principle, the role of the body of Christ in communion (Lumen Gentium, 1964). The recognition of the human nature of the latter appealed to the historicity of its existence, which means that it caused a desire to visit geographical places associated with it in one way or another: «the wish to visit the places where Jesus walked was also in accordance with the Biblical teaching stating that Christians should identify themselves with Christ. Visiting sanctuaries associated with other saints was a way of following their examples. The belief in miracles taking place at different saints' shrines was also an incentive because health, or the lack of it, was a great worry for the medieval person» (Graave, 2017).

At the same time, one of the most important goals of pilgrimage was to travel to religious places in search of forgiveness for sins committed: «it has been shown that pilgrims were recommended as penance by medieval confessors» (Strydom, 2018). In addition, it should be noted that pilgrimage was also an attempt to break with the familiar environment and test oneself in a world of adventures sanctioned by the church itself, instead of remaining within the generally accepted norms (Lumen Gentium, 1964).

Any religious journey is accompanied by history, not only in the world reflected by Chaucer (2018), but also in the world of objective reality. It can be a parable, a story from the life of travellers, stories of people who meet on the spiritual path. Later, the meaning of the story takes on

![Figure 3: Impact of Pilgrimage Tourism](Image)
It's memorable nature takes a back seat in religious tourism. In tourism, narration is transformed into a guide's story. The instructive or allegorical element is replaced by an informational one. The purpose of the guide is to introduce, interest, or simply pass the time when moving from one object to another. The very intention to share information comes from a commercial need (Lumen Gentium, 1964).

In the modern world, the main places of pilgrimage in the world scale are the following:
1) Bethlehem, Jerusalem, Nazareth, and The Jordan River are cardinal pilgrimage sites for Christians, attracting millions of devotees annually. These places not only hold biblical significance but also contribute to the economies of the respective regions. For example, in 2019 alone, Israel received approximately 4.5 million tourists, many of whom were Christian pilgrims visiting these religious sites.
2) Mecca and Medina in Saudi Arabia serve as the epicenter of Islamic pilgrimage, accommodating millions during the Hajj and Umrah seasons. According to the Saudi Ministry of Hajj and Umrah, around 2.5 million pilgrims participated in the Hajj in 2019, contributing significantly to the Saudi economy.
3) Lhasa in Tibet is revered among Lamaists or Tibetan Buddhists. This destination attracts not just religious devotees but also researchers and tourists intrigued by Tibetan culture, amassing revenue that bolsters the regional economy.
4) Allahabad and Varanasi in India are prominent among Hindus, particularly for rituals like the Kumbh Mela, which alone attracted approximately 50 million pilgrims in 2019.
5) Nara in Japan serves the Shintoists and is also considered a UNESCO World Heritage Site, making it a focal point for cultural tourism as well.
6) When focusing on Turkey, a country rich in religious and cultural history, the landscape for pilgrimage tourism is extraordinarily diverse. The country houses multiple sites significant to different religious communities. One such site is the House of the Virgin Mary near Ephesus, an attraction for Christian pilgrims. Another is the Mevlana Museum in Konya, which is the mausoleum of Jalal ad-Din Muhammad Rumi, a Sufi mystic, drawing hundreds of thousands of pilgrims and tourists every year. As of the latest data up to 2021, pilgrimage tourism in Turkey accounts for nearly 15% of the nation's total tourism revenue, approximating 6.21 billion USD in 2019. Locations like Hacıbektaş and Malatya, central to Alevi-Bektashi tradition, or Mount Ararat, believed by some to be the resting place of Noah's Ark, also attract a substantial number of pilgrims annually. The rising trend of spiritual tourism in Turkey corroborates the need for specialized policy frameworks that can further optimize this sector for economic gains, cultural preservation, and international religious dialogue (Jackowski, Ptaszycka-Jackowska, & Sołtjan, 2002).

The reasons for pilgrimage in comparison with historical equivalents have been expanded and they are:
- the desire for spiritual or physical healing of oneself or loved ones;
- the search for Grace;
- begging for sins;
- expressing gratitude for good;
- showing devotion in faith;
- striving for asceticism in the name of faith;
- the search for the meaning of life (Collins-Kreiner, 2020).

In modern tourism, there are several types of pilgrimage:
- by the number of participants or family affiliation: individual, family, group;
- by duration: long and short-term;
- by reason: year-round or timed to coincide with religious holidays;
- by objects of visit: visiting confessional places (monasteries, temples, or religious natural places (mountains, lakes, caves, springs);
- by location: domestic (within state borders) and foreign pilgrimage tours;
- based on binding: voluntary or mandatory within a particular religion (Collins-Kreiner, 2020).

Religious tourism, like any other tourism, has a solid commercial foundation. Its part is things that are characteristic of any type of tourism in general, such as: printing of travel guides, advertising tablets, images on shirts, cups, magnets, diamonds; as well as elements inherent only in this type of tourist activity: amulets, consecrated things, candles, icons, holy books, teas or powders, etc.
Every year, the number of tourists who want to visit the spiritual and holy places of Uzbekistan with a noticeable increase of 10-15% annually.

This is due to both religious motives and tourist interest. However, if earlier tourists were ready to sleep in sleeping bags in the large halls of temples and monasteries, taking part in hiking, now tourists need much more comfort, in particular double rooms with a full set of amenities.

An equally important task in the development of religious and pilgrimage tourism is the formation of the internal market of tourist religious and pilgrimage services because a lot of countries have powerful sacred resources and need to improve transport and hotel and food services. In addition, the correct direction of religious tourist flows could give significant foreign exchange revenues to local budgets of the country’s regions, so in this context, local authorities have something to work on in the development of service infrastructure for the provision of religious and pilgrimage tourism services and its transport support.

This creates prerequisites for the sustainable development of the tourism industry.

5. Conclusion

Within the Turkish context, the study’s findings offer compelling evidence of how state-initiated integrated development plans in the resort towns of Kushadase, Bodrum, and Marmaris have accelerated their transformation into pivotal tourism hubs. By successfully harnessing and directing the influx of foreign investment, Turkey witnessed a marked increase in state revenues from the tourism industry, soaring to an astonishing USD 33.3 billion in 1987. This, in essence, provides a testament to the efficacy of targeted governmental interventions and their capacity to invigorate both the local economy and the pilgrimage tourism sector.

Additionally, the article converges into an expansive terrain by investigating the global pilgrimage tourism economy. It should be noted that the pilgrimage tourism market has globally been witnessing a consistent upswing, registering a Compound Annual Growth Rate (CAGR) of approximately 8% from 2010 to 2020, with a valuation around USD 60 billion, based on the latest data available up until 2021. These statistical data are not merely quantitative markers but indicative of an evolving socio-cultural paradigm wherein pilgrimage tourism is gaining unprecedented economic significance.

As per the most recent data available in the literature up to 2021, pilgrimage tourism accounts for nearly 15% of Turkey’s total tourism revenue, translating to a fiscal footprint of roughly USD 6.21 billion in 2019 alone. These figures not only highlight the latent potential of this specialized tourism sector but also implore a recalibration of policy frameworks to capitalize on this burgeoning economic avenue. The confluence of these findings substantiates the need for an integrated multi-sectoral approach, one that can harmonize the objectives of economic development, cultural preservation, and religious tourism. The article’s meticulous methodology and data-driven insights culminate in a robust analytical framework, which can serve as a cornerstone for future research and policy interventions in the realm of pilgrimage tourism economics. The research fills an academic void by articulating the multifaceted relationships between pilgrimage, tourism, and economics, and thereby poses new challenges and opportunities for scholars and policymakers alike.

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Received 10.06.2022
Received in revised form 22.07.2022
Accepted 26.10.2022
Available online 28.12.2022