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**TRENDS OF KAZAKHSTAN'S TOURISM RESEARCH: ANALYSIS THROUGH WORD CLOUDS**

**Abstract.** *This article presents an analysis of publications on tourism in Kazakhstan for the period from 2004 to 2024 based on data from the Scopus database. The main objective of the study was to identify key themes and trends using word cloud construction. The results showed the evolution of research interest in tourism in Kazakhstan: from basic issues of development and regional cooperation in the initial period to an emphasis on sustainable development, cultural heritage, ecotourism and the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic in recent years. The main challenges and prospects for the tourism industry, including economic aspects, industry management and rural tourism development, were also identified. The findings highlight the dynamics of scientific discourse and the transition to more applied and strategic research. These insights could inform policymakers, industry leaders, and researchers in formulating strategies to harness Kazakhstan's tourism potential while addressing modern challenges. The article can serve as a basis for further research and development of recommendations for tourism development in Kazakhstan, taking into account modern challenges and opportunities.*

**Keywords:** *Kazakhstan, tourism, research, scopus, word cloud, trends*

**Introduction**

Tourism plays an important role in the economy and development of Kazakhstan. Since receiving independence in 1991, the country has undergone some transformations in its tourism sector and possesses great potential to establish a diverse and well-rounded tourism industry, supported by various critical factors. According to UNESCO (2024), it has a rich mix of natural and cultural heritage sites, many of which have already been designated or nominated for inclusion on the UNESCO World Heritage List. The country's vast and relatively untouched wilderness offers ample opportunities for adventure tourism activities such as skiing, snowboarding, horseback riding and ecotourism. This diversity offers a wide range of outdoor activities, such as hiking, mountaineering, camping and wildlife watching, that appeal to adventure seekers and nature enthusiasts. Kazakhstan's ecotourism potential and the variety of tourism options it offers

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contribute to its attractiveness as a destination [13]. Its abundant natural resources, including lake ecosystems and unique cultural heritage, provide a solid foundation for tourism development [9]. Kazakhstan has a variety of natural landscapes, including vast steppes, rugged mountains, vast deserts, and pristine lakes. Moreover, Kazakhstan's cultural heritage is deeply rooted in nomadic traditions. As a crossroads of civilizations, Kazakhstan acts as a bridge between Europe and Asia, providing opportunities for cultural exchange and intercultural dialogue. Located in the heart of Central Asia, Kazakhstan acts as a gateway to the region, offering easy access to neighboring countries such as Russia, Kyrgyzstan, Uzbekistan, and China. This strategic location positions Kazakhstan as a potential hub for regional tourism circuits and multi-destination itineraries, offering visitors the opportunity to explore the cultural and natural wonders of Central Asia. The rich cultural heritage, historical sites, archaeological treasures and striking landscapes of Central Asian countries present a great opportunity for these countries to become important tourist destinations [12].

Tourism development in Kazakhstan is important not only in terms of its economic impact but also in terms of its social and cultural significance. Tourism has the potential to create employment, boost local economies and facilitate cultural exchange [5].

Tourism stands as a dynamic and multifaceted industry that is vital to economic growth, cultural exchange and social development worldwide. Its complex nature requires continuous research and understanding to optimize its benefits while reducing potential disadvantages. From this perspective, academic research plays a crucial role in revealing the intricacies of tourism for Kazakhstan, encouraging innovation, informing policies and promoting sustainable practices. Academic research serves as a cornerstone for expanding the knowledge base in tourism research. Through scientific research, theoretical frameworks are developed and new concepts are developed that provide deeper insights into tourist behavior, destination management, marketing strategies and sustainable practices.

Recent studies on tourism in Kazakhstan have shed light on several important aspects of the industry. Scholars have highlighted the potential for sustainable tourism in Kazakhstan, highlighting the importance of initiatives such as the Great Silk Road in promoting sustainable tourism practices [23]. In addition, studies have investigated the role of cultural tourism, social tourism, and ecotourism in the country [23]. The socio-economic impacts of tourism, especially in regions such as East Kazakhstan, have been assessed using integrated assessment methods [4]. Studies have also investigated specific types of tourism, such as agricultural, ethno, spiritual, and sports tourism, which reveal various opportunities for tourism development in Kazakhstan [18], [6]. Efforts to improve tourism education and human resource management in the tourism sector have also been addressed [16]. The use of digital technologies for marketing and the potential of the Belt and Road Initiative to influence tourism development in Kazakhstan have been investigated [8]. In addition, the importance of services such as tourism in contributing to the economy of Kazakhstan has been investigated [11]. The development of regional brands such as neo-nomadic culture and unique eco-cultural tourism has been proposed to stimulate tourism in Kazakhstan [21]. Studies have also focused on the barriers to domestic tourism, zoning of recreational facilities, and measurement of spiritual tourism in different regions of Kazakhstan [1], [14]. The potential of ecotourism, ethnic tourism, and the creation of ethnic theme parks have been highlighted as avenues for further tourism development [14], [19]. The importance of natural resources, such as springs and artesian

wells in Western Kazakhstan, for tourism has also been highlighted [2].

In general, research on the tourism sector in Kazakhstan reflects the variety of tourism types, sustainable practices, economic impacts, and the growing interest in the use of various resources to develop the country's tourism industry.

Review articles, which provide a comprehensive summary and analysis of existing research on a particular topic, play an important role in advancing knowledge in academia, guiding future research, educating readers, influencing decision-making, and supporting interdisciplinary collaboration. One of the rare research studies on tourism in Kazakhstan is Wendt, who analyzed research trends in tourism geography in Kazakhstan, aiming to identify both frequently researched areas and areas that are underrepresented in the literature. Statistical and bibliometric analyses were used to assess the number of publications, authors, journals, and citations by examining articles indexed in Scopus and published between 2010 and 2020. Wendt concluded that articles discussing theory, infrastructure, leisure activities and important issues such as shopping tourism, ecotourism and anthropogenic values are not sufficiently acknowledged among the cited studies. His observation may indicate both the lack of interest of researchers in these issues and the limited relevance or importance of factors such as anthropogenic values in the region [24].

While Wendt's article provides valuable insights into the geography of tourism and publications spanning a decade, there is a clear need for more articles that comprehensively address the breadth and depth of Kazakhstan's tourism landscape. The complex interplay of factors influencing tourism development in Kazakhstan warrants ongoing research to capture evolving trends, emerging challenges, and innovative practices. Therefore, additional review articles are important to provide a holistic understanding of Kazakhstan's tourism sector and provide evidence-based strategies for sustainable growth and prosperity. Therefore, the purpose of this article is to identify emerging trends in the current state of research on Kazakhstan's tourism, and identify potential directions for future scholarship.

### **Materials and methods**

In this study, the main method involved creating a visual representation in the form of a word cloud to identify the most frequently used terms. The data was collected through the Scopus search engine, where the keywords "Kazakhstan and Tourism" were used in the search string. The Scopus database was chosen for this study because it is one of the largest and most authoritative platforms for searching scientific information. Scopus provides access to publications from various scientific fields, including tourism, which allows you to obtain representative data for your research. The database allows you to conduct precise and targeted searches using keywords, time filters and other parameters. The database provides structured information such as authors, publication titles, abstracts, publication years, citation counts and document types. Scopus is widely used by scientists, researchers and universities around the world, making research results relevant and comparable to similar works. The study covered publications for the period 2004-2024. The total data volume was 428 articles. The data were exported in CSV format with the main variables such as: *Author(s), Document Title, Year, and Document Type*.

The main objective of this study is to explore the topics of articles using a word cloud method. A word cloud is a visualization that displays the most frequently used terms in a text. The size of each word in the cloud is proportional to its frequency or importance in the analyzed data set. This method is widely used in text analysis and data visualization, allowing you to easily

identify key terms in a large amount of text. Word cloud analysis is a visual method for studying unstructured text data [3]. This approach uses software that processes manually prepared text information to extract key words (usually nouns and adjectives) and count their frequency of occurrence in the text [3]. The words in the cloud are of different sizes: the more frequently a word appears, the larger it is displayed. This makes it easier to determine the importance of words in a particular context. The data analysis process was carried out using the Orange program. The CSV file was uploaded to the platform through the corresponding widgets. To analyze the text content, the Word Cloud widget was connected, which made it possible to determine the most frequently occurring terms for each time interval. A separate word cloud was created for each period, which revealed changes in the frequency of term use. The results visualized the dominant topics for each time interval, which allowed us to draw conclusions in accordance with the objectives of the study.

In the first stage, a pre-processing process was performed to improve the quality of the data. This stage included the removal of incomplete data, filtering duplicate records, excluding stop words (frequently occurring non-meaningful words), and lemmatization of the text. As a result, the texts were prepared for targeted analysis. The equal time intervals method was used to analyze the data — chronological division into 5-year periods: 2004–2008, 2009–2013, 2014–2018, and 2019–2024. This approach allowed for a comparative analysis of changes in research topics in different time periods, enabling an understanding of temporal trends and shifts in academic focus.

### **Results and discussion**

It is noteworthy that between 2004 and 2008, only 8 papers containing the keywords "tourism" and "Kazakhstan" were published in the Scopus database. Such a small number may indicate a low level of research activity in this area or insufficient attention to this topic during the specified time period.

These words, such as *Kazakhstan*, *Kyrgyzstan*, *Turkmenistan*, *Uzbekistan*, *Asia*, *transboundary*, *development*, *preconditions*, *cooperation*, *geoecological*, *territories*, *region*, *perceptions*, *conditions*, *market*, *tourism*, *travel* were encountered most often, which is due to the fact that tourism in Kazakhstan during this period was at the initial stage of its development (see Figure 1). Frequent mention of the countries of the region (Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Turkmenistan, Uzbekistan) and the term *Asia* indicates the emphasis in the research on the regional approach. Central Asia was considered as a single tourist destination united by a common history, natural resources and cultural heritage. At this stage, the research focused on creating preconditions for the formation of the tourism industry, studying the infrastructural conditions, as well as analyzing the opportunities and challenges of the tourism market. This indicates that tourism was just beginning to develop as an independent economic sector requiring significant investment and organizational work.



**Figure 1 – Word cloud of frequently used terms in scopus publications on "Kazakhstan" and "Tourism" between 2004–2008**

(Source: Made by the author through Orange Data Mining software)

Between 2009 and 2013, the number of publications in Scopus related to "Kazakhstan" and "tourism" increased to 14, reflecting a growing academic interest in tourism and its associated fields. The frequent terms from this period highlight key themes and trends (see Figure 2): *Kazakhstan, tourism, development, international, regional, Turkey, Armenia, Asia, integration, relationships, conferenc, economic situation, challenges, problems, comparative, deepen, tourism, hospitality, tourist population, spa, scientific, methodological, analysis, evaluation, management, excellenc, biomedical, climate, legal, state development, Asia region*



**Figure 2 – Word cloud of frequently used terms in scopus publications on "Kazakhstan" and "Tourism" between 2009–2013**

(Source: Made by the author through Orange Data Mining software)

Based on the data for 2014–2018, where the total number of publications increased to 106, the word frequencies reflect significant patterns and themes in tourism research related to Kazakhstan. During the period from 2014 to 2018, the most frequently occurring words in the publications' titles were *tourism, Kazakhstan, development, republic, region, potential, problems, industry, study, tourist, impact, prospects, and regions* (see Figure 3).

A significant increase in publications, totaling 106 articles, indicates growing academic interest in Kazakhstan's tourism sector. This period highlights both the potential and challenges of developing tourism as a strategic industry, with a particular focus on regional tourism development to align with national goals of attracting visitors to various parts of the country. There was also a greater emphasis on impact assessment and future prospects, reflecting a forward-looking approach to understanding tourism's role in Kazakhstan's economic and social landscape. Overall, the data suggests that this was a transitional phase, during which the tourism industry moved beyond foundational discussions to address practical issues, explore opportunities, and develop strategies for sustainable growth.



**Figure 3 – Word cloud of frequently used terms in scopus publications on "Kazakhstan" and "Tourism" between 2014–2018**

(Source: Made by the author through Orange Data Mining software)

From 2019 to 2024, the number of publications increased significantly to 300, reflecting a sharp rise in research activity focused on tourism in Kazakhstan. The most frequently mentioned words were *case, assessment, sustainable, tourist, industry, potential, republic, analysis, rural, recreational, impact, economic, state, study, heritage, prospects, education, de, Almaty, business, destination, management, COVID, national, central, using, natural, nature, based, ecological, areas, formation, and ecotourism* (see Figure 4). The period marks a significant transformation in Kazakhstan's tourism research landscape, driven by themes of sustainability, heritage preservation, and rural development, alongside increased focus on the economic impact and management of tourism. The influence of global challenges such as the COVID-19 pandemic is evident, shaping



regional context. In the period 2009–2013, there was an increasing interest in investment opportunities, regional cooperation and solving infrastructure problems. From 2014 to 2018, the number of publications increased significantly, indicating a growing interest from the scientific community in the potential of the tourism industry in Kazakhstan. During this period, attention was increased to issues of industry development, regional integration and assessment of economic prospects. The most significant increase in the number of publications occurred between 2019 and 2024, when the key topics were sustainable development, ecotourism, cultural heritage, and the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on the tourism industry. During this period, special attention is paid to the issues of assessing the impact of tourism, industry management, and rural tourism development, reflecting global trends and national priorities of Kazakhstan.

Thus, the results of the study demonstrate the evolution of the scientific discourse on tourism in Kazakhstan, the transition from fundamental issues to more applied and strategic topics, such as sustainable development, regional policy, and assessment of economic potential. The findings can serve as a basis for further research and the development of practical recommendations for the development of tourism in Kazakhstan.

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### **ҚАЗАҚСТАНДАҒЫ ТУРИЗМ ЗЕРТТЕУЛЕРІНІҢ ҮРДІСТЕРІ: WORD CLOUD**

#### **ТАЛДАУЫ**

*Аңдатпа.* Бұл мақалада 2004 жылдан 2024 жылға дейінгі кезеңдегі Қазақстандағы туризм тақырыбындағы жарияланымдарға Scopus деректер базасы негізінде талдау жасалған. Зерттеудің негізгі мақсаты - word cloud құру арқылы негізгі тақырыптар мен үрдістерді анықтау болды. Нәтижелер Қазақстандағы туризм бойынша зерттеулердің эволюциясын көрсетті: бастапқы кезеңде даму мен аймақтық ынтымақтастық мәселелерінен бастап, соңғы жылдары тұрақты даму, мәдени мұра, экотуризм және COVID-19 пандемиясының әсеріне басымдық берілгені анықталды. Сондай-ақ, туризм саласының негізгі қиындықтары мен мүмкіндіктері, оның ішінде экономикалық аспектілер, саланы басқару және ауылдық туризмді дамыту мәселелері анықталды. Қорытындылар ғылыми дискурстың динамикасы мен қолданбалы және стратегиялық зерттеулерге көшуін көрсетеді. Бұл нәтижелер саясаткерлерге, сала көшбасшыларына және зерттеушілерге Қазақстанның туризм әлеуетін пайдалану стратегияларын қалыптастыруда және қазіргі заманғы қиындықтарды шешуде көмектесе алады. Мақала Қазақстандағы туризмді дамыту бойынша одан әрі зерттеулер мен ұсыныстар әзірлеуге негіз бола алады.

*Кілт сөздер:* Қазақстан, туризм, зерттеу, Scopus, word cloud, үрдістер

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### **ТЕНДЕНЦИИ ИССЛЕДОВАНИЙ ТУРИЗМА В КАЗАХСТАНЕ: АНАЛИЗ ЧЕРЕЗ WORD CLOUD**

*Аннотация.* В данной статье представлен анализ публикаций о туризме в Казахстане за период с 2004 по 2024 годы на основе данных из базы Scopus. Основной целью исследования было выявление ключевых тем и тенденций с использованием построения облаков слов. Результаты показали эволюцию научного интереса к туризму в Казахстане: от базовых вопросов развития и регионального сотрудничества на начальном этапе до акцента на устойчивом развитии, культурном наследии, экотуризме и влиянии пандемии COVID-19 в последние годы. Также были выявлены основные вызовы и перспективы для туристической отрасли, включая экономические аспекты, управление отраслью и развитие сельского туризма. Выводы подчеркивают динамику научного дискурса и переход к более прикладным и стратегическим исследованиям. Эти результаты могут помочь политикам, лидерам отрасли и исследователям в разработке стратегий для реализации

*туристического потенциала Казахстана, учитывая современные вызовы. Статья может служить основой для дальнейших исследований и разработки рекомендаций по развитию туризма в Казахстане с учетом современных вызовов и возможностей.*

**Ключевые слова:** *Казахстан, туризм, исследование, Scopus, облако слов, тенденции*