



Tékhne

www.elsevier.pt/tekhne



ARTICLE

Analysis of tourism features and development strategy for memorial complex “Imam Al Bukhari Mausoleum”, Samarkand region, Uzbekistan[☆]

M. Bulai, M. Eva, L. Rosu^{*}

Department of Geography, Faculty of Geography and Geology, Alexandru Ioan Cuza University of Iasi, Bd. Carol I. 20A, Corp B, 700505 Iasi, Romania

Received 10 March 2016; accepted 3 November 2016

JEL CLASSIFICATION

A1;
Z3;
Z32

KEYWORDS

Religious tourism;
Pilgrimage;
Tourism resource;
Tourism planning;
Experience

Abstract The Imam Al Bukhari Complex is a unique pilgrimage site in Hartang, Samarkand region, Uzbekistan. This site is requiring a better visitation flow by its present administration as unique stakeholder. The goal of this article is to spot the solutions that could further increase the experience at the site as well as the benefits to the local community. The main study methods used were the qualitative observation during fieldwork, the interview with visitors and stakeholders as well as the analysis of online resources. The analysis of the demand and offer of this tourist attraction has highlighted an imbalance towards a wide range of weaknesses that could be fixed in a short-term perspective. The solutions envisage several measures to increase the accessibility and online visibility of the Complex, to enhance the experience of the visitors, to involve the community in order to obtain larger benefits.

© 2016 Instituto Politécnico do Cávado e do Ave (IPCA). Published by Elsevier España, S.L.U. All rights reserved.

1. Introduction

Religion and tourism share a close relationship in which the former motivates travel and is a source of assorted visitor attractions, with pilgrimage being one of the ties between the two (Henderson, 2011). Trying to plan Muslim holy sites

and integrate them into international tourism is of great interest, as one can consider that holy Muslim cities hospitality market is “exceptional in terms of enjoying the benefits of an effective indefinite demand” (Colliers International, 2014). However, there are a series of present geopolitical issues for travellers and pilgrims related to these destinations that generate uncertainty.

The present study deals with planning a holy site in Uzbekistan with the aim of boosting religious motivated tourism. More specifically, the study focuses on “Imam Al Bukhari Complex” (hereinafter IABC), which represents an ensemble hosting the tomb of Imam al Bukhari, a famous

[☆] Paper presented at the IV International Congress on Tourism ESG/IPCA, Tourism for the 21st Century, December 3–4, 2015, Guimarães, Portugal.

^{*} Corresponding author.

E-mail address: luci_r2003@yahoo.com (L. Rosu).

<http://dx.doi.org/10.1016/j.tekhne.2016.11.001>

1645-9911/© 2016 Instituto Politécnico do Cávado e do Ave (IPCA). Published by Elsevier España, S.L.U. All rights reserved.

Please cite this article in press as: Bulai, M., et al. Analysis of tourism features and development strategy for memorial complex “Imam Al Bukhari Mausoleum”, Samarkand region, Uzbekistan. *TÉKHNE - Review of Applied Management Studies* (2016), <http://dx.doi.org/10.1016/j.tekhne.2016.11.001>

personality of the world Islamic religious history, situated in the little town of Hartang, Samarkand region. The new administration at IABC, with the support of the Department of Geography at Samarkand State University, has commissioned a research on the possibilities of development at IABC, which generated the present study.

As Ebadi (2016) points out, research dealing with pilgrimages in developing countries is few compared to research dealing with pilgrimages in developed countries. Furthermore, the author argues that although much has been discussed on the planning and management of mandatory Muslim pilgrimage (*hajj* – at Mecca), a lot less attention has been given to management of the voluntary ones (*ziyarat* – such as the one at IABC). Our research contributes thus to the emerging discussions on the planning of voluntary pilgrimage destinations. Following a detailed diagnosis, our paper aims at highlighting the current situation of a less known pilgrimage destination, thus bringing into discussion empirical evidences for how one of the central Asian Muslim tourism destinations functions nowadays.

Furthermore, our paper considers existing principles and models developed in literature with the aim of defining an action plan for boosting tourism development at IABC. In doing so, we analyzed both the peculiarities of local context and the importance of having “a structured management approach to succeed in achieving the goals of local tourism development” (the importance of the latter being highlighted by scholars such as Cerutti & Piva, 2015).

The paper is structured in seven sections. The second section deals with the theoretical and methodological background related to both pilgrimage/religious tourism continuum and principles of tourism planning analyzed by the existing research in the field topic. The third section briefly highlights the geographical location and infrastructure amenities of the study area. The fourth section deals, firstly, with tourism features of IABC (it discusses in detail aspects related to actors, policies, tourism demand, tourism resources, tourist experience, tourism products, and image) and, secondly, with its impact on local development. Building upon the results presented in the fourth section, the fifth section presents a SWOT analysis as a basis for sound solutions for a development strategy (sixth section). Finally, the seventh section highlights the main conclusions of our research.

2. Theoretical and methodological background

2.1. Pilgrimage vs. tourism

Pilgrimage and tourism share common practices for millenniums and the interdependences between the two never

ceased to increase their complexity. Therefore, the relationship in question needs clear clarifications in order to really understand how to deal with practices related to visiting holy sites. The question attracted significant attention from scholars, who either advanced or discussed interesting models aimed at clarifying the concepts we are operating with (Cohen, 1992; Raj & Morpeth, 2007; Rinschede, 1992; Ross, 2014; Smith, 1992).

While Smith (1992) pinpoints the position of religious tourism as somewhere between two extremities defined by pilgrimage and tourism, Cohen (1992) underlines the importance of distinguishing between *traveller pilgrim* belonging to the culture of the Temple and the *traveller tourist* not belonging to it.

IABC pilgrims and tourists' motivations highlight the existence of a destination situated somewhere between sacred and profane knowledge-based benchmarks (Fig. 1). As a consequence, the current services and amenities correspond more to a pilgrimage than a religious oriented tourism (aspect which has to be dealt with in a future strategy). Furthermore, according to Cohen (1992) definitions, one may consider that IABC is almost an exclusive destination for traveller pilgrims.

From a different perspective, Rinschede (1992) brings into discussion the differences between short and long-staying travellers, considering the act of the former as being a pilgrimage and the act of the latter as being a pilgrimage journey. Furthermore, the author argues on the differences between religious and social pilgrimage. Religious tourism, in developing countries, has a strong affinity with social and group tourism, being important to travel with a group of believers who think similar or to travel with the family, being a traditional activity, especially in Central Asia.

Religious tourism and pilgrimage do manifest interesting trends at the beginning of the third millennium, as the forms of their manifestation are constantly evolving towards (Kaelber, 2006). Therefore, theoretical and conceptual debates are still open to discussions.

2.2. Planning pilgrimage sites

From a theoretical point of view, our research grounds on two different perspectives of planning sites: (1) the conclusions Woodward (2004) extracted from empirical researches on religious sites and (2) the principals of Hough (1995) originating from researches in urban landscape design. We argue that the two views could be integrated and took into consideration in planning holy sites.

When it comes to planning sites situated at the crossroads between pilgrimage and tourism, Woodward (2004) argues that there is a need to accommodate the desires of those

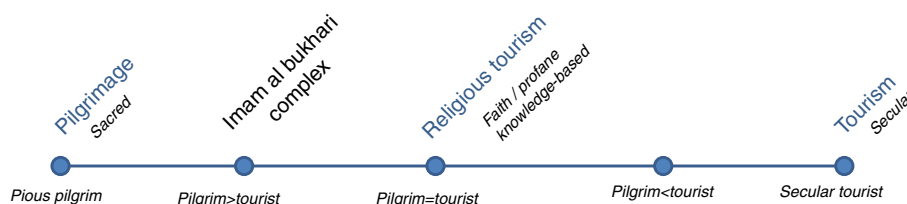


Figure 1 IABC position on the Smith model.

Download English Version:

<https://daneshyari.com/en/article/8929041>

Download Persian Version:

<https://daneshyari.com/article/8929041>

[Daneshyari.com](https://daneshyari.com)