

IRSTI 06.71.57

<https://www.doi.org/10.62867/3007-0848.2024-1.09>

UDK 338.48;

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**OVERVIEW OF SUSTAINABLE TOURISM DEVELOPMENT STRATEGIES: INSIGHTS
FROM THE REPUBLIC OF KAZAKHSTAN**

Abstract. This paper offers an outline of sustainable tourism development techniques, with a specific focus on the Republic of Kazakhstan as a case study. The paper examines different methods for sustainable tourism by analysing existing literature and actual data and evaluating their suitability in the Kazakh setting. The findings provide valuable information on the obstacles and possibilities for sustainable tourism growth in Kazakhstan and add to the larger discussion on sustainable tourism strategies.

Keywords: Sustainable tourism, tourism development, Kazakhstan, sustainability strategies, literature review.

Introduction

The principle of sustainable development ensures the situation that our present needs are met without spoiling the resources of future generations to the same extent (World Commission on Environment and Development, 1987). Sustainability challenges are currently being studied in four dimensions: as they have substantial impacts on political, economic, social-cultural and ecological affairs (Sharpley, 2009; Ritchie, and Crouch, 2003). The strategic managements concept is very crucial in achieving sustainable development in territory units, says Niezgodna (2006). Beyond strategic interventions at the country level, further sectoral strategies related to tourism are also formulated. From the other hand, Ritchie & Crouch, (2003), argue that the tourism development strategy in the region should be integrated into the broader socio-economic development planning process for two main reasons: the curriculum should be able to meet those questions and to achieve the goals which are contained in the broader plan that will ensure the success of the educational system. The main task, therefore, is to upgrade the local community's welfare standards by increasing the number of visitors spending money in the area, all the while sticking to the environmental regulations (Niezgodna, 2006; Carter, 2007; Gołembski, 2009).

Sustainable tourism is primarily viewed as a normative approach aimed at altering behaviour to accomplish sustainable development objectives. It involves balancing different goals instead of aiming for a perfect balance. Sustainable tourism is considered important for all types of tourism, especially mass tourism, regardless of size (Bramwell et al., 2017). The concept of sustainable tourism encompasses social, cultural, economic, political, and environmental aspects. While sustainability first stemmed from environmentalism, criticism emerged, questioning the concept's

***Бізге дұрыс сілтеме жасаңыз:** Kogabayev T. T. Overview of Sustainable Tourism Development Strategies: Insights from the Republic of Kazakhstan // Bulletin of the International university of Tourism and Hospitality. –2024. –No1(3). –Б. 114–124. <https://www.doi.org/10.62867/3007-0848.2024-1.09>

***Cite us correctly:** Kogabayev T. T. Overview of Sustainable Tourism Development Strategies: Insights from the Republic of Kazakhstan // Bulletin of the International university of Tourism and Hospitality. –2024. –No1(3). –Б. 114–124. <https://www.doi.org/10.62867/3007-0848.2024-1.09>

imbalance in addressing the demands of human actors (Butler, 1999). According to other authors, the fundamental mission is not the limitation of development, which was the idea reflected in Donella, et al's original book (1972), but instead a regulation of growth fitting the needs of visitors, the destination environment, and the local population (Liu, 2003). As recently, the sustainability issues in the tourism framework are considered to be critical (Bramwell et al., 2017). A major trend in sustainable tourism researches and policies is to focus on the micro-level structure instead of the broader social relations, structures, norms, rules, capital, governance regimes, and systems of production and consumption. In addition, the trend is to look for a more harmonious approach, which unites human and natural systems (Butler, 2017). A holistic approach to sustainable tourism in this region is working towards a social-ecological system analysis that focuses on resilience and vulnerability. Ideally, the theories and concepts are very prevalent in studies on climate change, ecosystem services and water governance (Cheer & Lew, 2017).

Effective tourism development necessitates the active involvement of all stakeholders and decisive political leadership to ensure engagement and agreement among stakeholders at every stage. Attaining sustainable tourism is a continual process that involves monitoring developments, implementing preventive measures, and taking corrective action as needed (UNWTO, 2017).

The Ministry of Culture and Sport in Kazakhstan outlined priorities for tourism growth in the State Programme of Development of the Tourist Industry for 2019-2025. The plan suggests focusing on particular tourist destinations or products with the greatest expected potential for development. The tourism sector in Kazakhstan has considerable potential for expansion. The nation is located along the famous Silk Road and has five sites recognized on the UNESCO World Heritage List. It is estimated that there are more than 100 acknowledged tourist spots, known as "tourist magnets" and "points of tourist growth" at present (Myrzadiyar, 2021). As per Tiberghien, (2019), Kazakhstan is considered an appealing destination for nature-loving visitors. Despite being the ninth largest country globally, Kazakhstan is nonetheless unfamiliar and mysterious to many individuals.

Tourism in Kazakhstan is a relatively minor sector in comparison to other parts of the economy. According to WTTC, (2021), the travel and tourism industry's contribution to the total GDP dropped from 5.2% in 2019 to 2.4% in 2020. In 2019, the tourism sector accounted for 5.1% of total employment (443,000 jobs), decreasing to 3.9% in 2020 due to COVID-19 restrictions (WTTC 2021). From 2014 to 2019, the industry created 334 million jobs worldwide, making up 10% of total employment. Additionally, it contributed 25% of the new job opportunities during that period (WTTC, 2021).

Tourist spending remained at a decreased level as well. In 2019, international tourists comprised 4.4% of overall exports, in total of KZT 1,165 billion, according to WTTC, (2021).

Local visitors in the same year spent 1,349 billion KZT, which represents a 12% increase compared to foreign travelers. The 54% of the total spending came from local visitors, while 46% was contributed by overseas tourists. In 2020, the number of international tourists dropped by 80% while domestic tourism saw a 42% decline (WTTC, 2021). The tourist sector in Kazakhstan is projected to bounce back in the coming years, as tourism rebounds with the lifting of travel restrictions, mirroring trends in other nations across the globe. The 2019-2025 Program for the Improvement of the Tourism Industry in Kazakhstan by the Kazakh government is focused on enhancing competitiveness and fostering growth in the hospitality sector of the country.

The government aims to increase international tourists from 830,000 to 3 million, domestic tourists from 5 million to 8 million, and raise the tourism sector's GDP contribution from 5.7% to

8% (MCSRK, 2019). Kazakhstan's tourism popularity is growing, with literature on the topic going up from one item in 2010 to 47 pieces in 2020 (Wendt, 2020).

The paper aims to participate in the ongoing discussion over tourism in Kazakhstan and to explore future prospects for tourist growth in the country. The objectives of this study are: a) to identify existing sustainable tourism practices in Kazakhstan; b) to explore opportunities for enhancing sustainable tourism; and c) to provide recommendations for policymakers and stakeholders.

Literature review

Tourism has both advantages and disadvantages (Dluzewska et al., 2022). Tourism companies provide employment opportunities for socially vulnerable groups and promote self-employment. However, competition between tourism firms and large corporations can result in the bankruptcy of small businesses and job losses (Aktymbayeva et al. 2020). Establishing appropriate conditions for the tourism system is vital in order to guarantee a steady increase in employment.

According to Shevyakova, Munsh & Arystan (2019), tourism in Kazakhstan could play a major role in diversifying the economy. In 2019, the Kazakh government gave the green light to The Programme for the Development of the Tourism Industry for 2019–2025 in order to boost the tourism sector, specifically its workforce, and enhance the quality of life for the local inhabitants (Aktymbayeva et al. 2020). The aim of the program is to improve the investment atmosphere in the tourism industry, increase the number of international and domestic tourists, and raise awareness of Kazakhstan nationally and internationally.

However, Kazakhstan is an up-and-coming tourist destination with insufficient tourism facilities, below-average offerings, and an unfavorable image in international tourism sectors.

Kazakhstan lacks the necessary resources to fully take advantage of the potential of a successful and valued tourism sector as a result of current deficiencies and insufficiencies. A number of issues need to be addressed or improved. The Kazakh government recognizes the need for better tourism infrastructure, more open bilateral service agreements, simplified visa procedures, and improved road quality. The tourism industry in Kazakhstan has specific weaknesses including a lack of global market knowledge, unqualified personnel, and insufficient transportation infrastructure. Many steps need to be taken to improve the tourism sector in the country. For example, the main priority for tourism officials should be to promote Kazakhstan both on a global and local level (Biolo, 2017). According to Abubakirova et al. (2016), Kazakhstan must introduce a fresh approach for its image, as well as focus on product innovation, targeted marketing, price changes, and security measures.

A report on Qatar indicates that diversification in tourism can be seen in two ways: broadening the entire economy and diversifying within the tourism industry (Giampiccoli & Mtapuri 2015). In tourism, innovation is essential, with the government, sustainable tourism practices, innovation, human resources, and ICT all being interlinked. We should prioritize and promptly implement efforts for sustainable development in Kazakhstan (Allayarov, Embergenov & Han 2018). One example is the advancement in tourism research should include creative methods in the tourism industry and "the effective use of ICTs for sustainable tourism growth is dependent on having an ICT policy that demonstrates the formal recognition of these technologies" (Kim &

Garkavenko 2019). At the same time, solely relying on ICTs will not be enough to tackle the development issue. Ensuring that education is accessible to everyone is crucial for the successful implementation of ICTs in Kazakhstan. Flaws have been discovered in how ICTs are being used to enhance Kazakhstan's marketing, information, EMS system, and host community development. Advancements have been happening slowly in these fields within the research region, as knowledge is also on the rise.

Regardless, there are opportunities and potential in the tourism industry in Kazakhstan despite certain unfavorable factors. An analysis carried out in Kazakhstan assesses the competitiveness of tourist spots and pinpoints three drawbacks and three advantages. Kazakhstan is known for its rich history and beautiful natural resources, as well as safety standards. However, there are challenges in language proficiency, professionalism among tourism staff, and pricing strategies. When it comes to competition among destinations, the focus is usually on the overall tourist experience and attractions, rather than specific aspects like transportation, environmental resources, hospitality, and services (Kenzhebekov et al., 2021). Identifying positive tourism attractions, products, and ways to enhance tourism development and tourist experiences is crucial to fully exploit tourism potential. Kazakhstan's characteristics highlight the importance of prioritizing tourism development for reasons including employment opportunities, business growth, infrastructure improvement, collaboration with other economic sectors, and promotion of cross-cultural relations (Shevyakova, Munsh & Arystan 2019).

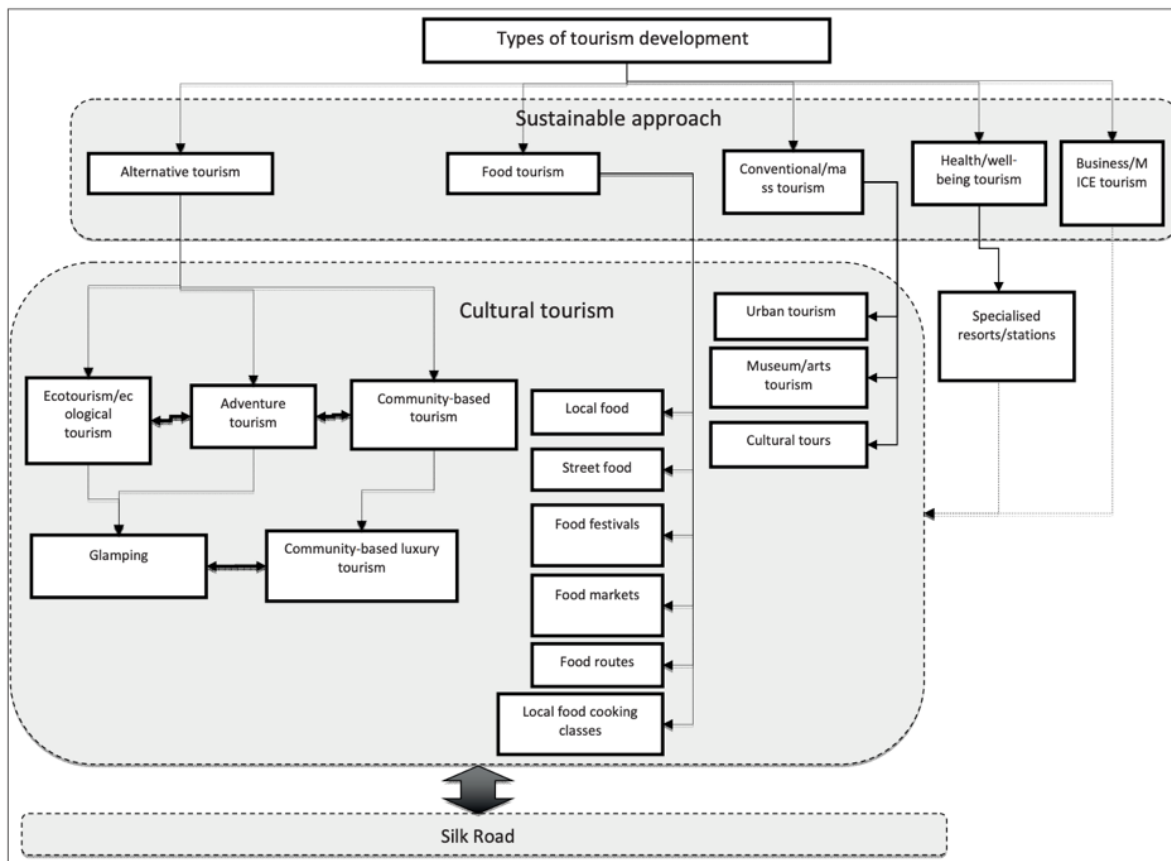
Methods. This article utilises a qualitative research methodology to investigate sustainable tourism development options in the Republic of Kazakhstan. Qualitative research methodologies are selected to explore the intricacies of sustainable tourism practices, enabling a detailed comprehension of the topic.

Data Collection: This study primarily gathers data by conducting a thorough analysis of existing literature on sustainable tourism development in Kazakhstan. Information about sustainable tourism projects, policies, and best practices in the country is collected by consulting academic journals, government reports, industry publications, and relevant web sources. Furthermore, case studies and reports from international organisations are incorporated to offer comparative perspectives on sustainable tourism initiatives adopted in analogous settings.

Data Analysis: The data obtained from the literature study is thematically analysed to find recurring themes, patterns, and trends in sustainable tourism development in Kazakhstan. Thematic analysis is the methodical process of categorising and categorising material to identify important findings and insights. Themes may encompass sustainable tourism projects, policy frameworks, stakeholder participation, difficulties, and possibilities.

Results. Kazakhstan's tourism development plan should be based on principles of sustainability and culture. At the same time, community involvement in the form of community-based tourism (CBT) should be incorporated along with a diverse approach to different types of tourism. Figure 1 illustrates the various types of tourism that the country's development plan should focus on considering these challenges. Figure 1 illustrates five main strategies for the growth of tourism in Kazakhstan, all of which need to be in line with and adhere to a sustainable approach.

Figure 1 – Proposed tourism development plan for Kazakhstan



Source: (Dłużewska et al., 2022)

Alternative tourism, food tourism, conventional tourism, health-well-being tourism, and business/MICE (Meetings, Incentives, Conferences and Exhibitions) tourism are the five main directions of tourism development. Taking into account these five guidelines, Kazakhstan should prioritize particular types of tourism. Three main strategies, such as alternative tourism, food tourism, and conventional/mass tourism, need to be placed within a cultural tourism context that takes into account both local culture and national identity. Priority in alternative tourism should be given to ecotourism, adventure tourism, and community-based tourism (CBT). These three types of tourism are in harmony with the objective of responsibly utilizing Kazakhstan's natural resources for tourist purposes. Furthermore, CBT plays a role in increasing involvement of residents in the community, which in turn boosts the growth of tourism. Community-based tourism emphasizes the participation of individuals from lower socioeconomic backgrounds in the tourism sector, allowing them to oversee the industry in their region and reap its rewards. Kazakhstan's ecotourism and adventure tourism industries can leverage the vast, pristine landscapes to provide a range of offerings. Including ecotourism, adventure tourism, and CBT does not mean that high-spending tourists cannot join in, as long as luxury tourism options such as "glamping" and community-based luxury tourism are also available in the area. It is unsafe to solely concentrate on alternative tourism; therefore, various sorts of tourism markets are required. Food tourism marketplaces hold significant importance within a cultural framework.

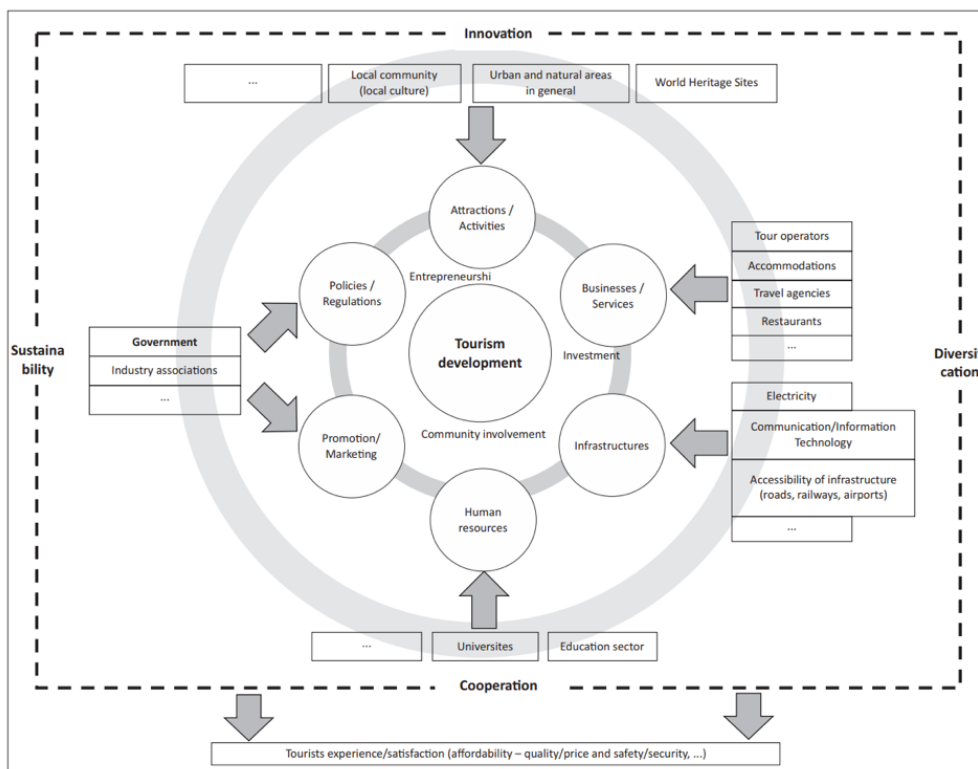
Every country possesses unique traditional foods, ingredients, and cuisine that serve as a significant tourism asset, drawing tourists through attractions like restaurants, street food, and food festivals. Conventional mass tourism should prioritise sustainability and focus on cultural aspects

by offering tourism products and services that are connected to local culture, such as monuments, museums, World Heritage Sites, and specific cultural tours.

It is crucial to propose an overarching model or structure for enhancing tourism in Kazakhstan that goes beyond the mentioned tourism categories.

Figure 2 indicates that the growth of tourism should be based on four main principles: innovation, collaboration, sustainability, and diversification. The development of tourism should be integrated into the country's diversification plan, focusing on innovation and sustainability. Various stakeholders, led by the government, should collaborate in this effort. Within these four foundations, tourist development includes attractions and activities, policies and regulations, businesses and services, promotion and marketing, human resources, and infrastructure. These components are interconnected, as shown in Figure 2, and do not operate independently. Each component will have its own practical elements. The business/services component comprises entities such as restaurants, tourism operators, and other related items represented by a rectangle with dots connecting each item.

Figure 2 – Proposed components and contexts of tourist growth



Source: (Dłużewska et al., 2022)

In the illustrated model (Fig. 2), all parts are uniformly linked together. To illustrate, investing should be creative. Think about trying out different investment tactics such as the Investment Redistributive Incentive Model (IRIM), which entails utilizing investment perks such as tax breaks or relief to alter a company's management and ownership setup. Another possibility is to expand IRIM by establishing Special Tourism Zones (STZs) that center on Community-Based Tourism (CBT) or other mutually approved rules.

More forms of investment are being used to introduce new types of tourism, like community-based diffused tourism, or establish distinct categories within a particular tourism industry, such as accommodations. Figure 2 shows that the main objective should be enhancing the

tourist experience by concentrating on aspects like cost, excellence, and security. This is to improve the image of the places visited and, as a result, improve the reputation of Kazakhstan.

Conclusion

The expected potential of the tourism industry in Kazakhstan is not being achieved. Introducing fresh strategies and projects is crucial for improving the tourism industry in the nation. This article aimed to improve the current research on tourism growth in Kazakhstan by offering fresh suggestions. The literature explores the strong points, weaknesses, and possible categories of attractions and tourism segments that could affect the growth of tourism in Kazakhstan. Afterwards, two proposals for models were made. The original model shows numerous tourism segment categories that the government should focus on first. The literature demonstrated a sustainable tourism approach that highlights cultural tourism in the suggested strategy. Specific types of tourism considered significant include community-based tourism, adventure tourism, and MICE tourism. This model offers recommendations on the types of tourism that the Kazakhstan government should focus on. The government needs to take a leading role in monitoring and guiding tourism development within the nation. The government must be ready to collaborate with other organizations. Several factors need to be taken into account, such as human resources and infrastructure improvement. The two models provide recommendations to the Kazakh government on how to advance tourist development in Kazakhstan, adding slightly to the existing proposals on the topic.

Although not entirely exhaustive or flawless, these models are worth examining as they aim to add to the ongoing conversations and proposals for the improvement of tourism in Kazakhstan. One model focuses on public-private partnerships to enhance infrastructure and marketing efforts, while the other emphasises sustainable tourism practices to protect the environment and local culture. By combining components of both models, the authorities have the ability to develop a thorough plan that deals with both the obstacles and advantages of the increasing number of tourists in Kazakhstan. This approach can help attract more visitors, boost the economy, and preserve the country's natural and cultural heritage for future generations to enjoy. It is important for stakeholders to collaborate and implement these strategies effectively to ensure sustainable growth in the tourism industry. By working together, stakeholders can achieve a balance between economic development and environmental conservation, ensuring that tourism benefits both the local communities and the natural surroundings. This collaborative effort will not only enhance Kazakhstan's reputation as a tourist destination but also contribute to the long-term sustainability of the industry. In addition, promoting responsible tourism practices can help minimise negative impacts on the environment and local communities. By educating tourists about the importance of sustainable travel, stakeholders can further enhance the overall experience for visitors while preserving Kazakhstan's unique natural and cultural assets.

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Received 25.01.2024

Received in revised form 03.02.2024

Accepted for publication 29.03.2024

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**ТУРИЗМДІК ТҰРАҚТЫ ДАМУ ТРАТЕГИЯЛАРЫНА ШОЛУ: ҚАЗАҚСТАН
РЕСПУБЛИКАСЫНЫҢ ТӘЖІРИБЕСІ**

Аңдатпа. Бұл мақалада Қазақстан Республикасының мысалына ерекше назар аударып, тұрақты туризмді дамыту әдістеріне шолу ұсынылады. Мақалада қолданыстағы әдебиеттер мен нақты деректерді талдау және олардың Қазақстан жағдайында қолданылуын бағалау арқылы тұрақты туризмнің әртүрлі әдістері қарастырылады. Алынған нәтижелер Қазақстандағы туризмнің тұрақты дамуы үшін кедергілер мен мүмкіндіктер туралы құнды ақпарат береді және тұрақты туризм стратегияларын кеңінен талқылауға ықпал етеді.

Кілт сөздер: Тұрақты туризм, туризмді дамыту, Қазақстан, тұрақты даму стратегиялары, әдебиетке шолу.

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**ОБЗОР СТРАТЕГИЙ УСТОЙЧИВОГО РАЗВИТИЯ ТУРИЗМА: ОПЫТ
РЕСПУБЛИКИ КАЗАХСТАН**

Аннотация. В данной статье предлагается обзор методов развития устойчивого туризма с особым акцентом на примере Республики Казахстан. В статье рассматриваются различные методы устойчивого туризма путем анализа существующей литературы и фактических данных и оценки их применимости в условиях Казахстана. Полученные результаты предоставляют ценную информацию о препятствиях и возможностях для устойчивого развития туризма в Казахстане и способствуют более широкому обсуждению стратегий устойчивого туризма.

Ключевые слова: Устойчивый туризм, развитие туризма, Казахстан, стратегии устойчивого развития, обзор литературы.