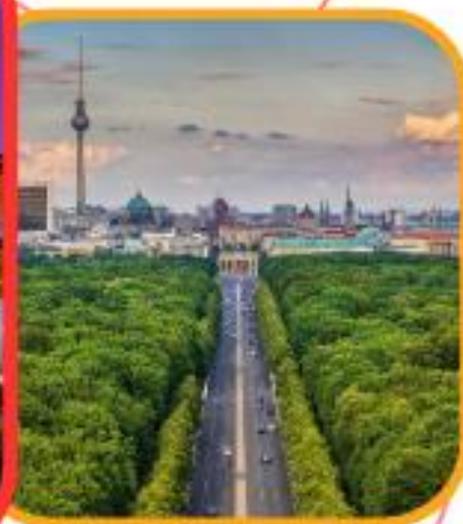




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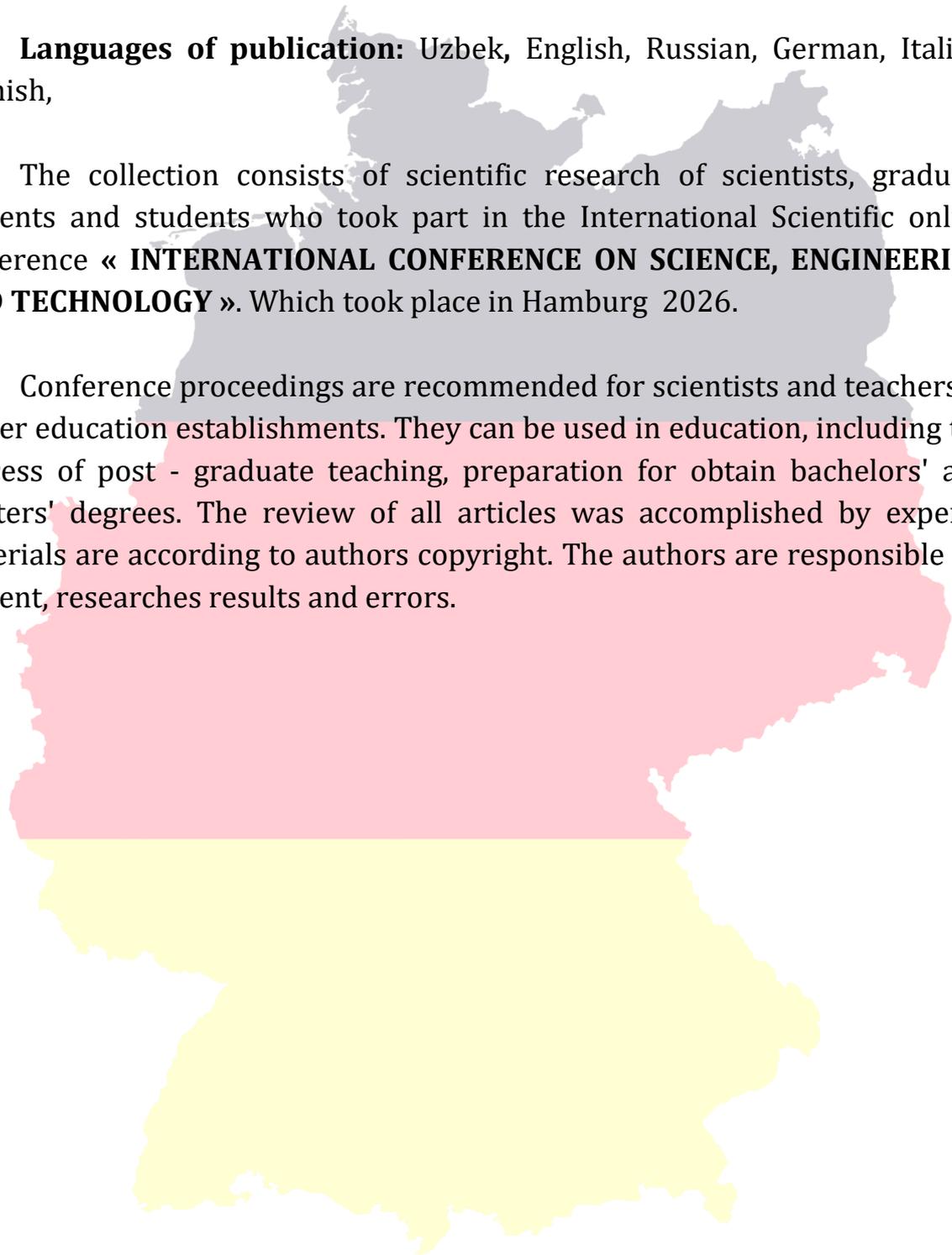


INTERNATIONAL CONFERENCE ON SCIENCE, ENGINEERING AND TECHNOLOGY:
a collection scientific works of the International scientific conference –
Hamburg, Germany, 2026 Issue 3

Languages of publication: Uzbek, English, Russian, German, Italian,
Spanish,

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ECOLOGICAL AND RELIGIOUS TOURISM-BASED STRATEGIES FOR DEVELOPING SUSTAINABLE TOURISM

Majidova Mahliyo Shomilovna

KSU, Faculty of Economics

Tourism, 1st-year student

E-mail: mahliyomajidova45@gmail.com

Abstract: This article analyzes that in the context of modern globalization, the tourism sector has become one of the rapidly developing branches of the economy, and it examines the impact of its religious and ecological directions on the national economy. In particular, these tourism directions have a significant influence on the economic, social, and cultural development of regions. Ecological tourism contributes to the proper use of natural resources and the protection of the environment, while religious tourism plays an important role in preserving historical and cultural heritage sites and involving them in tourism activities. During the research process, strategies for developing sustainable tourism based on ecological and religious tourism, their impact on regional development, ensuring employment, and improving tourism infrastructure were analyzed.

Keywords: ecological tourism, religious tourism, sustainable tourism, tourism infrastructure, natural resources, regional development

Introduction. Today, tourism is one of the most important sectors of the world economy and is recognized as a key source of economic growth in many countries. According to the World Tourism Organization, tourism accounts for a significant share of global GDP and provides employment for millions of people. The development of tourism is closely linked to natural resources, i.e., ecological factors, and cultural heritage sites. In particular, ecological and religious tourism directions contribute to the sustainable development of tourism in many regions. Ecological tourism is associated with the preservation of nature, biodiversity conservation, and protection of natural areas, while religious tourism includes tourist activities related to sacred sites, historical monuments, and pilgrimage locations. Therefore, the combined development of these two directions is an important factor in shaping sustainable tourism.

In recent years, the rapid expansion of the tourism sector has also brought some challenges. Excessive use of natural resources, increasing amounts of waste, and the degradation of natural landscapes negatively affect ecological balance. Especially natural areas and protected zones experience ecological pressure due to the growing number of tourists, resulting in various environmental issues. These situations can affect the long-term development of tourism. Several factors contribute to these problems. Firstly, in some regions, the tourism infrastructure is not sufficiently developed, which prevents effective management of tourist flows. Secondly, the inadequate implementation of ecological protection measures can lead to the deterioration of the natural environment. Additionally, in religious



tourism sites, insufficient development of transport, accommodation, and service systems creates certain difficulties, particularly for foreign tourists.

According to statistical data, in recent years, the number of international tourists worldwide has exceeded one billion, significantly increasing the demand for tourism infrastructure. At the same time, religious tourism is one of the fastest-growing directions, with millions of pilgrims visiting various sacred sites annually. Such trends further emphasize the need for effective tourism management and sustainable development strategies. To address these challenges, it is essential to develop strategies for sustainable tourism based on ecological and religious tourism. Developing ecological tourism helps protect natural areas, manage waste, and raise environmental awareness. Similarly, improving modern infrastructure, transport systems, and service quality at religious tourism sites is crucial.

Effective development of ecological and religious tourism has a positive impact on regional economies. It promotes the growth of tourism infrastructure, creates new jobs, and increases the income of local communities. Furthermore, it enables the preservation of natural resources and historical-cultural heritage. Around religious sites (Chor-Chinor in Urgut or Nurota mountainous regions), it is necessary to maintain a clean ecological environment, manage waste, and establish infrastructure that does not harm nature. Visitor flows at these sites should be regulated, and visitation quotas introduced to reduce pressure on natural resources. Maintaining ecological balance, using natural resources efficiently, and involving local communities in tourism activities are key factors in developing sustainable tourism. There are several reasons behind these problems. First, in some regions, tourism infrastructure has not developed sufficiently, which makes it difficult to manage large flows of visitors effectively. Second, environmental protection measures are sometimes insufficient, leading to further pressure on natural habitats. Religious tourism sites also face challenges, as visitor numbers continue to rise but services, transport, and accommodation facilities remain limited.

Statistics show that the number of international tourists worldwide exceeds 1.4 billion annually, placing significant demands on tourism infrastructure. Religious tourism is also a rapidly growing sector, with over 300 million pilgrims visiting sacred sites around the world each year. This growing demand highlights the need for sustainable planning and management of both ecological and religious tourism.

The results of this study show that ecological and religious tourism are important directions for developing sustainable tourism. By developing these types of tourism, it is possible to protect natural resources, preserve cultural heritage sites, and ensure regional economic development. Improving tourism infrastructure, strengthening ecological protection measures, and enhancing service quality are also essential factors in promoting sustainable tourism. By



developing ecological and religious tourism in an integrated manner, the long-term and sustainable growth of the tourism sector can be achieved.

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