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***KAZAKHSTAN'S ACADEMIC TOURISM RESEARCH: A BIBLIOMETRIC ANALYSIS OF TRENDS, COLLABORATION, AND REGIONAL POSITIONING (2003–2023)***

**Abstract.** *Kazakhstan's tourism sector holds significant potential but remains underdeveloped, as reflected in its 2019 Travel & Tourism Competitiveness Index ranking of 80th globally. Moreover, less than 5% of the country's research and development output is commercialized into industry, indicating a gap between knowledge generation and practical innovation. This study presents a comprehensive bibliometric analysis of academic publications on tourism in Kazakhstan, using the Scopus database as the primary data source. The analysis spans 2003–2023 and examines publication volume, document types, authorship, collaboration patterns, and citation and keyword trends. A total of 377 documents were identified, with output growing markedly after 2012 and reaching approximately 60 publications in 2023. Journal articles dominate (82.5% of documents), and Kazakhstan's publication count ranks third among post-Soviet countries (after Russia and Ukraine) but remains far below Turkey's output. The top contributing institutions are domestic universities (led by L.N. Gumilyov Eurasian National University with 94 publications) alongside international partners, reflecting robust collaboration (over half of prolific authors are affiliated in Kazakhstan, followed by a significant cohort from Turkey). Kazakhstan's academic tourism research is on an upward trajectory, supported by policy reforms in higher education and science since 2011. This growing body of research is poised to inform evidence-based tourism policy, foster innovation (e.g., in sustainable and cultural tourism), and raise Kazakhstan's international academic and industry profile. The findings provide valuable benchmarks by comparing Kazakhstan's productivity with regional peers and underscore the need to leverage academic output to support national tourism development and competitiveness.*

**Keywords:** *tourism sector, academic publications, bibliometric analysis, Kazakhstan, sustainable tourism, cultural heritage, international collaboration, Scopus, research policy, higher education*

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## **Introduction**

Tourism is a strategic industry for Kazakhstan, given the country's rich natural, cultural, and historical assets. However, tourist arrivals and revenues remain below potential, suggesting that Kazakhstan has yet to fully capitalize on its attractions. In terms of global competitiveness, Kazakhstan ranked only 80th out of 140 countries in the World Economic Forum's Travel & Tourism Competitiveness Index (2019) [1]. This middling position—third among CIS countries (after Russia and Azerbaijan)—highlights persistent challenges in areas such as international openness, tourism infrastructure, and service diversification. One contributing factor to this underperformance is the limited translation of research and innovation into the tourism sector: less than 5% of university R&D in Kazakhstan leads to commercial products or technologies, with most research remaining theoretical [2]. Strengthening the link between academic research and industry practice is therefore crucial to improving tourism offerings and overall competitiveness. Academic research can play a pivotal role in informing tourism development policy, enhancing product quality, and fostering innovation within the industry. Universities and research institutions generate knowledge on sustainable tourism, marketing, tourist behavior, and destination management, which can guide evidence-based decision-making. However, the role and output of Kazakhstan's academic community in the tourism domain have not yet been comprehensively explored. There is a need to assess the extent to which Kazakhstani scholars are publishing tourism-related research and whether this intellectual output aligns with national development priorities and global trends. This study aims to address that gap by analyzing Kazakhstan's academic publication performance in the field of tourism over the past two decades (2003–2023). Using Scopus—the largest interdisciplinary bibliographic database—we retrieve and examine publications related to tourism in Kazakhstan [5].

The objectives of this analysis are to: (1) quantify the volume and growth of tourism research publications from Kazakhstan; (2) characterize the types of publications, key thematic areas (via keywords), citation impact, and leading authors and institutions; and (3) compare Kazakhstan's tourism research productivity with that of other post-Soviet countries and Turkey, in order to contextualize Kazakhstan's position in the region. By focusing on Scopus-indexed outputs, the study captures research with international visibility that meets global scholarly standards—an essential factor for Kazakhstan's academic recognition and international collaboration. The significance of this work lies in providing evidence-based insights for policymakers and academic leaders. Understanding publication trends can inform research policy—such as evaluating whether recent incentives and reforms (e.g., changes in research evaluation criteria or doctoral requirements) have influenced output. Comparisons with regional peers can reveal competitive strengths or weaknesses, thereby guiding strategic decisions regarding funding priorities or international partnerships. Ultimately, a stronger body of tourism research can support Kazakhstan's efforts to innovate its tourism sector, enhance education and training, and raise international recognition of both its tourist destinations and academic contributions. The following sections present a review of relevant literature, outline the methodology used in the bibliometric analysis, discuss the results, and explore implications for policy and practice.

## **Literature Review**

Bibliometric techniques are widely used to evaluate academic productivity and influence by analyzing publication counts, citations, authorship networks, and other indices. In tourism research, numerous studies have applied bibliometric analysis to assess research trends and knowledge

development. For instance, Wendt (2020) conducted a detailed bibliometric study of tourism research in Kazakhstan, analyzing Scopus-indexed articles and their content [3]. He reported a sharp growth in output over the last decade: publications on Kazakhstan's tourism increased by over 450% from 2015 to 2020, which was attributed to policy changes in Kazakhstan's science sector. Wendt also identified the most common research themes and impactful topics: areas such as tourism development, management, and marketing were well represented, while niche topics such as eco-cultural tourism—though fewer in number—achieved higher-than-average citation counts. This suggests that sustainability and cultural heritage topics in Kazakhstan's tourism research resonate strongly within the academic community. Additionally, Wendt's analysis showed that roughly half of the authors publishing on Kazakh tourism are based at Kazakhstani universities, followed by a significant share from Turkish institutions. This points to robust international collaboration between Kazakhstan and Turkey in tourism research—a theme that the present study will further explore.

Kazakhstan's overall scientific output has been on an upward trajectory since the early 2010s, following major reforms in higher education and research funding. As part of broader post-Soviet transformations, Kazakhstan invested in integrating its higher education and science (HES) sector into the international arena. Notably, Kazakhstan was an early adopter of the Bologna Process in 2010–2011 and introduced new research evaluation criteria that reward publications in internationally indexed journals. These measures, including requirements for doctoral students to publish in Web of Science or Scopus journals, have led to a marked increase in publications by local researchers in internationally recognized outlets. Narbaev and Amirbekova (2021) provide empirical evidence of this trend: examining over 23,000 Scopus-indexed Kazakhstani publications across disciplines, they found a substantial post-2011 surge in both the number of papers and citations in almost all fields. However, they also noted that despite quantitative growth, Kazakhstan's research has not yet reached full maturity according to certain scientometric indicators (e.g., Lotka's law distribution of productivity), implying that research output is still consolidating in terms of consistency and global impact [4].

Within this context, the tourism research subfield can be seen as a microcosm of Kazakhstan's broader scientific development. Early studies in the 2000s on Central Asian tourism (e.g., Kantarci, 2007, on investor perceptions and destination image) were limited in number and often authored by international collaborators. It is only in the past decade that tourism scholarship in Kazakhstan has gained momentum, paralleling the rise in domestic academic capacity and increasing government attention to tourism as an economic priority. Wendt (2020) observed that until around 2010, there were only sporadic publications on the geography of tourism in Kazakhstan. Since then, not only has output grown, but research has also diversified across disciplines—spanning social sciences, business and management, economics, environmental science, and geography—reflecting the interdisciplinary nature of tourism studies. This diversification indicates a broadening base of scholars engaging with tourism topics, including areas such as sustainable development, environmental impacts, and regional planning.

In the post-Soviet space, Kazakhstan is emerging as one of the more research-active countries, though still behind Russia in absolute output. Publications from Russia and Ukraine have traditionally dominated the region's academic output, partly due to their larger research systems and the legacy of Soviet-era scholarly networks. However, smaller countries have made gains in niche areas. For example, the Baltic states (Estonia, Latvia, Lithuania) have leveraged EU partnerships to

increase research output in fields including tourism. Yet, according to recent analyses, Kazakhstan's output on tourism-related publications now exceeds that of any individual Baltic state over the last two decades. Turkey stands out as a non-post-Soviet comparator with a very high volume of tourism research—thanks to its well-established tourism academia and journals—providing a benchmark for Kazakhstan. Prior studies (e.g., Table 1 in the Results section of this paper) show Turkey producing several times more tourism publications than Kazakhstan or any post-Soviet country during the same period. In addition, collaborative ties are evident: Turkish researchers, often in collaboration with Kazakhstani co-authors, have contributed significantly to the literature on Kazakhstan's tourism development, highlighting the role of international partnerships in enhancing research output and quality. In summary, the literature suggests that Kazakhstan's academic tourism research is growing rapidly from a low base, driven by policy-driven integration into global science and collaboration with foreign partners. Key knowledge gaps remain, such as the need to better connect research with industry application (given the low commercialization rate) and to ensure that the increasing quantity of publications also yields greater quality and impact. Building on these insights, this study provides an updated quantitative assessment of Kazakhstan's tourism research output and examines its characteristics and comparative standing, thereby contributing to a deeper understanding of how academic productivity supports national development goals in tourism.

According to the English-language publications indexed in Scopus over the past decade, there has been a significant increase in scientific productivity in the field of tourism. The Scopus database for 2012–2021 contains approximately 1,690 articles on tourism development, authored by 4,253 authors from different countries [7]. This growth reflects the expanding role of tourism as a multifaceted field of study. The bibliometric analysis reveals several key trends shaping the development of tourism science. First of all, sustainable tourism dominates, focusing on environmental sustainability, nature conservation and adaptation to climate change, as well as on the implementation of responsible practices in the industry [8]. There is also a noticeable surge of interest in digital tourism: the latest technologies (e.g. smart tourism concepts, the use of augmented reality and AI technologies) are actively integrated into the tourist experience and research agenda [9]. In addition, increasing attention is being paid to social aspects – the participation of local communities in tourism, issues of social inclusion – along with the development of specialized niches such as medical and wellness tourism [10]. New concepts are also emerging, for example, the phenomenon of overtourism, which refers to the problem of overloading destinations with excessive tourist flows [8]. All this indicates the evolution of scientific interests in response to modern challenges of the tourism industry.

Bibliometric trends also show that the most cited topics are focused on sustainable development and innovation in tourism. Research on sustainable tourism, such as conservation of natural resources, the impact of climate change and the implementation of the Sustainable Development Goals, ranks high in citation impact [8], reflecting a broad interest in ensuring the long-term viability of the tourism industry. In parallel, studies examining the technological transformation of tourism and tourist behavior in the digital age have a high impact [9].

Given that tourism accounted for around 10.4% of global GDP and 10.6% of employment in 2019 before the pandemic [8], its vulnerability to global crises (for example, due to COVID-19, tourism's contribution to the global economy has almost halved) highlights the need for further research to improve the resilience and adaptability of the industry [8]. Thus, continued research in

tourism is essential to inform strategies to enhance the positive impacts of tourism and mitigate its negative consequences. Current reviews point to the need to better link technological innovations with sustainability principles and the consideration of socio-cultural factors in tourism development [9]. Similarly, gaps have been identified in specific segments (e.g., the integration of medical and wellness services in health tourism) that require further research to fully develop knowledge [10]. Ultimately, advancing tourism research is critical for the sustainable development of the industry itself and for developing evidence-based approaches to tourism management in the face of new global challenges.

## **Methodology**

### **Data Source and Search Strategy**

This study employs a bibliometric approach using the Scopus database to retrieve relevant publications. Scopus was selected for its extensive coverage of peer-reviewed literature across disciplines, including conference proceedings and book series, which is pertinent for capturing tourism research output. The primary query targeted publications related to Kazakhstan in the context of tourism. Specifically, we searched for documents containing the terms “Kazakhstan” AND “tourism” in the title, abstract, or keywords fields. This query effectively captures scholarly works that discuss tourism issues in Kazakhstan (e.g., case studies on Kazakhstan’s tourism, comparative studies involving Kazakhstan, etc.). The search was restricted to the period 2003–2023 (inclusive), covering the last twenty years of publications. The year 2003 was selected as the starting point because preliminary exploration revealed minimal indexed tourism output on Kazakhstan prior to the early 2000s, and a 20-year span provides a robust timeframe for trend analysis.

In addition to the main Kazakhstan-focused search, comparative searches were conducted to gather data on other countries’ tourism publications. For each post-Soviet country (e.g., Russia, Ukraine, etc.) and Turkey, we ran analogous searches in Scopus using the pattern “[Country name]” AND “tourism”, again filtering by the years 2003–2023. This enabled the compilation of the total number of tourism-related publications associated with each country over the same period. In these comparative searches, the country name was matched to any part of the document metadata (title/abstract/keywords), similar to the Kazakhstan search. Thus, the results generally reflect publications explicitly addressing tourism in the respective country. While this method may not capture all tourism studies authored by researchers from a given country (e.g., a Russian author writing about tourism in another country would not be counted under “Russia AND tourism”), it serves as a reasonable proxy for estimating literature focused on tourism within each country.

### **Data Collection and Processing**

From the Kazakhstan-focused search, bibliographic records (metadata) of all retrieved documents were downloaded. This included details such as publication year, document type (e.g., article, conference paper), authors, author affiliations (with country), source title (journal or conference name), keywords, and citation counts. The dataset was cleaned to ensure relevance: non-scholarly items, if any, were excluded via Scopus filters. Only substantive document types were included (articles, conference papers, reviews, book chapters, etc.), while errata, notes without content, and similar items were excluded unless counted as documents by Scopus.

The total number of publications was recorded, and annual publication counts were compiled to analyze temporal trends. Each document’s type was categorized as provided by Scopus (e.g.,

Journal Article, Conference Paper, Review, Book Chapter), and these were aggregated to determine the distribution of document types. Author and affiliation data were used to identify leading authors (by publication count) and leading institutions (based on affiliated authors). All authorship contributions were treated equally—a co-authored paper counted once for each author and each of their institutions. For institutional counts, if a paper had multiple affiliations, each institution listed for the authors was credited once for that paper. While this may slightly inflate institutional counts due to multi-author collaborations, it reflects the collaborative contributions and institutional presence in the field.

For the comparative country dataset, we recorded the total publication count for each target country from 2003 to 2023. In addition, we calculated a simple average of annual publications (total divided by 20 years) to enable normalized comparisons, particularly useful given the variation in total outputs (e.g., Turkey as a high-output outlier). These figures were tabulated for analysis and visualization.

#### Analysis Techniques

We employed descriptive bibliometric analysis. Key indicators analyzed include:

**Publication output over time:** A year-by-year plot was generated to identify growth patterns, peak years, and any plateaus or declines. We examined correlations with known policy or external events (e.g., the introduction of new research policies in 2011, the COVID-19 pandemic in 2020).

**Document type distribution:** Presented as percentages of total output to highlight the preferred dissemination channels for Kazakhstan’s tourism research.

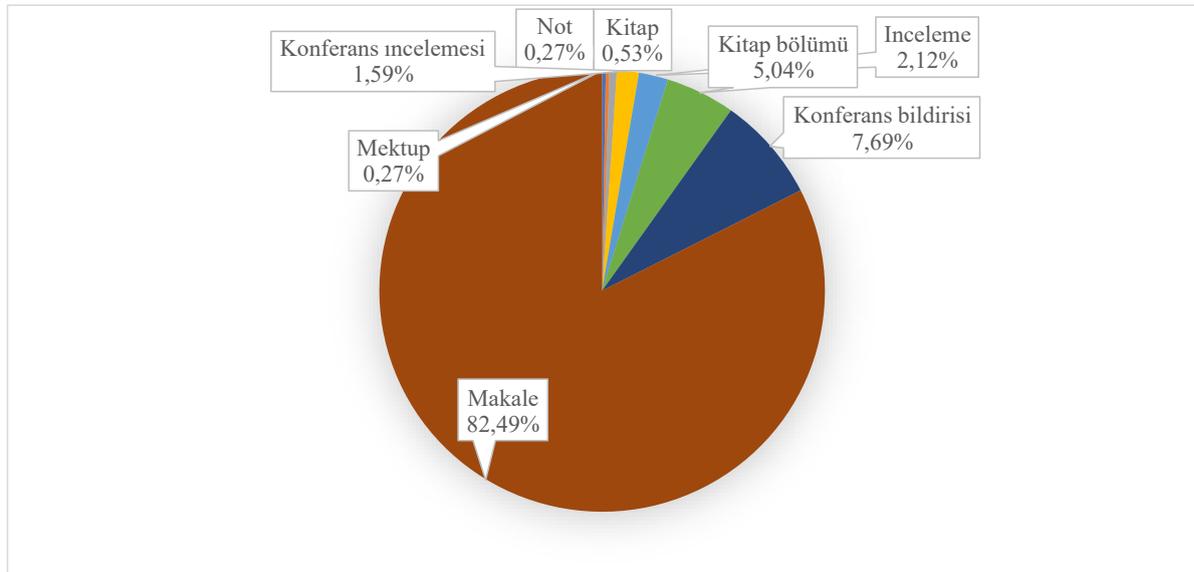
**Authorship and collaboration:** Analysis of top authors (with country affiliations) and breakdown of publications by author-affiliated country, enabling assessment of international collaboration. For example, we calculated how many Kazakhstan-related tourism papers had at least one author from Kazakhstan, Turkey, Russia, etc., to gauge collaborative networks. **Institutional contributions:** Identification of the most active universities or institutions (domestic and international) publishing on Kazakhstan’s tourism. **Citation analysis:** While a full citation network analysis was beyond the scope of this study, we collected basic citation metrics such as the total number of citations within the dataset and identified the most cited papers. **Keyword frequency** was also examined to determine thematic focus, with particular attention to whether highly cited topics (e.g., “sustainable tourism”, “heritage”, “marketing”) aligned with previous findings by Wendt (2020).

It should be noted that the use of Scopus-indexed publications emphasizes research with international visibility (typically in English or other major world languages). Many Kazakhstani researchers also publish in local journals (often in Kazakh or Russian) that are not indexed by Scopus; such outputs are not captured in this analysis. Therefore, the findings reflect the segment of academic output that contributes to Kazakhstan’s international research profile. While this aligns with the study’s focus on global recognition and collaboration, readers should avoid interpreting these figures as representing the full scope of research activity in Kazakhstan. Additionally, using the country name in the search query emphasizes research about Kazakhstan’s tourism, potentially omitting works by Kazakhstani authors on general tourism theory or on tourism in other countries. Despite these limitations, the adopted approach provides a sound basis for cross-country and temporal comparisons, and captures the core body of literature on Kazakhstan’s tourism development within the international academic context.

## Results and Analysis

### Publication Volume and Growth Over Time

The Scopus search for “Kazakhstan AND tourism” yielded a total of 377 publications between 2003 and 2023. Figure 1 illustrates the distribution of these publications by document type [5].



**Figure 1 – Distribution of Scopus-indexed tourism publications from Kazakhstan by document type (2003–2023)**

Over four-fifths of the publications are journal articles, underscoring the central role of peer-reviewed journals in academic dissemination. Conference papers, book chapters, and review articles constitute the bulk of the remainder, while other document types (such as notes, letters, and books) are negligible.

As shown in Figure 1, the vast majority of Kazakhstan’s tourism-related publications are journal articles (311, approximately 82.5%), followed by conference papers (29, ~7.7%). The presence of 19 book chapters (~5.0%) suggests contributions to edited volumes or monographs on tourism. Additionally, 8 review articles (2.1%) indicate a modest but growing interest in synthesizing existing research. Minor categories include a few conference reviews and isolated instances of notes, letters, or books indexed in Scopus. The dominance of journal articles is consistent with Kazakhstan’s research policy priorities, which emphasize publication in international peer-reviewed journals, and suggests that scholars prefer journal outlets to reach a broader academic audience. The relatively low proportion of review articles further implies that the tourism research field in Kazakhstan is still emerging; in more mature research areas, review studies typically constitute a larger share of output, serving to consolidate accumulated knowledge.

Temporal analysis reveals a marked increase in publication output over the two-decade span. In the early 2000s, Kazakhstan’s tourism research output was minimal—for example, only one Scopus-indexed publication was found in 2003, and some years (e.g., 2005 and 2011) recorded zero publications. Throughout much of the 2000s, annual output remained in the single digits. However, beginning around 2012, a notable upward trend emerged. By 2015, annual output reached double digits, and the momentum continued into the late 2010s. The year 2023 marked a peak, with approximately 60 publications—an all-time high compared to near-zero levels a decade earlier.

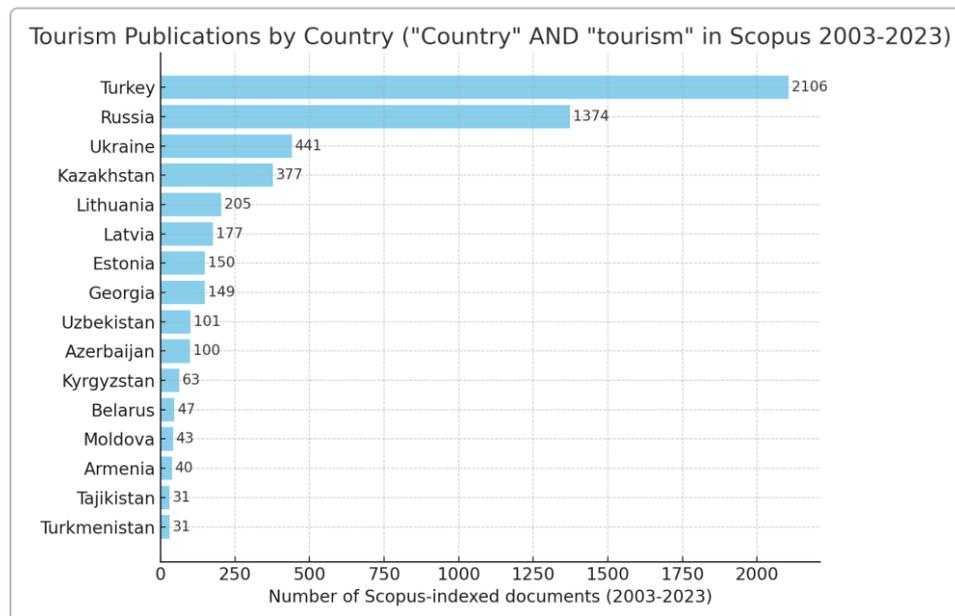
This growth trajectory is in line with previous studies and appears to correlate with key policy

interventions: around 2011–2012, Kazakhstan introduced new research evaluation standards and enhanced integration into international indexing systems. These changes likely incentivized researchers—particularly in universities—to increase international publication. Notably, this growth trend persisted even during periods of global disruption such as the COVID-19 pandemic. While many countries experienced a shift in research priorities in 2020 toward pandemic-related topics, Kazakhstan’s tourism research output remained stable. In fact, several tourism-related studies during 2020–2021 addressed the pandemic’s impact on travel in Central Asia, contributing to the continued upward trajectory.

Qualitative observations reveal that early-period publications (2003–2010) were typically isolated works, often led by foreign collaborators or focused on broader regional themes. For example, Kantarci’s 2007 studies examined Kazakhstan as part of the broader Central Asian tourism market. In contrast, publications after 2012 show a diversification of topics and increased participation by local scholars. By the late 2010s, there was a notable rise in studies on sustainable tourism development, tourism economics, heritage and ecotourism in specific regions (e.g., the Almaty mountain parks, Silk Road tourism routes), and analyses of tourist behavior. This trend reflects a growing engagement of Kazakhstan’s academic community with various dimensions of the national tourism sector—likely influenced by the country’s strategic objective of positioning tourism as a pillar of economic diversification.

#### Comparison with Post-Soviet Countries and Turkey

A key objective of this study is to position Kazakhstan’s tourism research output within a regional context. Table 1 and Figure 2 summarize the total number of Scopus-indexed publications on tourism from 2003 to 2023 for Kazakhstan, other post-Soviet countries, and Turkey. For consistency, the search query “Country name AND tourism” was used for each country, mirroring the Kazakhstan search.



**Figure 2 – Total Scopus-indexed publications on tourism (2003–2023) for Kazakhstan, other post-Soviet countries, and Turkey**

Publications are counted based on the presence of the country name alongside “tourism” in

the title, abstract, or keywords. Turkey's academic output in tourism far exceeds that of any post-Soviet country, while Kazakhstan ranks third among the post-Soviet group (or fourth if Turkey is included). According to the data, Turkey is a clear outlier, with 2,106 tourism-related publications between 2003 and 2023. This reflects Turkey's well-established tourism research community and the presence of numerous academic journals in the field. In comparison, the total output of all post-Soviet countries combined (excluding Turkey) stands at approximately 3,074 publications—only about 1.5 times Turkey's total alone. This stark contrast highlights Turkey's prolific contribution to global tourism research, likely supported by robust institutional infrastructure, a highly developed tourism industry, and strong international research collaboration. Within the post-Soviet space, Russia leads with 1,374 publications, averaging around 68.7 per year. Russia's output is roughly 3.6 times greater than Kazakhstan's. Ukraine follows with 441 publications, ranking second in the region, though still far behind Russia. Kazakhstan, with 377 publications, is third among the post-Soviet countries in absolute terms, slightly behind Ukraine. This confirms Kazakhstan's position as one of the top three tourism research producers among former Soviet republics. Notably, Kazakhstan outperforms other Eurasian countries with comparable population sizes or tourism potential, such as Uzbekistan (101 publications) and Azerbaijan (100). Even the Baltic states—Lithuania (205), Latvia (177), and Estonia (150)—which are often recognized for their integration into the European research area, fall behind Kazakhstan in total tourism-related publications. This achievement is significant given Kazakhstan's comparatively lower starting point in terms of research capacity, and it suggests that national policies to encourage academic publishing in English and in internationally indexed journals have had a measurable impact in the tourism domain. In terms of other Central Asian and Caucasus countries, outputs remain relatively low: Georgia (149), Uzbekistan (101), Azerbaijan (100), Kyrgyzstan (63), Armenia (40), and Tajikistan and Turkmenistan (31 each) over the 20-year period. Many of these countries average only 1 to 5 tourism publications per year. Kazakhstan, by contrast, averages approximately 18.9 publications per year, which—while modest in absolute terms—is significantly higher than its regional neighbors, suggesting a comparatively stronger academic base or strategic emphasis on research. It is also important to note that some countries may publish research in local languages not captured by Scopus (e.g., in Uzbek or Georgian), but the relative positioning remains clear: Kazakhstan has emerged as a regional leader in tourism scholarship outside of Russia. The implications of this comparison are twofold. First, Kazakhstan has made substantial progress—from virtually no tourism research output two decades ago to becoming a regional frontrunner. Second, a substantial gap still exists between Kazakhstan and higher-performing countries such as Turkey and Russia. For instance, Turkey's average of 105 tourism-related publications per year compared to Kazakhstan's 19 highlights differences in research infrastructure, scale of academic engagement, and availability of publication venues. Bridging this gap may require Kazakhstan to increase investment in tourism research centers, expand graduate education in the field, and enhance international collaborations that support high-quality research outputs. This comparison also underscores the value of academic partnerships. Kazakhstan's collaboration with Turkish institutions (discussed in the next section) appears to be mutually beneficial: Turkey contributes experience and established publication platforms, while Kazakhstan offers unique case studies, empirical data, and emerging research contexts. Such synergies are likely to enhance the research productivity and impact of both countries in the field of tourism studies.

#### **Authorship and International Collaboration Patterns**

An analysis of authorship offers important insights into the key contributors to Kazakhstan's tourism research and the extent of international scholarly collaboration. The top 15 authors in the dataset (2003–2023) were identified based on publication count. Collectively, these prolific authors contributed a substantial portion of the total output, often through co-authorship networks. Over half of these top authors are affiliated with Kazakhstani institutions, while a significant subset are based in other countries—most notably Turkey, the United Kingdom, Poland, and Hungary. This finding aligns with Wendt's (2020) observations that many publications on Kazakhstan's tourism are co-authored by Kazakhstani and Turkish researchers, indicating strong bilateral academic ties. Prominent contributors include: Dr. G. Tiberghien (University of Glasgow, UK) – with 14 publications, he holds the highest single-author count on Kazakhstan's tourism in the dataset. His research, often focused on sustainable tourism and policy, exemplifies foreign academic engagement in Kazakhstani tourism studies. Prof. J.A. Wendt (University of Gdańsk, Poland) – with approximately 11 publications, his work includes bibliometric studies and geographic analyses, representing Poland–Kazakhstan scholarly collaboration. Dr. E. Atasoy (Uludağ University, Turkey) – with 11 publications, reflects the contribution of Turkish scholars, frequently in areas such as comparative tourism studies and management. On the Kazakhstani side, A. Aktymbayeva (Al-Farabi Kazakh National University) and K.T. Saparov (L.N. Gumilyov Eurasian National University) each have 9 publications; A.M. Sergeyeva (K. Zhubanov Aktobe Regional University) has 8, and others such as G. Abdramanova and S. Ziyadin (Al-Farabi KazNU) have contributed multiple papers. These scholars are primarily faculty members or doctoral researchers in Kazakhstani universities, focusing on tourism or related disciplines. Notably, Ziyadin is recognized for his work on tourism economics and development strategies. Nearly all top Kazakhstani contributors are affiliated with leading national universities—particularly L.N. Gumilyov Eurasian National University (ENU) in Astana and Al-Farabi Kazakh National University (KazNU) in Almaty—reinforcing the status of these institutions as central hubs for tourism research in Kazakhstan. The involvement of multiple foreign scholars among the top contributors also highlights significant patterns of international collaboration. To further quantify this, we analyzed the affiliation countries of all authors in the dataset. As shown in Figure 4 (referenced in the original analysis), authors affiliated with Kazakhstani institutions contributed to 278 out of 377 publications (approximately 73.7%). This is expected, given the Kazakhstan-specific focus of the search. However, the next most frequent countries of affiliation were Russia and Turkey, followed by the United Kingdom, Poland, Hungary, and others. Turkey and Russia, in particular, featured prominently in dozens of co-authored papers—second only to Kazakhstan itself. These patterns suggest frequent cross-border collaboration. Typical cases include Kazakhstani researchers working with Turkish colleagues on tourism development or with Russian scholars, reflecting both regional proximity and shared post-Soviet academic legacies. Kazakh–Turkish collaboration is especially noteworthy and has been discussed in earlier studies. It is likely reinforced by shared cultural and linguistic ties (e.g., Turkic heritage) and active institutional cooperation—such as joint projects and conferences. For example, the International University of Tourism and Hospitality in Turkestan, Kazakhstan, where one of this study's authors is affiliated, maintains partnerships with Turkish academic institutions. Similarly, collaboration with European scholars from the UK, Poland, and Hungary often occurs within the framework of multi-country research projects or through the interest of foreign researchers using Kazakhstan as a case study for global themes such as sustainable tourism or heritage management along the Silk Road. From a

policy standpoint, these collaboration trends are highly encouraging. They suggest that Kazakhstan's academic community is not operating in isolation but is integrated into broader international research networks. This can enhance both the quality and the visibility of publications. International co-authorships often provide access to wider expertise and increase the likelihood of global citation. Nevertheless, there remains a potential challenge: Kazakhstan's domestic research community may still be dependent on external partnerships for high-impact output. Over time, strengthening the capacity of local scholars to initiate and lead international projects will be an important goal for ensuring sustained research development.

### **Leading Journals and Institutions**

The publication venues for Kazakhstan's tourism research are diverse, spanning international peer-reviewed journals, regional outlets, and conference proceedings. While no single journal dominates the output, several recurring and reputable sources have published multiple studies related to Kazakhstan. For example, the *GeoJournal of Tourism and Geosites*—an international outlet—has featured numerous Kazakhstan-focused articles, including Wendt's (2020) bibliometric analysis. Other prominent journals include *Tourism Management* (known for high-impact studies, though limited in number of Kazakhstan-related articles), *Tourism Geographies*, *Current Issues in Tourism*, and several interdisciplinary journals that occasionally publish research on tourism in Central Asia. Notably, earlier publications were sometimes published in Russian-language journals or local university bulletins. However, such works are infrequent in Scopus unless they include English-language abstracts. A clear trend emerged during the 2010s toward publishing in English-language international journals and conference proceedings, enhancing global visibility and accessibility of Kazakhstan's tourism research. On the institutional level, our analysis identified the leading organizations based on the number of affiliated publications in the dataset: L.N. Gumilyov Eurasian National University (ENU) – Emerges as the top contributor, with 94 publications (out of 377) affiliated with the institution between 2003 and 2023. Located in Astana, ENU houses a prominent faculty specializing in tourism and related disciplines. Its high output is likely due to the activity of leading faculty members (several of whom are among the top authors identified earlier), as well as the presence of research centers or grant-supported projects focused on tourism. Al-Farabi Kazakh National University (KazNU) – Ranks second, with 54 publications over the same period. As Kazakhstan's oldest and one of its most prestigious universities, KazNU has made significant contributions to tourism research, particularly through its departments of economics and geography. Other Kazakhstani universities with noteworthy—though smaller—outputs include: Khoja Akhmet Yassawi International Kazakh-Turkish University (Turkestan), with approximately a dozen publications; Narxoz University (Almaty), focused on economics and management, with around 10 publications; Karaganda Economic University and Saken Seifullin Kazakh Agrotechnical University (Astana), each with a few publications. These figures indicate that tourism research activity, while concentrated in Astana and Almaty, is not limited to a single institution or geographic location. Importantly, several international institutions also appear among the top contributors, reflecting strong collaborative ties: University of Glasgow (UK), University of Gdańsk (Poland), Bursa Uludağ University (Turkey), and universities from countries such as Hungary and Portugal each account for 5 to 14 publications affiliated with their respective scholars. University of Glasgow has approximately 9–14 publications, likely associated with Dr. G. Tiberghien's work on sustainable tourism. University of Gdańsk shows similar output, largely attributed to Prof. J.A. Wendt's bibliometric and geographical studies. Hungarian University of Agriculture and Life

Sciences, represented by L.D. Dávid (9 publications), may be contributing through work on ecotourism or agro-tourism. Bursa Uludağ University in Turkey has produced around 7 publications, notably through Dr. E. Atasoy, reflecting Turkey's consistent academic engagement. These institutional affiliations, illustrated in Figure 5 of the original analysis, provide further evidence of international academic interest and collaborative engagement in Kazakhstan's tourism sector. Such collaboration enhances the visibility and scholarly impact of Kazakhstan-related research, offering comparative perspectives and fostering joint authorship with local academics. Another notable finding is the absence of private research institutions or industry-based research units among the top contributors. All leading entities are universities, suggesting that academic institutions remain the primary producers of tourism-related scholarly knowledge in Kazakhstan. This indicates a gap in direct research contributions from think tanks, government tourism agencies, or private-sector research divisions. Addressing this academia–industry disconnect is an issue discussed in subsequent sections of the study.

### **Citation and Keyword Analysis**

Although the primary focus of this study is on publication volume and collaboration patterns, citation analysis provides a useful proxy for assessing research impact. Across the 377 Scopus-indexed publications analyzed, the total number of citations (as of early 2024) is in the several hundreds. On average, this indicates a modest citation rate per article—an expected outcome, given that a significant portion of the publications are relatively recent and thus have had limited time to accumulate citations. Nevertheless, several standout publications have attracted considerable academic attention. Highly cited works tend to focus on themes such as sustainable tourism development, tourism marketing strategies, and eco-tourism in Kazakhstan's unique natural environments. These studies are frequently published in higher-impact international journals and often involve international co-authors, which enhances their visibility and reach. The most cited publications—each with dozens of citations—are typically review or conceptual articles that situate Kazakhstan's tourism within broader global contexts, compare it to international trends, or propose theoretical frameworks for tourism development. This pattern suggests that Kazakhstan's tourism experience is contributing meaningfully to global academic discourse, particularly in the context of developing and transition economies. Keyword analysis offers further insight into prevailing research themes and evolving academic priorities: As expected, the terms “Kazakhstan” and “tourism” are present in all publications by design. Beyond these, frequently occurring keywords include “tourism development”, “sustainable tourism”, “tourism management”, “ecotourism”, “heritage”, “tourist behavior”, “marketing”, as well as geographic identifiers like “Central Asia”, “Silk Road”, and “Almaty”.

An earlier study by Wendt (2020) similarly noted that “Kazakhstan”, “tourism”, and “tourism development” were among the most common keywords, each appearing over 30 times. This is consistent with our findings, which indicate that development and management themes are central to Kazakhstan's tourism scholarship. The prominence of sustainability-related keywords (e.g., “sustainable tourism”, “ecotourism”) reflects a broader global trend wherein sustainability is increasingly prioritized in tourism research. In the context of Kazakhstan, such terms are often linked to the management of natural attractions—such as national parks, mountainous areas, and lake tourism—and to the integration of environmental concerns into tourism growth strategies. Cultural and historical tourism is another frequent research focus, with keywords like “heritage”, “cultural tourism”, and “Silk Road” appearing in numerous publications. Kazakhstan's geographic

and historical positioning along the Silk Road and its nomadic heritage make it a particularly relevant case for research in this area. Tourism economics and policy are also represented through keywords such as “tourism infrastructure”, “destination competitiveness”, and “economic impact”, highlighting the applied and policy-relevant dimension of the research. Some studies explicitly reference the World Economic Forum’s Travel & Tourism Competitiveness Index in evaluating Kazakhstan’s international standing in tourism. Importantly, certain high-impact publications are associated with topics that are not dominant in quantity but stand out in terms of academic influence. As Wendt (2020) observed, papers including keywords such as “eco-cultural tourism”, “marketing”, “sustainability”, and “development” tended to receive citation counts above the dataset average. Our findings support this: for example, a study on eco-cultural tourism—which combines ecological and cultural heritage perspectives in Kazakhstan—achieved significant citations due to its conceptual universality. Likewise, research on tourism marketing strategies in Kazakhstan has been cited in comparative studies on emerging tourism markets. In summary, the bibliometric evidence indicates that tourism research in Kazakhstan is growing in volume, diversifying in scope, and becoming increasingly collaborative on the international stage. Although average citation rates remain modest, there are clear signs of emerging academic influence, particularly in sustainability and development-focused studies. The following section discusses the implications of these findings for Kazakhstan’s academic and policy-making communities and explores how tourism research can further support innovation, competitiveness, and international recognition.

### **Discussion**

The findings of this bibliometric analysis offer a range of implications and insights regarding the development of Kazakhstan’s academic tourism sector and its broader relevance for policy, innovation, and international positioning.

#### **Trajectory of Growth and Policy Impact**

The sharp increase in tourism-related publications after 2012 aligns closely with national policy reforms in science and higher education. Measures such as linking academic promotion and PhD completion to publications in Scopus- or Web of Science-indexed journals have effectively incentivized scholarly output. In the field of tourism, this has led not only to an increase in publication volume but also to greater engagement with international academic standards. The absence of publications in 2011, followed by steady growth, reflects the tangible impact of these systemic changes. However, while the quantitative increase is encouraging, the next challenge lies in improving research quality and ensuring relevance. The expanding body of academic knowledge provides a foundation for policymakers to adopt data-driven approaches—drawing on research about tourist preferences, destination competitiveness, and sustainability—to inform national tourism strategies and close the gap between research and practice.

#### **International Collaboration and Scientific Diplomacy**

Kazakhstan’s extensive collaboration with countries such as Turkey demonstrates the value of scientific diplomacy. These partnerships not only enhance publication output through co-authorship but also foster broader academic and cultural exchange. For example, joint projects may include fieldwork, training programs, or student mobility initiatives. International collaboration can also indirectly support tourism by increasing Kazakhstan’s visibility through academic channels. The strong presence of Turkish scholars among co-authors likely reflects deep-rooted academic

linkages, often forged through graduate study exchanges. Kazakhstan may further benefit by expanding partnerships with leading tourism research nations such as Spain, the United States, or China.

#### Position Relative to Peers – Room for Improvement

Kazakhstan's third-place ranking among post-Soviet countries in tourism research is commendable. However, the gap with Russia—and especially with Turkey—is substantial. Russia's advantage stems from its larger academic system and higher volume of Russia-focused tourism studies. Turkey's lead is more profound, bolstered by dedicated tourism faculties, specialized journals, and strong international ties. To narrow this gap, Kazakhstan could establish national centers of excellence in tourism research, support the launch of a Scopus-indexed tourism journal, or host a regional tourism research conference. Encouraging bilingual publication (Kazakh/Russian for local impact, English for global reach) would also facilitate knowledge diffusion at multiple levels.

#### Thematic Focus and Relevance to National Needs

Keyword analysis shows that Kazakhstani tourism research engages with globally significant themes such as sustainability, cultural heritage, and tourism management. These themes align well with Kazakhstan's tourism development priorities. For instance, research on eco-cultural tourism supports national strategies to promote Silk Road heritage sites in an environmentally sustainable manner. Similarly, studies on destination management and marketing can contribute to sector professionalization. Nonetheless, certain underexplored areas—such as digital marketing, tourism education and training, and rural/community-based tourism—warrant greater attention. Academic institutions could direct student research and graduate theses toward these strategic niches.

#### Bridging the Research–Industry Divide

The fact that less than 5% of R&D results are translated into practice underscores a critical weakness in Kazakhstan's knowledge economy. In the tourism sector, this gap implies that much of the academic insight is not reaching policymakers or industry actors. To remedy this, mechanisms for knowledge transfer should be institutionalized. Examples include regular forums connecting scholars with tourism professionals, policy briefs for government agencies, or involving practitioners in research design. Encouraging signs are emerging—studies on tourism entrepreneurship and digital innovation suggest a shift toward applied, market-relevant research. However, greater efforts are required to ensure academic knowledge is not confined to publications but contributes to real-world outcomes.

#### Academic Capacity and Future Outlook

The concentration of tourism research output in two universities (ENU and KazNU) highlights a potential vulnerability: overdependence on a limited number of institutions. To strengthen national capacity, universities in key tourism regions (e.g., East and South Kazakhstan) should be supported through targeted funding and infrastructure. The establishment of the International University of Tourism and Hospitality (IUTH) in Turkestan is promising and may serve as a catalyst for linking academic research with industry training. Continued professional development for academic staff—in research methods, publication strategies, and English-language writing—will also be essential. As government initiatives like the Bolashak program continue to build a new generation of scholars, the field of tourism studies may experience further expansion and diversification.

#### Enhancing International Recognition

Publishing in Scopus-indexed journals has already improved Kazakhstan's academic visibility. To strengthen this position, researchers should aim for higher-impact journals and greater participation in international conferences. Hosting international tourism research conferences in Kazakhstan could yield multiple benefits: showcasing Kazakhstan as a research destination, encouraging scholarly tourism, and stimulating domestic innovation through foreign exposure. The growing interest of international scholars in Kazakhstan's tourism sector can be harnessed into collaborative projects and visits, creating intellectual and economic value simultaneously.

### **Conclusion**

This study presented a comprehensive bibliometric analysis of Kazakhstan's academic publications in the field of tourism, based on data from the Scopus database covering the period 2003–2023. The findings reveal a trajectory of significant growth, increased scholarly engagement, and expanding international collaboration. From a near-zero baseline in the early 2000s, Kazakhstan's tourism research output has grown to 377 publications, reflecting the impact of national educational and research reforms that emphasize international publication. Kazakhstan now ranks third among post-Soviet states in terms of tourism-related publications, although it remains significantly behind high-output countries such as Turkey. The field is largely dominated by journal articles (over 80% of total output), indicating a strong academic orientation. Leading contributions originate from major institutions such as L.N. Gumilyov Eurasian National University and Al-Farabi Kazakh National University [6]. A noteworthy aspect is the active participation of foreign scholars—particularly from Turkey, as well as Europe and beyond—in co-authored publications, signaling robust international cooperation and knowledge exchange. Thematic analysis indicates that Kazakhstan's tourism research aligns well with both global academic trends and national strategic priorities. Core areas of focus include sustainable tourism development, cultural heritage and ecotourism, as well as tourism economics and management. These themes are not only academically relevant but also critically important to Kazakhstan's broader goals of economic diversification and cultural preservation. Importantly, the study highlights the potential of academic tourism research to contribute to three interrelated domains:

**Policy:** The growing body of scholarly work offers valuable, evidence-based insights that can inform tourism policy and planning. Research evaluating destination competitiveness, tourist satisfaction, or infrastructure needs can directly support the implementation of Kazakhstan's tourism development strategies. Involving researchers in policymaking bodies or using academic findings in policy formulation could bridge the persistent gap between theory and practice.

**Innovation:** Academic studies often explore novel concepts—such as community-based tourism in rural Kazakhstan or the use of digital platforms for destination promotion. Despite current low levels of commercialization, these studies offer untapped potential for practical application. By fostering partnerships between universities and industry actors (e.g., hotels, tour operators, technology firms), Kazakhstan can transform academic knowledge into innovative tourism products and services. Examples include eco-tourism packages, smart tourism applications, or training programs grounded in hospitality research. **International Recognition:** Each publication in an internationally indexed journal and each collaborative research project enhances Kazakhstan's global academic visibility. This intellectual diplomacy elevates Kazakhstan's reputation as both a contributor to global knowledge and an emerging tourism destination that emphasizes sustainability and cultural richness. It may also attract foreign academics and students—thereby supporting

educational tourism and fostering long-term advocacy for Kazakhstan abroad. Looking ahead, a new generation of scholars and emerging institutions—such as the International University of Tourism and Hospitality—are well-positioned to sustain and accelerate the momentum. Continued institutional support, targeted research funding, and alignment with national tourism development goals will be essential. Moreover, impact assessment should move beyond publication counts to include social, cultural, and economic outcomes, thereby encouraging researchers to produce work with tangible benefits. In summary, Kazakhstan’s academic tourism research sector has evolved over the past two decades from relative obscurity to a position of growing prominence. The bibliometric patterns observed in this study reflect broader shifts in the country’s research ecosystem and its engagement with international academic networks. The challenge—and opportunity—now lies in leveraging this academic output to its fullest potential: translating knowledge into innovative, inclusive, and sustainable tourism development. Kazakhstan’s experience demonstrates how sustained investment in academic capacity and openness to collaboration can yield dividends in both scholarly prestige and practical transformation.

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**ҚАЗАҚСТАНДАҒЫ ТУРИЗМ САЛАСЫНДАҒЫ АКАДЕМИЯЛЫҚ ЗЕРТТЕУЛЕР:  
ҮРДІСТЕР, ЫНТЫМАҚТАСТЫҚ ЖӘНЕ ӨНІРЛІК БАҒЫТТАЛУДЫҢ  
БИБЛИОМЕТРИЯЛЫҚ ТАЛДАМЫ (2003–2023)**

*Аңдатпа.* Қазақстанның туризм саласы елеулі әлеуетке ие болғанымен, әлі де толық дамымаған. Бұл жағдай 2019 жылғы Туризм және саяхат бәсекеге қабілеттілік индексында Қазақстанның әлем бойынша 80-орынды иеленуімен көрініс табады. Сонымен қатар, елдегі ғылыми-зерттеу және тәжірибелік-конструкторлық жұмыстардың 5%-дан азы ғана өндірісте коммерцияландырылатыны білім мен инновация арасындағы алшақтықты көрсетеді. Бұл зерттеу Scopus дерекқорын негізге ала отырып, Қазақстандағы туризм тақырыбындағы академиялық жарияланымдарға библиометриялық талдау ұсынады. Талдау 2003–2023 жылдар аралығын қамтиды және жарияланым көлемі, құжат түрлері, авторлық, ынтымақтастық үлгілері, дәйексөздер мен кілт сөздердің динамикасы қарастырылады. Барлығы 377 құжат анықталды, олардың саны 2012 жылдан кейін айтарлықтай артып, 2023 жылы шамамен 60-қа жетті. Жарияланымдардың басым бөлігі (82,5%) – ғылыми мақалалар. Қазақстан ТМД елдері ішінде Ресей мен Украинадан кейінгі үшінші орында, алайда Түркиядан едәуір артта. Негізгі үлес қосушы ұйымдар – отандық жоғары оқу орындары (лидер – Л.Н. Гумилев атындағы Еуразия ұлттық университеті, 94 жарияланым), сондай-ақ шетелдік серіктестер. Нәтижелі авторлардың жартысынан

астамы Қазақстанда орналасқан, ал келесі үлкен топ – Түркиядан. Қазақстандағы туризм саласына арналған академиялық зерттеулердің саны артып келеді, бұл үрдіс 2011 жылдан бері жоғары білім мен ғылым салаларындағы саясаттық реформалармен қолдау тапты. Бұл өсіп келе жатқан зерттеулер қоры деректерге негізделген туризм саясатын қалыптастыруға, инновацияны (мысалы, тұрақты және мәдени туризмде) ілгерілетуге және Қазақстанның халықаралық академиялық және салалық беделін арттыруға ықпал ете алады. Зерттеу нәтижелері Қазақстанның аймақтық әріптестермен салыстырғандағы өнімділігін көрсететін маңызды индикаторлар ұсына отырып, туризмнің дамуы мен бәсекеге қабілеттілігін қолдау үшін академиялық әлеуетті тиімді пайдалану қажеттігін айқындайды.

**Кілт сөздер:** туризм саласы, ғылыми жарияланымдар, библиометриялық талдау, Қазақстан, тұрақты туризм, мәдени мұра, халықаралық ынтымақтастық, Scopus, ғылыми саясат, жоғары білім

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### **АКАДЕМИЧЕСКИЕ ИССЛЕДОВАНИЯ В СФЕРЕ ТУРИЗМА В КАЗАХСТАНЕ: БИБЛИОМЕТРИЧЕСКИЙ АНАЛИЗ ТЕНДЕНЦИЙ, НАУЧНОГО СОТРУДНИЧЕСТВА И РЕГИОНАЛЬНОГО ПОЗИЦИОНИРОВАНИЯ (2003–2023)**

**Аннотация.** Туристический сектор Казахстана обладает значительным потенциалом, но остаётся недостаточно развитым, что отражено в 80-м месте страны в Глобальном индексе конкурентоспособности в сфере туризма и путешествий за 2019 год. Кроме того, менее 5% научно-исследовательских и опытно-конструкторских разработок в Казахстане коммерциализируются в промышленности, что указывает на разрыв между производством знаний и их практическим применением. В настоящем исследовании представлен всесторонний библиометрический анализ научных публикаций по туризму в Казахстане на основе данных из базы Scopus за период 2003–2023 гг. Анализ охватывает объём публикаций, типы документов, авторство, модели сотрудничества, а также динамику цитирования и ключевых слов. Всего было выявлено 377 публикаций, причём объём публикаций значительно вырос после 2012 года и достиг примерно 60 публикаций в 2023 году. Подавляющее большинство (82,5%) составляют статьи в научных журналах. Казахстан занимает третье место среди постсоветских стран (после России и Украины), однако значительно уступает Турции по объёму. Основной вклад внесён отечественными вузами (в первую очередь Евразийский национальный университет им. Л.Н. Гумилёва – 94 публикации), а также международными партнёрами. Более половины наиболее продуктивных авторов работают в Казахстане, а следующая по численности группа – из Турции. Академические исследования по туризму в Казахстане находятся на стадии активного роста и получают поддержку со стороны реформ в сфере высшего образования

и науки, начавшихся в 2011 году. Расширяющаяся база научных знаний способна обеспечить формирование политики в сфере туризма, основанной на доказательствах, стимулировать инновации (например, в области устойчивого и культурного туризма) и повысить международный научный и отраслевой имидж страны. Полученные результаты предоставляют ценные ориентиры для сопоставления производительности Казахстана с региональными странами и подчёркивают необходимость активного использования академических ресурсов для развития и повышения конкурентоспособности туристической отрасли страны.

**Ключевые слова:** туристическая отрасль, научные публикации, библиометрический анализ, Казахстан, устойчивый туризм, культурное наследие, международное сотрудничество, Scopus, научная политика, высшее образование