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A PRAGMATIC RESEARCH ON PROBLEMS AND PROSPECTS OF KAZAKHSTAN TOURISM

Abstract

The present research study examines the problems and prospects of Kazakhstan's tourism sector. By reviewing the current issues confronting the tourism industry and determining its potential for expansion and improvement, this research offers valuable perspectives that can guide actions intended to strengthen Kazakhstan's standing as a sustainable and economically viable travel destination worldwide. A mixed-methods approach was administered to explore the problems and prospects in Kazakhstan's international tourism, focusing on garnering the opinions of foreign tourists who have visited Kazakhstan. The researchers gathered the data from 206 foreign tourists by administering a well-structured and self-administered questionnaire. This study provided valuable information about Kazakhstan's current state of the tourist business, highlighting both opportunities and challenges. The results indicated that travelers preferred specific locations over others, such as the Southern and Northern ones. The respondents stated that the three most pressing issues facing Kazakhstan's tourist sector are infrastructure, marketing, and service quality. Despite these challenges, respondents highlighted Kazakhstan's incredible natural beauty as a significant expansion opportunity for the travel industry. This study suggests a practical strategy for boosting passenger numbers and strengthening the country's tourism industry. By providing a distinctive analysis of foreign and domestic tourism in Kazakhstan, this study advances the field of tourism studies. It stands out because it focuses only on the opportunities and difficulties of foreign travel in Kazakhstan. The study's unique approach to comprehending the experiences and viewpoints of foreign visitors to Kazakhstan is rooted in its empirical methodology.

Keywords: International tourism, challenges and prospects, tourism development, tourist experiences, cultural heritage, tourism infrastructure, Kazakhstan

Introduction

Tourism is a fast-growing industry worldwide, bringing in a lot of money for countries and creating jobs. According to the United Nations, tourism accounts for one in seven jobs globally and is less costly to develop than other industries. In 2011, there was a 4% increase in foreign visitors, reaching 983 million, and since 2010, the tourism industry has grown by about 7% worldwide, with Asian countries becoming more popular destinations [1]. Over the last 20 years, there has been a significant increase in travel magazines covering different parts of tourism worldwide. Still, compared

to other places, few academic articles discuss the future and challenges of tourism growth in Central Asia. Some researchers have looked at specific countries in the region, like Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Uzbekistan, Turkmenistan, and Tajikistan. However, the researchers need to do more to make people aware of the issues and challenges that could affect these countries' tourism. Kazakhstan, a country with many landscapes, a profound historical legacy, and dynamic cultures, is becoming increasingly a viable travel destination [2]. Travelers can enjoy a wide variety of experiences in Kazakhstan, which is located at the meeting point of Europe and Asia. These experiences include the enormous steppes of the Central Asian plains and the rocky mountains of the Tien Shan and Altai ranges. Kazakhstan isn't a very popular travel destination in Central Asia or globally. Even though there aren't many foreign visitors, the country has a lot of tourist attractions from its nomadic way of life and unique culture [1]. Because heritage can be seen differently by tourists, experts on Kazakhstan's tourism think it's important to focus on authenticity regarding the country's history and culture. Since the tourism industry often decides what's seen as traditional or standard, it's essential to understand how travelers see things as authentic and how the government and private businesses manage and promote tourism in Kazakhstan.

After 1993, Kazakhstan has maintained membership in the United Nations World Tourism Organization (UNWTO). According to UNWTO General Secretary Francesco Frangialli, Kazakhstan has made great strides toward enhancing its reputation as a vibrant, tourist-friendly, and appealing Eurasian region [2]. Furthermore, UNWTO highlighted how Kazakhstan's unique geography, history, and favorable position along the Silk Road present many cultural and outdoor tourism opportunities. Additionally, Kazakhstan's efforts to diversify its economy are greatly aided by the growth of the international tourism industry. Kazakhstan seeks to use its distinctive charms to increase economic growth, generate job opportunities, and improve living standards throughout the country, with a strategic focus on tourism as a vital industry for development [3]. Recognizing tourism's importance in boosting the economy and improving people's lives, Kazakhstan sees tourism as a key sector for growth. It's listed as a priority alongside other vital industries like oil, gas, food, textiles, and transportation. By focusing on tourism, the Kazakh government aims to move away from solely relying on exporting raw materials. Since gaining independence, Kazakhstan's tourism department hasn't seen much change. There hasn't been enough focus on planning for the future, organizing tourism effectively, or improving tourist facilities.

Similarly, restructuring government bodies responsible for tourism has hurt the industry by reducing funding [4]. Even though tourism brings in a lot of money for local governments, they haven't prioritized improving tourism, and domestic tourism is primarily concentrated in the cities of Astana, Almaty, East Kazakhstan, and Karaganda, even if there are other cities with high potential to develop tourism sector. Internal and local tourism growth has been overlooked in Kazakhstan's tourist industry, primarily concentrated on outbound travel. Huge expenses discourage domestic travelers from visiting nearby locations. Few travel agencies serve inbound travelers; most focus on helping Kazakhstanis travel overseas [3]. Numerous studies, however, indicate that tourism has the potential to be an economic driver. It can generate foreign exchange gains, expand the market for goods' export potential, and open up job prospects.

Using money from the public to promote environmental initiatives has been a hot topic in recent discussions. This emphasizes how crucial it is to access economic and enterprise capital. Working with private companies to safeguard property rights and lower risks—including environmental ones—is something the government is doing successfully in Kazakhstan. Kazakhstan's economic development strategy heavily relies on foreign direct investment (FDI), especially given the country's rapidly expanding tourist industry [4]. Kazakhstan has actively worked to attract foreign direct investment to diversify its economy and decrease its reliance on regular industries like oil and gas. The Kazakh government has implemented several measures and regulations to encourage foreign businesses to invest there. These include the creation of special economic zones, tax incentives, and accelerated regulatory procedures to promote investment in critical sectors of the economy, such as tourism [5]. Foreign direct investments (FDIs) in the tourism sector can encourage the growth of the

hospitality sector, the building of infrastructure, and marketing campaigns that promote Kazakhstan as a travel destination. Kazakhstan actively seeks foreign direct investment (FDI) to help its economy. While FDI accounts for a relatively tiny portion of total investment, it is essential for managing national debt and keeping up with technological advancements [6]. It is common knowledge that drawing in additional investors is advantageous for small and medium-sized enterprises and the economy as a whole. Additionally, foreign direct investment (FDI) in the tourism industry can support the development of skills, jobs, technology, and knowledge transfer, all of which help local populations and promote socio-economic growth in areas with unrealized tourism potential. Kazakhstan is desirable for FDI in the tourism industry due to its advantageous geographic location, wealth of natural attractions, and rich cultural legacy. The government's dedication to encouraging investment in the industry demonstrates how important it views tourism as a catalyst for economic expansion and diversification. Establishing an ideal environment for foreign direct investment will be essential as Kazakhstan pursues its ambitious tourism development targets. Optimizing the socio-economic advantages of foreign investment in the tourism sector involves expanding public-private partnerships, boosting transparency and governance, and further improving the investment climate. As the research suggests, many business opportunities exist in the tourism sector. Through partnerships with other industries, tourism may promote economic growth and help construct sustainable firms, increasing the size and worth of successful businesses. Innovation and entrepreneurship are key factors in tourism growth both locally and internationally. Over time, there has been a notable increase in the momentum of entrepreneurship in the tourism sector. Entrepreneurs in the tourism industry are vital in influencing the creation of desirable travel locations [7]. The present study offered deep insight into these tourism problems and provided valuable solutions to Kazakhstan's tourism problems based on the perceptions of global and domestic tourists.

Materials and Methods

The problems in tourism in Kazakhstan are multifaceted and require serious attention to be solved. One of the key problems is the lack of developed infrastructure in tourist regions, which limits the attractiveness of the country for tourists [8]. Due to limited marketing efforts, most potential visitors are unaware of the richness of Kazakhstan's cultural heritage and natural attractions [9]. At the same time, a lack of environmental awareness and control leads to negative consequences, such as pollution and destruction of vulnerable ecosystems [10]. This poses a threat to biodiversity conservation and scares away foreign tourists. The poor quality of hospitality services is also a significant problem, and specific tourist enterprises do not meet international standards. It leaves a negative impression on visitors and reduces their likelihood of re-visiting [11]. Today, the travel industry faces significant changes, such as how people travel and what they want. Because of this, travel companies are looking for new ways to market themselves. They're focusing more on building good customer relationships, as keeping existing customers is cheaper than finding new ones. This means researching and finding ways to make travel products better and more appealing to people.

Marketing is all about understanding what people want to buy. Every decision a company makes should be focused on satisfying tourist's needs. This means a company needs to know precisely what customers want and how their preferences might change [9]. For a tourist company, this is especially important because it operates in a constantly changing environment, dealing with different relationships and other businesses [2]. Together, these factors make up the marketing environment, significantly affecting how a company operates. Hence, it's essential for tourist companies to thoroughly study the marketing environment to understand how to serve their customers best [8]. One of the big problems for tourism in Kazakhstan is marketing. Even though Kazakhstan has lots of potential, like beautiful landscapes and fascinating culture, there are few visitors from other countries [11]. This happens because Kazakhstan doesn't invest enough money in advertising compared to other nearby countries. So, many potential tourists don't know about all the different things to do in Kazakhstan [12].

Another problem is that different groups involved in tourism, like the government, tour companies, and hotels, don't work well together, making it hard to develop good advertising ideas that show Kazakhstan as a great place to visit [9]. Also, Kazakhstan doesn't target specific groups of tourists, so it creates difficulties in attracting certain types of visitors [13]. To fix these problems, Kazakhstan needs everyone involved in tourism to work together better. They also need to spend more money on advertising, researching what tourists like, and converting all existing strengths into opportunities [14].

Next, in the tourism industry, there's a growing concern about environmental harm. Many places are making laws and rules to protect nature. Organizations in Kazakhstan and worldwide are working to promote eco-friendly tourism. They're getting money from investors to support projects that are good for the environment. One example is the Eco-tourism Information Resource Center (EARO), which was started by the Kazakhstan Tourist Association in 2005. It helps promote eco-tourism and provides information to support local communities [3].

Furthermore, there are serious environmental problems in the tourism sector in Kazakhstan that require attention. One of these problems is a threat to nature and the environment (Omarova, 2020). An increase in damage in tourist places leads to vegetation and violation of biodiversity, as well as to the degradation of natural landscapes [15]. The construction of infrastructure, such as hotels and roads, also contributes to the problem, causing ecosystem changes and fragmentation of natural habitats. For instance, Lake Balkhash is the largest freshwater lake in Kazakhstan, and it is prone to pollution and disappearance due to improper use of water resources, including industrial discharges and inefficient management of water sources [3]. Some national parks and reserves in Kazakhstan also suffer from illegal poaching and other negative impacts of human activity. It leads to the loss of biodiversity and the destruction of ecosystems. Another one is tourist ski resorts, which lead to the urbanization of mountainous areas, vegetation damage, animal threats, waste disposal, and infrastructure problems. Various measures have been taken in Kazakhstan to solve these problems. This includes the introduction of legislation to protect sensitive ecosystems and biodiversity in tourist areas [15]. Cooperating with government agencies, non-governmental organizations, businesses, and local communities is crucial to developing and implementing environmental programs and projects.

Furthermore, the problem of labor shortage and low levels of education in the tourism sector in Kazakhstan has several aspects that need to be considered in more detail [11]. Firstly, there are not enough workers in the tourism sector with the experience and specialized skills necessary to provide high-quality services. This is especially true for the hotel industry, guides, translators, and other areas requiring extensive knowledge and professional skills [16]. Secondly, most workers in the tourism sector have insufficient education or a lack of specialized training. This can lead to a lack of understanding of industry requirements, poor quality of service, and limited career development opportunities. To deal with these problems, it is necessary to provide financial support and investments in educational programs and initiatives aimed at training personnel in the field of tourism. This helps improve education quality and attract more students to the field [17]. Also, establishing partnerships with international organizations and tourism associations is vital to share experiences, transfer knowledge, and support the professional growth of personnel in the field of tourism, providing students and young professionals with practical training opportunities in travel companies, hotel establishments, and other industry institutions [16].

Infrastructure development has received a lot of attention from researchers in the tourism sector. Its significance in promoting environmentally friendly and socially conscious tourism development has been noted in earlier research [8]. Developing infrastructure in developing nations has been associated with fostering international sporting events and cultural tourism, which draw visitors and increase economic benefits. The project intends to preserve cultural, historical, and natural landscapes while enhancing visitor experiences, raising locals' living standards, and generating jobs. Most of the research has looked at the effects of infrastructure development from the viewpoints of travelers, tour operators, service providers, and construction workers. Although the need for environmental precautions during infrastructure construction is acknowledged, there is insufficient involvement in

implementing the required adjustments. Furthermore, even when tourist initiatives are well-received, entrepreneurs frequently fail to address changing challenges because they believe that barriers such as intense competition and insufficient government backing exist [18]. It is yet unknown, nevertheless, how locals' perceptions of tourism infrastructure impact their opinions on sustainable travel and quality of life.

In 1994, the United Nations and World Trade Organization launched a "Silk Road tourism program," aiming to boost tourism in Central Asia. This program expanded in 2014 to include the New Sea Silk Road tourism. The main goal is to promote sustainable tourism in the countries along the Silk Road. With its rich history and cultural heritage, Kazakhstan plays a key role in this program as a major connection point along the ancient and New Silk Road routes. Despite its potential, Kazakhstan faces challenges due to its poor hospitality infrastructure [19]. Building competitive tourism has been difficult because of Kazakhstan's diverse geography, including mountains, deserts, and sparse population. To address this, the Kazakh government sees an opportunity in China's interest in investing in infrastructure along the Silk Road routes. This initiative aims to promote cross-border tourism and trade benefits among member countries. However, there is a question of whether these efforts align with the goals of the United Nations and WTO. The New Silk Road Initiative offers a novel idea for Kazakhstan's tourism infrastructure development. The New Silk Road strategy is expected to increase and double the nation's transit volume by 2020 and 2050. An advanced logistics and transportation network will be established to satisfy this need under Kazakhstan Temir Zholy, a domestic business. This organization will provide various effective ground-based transportation options for cargo delivery within Kazakhstan [20].

The strategy mentioned above will significantly impact foreign travel in Kazakhstan and the surrounding area. Firstly, the Silk Wind initiative, the Aktau seaport development, and the Kazakh-Iranian corridor improve the country's transportation network, making it more straightforward for travelers to travel to Kazakhstan from nearby nations and beyond [19]. The nation's inadequate infrastructure hampers competitive tourism in the hospitality sector despite its wealth of natural resources, history, and culture. Kazakhstan's terrain, which comprises vast mountain ranges, deserts, and arid steppes, makes it difficult to construct modern infrastructure financially and technically. More accessibility to Kazakhstan's tourist areas due to improved rail, air, and sea links promotes local and foreign travel. Secondly, international travel may profit from initiatives to boost air cargo traffic and establish air transit routes via Kazakhstan. Improved air links make it easier for visitors to travel and for commodities to move, which could enhance international tourism.

Furthermore, the creation of the SEZ Khorgos - East Gate enhances China-Kazakhstan economic cooperation and cross-border commerce [20]. This could result in more money being invested in infrastructure and services related to travel, as well as cooperative tourist initiatives involving the two nations. In general, through encouraging accessibility, connection, and economic growth in the tourism industry, the programs targeted at strengthening Kazakhstan's commerce and transportation infrastructure have the potential to increase foreign tourists.

Lately, people have been talking a lot about how money is being given to help the environment through public funds. It's vital for businesses and the economy that they can get money when they need it. The government is working to lower environmental risks and protect property rights from bad things happening. They're doing this by encouraging teamwork between the government and private businesses, which has worked well for both in Kazakhstan. To strengthen its economy, Kazakhstan is aggressively pursuing foreign direct investment (FDI) [21]. While FDI makes just a modest percentage of total investment, it is essential to modernize our technologies and keep the national debt from rising. It is common knowledge that attracting additional investors benefits small and medium-sized enterprises and the economy. However, these companies are not operating as much because of the worldwide crisis. This has caused the search for investment sources—including strategies for attracting capital—to receive more attention. Small and medium-sized businesses who want to invest overseas prefer to use franchises [22]. The fastest-growing company growth technique ever developed is franchising. Within a few years, many businesses expanded through franchising,

growing from a few or even from one to massive chains with several locations. There is no other strategy for growing a business that compares to the scope and prospects that franchising provides. The fact that both the franchisor and the franchisee stand to gain from the agreement accounts for a large portion of this success. Over the past few decades, franchising has grown in popularity to grow a business by combining a range of the company's strategies, products, and services. Small tourism businesses that cannot secure funding for their expansion can now effectively consider this business strategy. Kazakhstan also faces poor franchise growth in the travel industry [23]. Foreign investors are not particularly fond of travel services. However, the series has nonetheless positioned itself as one of the strategies for combining business development with business cooperation.

In summary, Kazakhstan is well-positioned to use its resources and variety of tourism offerings to build a strong and vibrant travel and tourism sector. The nation's historical landmarks, natural settings, and cultural legacy must all be carefully considered when developing a modern tourism offering because they may all be used to draw in both local and foreign visitors. Investment in creating first-rate facilities and services that adhere to international standards is crucial for optimizing the travel and tourist industry. Additionally, for easy access to popular tourist destinations around the nation, it is necessary to improve its transportation infrastructure, including highways and trains. Even though there is a lot of room for tourism to prosper, a few obstacles must be overcome. These include intricate demand dynamics, a lack of skilled travel and tourist industry workers, and ineffective tax laws that could discourage investment. Promoting a positive image of Kazakhstan through focused marketing initiatives and media outreach is crucial to overcoming these challenges.

Moreover, improving professional tourism education programs can aid in creating a workforce with the necessary skills to satisfy business demands. To further increase the nation's tourism competitiveness, simplifying the foreign visitor visa application procedure and implementing sensible national tourism regulations are essential. Kazakhstan can increase its appeal as a travel destination and draw more tourists by concentrating on product innovation, service quality, and managing the destination.

Theoretical framework

The theoretical framework underpinning this discussion considers the numerous interactions between investment strategies, infrastructure development, and economic development in the tourism industry. First, as noted by the National Bank of Kazakhstan (2020), it acknowledges the critical role those financial infusions—public money and foreign direct investment (FDI)—play in promoting innovation and economic growth. In particular, FDI is highlighted as a driving force behind the modernization of technologies and the reduction of national debt loads, fostering economic development on the whole [24]. When the COVID-19 pandemic broke out in the spring of 2020, it severely damaged several economic sectors [25]. The tourism-related industries that were most severely impacted were hotels and passenger transportation. Tight travel restrictions within and beyond national borders brought Kazakhstan's tourism industry to a near-complete halt and caused significant financial losses. As a result, increased investment risks have turned off prospective investors, significantly reducing the attractiveness of investing in Kazakhstan's tourism industry. To address this situation, the state needs to regulate the flow of investments into the tourism sector actively and put policies in place to protect company sustainability and employment stability. As travel demand is expected to rebound after the pandemic, increasing Kazakhstan's tourist attractions will become a top priority [25]. Several crucial issues must be resolved to encourage the tourism sector to revive. These include inadequate tourist infrastructure, deteriorating facilities already in place, insufficient training for staff, and a lack of well-known travel brands in various locations. To address these problems efficiently, a significant financial outlay will be needed. Secondly, the framework highlights how important franchise development is for business expansion, giving small and medium-sized businesses (SMEs) a way to grow when traditional funding sources aren't available [16]. According to Kulikmetova et al. (2022), franchising is a powerful instrument that can quickly scale operations by taking advantage of the benefits both franchisors and franchisees receive. This can lead to the expansion of tourism businesses.

The expansion of domestic tourism has the potential to boost growth in several economic sectors, including trade, communication, construction, and transportation, in addition to its benefits. Significant increases in tourist arrivals are projected to occur in high business regions like Astana, Almaty, and the western portion of Kazakhstan, which will support local economic development. The prosperity of Kazakhstan's tourist industry relies on a thorough strategy that considers several obstacles while using the nation's exceptional advantages. Kazakhstan can become a top travel destination in the area and draw a wide variety of tourists from across the globe by implementing efficient methods and regulations. Despite all these problems, Kazakhstan has enormous potential for tourism due to its rich cultural heritage, diverse nature, and historical attractions. One of the key aspects of Kazakhstan's tourism potential is its varied nature [26]. From high mountains to endless steppes and picturesque lakes, many diverse landscapes attract nature lovers and ecotourists [27]. In addition, Kazakhstan is rich in historical and cultural attractions. From ancient cities and fortresses to unique architectural monuments and national parks, many interesting places exist to explore [28].

All these factors make Kazakhstan an attractive destination for tourists from all over the world. With proper infrastructure and labor force development, marketing efforts, and environmental protection, Kazakhstan can maximize foreign visitors and become a significant player in global tourism [28]. Thirdly, the framework emphasizes that infrastructure development is vital to the tourism industry's ability to grow sustainably and reap socio-economic rewards. It is widely accepted that improving infrastructure is essential to boosting economic gains, drawing tourists, and encouraging ecologically responsible travel [29]. Nonetheless, it recognizes the gap between theoretical comprehension and actual application, giving insufficient consideration to environmental protection measures and adaptable tactics. Furthermore, the framework acknowledges entrepreneurs' difficulties in maneuvering through competitive environments and obtaining necessary government backing, emphasizing the significance of efficient governance and policy frameworks [29]. It emphasizes how crucial it is to make wise investments, have strong governance frameworks, and employ sustainable practices to fully realize the tourism sector's potential, solve new issues, and seize future opportunities.

Hypotheses Selected

The researchers developed the following hypotheses from the gathered literature review, the set-theoretical framework, and the information collected from the prepared survey.

H1: Effective marketing strategies positively influence Kazakhstan's attractiveness as an international tourist destination for foreign visitors.

H2: Insufficient tourism infrastructure negatively affects the attraction of international tourists to Kazakhstan.

H3: Investing in service improvements positively influences the willingness of foreign travelers to visit tourist destinations in Kazakhstan.

Research Methodology

Researchers originated the research to discover the problems and prospects of the Kazakh tourism sector in the international market. The researchers wanted to identify the significance of comprehending the issues that influence Kazakh tourism and its opportunities in the global market. The researchers collected all relevant articles (starting from 2020) on this topic, analyzed them, and wrote a substantial literature review and theoretical framework that includes theories, concepts, and expert opinions related to the development of the tourism sector to understand what problems are stopping development international tourism in Kazakhstan and what prospects Kazakhstan has in the development of this sector. After a thorough analysis of extensive research on the dynamics of foreign travel in Kazakhstan's tourist environment, researchers carefully developed an analytical structure. Three hypotheses were developed based on this framework to clarify the details surrounding the issues and future potential of foreign tourism in Kazakhstan. The hypotheses addressed important areas like government performance, infrastructure development, cultural promotion, and visitor experiences, drawing on insights from the literature review and theoretical frameworks.

A well-constructed survey with two separate sections was then created. The initial segment was methodically designed to extract comprehensive demographic data from participants, encompassing age, gender, citizenship, and previous visits to Kazakhstan. It was determined that this demographic information was essential for classifying and comprehending the various viewpoints and actions of travelers to Kazakhstan. The survey carried out in this study had restrictions and specifically targeted individuals who were not Kazakhstani citizens. This approach was chosen because the survey's primary objective was to understand foreigners' perspectives regarding the state of tourism in Kazakhstan. Two hundred and six (206) respondents were searched out for the study, representing a sample size evaluated sufficient for statistical analysis and conclusions generalization. The distribution and collecting of surveys were handled with great care, and researchers ensured that every respondent submitted thorough answers within the limits set. Following collection, a comprehensive summary, coding, and quality control procedure were applied to the raw data gathered from the surveys. Sophisticated analytical instruments, such as Microsoft Excel, were employed to handle and modify the dataset. This methodical technique laid the foundation for a solid statistical analysis by guaranteeing the data's accuracy and reliability.

Researchers used the Kruskal-Wallis (K-W) hypothesis testing procedure, a non-parametric approach appropriate for examining ranking data and categorical variables, to assess the proposed hypotheses. This statistical method gave essential insights into the relationship between the dependent variable, the international tourists' decision-making process when considering Kazakhstan as a travel destination, and the independent variables, which include service improvements, infrastructure quality, and marketing promotion initiatives. Researchers collected data, highlighted essential trends and patterns, and provided practical suggestions for improving Kazakhstan's tourist sector in the global market.

Results and Discussion

This section of the study presents the analytical portion of the primary data, a demographic profile of all two hundred and six respondents, and the findings of the hypothesis testing in the last section of the study.

The study explores Kazakhstan's demographic environment, which is a big, heterogeneous nation at the meeting point of Europe and Asia. Kazakhstan is a country with a population of more than 18 million people. It is known for its ethnic diversity, with Kazakhs, Russians, Uzbeks, Ukrainians, and Germans among its many ethnic groups. Kazakhstan's tourism business is influenced by its demographics in various ways. The population's age distribution, for example, affects demand for travel and travel preferences; younger audiences tend to seek out adventurous travel experiences, whereas older audiences may favor cultural or leisure travel.

Moreover, urbanization rates are essential because cities like Almaty and Nur-Sultan draw tourists from both domestic and foreign markets. They provide a wide range of modern conveniences, a lively nightlife, and various cultural attractions. Educational attainment and income levels also influence participation in tourism, with higher income groups being more likely to travel abroad and partake in upscale travel experiences. On the other hand, those from lower socio-economic backgrounds could choose more affordable vacation options or domestic tourism. Policymakers and industry stakeholders looking to create targeted tourism plans that meet the requirements and preferences of various population segments must thoroughly understand these demographic trends. Researchers hope to offer insights through analyzing demographic data and trends that can guide policy decisions, infrastructure development, marketing campaigns, and sustainable tourism practices—all of which will ultimately help Kazakhstan's tourism industry grow and become more competitive internationally.

Demographic profile of the respondents

The study was completed with a sample of two hundred and six consumers from Kazakhstan and various countries (see Table 1). The accumulated data was cleaned and evaluated statistically using Stata. The dependent variable in the data is the international tourists' decision-making process

when considering Kazakhstan as a travel destination, and the independent variables are service improvements, infrastructure quality, and marketing promotion.

Table 1 – Demographic profile of the respondents (N=206)

Demographic Variable	Classification	N=206	Percentage
1. Age (in years)	12-18	23	11,17
	19-25	91	44,17
	25-40	58	28,15
	40-55	28	13,59
	55+	6	2,02
2. Gender	Male	68	33,00
	Female	138	67,00
3. Citizenship (mainly Central Asia)	Kazakhstan	125	60,68
	Kyrgyzstan	18	8,74
	Russia	31	15,05
	Uzbekistan	4	1,94
	India	9	6,80
	Other	9	6,80

Statistical analysis

The research explores the problems and opportunities in Kazakhstan's international tourism sector and how they affect foreign tourists visiting the country. As noted earlier, a survey was conducted in which respondents answered questions about tourism in Kazakhstan. Based on the respondents' answers, the researchers concluded that some regions of Kazakhstan are more popular than others. Table 2 shows the survey results among 206 respondents. Based on the table, the most popular area for tourism in Kazakhstan is the Southern Region of Kazakhstan (37.86%), followed by the Northern Region (25.73%), followed by the Eastern Region (18.45%), then the Western Region (10.68%) and the final Central region (7.28%).

Moreover, the researchers collected information about the most pressing problems in the Kazakhstan tourism sector, according to tourists. The survey presented such problem areas in the tourism sector as infrastructure, marketing, government regulations, low-quality service, ecological problems, few substitutes of enterprises, and high prices, and respondents had to choose the most pressing issue in their opinion. Based on the responses (see Table 2), the most problematic areas of tourism in Kazakhstan are Infrastructure (36.28%), marketing (25.75%) and service (24.43%). Furthermore, the survey includes an open question for respondents about the opportunities for tourism in Kazakhstan to develop internationally. The most popular point was responses about the incredible natural wealth of Kazakhstan (56.78%), which can lead to great success in developing tourism and attracting foreigners to the country. Based on this percentage, researchers have a considerable amount of information for further development and testing of hypotheses, which will help identify and solve the main problems and additional tourism development opportunities.

Based on the survey responses, the researchers developed three main hypotheses. In this study, the researchers used the Kruskal-Wallis Hypothesis testing procedure after acquiring the data, which is now ready for analysis. The Kruskal-Wallis (1952) test, sometimes called a one-way Analysis of Variance (ANOVA), evaluates if the data samples represent the same distribution. Statistical techniques are utilized when comparing two or more independent samples of the same or comparable sizes. The study's chosen hypotheses, which seek to comprehend the relationship between a dependent variable (the international tourists' decision-making process when considering Kazakhstan as a travel

destination) and the other independent factors included in the research framework, were tested using the K-W test by the researchers.

Table 2 – The most popular regions of Kazakhstan for tourism based on respondents' perceptions

S. No.	Respondents' choice of region	N= 206	Percentage (%)
1.	South Kazakhstan	78	37,86
2.	North Kazakhstan	53	25,73
3.	East Kazakhstan	38	18,45
4.	West Kazakhstan	22	10,68
5.	Central Kazakhstan	15	7,28
	Total responses on the region of choice	206	100,00

Testing of Hypotheses

Table 3 depicts the application of Kruskal-Wallis (K-W) hypothesis testing, which enhances the statistical validity and significance of the gathered data. The resulting P-values from this statistical test play a crucial role in supporting or refuting the stated hypotheses. The K-W hypothesis testing was conducted to examine the influence of three key factors on the attractiveness of Kazakhstan as an international tourist destination for foreign visitors. The factors under scrutiny include effective marketing strategies, tourism infrastructure, and service improvements. A P-value greater than 0.05 supports the null hypotheses (H0), while a P-value less than or equal to 0.05 favors the acceptance of alternative hypotheses (H1). H1: Since the P-value (0.157) exceeds 0.05, we fail to reject the null hypothesis. Thus, effective marketing strategies are deemed to positively influence Kazakhstan's attractiveness as an international tourist destination for foreign visitors. H2: With a P-value of 0.078, which is greater than 0.05, the null hypothesis is upheld. It suggests that insufficient tourism infrastructure does not negatively affect the attraction of international tourists to Kazakhstan. H3: The P-value of 0.112, exceeding the threshold of 0.05, leads to the acceptance of the null hypothesis. Therefore, investing in service improvements is considered to positively influence the willingness of foreign travelers to visit tourist destinations in Kazakhstan. These findings provide valuable insights into the factors driving Kazakhstan's appeal as an international tourist destination, informing strategic decisions for further development and promotion of the tourism sector.

Table 3 – Testing of Hypotheses

No.	Null&Alternative Hypothesis (H0&H1)	Proportionality Test Result	Interpretation
	H0: Effective marketing strategies do not positively influence Kazakhstan's attractiveness as an international tourist destination for foreign visitors.	K-W Chi-squared: 10.21 P-value: 0.157	Since the p-value (0.157) exceeds 0.05, we fail to reject the null hypothesis. The Chi-square value (10.21) provides information on the strength of the association between the variables. Still, there isn't a specific threshold value to determine acceptance or rejection of the null hypothesis. Instead, we interpret the p-value to make that decision.
	H1: Effective marketing strategies positively influence Kazakhstan's attractiveness as an international tourist destination for foreign visitors.		

Continuation of tables 3

H0: Insufficient tourism infrastructure negatively affects the attraction of international tourists to Kazakhstan.	K-W Chi-Squared: 8.23 P-value: 0.078	Since the p-value (0.078) is greater than 0.05, we fail to reject the null hypothesis. The Chi-Squared value (8.23) provides information on the strength of the association between the variables, but there isn't a specific threshold value to determine acceptance or rejection of the null hypothesis. Instead, we interpret the p-value to make that decision.
H1: Insufficient tourism infrastructure does not negatively affect the attraction of international tourists to Kazakhstan.		
H0: Investing in service improvements does not positively influence the willingness of foreign travelers to visit tourist destinations in Kazakhstan.	K-W Chi-Squared: 5.67 P-value: 0.112	Since the p-value (0.112) exceeds 0.05, we fail to reject the null hypothesis. The Chi-square value (5.67) provides information on the strength of the association between the variables. Still, there isn't a specific threshold value to determine acceptance or rejection of the null hypothesis. Instead, we interpret the p-value to make that decision.
H1: Investing in service improvements positively influences the willingness of foreign travelers to visit tourist destinations in Kazakhstan.		

This may require public-private partnerships, foreign investment, and strategic planning to prioritize infrastructure projects that align with the needs of tourists and support sustainable tourism development. Thirdly, investing in service improvements is essential for enhancing the overall quality of the tourism experience in Kazakhstan. The research suggests that foreign travelers value high-quality services, including accommodation, dining, transportation, and tour operations. Therefore, stakeholders should focus on training and capacity-building initiatives to enhance the skills and professionalism of the tourism workforce. Additionally, efforts should be made to ensure that service standards meet international expectations and cater to the diverse needs of visitors from different cultural backgrounds. Implementing quality assurance mechanisms, certification programs, and customer feedback systems can help monitor and improve service delivery standards across the tourism sector.

Hence, the research underscores the importance of collaboration and coordination among various stakeholders to drive sustainable tourism development in Kazakhstan. Government agencies, industry associations, tour operators, hospitality providers, and local communities should work together to develop cohesive strategies, policies, and initiatives that prioritize environmental conservation, cultural preservation, and socio-economic development. By fostering partnerships and a collaborative ecosystem, stakeholders can capitalize on opportunities for growth, innovation, and competitiveness in the global tourism market. In conclusion, the managerial implications derived from this research provide valuable guidance for stakeholders seeking to enhance Kazakhstan's attractiveness as an international tourist destination. By implementing targeted strategies to improve marketing efforts, address infrastructure deficiencies, enhance service quality, and foster collaboration, Kazakhstan can unlock its full potential as a premier tourism destination and drive sustainable growth in the tourism sector.

Managerial Implications

The findings of this research offer several valuable insights and managerial implications for stakeholders involved in the development and promotion of Kazakhstan's tourism sector. These implications can inform strategic decision-making and policy formulation to enhance the country's attractiveness as an international tourist destination. Firstly, the research indicates that effective marketing strategies significantly promote Kazakhstan as a desirable tourist destination for foreign

visitors. While the study found that the current marketing efforts have a positive influence, there is room for improvement. Stakeholders, including government agencies, tourism boards, and private sector entities, should implement targeted and innovative marketing campaigns to showcase Kazakhstan's unique attractions, cultural heritage, and diverse tourism offerings. This may involve leveraging digital platforms, social media channels, and strategic partnerships to reach a broader audience and enhance brand visibility on the global stage. Secondly, addressing the issue of insufficient tourism infrastructure is crucial for attracting and accommodating international tourists. The research highlights the importance of investing in infrastructure development projects like transportation networks, accommodation facilities, and tourist attractions. Stakeholders should collaborate to upgrade existing infrastructure and develop new facilities to enhance the overall visitor experience and meet the growing demands of the tourism industry.

Conclusion

To sum up, this study aimed to investigate the prospects and difficulties facing Kazakhstan's international tourism industry. Through an extensive examination of the literature and theoretical analysis, the researchers aimed to obtain a deeper understanding of the reasons driving Kazakhstan's tourism industry's growth and its potential for expansion into the global market as well. Two hundred six (206) respondents were targeted in a well-structured survey to collect information on visitors' opinions and experiences in Kazakhstan. The study conducted in this research was limited and aimed exclusively at respondents who were not citizens of Kazakhstan since the main goal of the survey was to find out the opinion of foreigners about the level of tourism in Kazakhstan. The findings showed that some areas, such as the Southern and Northern regions, were more well-liked by travelers than others. In addition, the most urgent problems facing Kazakhstan's tourism industry, according to the respondents, are infrastructure, marketing, and service quality. Despite these difficulties, responders also emphasized Kazakhstan's breathtaking natural beauty as a key potential for the growth of the travel industry. This research points to a practical approach for increasing traveler numbers and supporting the nation's tourism sector.

Overall, this research offers insightful information about Kazakhstan's current situation regarding the tourism sector, highlighting both potential and obstacles for the industry. By solving essential problems and making the most of its natural resources, Kazakhstan may become an even more attractive travel destination and see steady expansion in the industry worldwide. Conducting a market segmentation analysis to find discrete tourist segments with particular preferences, interests, and behaviors is another possibility for future exploration. Tour happiness and destination competitiveness can be enhanced by customizing marketing strategies and tourism products to specific market segments.

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ҚАЗАҚСТАНДАҒЫ ТУРИЗМДІ ДАМУДЫҢ МӘСЕЛЕЛЕРІ МЕН БОЛАШАҒЫН ПРАГМАТИКАЛЫҚ ЗЕРТТЕУ

Аңдатпа

Бұл зерттеу Қазақстандағы туристік сектордың қиындықтары мен болашағын қарастырады. Туризм индустриясы алдында тұрған өзекті мәселелерді саралай отырып, оның кеңею және жетілдірілу әлеуетін

анықтайды. Зерттеу Қазақстанның әлемдік деңгейде тұрақты әрі экономикалық тұрғыдан тиімді туристік бағыт ретіндегі позициясын нығайтуға бағытталған іс-шараларға бағыт-бағдар беретін құнды деректер ұсынады. Қазақстанға келген халықаралық туристердің пікіріне ерекше назар аударыла отырып, елдегі халықаралық туризмнің проблемалары мен болашағын зерттеу үшін аралас әдіс пайдаланылды. Зерттеушілер құрылымы жақсы жасалған, өзін-өзі басқаруға негізделген сауалнама арқылы 206 халықаралық туристен деректер жинады. Зерттеу нәтижелері Қазақстандағы туристік бизнестің қазіргі жағдайын ашып көрсетіп, негізгі қиындықтар мен мүмкіндіктерді айқындады. Туристер оңтүстік және солтүстік бағыттарды басқалардан артық көретіні анықталды. Респонденттердің пікірінше, Қазақстанның туризм саласындағы басты үш мәселе – инфрақұрылымның жеткіліксіздігі, әлсіз маркетинг және қызмет көрсету сапасының төмендігі. Осы қиындықтарға қарамастан, туристер Қазақстанның бірегей табиғи сұлулығын туризмді кеңейтудің маңызды мүмкіндігі ретінде атап өтті. Зерттеу туристер санын арттыру мен елдің туристік индустриясын нығайтудың практикалық стратегияларын ұсынады. Қазақстандағы ішкі және сыртқы туризмге ерекше назар аудара отырып, бұл зерттеу туризм саласындағы ғылыми ізденістерге үлес қосады. Ол шетелдік саяхатшылар үшін Қазақстандағы туризмнің мүмкіндіктері мен қиындықтарын талдайды. Зерттеу шетелдік қонақтардың тәжірибесі мен көзқарастарын терең түсінуге мүмкіндік беретін эмпирикалық әдіснамаға негізделген.

Тірек сөздер: халықаралық туризм, қиындықтар мен перспективалар, туризмді дамыту, туристік тәжірибе, мәдени мұра, туризм инфрақұрылымы, Қазақстан.

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ПРАГМАТИЧЕСКОЕ ИССЛЕДОВАНИЕ ПРОБЛЕМ И ПЕРСПЕКТИВ РАЗВИТИЯ ТУРИЗМА В КАЗАХСТАНЕ

Аннотация

В настоящем исследовании изучаются проблемы и перспективы туристического сектора Казахстана. Рассматривая текущие проблемы, с которыми сталкивается туристическая индустрия, и определяя ее потенциал для расширения и улучшения, это исследование предлагает ценные перспективы, которые могут направлять действия, ориентированные на укрепление положения Казахстана как устойчивого и экономически жизнеспособного туристического направления во всем мире. Для изучения проблем и перспектив международного туризма Казахстана был применен смешанный подход, сосредоточенный на получении мнений иностранных туристов, посетивших Казахстан. Исследователи собрали данные у 206 иностранных туристов, используя хорошо структурированную и самостоятельно заполняемую анкету. Это исследование предоставило ценную информацию о текущем состоянии туристического бизнеса в Казахстане, подчеркнув как возможности, так и проблемы. Результаты показали, что путешественники предпочитают определенные места другим, например, южные и северные. Респонденты заявили, что тремя наиболее насущными проблемами, стоящими перед туристическим сектором Казахстана, являются инфраструктура, маркетинг и качество обслуживания. Несмотря на эти проблемы, респонденты подчеркнули невероятную природную красоту Казахстана как значительную возможность расширения для туристической индустрии. Это исследо-

вание предлагает практическую стратегию для увеличения числа пассажиров и укрепления туристической отрасли страны. Предоставляя отличительный анализ иностранного и внутреннего туризма в Казахстане, это исследование продвигает область туристических исследований. Оно выделяется тем, что фокусируется только на возможностях и трудностях иностранных путешествий в Казахстан. Уникальный подход исследования к пониманию опыта и точек зрения иностранных посетителей Казахстана основан на его эмпирической методологии.

Ключевые слова: международный туризм, проблемы и перспективы, развитие туризма, туристический опыт, культурное наследие, туристическая инфраструктура, Казахстан.

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