

IRSTI 06.71.57

<https://www.doi.org/10.62867/3007-0848.2026-2.01>

UDC 338.48

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***A CROSS-NATIONAL ANALYSIS OF HEALTH TOURISM EDUCATION INSIGHTS FROM TURKEY AND KAZAKHSTAN***

**Abstract.** *This study aims to conduct a comparative analysis of health tourism education in Türkiye and Kazakhstan. Within this scope, departments related to health tourism at universities in both countries were examined, and their curricula were analyzed in detail. By comparing the content of the education programs, the structure, scope, and practical aspects of health tourism education were evaluated. Based on the findings, similarities and differences in health tourism education between the two countries were identified, and the academic strengths and areas in need of development were determined. It was observed that Türkiye has a more established and practice-oriented approach to health tourism education, while Kazakhstan is in the process of developing its programs with recent initiatives in the field. As a result of the study, several recommendations were proposed to enhance the quality of health tourism education in both countries. These suggestions focus on ensuring standardization in education, increasing practical training opportunities, and fostering international cooperation. The research ultimately aims to contribute to improving the quality of human resources in the field of health tourism.*

**Keywords:** *Health tourism, education, course, Türkiye, Kazakhstan.*

**Introduction**

Health tourism is a rapidly growing sector with strategic importance in economic, social, and academic terms, driven by globalization and the pursuit of quality in health services. The conformity of the services provided in this field with international standards, and their support by qualified healthcare personnel, play a critical role in the sustainability of the sector.

In the sustainable development of health tourism, qualified human resources to be employed in this field play a decisive role, alongside physical infrastructure, technological capacity, and cost advantages. In particular, the provision of health services in accordance with international standards, as well as factors such as patient safety, ethical principles, intercultural communication, and foreign

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\*Бізге дұрыс сілтеме жасаңыз: Sariipek S., Tagmanov U., Kulbaeva A., Tubekova D. A Cross-National Analysis of Health Tourism Education Insights from Turkey and Kazakhstan // Bulletin of the International university of Tourism and Hospitality. –2026. – No2(12). –Б. 6–23. <https://www.doi.org/10.62867/3007-0848.2026-2.01>

\*Cite us correctly: Sariipek S., Tagmanov U., Kulbaeva A., Tubekova D. A Cross-National Analysis of Health Tourism Education Insights from Turkey and Kazakhstan // Bulletin of the International university of Tourism and Hospitality. –2026. – No2(12). –Б. 6–23. <https://www.doi.org/10.62867/3007-0848.2026-2.01>

language proficiency, reveal the need for specialized education in the field of health tourism. In this context, health tourism education provided at universities is of critical importance for the institutionalization of the sector and the enhancement of service quality.

In this context, health tourism education provided at universities is important for the institutionalization of the sector and the enhancement of the quality of human resources. While Türkiye stands out in the field of health tourism with its advanced healthcare infrastructure, internationally accredited institutions, and experienced healthcare personnel, Kazakhstan continues its development process in this field with its cost advantages and natural resource potential.

In this study, the question "How is health tourism education provided in Türkiye, and Kazakhstan?" is addressed as the main research problem. The aim of the study is to comparatively analyze health tourism education programs in both countries, to identify the similarities and differences in their content, implementation, and academic structures, and to offer recommendations aimed at improving the quality of education.

### **Literature review**

Health tourism in Türkiye. While the share of health tourism in overall tourism revenues was only around 1% in the early 2000s, it is currently aimed to reach levels of approximately 10%. Although Türkiye was generally characterized as a country with a problematic healthcare system in the 2000s, within approximately 25 years it has become a significant destination providing services to health tourists from many countries around the world through modern healthcare facilities. Health reforms implemented during this transformation process and investments in the healthcare sector have played a substantial role. Moreover, health tourism services make significant contributions not only to the healthcare sector but also to the economy. Developments in the field of health tourism are important in that they increase investment and employment and also contribute to reducing exchange rate volatility [1].

In Türkiye, health tourism activities have primarily developed under two main headings. The first is medical tourism, and the second is thermal tourism. Particularly in terms of thermal tourism, Türkiye is among the leading countries in the world. Thousands of thermal resources are found in almost every region of the country, and these resources provide thermal cure services in highly modern facilities, integrated with medical tourism. However, despite this strong potential, thermal tourism in Türkiye, as in many other countries, appears to remain largely limited to domestic tourism mobility [2].

In this development process, state support has also been a determining factor in the advancement of health tourism. It can be stated that Türkiye has adopted an approach of continuous development and improvement in areas such as the number of authorized facilities, healthcare and tourism investments, promotional activities, and accessibility [3]. Nevertheless, one of the most important stakeholders in the success of health tourism is healthcare professionals. Without qualified and high-potential healthcare personnel, it is not possible to deliver high-quality health services. In this context, the foreign language proficiency of healthcare workers in Türkiye, the education they have received, and their contributions to the medical literature increase the country's international recognition in terms of health tourism. Indeed, the first full face transplant and the first bilateral arm transplant performed at Akdeniz University constitute a concrete example of this situation [4].

These structural and human resource advantages have also strengthened Türkiye's position in the health tourism market. In particular, Türkiye has become an important destination for health tourism in recent years. The number of health tourists hosted in 2024 and 2025 reached approximately

3 million. It is reported that health tourists spent a total of 3 billion USD in 2024, and 2.2 billion USD in the first nine months of 2025. Based on these data, the average expenditure of health tourists in Türkiye can be estimated at around 2,000 USD [5].

Digital promotional channels also play an important role in the development of health tourism. In Türkiye, significant progress has been made in online promotion in recent years. The goturkiye.com platform, which has been operating since 2020, serves as an important digital tool where individuals can plan their travels and access detailed information about destinations. Similarly, through the healthturkiye.gov.tr website, health tourists can obtain information about businesses and healthcare personnel holding international health tourism authorization in Türkiye, and they can also apply for a health visa via this platform [6].

Furthermore, health tourism activities, particularly in the field of medical tourism, are conducted under a strict regulatory framework. Through the Department of Health Tourism, the Ministry of Health of the Republic of Türkiye issues the "International Health Tourism Authorization Certificate" to healthcare institutions operating in the country. As of 5 December 2025, within this scope, 504 hospitals, 126 medical centers, 2,300 clinics, and 1,372 other healthcare facilities have been accredited and are providing services. It is observed that the majority of the authorized facilities are concentrated in İstanbul [7].

Health tourism in Kazakhstan. Compared to Türkiye, the healthcare system in Kazakhstan exhibits different structural characteristics. In Kazakhstan, there are approximately 40 doctors per 10,000 people, and the average life expectancy is determined to be 74 years. Considering the population settlement structure, the urbanization rate is 58%. However, there is a significant inequality in access to healthcare services between urban and rural areas. One of the main reasons for this situation is that the railway infrastructure inherited from the former Soviet period is insufficient to meet current transportation and healthcare needs [8].

On the other hand, significant developments in the healthcare sector have been observed in Kazakhstan in recent years. The government has implemented various policies and programs aimed at improving the healthcare system. Within this scope, the "Program for the Improvement of Public Health" covering the years 2020-2025 was established; through this program, the objectives were to provide high-quality healthcare services, increase average life expectancy, and reduce the inequality between urban and rural areas. Additionally, improvements in the salaries of healthcare workers aimed to prevent the migration of qualified personnel abroad [9].

Another notable advantage of Kazakhstan in terms of health tourism is its cost advantage. For example, the cost of in vitro fertilization (IVF) treatment in Kazakhstan is approximately 2,500 USD, whereas the same service costs an average of 15,000 USD in European countries [10]. This situation places the country in a particularly competitive position, especially in the field of medical tourism.

In addition to its cost advantage, Kazakhstan also holds health tourism potential due to its natural resources [11]. In a study conducted in northern Kazakhstan, Makhanova et al [12] indicate that the region possesses a strip forest ecosystem found in only two areas worldwide, and these areas represent a significant resource for "forest bathing" therapy. Similarly, in the context of medical services, it is expected that future demand will emerge, particularly in regions with intensive industrial activity. Battakoya and Saipov [13] state that Kazakhstan has significant potential in health tourism in the treatment and rehabilitation of occupational diseases. Finally, it can be stated that, alongside medical tourism, thermal tourism has also developed in Kazakhstan. In a study conducted by Shyngysbaeva, et al [14] with tourists using thermal services in the Katon Karagay region of East Kazakhstan, it was found that visitor satisfaction levels were considerably high.

Health tourism education. Today, as in all fields, there is a high demand for qualified personnel in the field of health tourism. The importance of education becomes particularly evident in areas such as keeping up with current developments in healthcare and adapting to changing conditions. Even basic health tourism training produces outcomes that directly affect employee productivity [15].

Health tourism education, like the concept of health tourism itself, is still developing. Around the 2010s, each country developed various strategies related to health tourism and adapted them into educational models. Initially, temporary measures were adopted to avoid being left out of the health tourism market. For example, in Serbia, seminars primarily targeting individuals already working in the sector formed the basis of the educational model [16]. In Singapore, institutional training centers, university collaborations, and commercial and specialized schools were established through state initiatives [17]. Similarly, in developing countries, public universities and hospitals, in particular, organize programs related to health tourism education [18].

Today, health tourism education is being conducted in a more planned manner through higher education institutions. Having trained personnel provides various advantages for health tourism businesses and destinations. The presence of educated staff is an important scoring criterion in accreditation applications for businesses. Moreover, for international health tourists, the availability of personnel trained in the relevant field at the destination is a significant attraction factor [19]. In this context, it can be suggested that prioritizing education is a prerequisite for a destination to achieve a leading position in the field of health tourism.

### **Method**

In the context of addressing the research question, a qualitative methodology was followed. Since the problem involves a comparison between the two countries, the study can be described as comparative education research. Four fundamental elements were identified for the comparison [20].

- Determining the countries to be compared,
- Investigating and presenting the educational programs in line with the research problem,
- Compiling the research findings.
- Comparing and interpreting the compiled findings.

For data collection, the document review technique was preferred. Since the research topic determines which types of documents will be examined [21], the websites of universities in Türkiye and Kazakhstan, educational institutions, and the websites of organizations and institutions related to health tourism in these countries were reviewed. In Kazakhstan, all higher education institutions identified as offering courses related to health tourism during the data collection period were included in the analysis. It should be noted that the number of institutions included in Kazakhstan reflects the current structure of health tourism education in the country rather than a sampling decision by the researchers. All higher education institutions identified as offering courses directly related to health tourism during the data collection period were included in the analysis. Therefore, the findings represent the currently accessible educational landscape of health tourism education in Kazakhstan. The study does not rely on a selective sample but rather reflects the currently accessible educational landscape of health tourism education in the country. The data were then analyzed by following the fundamental stages of content analysis.

### **Findings**

This part of the study presents the findings. In the findings section, first, the institutions providing health tourism education in Türkiye and Kazakhstan are discussed, followed by the content

of the education offered. In addition, it was examined whether there are any institutions outside of higher education that provide health tourism education in both countries. Information on institutions offering health tourism education in Türkiye and Kazakhstan is presented in Table 1.

**Table 1 - Higher education institutions providing health tourism education in Türkiye and Kazakhstan.**

	<b>Türkiye</b>	<b>Kazakhstan</b>
<b>Health tourism education</b>		
Whether education is provided at the university level	√	√
The number of universities offering the program	10	3
<b>Education levels</b>		
Associate degree	√	-
Bachelor's degree	-	√
Graduate degree	√	-
<i>Source: compiled by the authors.</i>		

In Table 1, health tourism education in the two countries is compared quantitatively. In Türkiye, there are associate degree programs in health tourism management at 10 universities. At the bachelor's level, there is not yet a department specifically named "Health Tourism." At the graduate level, under various departments of tourism management, programs such as "Health Tourism," "Health Tourism Management," and "Health Tourism Management and Operations" have been established and student admissions have begun. Tourism management departments exist in 65 universities in Türkiye, and almost all universities offer elective courses under the name "Health Tourism."

In the case of Kazakhstan, there is no department specifically named "Health Tourism Management." Health tourism education is offered as elective or supplementary courses under tourism or related departments. In Kazakhstan, courses related to health tourism are provided at four universities located in the cities of Almaty, Astana, and Karaganda. Table 2 presents the universities offering health tourism education on a country basis. For Türkiye, universities with dedicated health tourism programs are shown (excluding the hundreds of universities that offer health tourism as a course), while for Kazakhstan, universities offering health tourism courses are listed.

**Table 2 - Universities offering health tourism education.**

	<b>Türkiye</b>	<b>Kazakistan</b>
Mode of instruction	Via associate degree programs	Elective courses in other bachelor's programs
Universities offering health tourism education	Afyon Kocatepe University Bandırma Onyedi Eylül University Harran University Kütahya Dumlupınar University Nevşehir Hacı Bektaş Veli University Sakarya Applied Sciences University Sivas Cumhuriyet University Tokat Gaziosmanpaşa University Ankara Medipol University Haliç University	Turan- Astana University Kazak Spor and Tourism Academy Kazakh National Women's Pedagogical University Turan University Karaganda Economy University
<i>Source: compiled by the authors.</i>		

Table 2 presents the universities offering health tourism education in the two countries. For Türkiye, a limitation was applied, and only universities listed under "Health Tourism Management" in the associate degree atlas of the Council of Higher Education (YÖK) are shown. In addition, at the bachelor's level, health tourism courses are offered at hundreds of universities in Türkiye. Graduate programs are also provided under various departments related to tourism.

In Kazakhstan, health tourism education is offered through various courses under bachelor's programs. For example, at Turan-Astana University in Astana, the course "Spa Science and Health Tourism" is provided under the Service Sector Program. In addition, a course on spa management is offered at three other universities.

Course contents offered at universities. This part of the study presents the course contents offered at universities. The contents of health tourism courses in Türkiye and Kazakhstan are presented under separate headings. In Türkiye, the course plans of a single university are provided as an example, while in Kazakhstan, all seven courses offered across four universities are included.

Course contents offered in Türkiye. The course plan and contents of the Health Tourism Management associate degree program at a selected higher education institution in Türkiye are presented in Table 3.

**Table 3 - Objectives and contents of courses offered in a health tourism Management Associate Degree Program in Türkiye.**

No	Course title	Course objective	Course content
1	Health information systems	The objective of this course is to enable students to understand the basic structure and functioning of health information systems; explain the importance of information and information management in the healthcare sector; introduce hospital information system modules; provide knowledge about e-health applications in Türkiye; and develop the ability to evaluate the integration of health technologies, particularly artificial intelligence and wearable technologies, into healthcare management.	Within the scope of this course, students will: Explain the importance of information and information management, Recognize the structure of hospital information systems, Gain knowledge about e-health applications in Türkiye, Acquire basic knowledge of health technologies, Develop the ability to evaluate next-generation health technologies.
2	Accommodation services in healthcare institutions	The objective of this course is to introduce students to the scope, importance, and management of accommodation services provided in healthcare institutions. It aims for students to develop the skills to plan, implement, and evaluate accommodation processes within the context of healthcare services.	Definition and scope of accommodation services in healthcare institutions; patient and companion accommodation; hospitality services; cleaning, hygiene, and environmental arrangements; management of accommodation units; service quality and patient satisfaction; example applications and case studies.

*Table 3 (continued on the next page)*

3	Basic health knowledge and first aid	To provide knowledge and skills in first aid and emergency care, raise public awareness, enable students to apply first aid and emergency care effectively, guide others, and develop organizational skills.	General first aid information; assessment of the injured person and the incident scene; basic knowledge of the human body and safety precautions; basic life support; first aid in cases of injuries, burns, heatstroke, and frostbite; fractures, dislocations, and sprains; consciousness disorders; poisonings and animal bites; drowning; and techniques for transporting the injured.
4	General tourism	This course aims to teach students in the field of tourism the key concepts and terminology of tourism, facilitating a better understanding of courses in other related areas.	Concepts of tourism and tourists, types of tourism, the economic, social, and physical impacts of tourism, and tourism enterprises in Türkiye.
5	General business	Business management is important not only in the public and private sectors but also in non-governmental organizations. The course aims to equip students with managerial and entrepreneurial skills, such as establishing a business from a business idea, working independently, developing projects for NGOs, and generating project ideas.	This course covers general concepts related to business management, the internal and external environment of a business, and the basic functions of a business.
6	Health tourism	The objective of this course is to familiarize students with concepts related to health tourism, examine the development of health tourism, study the health tourism sector, and analyze health tourism in Türkiye and worldwide.	This course covers the concept of health tourism, the historical development of health tourism, and types of health tourism, including Medical Tourism, Thermal Tourism, Spa/Wellness, Senior Tourism, and Tourism for People with Disabilities. It also addresses Tourist Health, Ethics and Patient Rights in Health Tourism, Intermediary Organizations in Health Tourism, the Health Tourism Market, Traditional and Complementary Medicine Practices in Health Tourism, Innovation in Health Tourism, Government Policies in Health Tourism, and research on health tourism conducted in Türkiye and worldwide.

*Table 3 (continued on the next page)*

7	Health tourism economics	The objective of this course is to provide students with the knowledge and perspective to evaluate the economic dimensions and impacts of the health tourism sector. Key goals of the course include assessing the contribution of health tourism to national economies, conducting cost analyses, examining supply-demand relationships, and evaluating economic indicators.	Fundamental concepts of health economics; the economic structure of the health tourism sector; supply-demand analysis; cost and revenue analysis; the contribution of health tourism to the national economy; foreign exchange inflows and employment effects; public and private sector investments; international health tourism revenues; the impact of economic crises; and health tourism incentives.
8	Human resources management	To introduce students to the general objectives of human resource management and the processes and methods that ensure the effective utilization of human resources in line with business objectives.	To understand the role of human resource management practices within the overall structure of a business.
9	Health tourism practices in Türkiye	The objective of this course is to introduce the biological, psychological, and social factors that influence individual and group behavior, enabling students to better understand and manage individual and group behaviors in the workplace.	Types of health tourism in Türkiye; institutions and organizations related to health tourism; city-based practices; the role of the public and private sectors; support and incentives; accreditation and quality practices; Türkiye's competitive advantages; and practical examples.
10	Biostatistics	The objective of this course is to teach fundamental statistical concepts and methods in the health sciences and health tourism, enhancing students' ability to make data-driven decisions. It aims for students to develop the competence to analyze, interpret, and utilize health-related data in scientific research.	The concept of biostatistics and its role in the health sciences; types of data; frequency distributions; measures of central tendency and dispersion; graphical data presentation; probability concepts; sampling methods; hypothesis testing; chi-square test, t-test, correlation and regression analyses; introduction to SPSS applications.
11	Communication	The objective of this course is to provide knowledge about the communication process, types of communication, effective communication skills, and communication barriers, and to help students develop their verbal, written, and nonverbal communication skills to communicate effectively in professional and social settings.	The importance of communication; functions of communication; the communication process; verbal, nonverbal, and written communication; formal and professional correspondence; organizational communication; technical communication; the internet.

*Table 3 (continued on the next page)*

12	Medical terminology	To learn the pronunciation and structure of terms in medical terminology, abbreviations, the cardiovascular, respiratory, and musculoskeletal systems, pharmaceutical terminology, and concepts related to public health and diseases.	Medical Terminology: Cardiovascular System and Endocrine System Medical Terms; Respiratory System and Eye-Ear-Nose-Throat Medical Terms; Central and Peripheral Nervous System Medical Terms; Musculoskeletal and Urogenital System Terminology; Pharmaceutical Science Terminology; Radiology and Nuclear Medicine Terms; Public Health and Disease Classification Terminology.
13	Health tourism marketing	The objective of this course is to teach students the concepts, strategies, and practices of marketing within the health tourism sector. It aims for students to acquire knowledge and skills in target market analysis, service promotion, digital marketing, brand management, and patient communication.	Marketing concepts in health tourism; marketing mix and service marketing; target market identification; brand management; pricing strategies; distribution and accessibility; digital and social media marketing; international health tourism marketing; patient loyalty and satisfaction.
14	General accounting	The objective of this course is to teach students the end-of-period accounting procedures, which constitute an important part of a business's accounting process, and to enable them to understand how these processes are completed and financial statements are prepared.	Basic concepts and the scope of end-of-period procedures; end-of-period work related to balance sheet accounts; cost of sales and period expenses; work related to income statement accounts and determination of profit or loss; preparation of the balance sheet and income statement.
15	Health tourism management	The objective of this course is to introduce students to the fundamental concepts of health tourism, its stakeholders, service processes, and managerial aspects. Additionally, it aims to provide knowledge and skills in strategic planning, marketing, quality management, and ethics within the field of health tourism.	The concept and scope of health tourism; types (medical, thermal, elderly and disabled tourism); stakeholders in health tourism; national and international health tourism practices; structure and management of health tourism enterprises; marketing strategies; ethical principles; quality management; health tourism legislation.
<i>Source: compiled by the authors.</i>			

Table 3 presents the course objectives and content of the Health Tourism Management Program at a higher education institution in Türkiye. Courses in Turkish language, history, and foreign languages are not included; only field-specific courses are shown in the table. Since health tourism is

a multidisciplinary field, the course plan is seen to have a rich and comprehensive content. It was also determined that the Medical Terminology and First Aid courses are taught by physicians employed at the institution.

Course content offered in Kazakhstan. Table 4 presents the objectives and course content of health tourism courses offered in Kazakhstan.

**Table 4 - Objectives and course content of health tourism courses offered by higher education institutions in Kazakhstan.**

No	Course title	Course objective	Course content
1	Spa science and health tourism	The objective of this course is to equip students with the necessary professional competencies to develop managerial skills in spa operations.	Students acquire knowledge about the organization of spa services and recreation, as well as the development and marketing processes of specialized tourist products such as therapeutic and health-oriented tours.
2	Treatment and health tourism	This course aims to teach the types of sanatorium and spa therapies, methods for improving public health from a travel technology perspective, the different components of natural complexes, and various health methods that affect the human body.	Students develop skills in designing tourist products for different social groups and in planning and marketing the cycle of health and recreation services.
3	Sanatorium and spa therapy	To familiarize students with the natural and recreational resources for health tourism in the Republic of Kazakhstan, the country's sanatorium and spa complexes, as well as children's health centers.	Students develop a scientific understanding of healthy lifestyles and physical awareness through sanatorium therapy.
4	Sanatorium and spa management	To enable students to learn the typology of treatment tourism, the historical development of spa science, and the types and settlement characteristics of treatment tourism and sanatorium institutions.	The course provides students with foundational theoretical knowledge, the characteristics of the geography of treatment and health tourism, and the current status and development perspectives of sports and balneological tourism. Students acquire the skills to appropriately utilize the healing properties of nature for health protection purposes, identify consumer needs, compare Kazakhstan's recreation regions, and classify natural conditions and health resources.

*Table 4 (continued on the next page)*

5	Sale of medical and health-oriented tourist services	The course is designed to help students acquire skills related to the sale of medical and health tourism services. It provides students with the opportunity to develop corporate (portfolio, competitive), functional, and instrumental strategies for selling medical and health services in the future. By examining the theoretical foundations, the course enables students to communicate effectively with tourists, clients, and various stakeholders involved in medical tourism. An important feature of the course is the development of individualized approaches to health issues and appropriate guidance strategies.	The practical training is based on interaction-oriented skills and includes case analysis, brainstorming, creative assignments, out-of-class activities, discussions, and reflection methods. Additionally, the course incorporates guest lectures and case studies. Interim assessments involve preparing personalized medical pathways for individual patients based on their financial capacities and benefits. The course is concluded with an exam that includes theoretical questions and situational problems.
6	Recreation and spa science	This course aims to develop students' competencies in evaluating areas suitable for recreational activities by considering factors such as local conditions, climate, environmental status, and technological and natural risks. The course covers the fundamental characteristics of balneology, types of spa and thermal facilities, and the ways natural resources are utilized.	Practical exercises include descriptive analysis, case resolution, application of resource evaluation methods, and comparative analysis of different regions. Students examine the characteristics of specific areas to develop the most suitable methods for recreational use. Additionally, they gain knowledge about the specialization areas of spas and the quality and safety standards of modern spa services. The final assessment is based on a content analysis of the student's individual portfolio.
7	Sanatorium and spa management	To deepen students' knowledge and skills regarding the organizational fundamentals of sanatorium and spa services.	To acquire knowledge about the fundamental principles of sanatorium and spa management; to become familiar with the sanatorium and spa service market; to gain practical skills in developing spa products in tourism; and to effectively apply the unique aspects of the economic activities of sanatorium enterprises.

*Source: compiled by the authors.*

Table 4 presents the health tourism courses offered in Kazakhstan. Health tourism courses are provided under various departments at universities located in Almaty, Astana, and Karaganda. These departments include the Service Sector Program, the Recreation and Sports Health Program, and Tourism Management Programs.

Health tourism education provided through institutions other than universities. Another research question examines whether health tourism education is offered outside higher education institutions in the two countries. In this context, an evaluation of Turkey shows that, in addition to universities, some other institutions also provide training in the field of health tourism.

Universities primarily organize training programs for businesses or individuals through continuing education centers. For example, Marmara University's Continuing Education Center offers a 72-hour Health Tourism Training Program, which individuals or businesses can attend for a fee [22]. In addition, various private enterprises also provide health tourism training programs. Furthermore, the "Basic Level Health Tourism Training" course program, approved by the Ministry of National Education on 20.02.2024, is designed for individuals who have completed secondary education and are at least 19 years old, with a total duration of 25 hours [23].

In Kazakhstan, health tourism education outside universities is also offered by a few institutions. The Kazakhstan Tourism Organization, through its "Kazakhstan Tourism Association" Health Tourism Department, provides services to support specialists who organize and sell health tourism tours while addressing issues that hinder the development of health tourism in the country. Among the department's activities are webinar seminars aimed at developing health tourism education [24].

Additionally, the Kazakhstan Tourism Online Academy in Astana offers a course titled "Introduction to Health Tourism." Comprising six modules, the course provides information on why health tourism is a promising field, how to create medical tourism products that attract foreign tourists, how to collaborate with clinics to develop unique service packages, the essential components of hospital services, and key aspects of medical marketing that contribute to the effective promotion of businesses in this sector [25].

### **Conclusion and recommendations**

This study aimed to comparatively examine how health tourism education is structured at the higher education level in Turkey and Kazakhstan. Findings obtained through a qualitative research method based on document analysis reveal that there are significant differences between the two countries in both the structural and content-related approaches to health tourism education.

According to the research results, health tourism education in Turkey exhibits a more institutionalized and multidimensional structure. In particular, programs offered at the associate degree level under the title "Health Tourism Management" provide courses covering medical, managerial, economic, and marketing aspects of the field through a holistic approach. In addition, the proliferation of elective courses related to health tourism at the undergraduate level and the availability of specialized fields focusing on health tourism in graduate programs indicate an increasing academic awareness of this area in Turkey. Moreover, trainings offered outside universities through continuous education centers, the Ministry of National Education, and private institutions demonstrate that health tourism education is not confined solely to the academic domain but has diversified in response to sectoral needs.

In Kazakhstan, however, health tourism education appears to be more limited and concentrated

around specific themes. There is no standalone department dedicated to health tourism; instead, education is mostly offered as elective or supplementary courses within programs such as tourism, the service sector, recreation, and sports health. The fact that course content largely focuses on sanatoriums, thermal springs, recreation, and natural treatment resources indicates that Kazakhstan's approach to health tourism is primarily thermal- and rehabilitation-oriented. In contrast, topics such as medical tourism, health management, patient rights, digital marketing, and international health regulations are addressed only to a limited extent.

A comparative evaluation suggests that Turkey has established a more balanced and multidisciplinary structure in health tourism education, whereas Kazakhstan, despite its natural and cost advantages, has not been able to systematically translate this potential into an educational framework. Considering the growth potential of the health tourism sector in both countries, it can be argued that the quality of education should be enhanced and a stronger integration with the industry should be achieved.

Based on the research findings, several recommendations can be made as follows:

- Health tourism education programs in Turkey and Kazakhstan should be structured in accordance with international standards. Within this scope, it is recommended that courses addressing patient safety, ethical principles, intercultural communication, foreign language proficiency, international health regulations, and quality-accreditation processes be incorporated into curricula more systematically. Particularly in Kazakhstan, the establishment of standalone undergraduate programs in health tourism would contribute to the institutionalization of education and enhance specialization in the field.

- Health tourism education should not be limited to theoretical knowledge alone; it is important to support it with internships, field practices, case analyses, and active participation of industry representatives in the educational process. Strengthening collaborations between universities and healthcare institutions, thermal facilities, and health tourism intermediary organizations will enhance graduates' sectoral competencies and employability.

- To ensure that personnel working in the health tourism sector can adapt to current developments, certificate programs, in-service training, and continuous education activities should be expanded. Additionally, it is recommended that innovative topics such as digital health applications, e-health systems, and digital marketing be integrated into education programs. Academic collaborations between universities in Turkey and Kazakhstan, student and faculty exchange programs, and joint research initiatives will further strengthen knowledge and experience sharing.

- The implementation of these recommendations requires the active involvement of multiple stakeholders. In Türkiye, institutions such as the Council of Higher Education (YÖK), the Ministry of Health, universities and health tourism organizations may collaborate in developing standardized curriculum frameworks and expanding internship opportunities.

- In Kazakhstan, cooperation between universities, healthcare institutions, tourism associations and relevant ministries may support the establishment of specialized health tourism programs and sector-oriented training modules. Furthermore, allocating resources for practical training, digital health education and international exchange programs may contribute to improving the quality and international competitiveness of health tourism education in both countries.

Limitation of this study is that it focuses on the structural and curricular characteristics of health tourism education programs based on document analysis. The study does not assess graduate employment rates, labor market expectations, employer perspectives or the effectiveness of learning

outcomes. In addition, the study does not evaluate competency frameworks, compliance with international accreditation standards, or the alignment of educational programs with labor market requirements. Future studies may address these dimensions to provide a more comprehensive assessment of the quality and effectiveness of health tourism education. Future studies may address these dimensions through surveys, interviews and mixed-method research designs involving graduates, employers and sector representatives.

#### ПАЙДАЛАНЫЛГАН ӘДБИЕТТЕР ТІЗІМІ

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*Received 16.01.2026*

*Received in revised form 09.06.2026*

*Accepted for publication 30.06.2026*

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**ТУРКИЯ МЕН ҚАЗАҚСТАНДАҒЫ САУЫҚТЫРУ ТУРИЗМІ БІЛІМІ: САЛЫСТЫРМАЛЫ (КРОСС-ҰЛТТЫҚ) ТАЛДАУ**

*Аңдатпа.* Бұл зерттеудің мақсаты Түркия мен Қазақстандағы сауықтыру туризмі саласындағы білім беруді салыстырмалы түрде талдау болып табылады. Осы мақсатта екі елдің жоғары оқу орындарында сауықтыру туризмге қатысты бөлімдер қарастырылып, олардың оқу жоспарлары жан-жақты талданды. Білім беру бағдарламаларының мазмұнын

салыстыру арқылы сауықтыру туризмі білімінің құрылымы, ауқымы және тәжірибелік қырлары бағаланды. Зерттеу нәтижелері негізінде екі елдегі сауықтыру туризмі білім беру жүйесіндегі ұқсастықтар мен айырмашылықтар айқындалып, академиялық тұрғыдан мықты жақтары мен дамытуды қажет ететін бағыттары анықталды. Түркияда сауықтыру туризмі білімінің негүрлым қалыптасқан әрі тәжірибеге бағытталған жүйесі бар екені байқалса, Қазақстанда бұл саладағы білім беру бағдарламалары соңғы бастамалар аясында даму кезеңінде екені анықталды. Зерттеу нәтижесінде екі елде де сауықтыру туризмі саласындағы білім беру сапасын арттыруға бағытталған бірқатар ұсыныстар жасалды. Аталған ұсыныстар білім беруді стандарттау, тәжірибелік оқыту мүмкіндіктерін кеңейту және халықаралық ынтымақтастықты дамыту мәселелеріне бағытталды. Зерттеу сауықтыру туризмі саласындағы адами ресурстардың сапасын арттыруға үлес қосуды көздейді.

**Кілт сөздер:** Сауықтыру туризмі, білім беру, оқу курсы, Түркия, Қазақстан

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### **СРАВНИТЕЛЬНЫЙ МЕЖНАЦИОНАЛЬНЫЙ АНАЛИЗ ОБРАЗОВАНИЯ В СФЕРЕ ОЗДОРОВИТЕЛЬНЫЙ ТУРИЗМА: ОПЫТ ТУРЦИИ И КАЗАХСТАНА**

**Аннотация.** Целью данного исследования является проведение сравнительного анализа образования в сфере оздоровительного туризма в Турции и Казахстане. В рамках исследования были рассмотрены университетские подразделения, связанные с оздоровительным туризмом в обеих странах, а также детально проанализированы их учебные планы. Путём сопоставления содержания образовательных программ были оценены структура, объём и практическая направленность обучения в сфере оздоровительного туризма. На основе полученных результатов выявлены сходства и различия в системе подготовки специалистов по оздоровительному туризму в двух странах, а также определены академические сильные стороны и направления, требующие дальнейшего развития. Установлено, что в Турции сформирован более устойчивый и практико-ориентированный подход к обучению в области медицинского туризма, тогда как Казахстан находится на этапе развития образовательных программ благодаря недавним инициативам в данной сфере. По итогам исследования предложен ряд рекомендаций, направленных на повышение качества образования в сфере медицинского туризма в обеих странах. Данные предложения ориентированы на обеспечение стандартизации образовательного процесса, расширение возможностей практической подготовки и развитие международного сотрудничества. В конечном итоге исследование направлено на вклад в повышение качества человеческих ресурсов в сфере оздоровительного туризма.

**Ключевые слова:** оздоровительный туризм, образование, учебный курс, Турция, Казахстан.