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A comprehensive study of Kazakhstan's cultural heritage and its impact on domestic tourism

Abstract. *Cultural heritage is not just a static imprint of the past, but also a dynamic contribution to the current and future socio-economic structure of the country. The article examines the dynamic relationship between the cultural heritage of the Republic of Kazakhstan and the growing sphere of domestic tourism. The study focuses on assessing how the rich cultural heritage of Kazakhstan can be strategically used to stimulate the sustainable growth of domestic tourism, strengthen national pride and cultural identity, and also covers several key objectives: to analyze the state of Kazakhstan's cultural heritage; to assess its potential as a development factor for domestic tourism; to assess the level of awareness about cultural heritage objects; and formulate pragmatic recommendations on the use of heritage for the development of domestic tourism. The significance of the research from a scientific point of view covers the academic discourse on cultural tourism, and the practical part offers an action plan for stakeholders in the industry. Using a systematic methodology, the study synthesizes existing literature to contextualize research within the broader academic landscape and uses quantitative methods such as surveys to collect empirical data from tourists and tourism professionals. This mixed methodological approach makes it possible to get a comprehensive understanding of the perception and behavior in relation to cultural objects of Kazakhstan. The practical significance of the research results lies in providing a strategic framework for the integration of cultural heritage preservation, offering recommendations for the development of domestic tourism in Kazakhstan. The analysis and results clarify the key role of cultural heritage in the development trajectory of the tourism sector of Kazakhstan. Thus, it was revealed that the cultural heritage including both tangible and intangible elements, serves as a powerful incentive for domestic tourism.*

Keywords: *domestic tourism, cultural heritage, development, historical heritage, state programs, UNESCO.*

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Introduction. The message of President K.K. Tokayev dated September 1, 2023, stressed the need to harness the country's potential. Similar transformative projects should be implemented in the tourism sector [1].

In recent years, there has been a shift in the discourse on heritage from a conservation-oriented approach to a values-oriented approach, which entails recognizing the value of cultural and natural heritage across various spheres of life. The London Declaration of the Conference on the Sustainable Cultural Heritage of Europe, stated that cultural heritage has a significant impact on various areas, including economic and regional development, sustainable tourism, job creation, skills development through technological innovation, environment, social identity, education and construction.

The significant potential of domestic tourism lies in stimulating the economies of countries, strengthening cultural identity, and promoting sustainable tourism development. This potential is rooted in the historical and cultural heritage, evident in ancient structures, works of art, narratives, and traditions.

Purpose of the study is to conduct a comprehensive analysis of the relationship between the cultural heritage of the Republic of Kazakhstan and domestic tourism expansion, to provide practical recommendations for utilizing the heritage to promote sustainable tourism development and enhance national pride and identity.

Research objectives:

1. To examine the cultural heritage of the Republic of Kazakhstan.
2. To explore the potential of Kazakhstan's cultural heritage and cultural experience as the primary drivers of domestic tourism.
3. To assess the level of awareness regarding the cultural heritage sites of Kazakhstan.
4. To offer practical recommendations for the domestic tourism promotion through the preservation and popularization of cultural heritage.

Research methods

Literature review. Conducting a comprehensive review of literary sources, focusing on cultural heritage. This stage serves to synthesize current knowledge, identify trends and pinpoint gaps in the existing literature.

Methodological approach. The study employs quantitative methods, including surveys, to gather numerical data and draw logical conclusions.

Data collection. Questionnaires were distributed to both tourists and individuals working in the tourism industry to collect information.

Conclusions. Through an extensive examination of the gathered information, conclusions are drawn regarding the influence and significance of cultural heritage in the tourism sector development.

Results of the study. The term «heritage» encompasses the legacy of physical artifacts, including buildings, monuments, landscapes, books, works of art and artifacts, as well as intangible attributes such as folklore, traditions, language and knowledge. This heritage is inherited from past generations, preserved in the present, and passed on for the future generations' benefit. The authors have examined this legacy within various contexts, as illustrated in Figure 1.

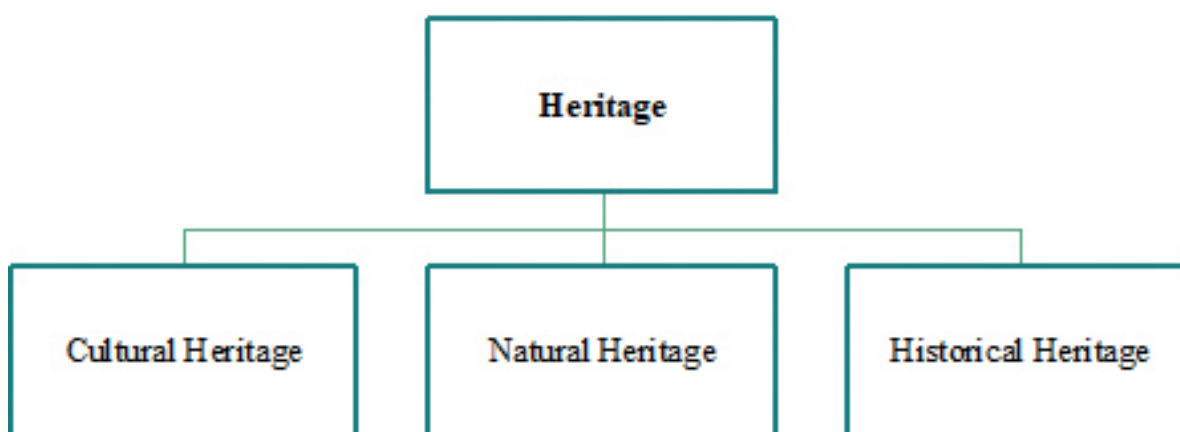


Figure 1 – Heritage types [compiled by authors]

Cultural heritage encompasses tangible elements such as buildings, monuments, landscapes and books, along with intangible aspects like folklore, traditions, language and knowledge. It also includes natural heritage, which comprises culturally significant landscapes and biodiversity).

Natural heritage comprises physical and biological formations or groups of such formations that hold ecological, aesthetic or scientific value. For instance, natural heritage sites may include national parks and nature reserves.

Historical heritage pertains to both tangible and intangible remnants of the past that possess historical significance and value. This heritage is preserved and transmitted from one generation to the next due to its importance in comprehending the historical context, evolution, and identity of a specific culture, community, or nation [3].

The concept of heritage can be expansive, covering all traces of past accomplishments and activities, whether in the realms of science and medicine or terms intended for transmission to future generations. The definition of what constitutes «heritage» is subjective and can vary based on culture and individual perspectives.

The field of heritage studies continues to expand and evolve. Scholars have delved into the comprehension of cultural heritage, including not only just material artifacts but also intangible practices, values, and meanings. Presented below are definitions and viewpoints on the cultural heritage from renowned scholars and their publications:

Rodney Harrison (2013) provides an overview of how «heritage» is understood in various disciplines in his book «Heritage: Critical Approaches». Harrison positions heritage as something continually created and remade concerning the present. Heritage is viewed as a cultural process involving negotiation, contestation, and change [4].

In his book «Perception of the Past», Cornelius Holtorf (2017) discusses the subjective nature of heritage and how different people can perceive and interpret the same heritage object or artifact in various ways. He suggests that heritage can serve as a form of communication between past and present cultures [5].

D. Fairchild Ruggles (2011) explores how Islamic art and architecture contribute to the understanding of cultural heritage in Islamic societies in her book «Islamic Art and Visual Culture». She emphasizes the importance of intercultural dialogues and multifaceted historical narratives embedded in these forms of art [6].

These perspectives underscore the multifaceted nature of cultural heritage and its deep connections with social values, politics, power dynamics and identities. They also highlight the importance of understanding cultural heritage as an ever-evolving concept intricately linked to contemporary contexts.

Historical and cultural heritage stands as a paramount facet of the country's identity, and Kazakhstan is no exception. The country has a rich cultural heritage that traces its roots back thousands of years, reflecting the diversity of ethnic groups and historical events that have influenced its development. Presently, there are 250 monuments of cultural heritage in Kazakhstan, of which: in the East Kazakhstan region – 8, Abai region – 13, Turkestan region – 31, North Kazakhstan region – 8, Pavlodar region – 3, Mangystau region – 20, Kyzylorda region – 30, Kostanay region – 5, in Karaganda region – 6, in Ulytau region -17, in Zhambyl region – 30, in Western Kazakhstan – 7, in Atyrau region – 4, in Almaty region – 4, in Zhetysay region – 8, in Aktope region – 9, in Akmola region 4, in Shymkent – 7, in Astana – 3 and in Almaty – 33 [7].

The historical and cultural heritage sites in Kazakhstan's tourist destinations play a pivotal role in attracting visitors and promoting the country's tourism industry. Kazakhstan boasts a rich cultural heritage spanning centuries, given the coexistence of diverse ethnic groups within its borders. Moreover, these cultural heritage sites are instrumental in preserving and popularizing the history and culture of Kazakhstan. The classification of cultural heritage objects is shown in Table 1 below.

Table 1 – Cultural heritage objects classification

Types of objects	Definition
Archaeological	Ancient settlements, mounds, remains of ancient settlements, sites, fortifications, military camps, industries, irrigation facilities, paths, burial grounds, places of worship and structures, megaliths, rock carvings, sites of historical cultural layers, fields of ancient battles, remnants of the life of primitive and ancient people.
Historical	Houses, structures, complexes (ensembles), individual burials and necropolises, outstanding places associated with important historical events, and locations tied to the life and activities of famous individuals, as well as the culture and way of life of different peoples.
Monumental art	Works of fine art, both as independent (stand-alone) pieces and those connected with architectural, archaeological, or other attractions.
Architecture and urban planning	Historical centers, streets, blocks, squares, architectural ensembles, remnants of long-standing planning and development, individual architectural structures, as well as related works of monumental, decorative and fine art.
Gardening and park art	Combinations of park construction integrated with natural or man-made landscapes.
Landscape	Natural territories that hold historical significance.

Cultural heritage sites play a crucial role in the tourism industry development in Kazakhstan. Being significant attractions for visitors, cultural heritage sites should be well preserved and promoted for tourism industry growth.

The World Convention on the Protection of Cultural and Natural Heritage was adopted in 1972. The convention establishes criteria for the inclusion of objects in the UNESCO World Heritage List. An object must meet one or more of the following criteria so that it can be included in the list:

1. «Historical importance»: objects of profound significance in history, art, science, religion, or culture can be recognized for their historical value.
2. «Natural importance»: objects representing unique natural wonders or possessing significant scientific, ecological, or aesthetic value can be recognized for their inherent natural value.
3. «Cultural significance»: objects reflecting traditional ways of life, customs, faith, craft techniques, or architectural styles can be recognized for their cultural essence.
4. «Innovative significance»: objects representing creative potential, innovative concepts, or technical achievements can be listed for their contributions to the advancement of science, technology, art or design.
5. «Social significance»: objects associated with movements for freedom, social equality, human rights, or the resolution of social issues can be distinguished for their impact on society [8].

Kazakhstan boasts a rich history and cultural heritage that spans many centuries. Several of its attractions have earned a place on the UNESCO World Heritage Sites list, attesting to their exceptional global significance. These sites not only enhance the tourist appeal of Kazakhstan but also serve as guardians of its rich cultural identity (Fig. 2).

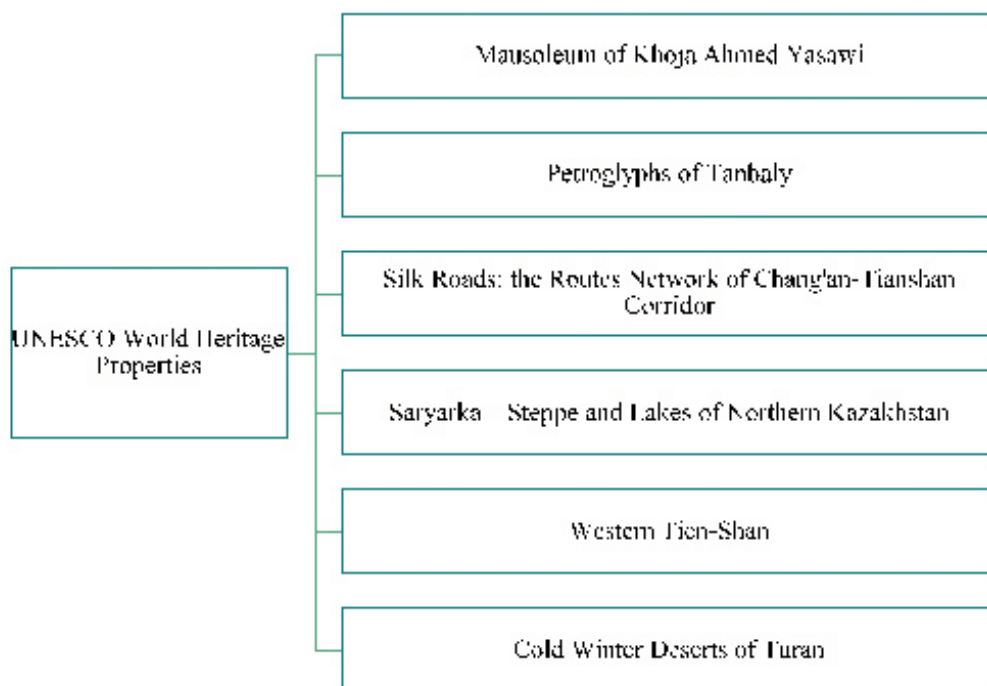


Figure 2 – UNESCO World Heritage Properties in Kazakhstan

– The mausoleum is one of the most significant structures from the Timurid period in the country. This edifice represents an early and unparalleled masterpiece of Islamic architecture in Central Asia and plays a decisive role in the propagation of Islam in the region [9].

– Tanbaly, located 170 km northwest of Almaty, features a monument comprised of a series of petroglyphs, totalling about 5,000 individual rock carvings created over several centuries. These petroglyphs depict scenes of everyday life, rituals and symbols, offering a unique glimpse into the beliefs and customs of ancient Eurasian nomadic tribes [10].

– Saryarka, a natural entity, comprises two protected areas: the Naurzum State Nature Reserve and the Korgalzhyn State Nature Reserve. Together, they occupy a vast region of Central Asian steppes and lakes, providing refuge for more than half of the world's small white-fronted geese population, along with other rare bird species. This is the most crucial site for migrating waterfowl in Central Asia [10].

– This segment of the ancient Silk Road served as the primary corridor for trade and cultural exchange between China and the Mediterranean. Several routes traversed Kazakhstan, with numerous settlements, caravanserais, fortifications and burial sites along their path [11].

– This transnational property is situated in the Tien Shan mountain system, one of the world's largest mountain ranges. The Western Tien Shan spans altitudes from 700 to 4503 meters and offers a diverse range of landscapes, hosting an exceptionally rich biological diversity [12].

– This transnational treasure consists of fourteen components located in the arid regions of the temperate zone of Central Asia between the Caspian Sea and the Turan highlands. This area experiences extreme climatic conditions, with very cold winters and hot summers, and it boasts an exceptionally diverse flora and fauna that have adapted to these harsh conditions [12].

These sites, possessing unique cultural, historical and natural significance, not only contribute to the world heritage but also serve as evidence of the intricate intertwining of history and the natural splendor of Kazakhstan.

When discussing the significance of cultural resources and their diversity, it is pertinent to highlight a strong position held by Kazakhstan in the Travel & Tourism Development Index 2021. According to the World Economic Forum Report «Rebuilding for a Sustainable and Resilient Future» Kazakhstan is 63 out of 117 represented destinations in terms of cultural resources pillar.

A country's position in the global ranking has significant implications for various aspects of its development, influence, and overall positioning within both domestic and international tourism markets [13].

Discussion. The authors conducted a case study of countries and cities whose cultural heritage has contributed to the development of domestic tourism (see Table 2).

Table 2 – Countries and cities thematic study [compiled by the authors]

Name of the country	Contribution of cultural heritage to the development of domestic tourism
Xi'an, China	Xi'an, formerly the ancient capital of China, is renowned as the birthplace of the world-famous Terracotta Army. While the Terracotta Army draws foreign tourists, domestic tourism is thriving as Chinese citizens are driven by educational programs and national pride to explore their country's ancient heritage.
Rome, Italy	Rome, often referred to as the «Eternal City», is home to numerous historical attractions from the Roman Empire, such as the Colosseum, the Roman Forum, and the Pantheon. Additionally, the city is the heart of the Catholic Church, with the Vatican drawing religious tourists.
Cairo and Luxor, Egypt	The rich history of the Egyptian Pharaohs serves as the primary attraction. The Egyptian Museum in Cairo and the Pyramids of Giza, along with the Luxor Valley of the Kings, are pivotal in attracting tourists. Educational excursions and local vacations encourage many Egyptians to explore these sites, underlining the role of cultural heritage in domestic tourism.
Cusco, Peru	Cusco, the former capital of the Inca Empire, is the gateway to Machu Picchu. The city itself, with its blend of Inca and Spanish colonial architecture, has been designated as a UNESCO World Heritage Site. While Machu Picchu gains international renown, Peruvians frequently visit Cusco to reconnect with their Inca roots, contributing to a thriving domestic tourism industry.

From the study of countries and cities whose cultural heritage has made a significant contribution to the development of domestic tourism, the following conclusions can be drawn:

- The popularization of unique stories, folklore and historical significance of sites can enhance their attractiveness.
- Accessibility is crucial. Improved transportation, clear signage, the availability of local guides, and amenities can significantly improve the tourist experience.
- Informing residents about their own cultural and historical attractions often stimulates interest. School trips, seminars and cultural programs can help boost self-esteem, leading to an increase in local visits.
- Promoting sites on the Internet through virtual tours, interactive websites, and engaging content on social networks can generate interest and provide the necessary information to encourage visits.

Through an understanding and application of these lessons, regions can optimize their cultural heritage assets, stimulating domestic tourism while simultaneously ensuring sustainability and preservation for future generations [14].

The authors also conducted a survey. The methodology involved a systematic approach to gathering insights on the attractiveness, significance, awareness, and preferences of respondents regarding cultural assets. The questionnaire consisting of 7 questions was distributed through social networks and 128 people from various age groups across all regions of the country were interviewed. The chosen sample size of 128 respondents strikes a balance between statistical

significance, resource considerations, and the depth of insights sought, making it a robust foundation for understanding public perspectives on cultural heritage objects in the country.

The findings revealed that:

1. The majority of respondents, approximately 75%, fall within the age range of 17 to 24 years. The remaining age groups, spanning from 25 to 35 years old, from 36 to 50 years, and those over 50 years old, are fairly evenly distributed, each accounting for about 8-9% of respondents (Figure 3.1).

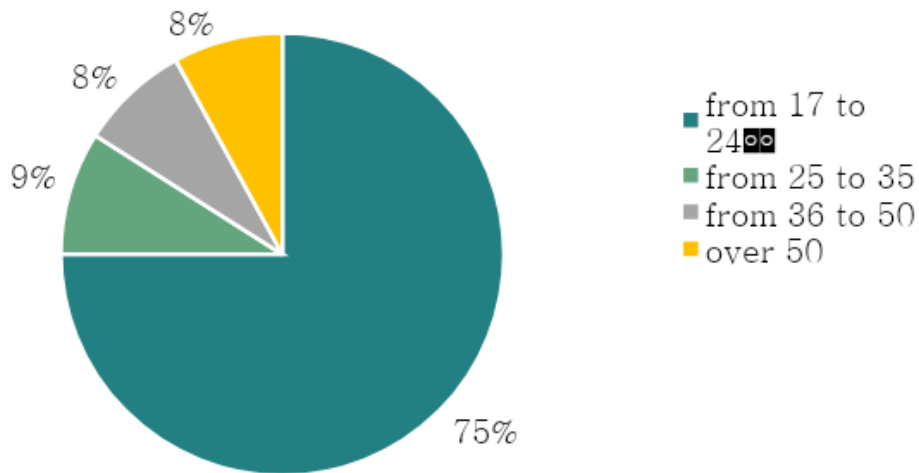


Figure 3.1 – Distribution of the responses to the question: Specify your age

2. Based on the presented data, the highest preference among the types of tourism is given to «Cultural» tourism (58%), indicating a strong inclination among respondents towards experiences that provide insights into history, culture and education. Following that, 43% of respondents favor the «City breaks» option, which indicates the popularity of short, revitalizing getaways. Less preferred types such as «Ethnographic» (18%) may cater to niche interests. It is worth noting that preferences such as «Event tourism» and «Extreme tourism» are also notable, with each attracting almost a third of the respondents. Such information can be valuable for specialists in tourism marketing and planning when developing service packages and promotions (Figure 3.2).

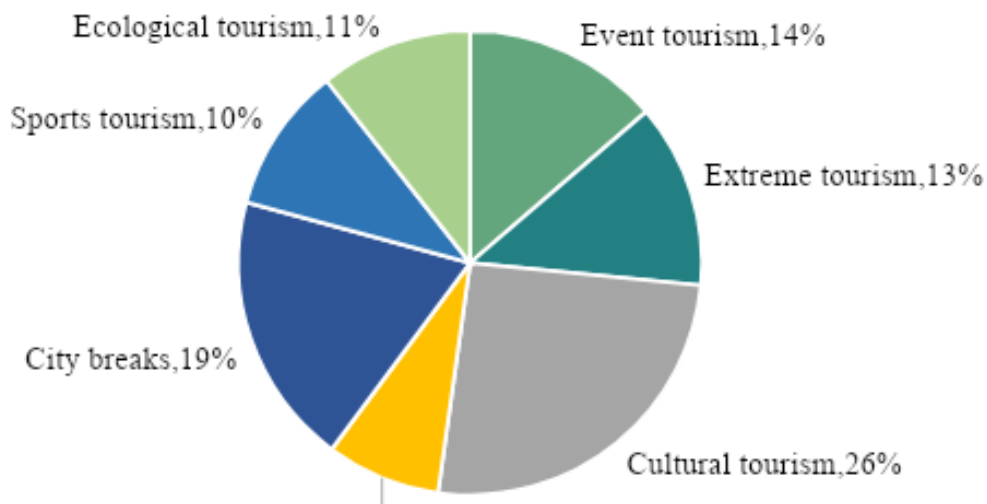


Figure 3.2 – Distribution of the responses to the question: Which types of tourism do you prefer?

3. Among the categories of cultural heritage, the most intriguing ones are «Historical monuments» (68%) and «Archaeological monuments» (46%) (Figure 3.3).

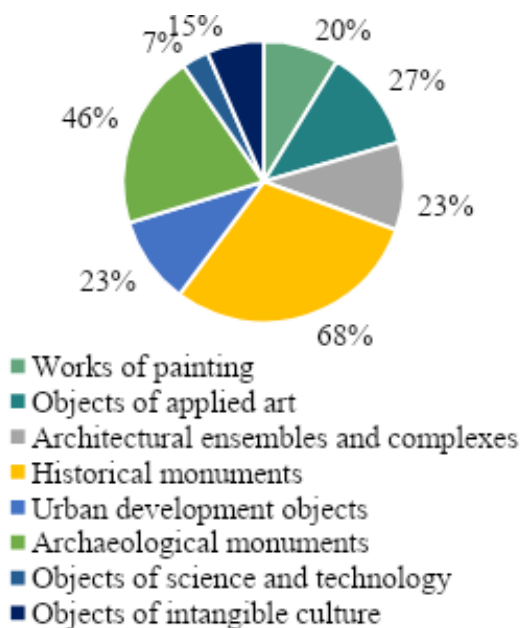


Figure 3.3 – Distribution of the responses to the question: Which cultural heritage sites are most attractive to you?

4. The most common sources from which people gather information about cultural heritage objects are the Internet (81%) and Social Networks (50%). The prevalence of online sources underscores the significance of maintaining a robust digital presence and accessibility for promoting cultural heritage in the modern internet age (Figure 3.4).

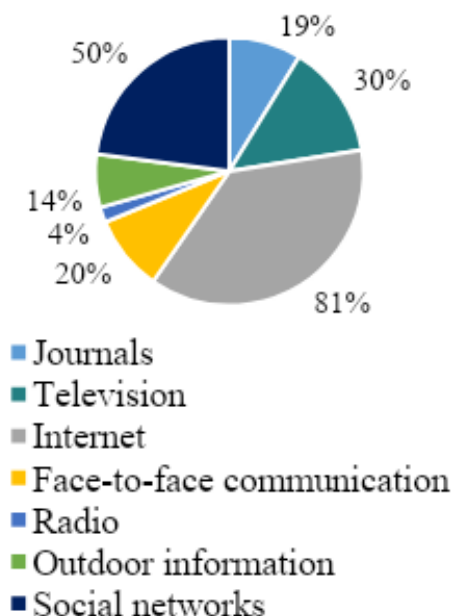


Figure 3.4 – Distribution of the responses to the question: From what sources do you obtain information about cultural heritage sites?

5. A substantial portion of respondents (54%) «respectfully» for the cultural heritage objects in their region, reflecting a deep sense of esteem and appreciation for these attractions. Furthermore, 40% of respondents «with interest» in these places, indicating curiosity or a desire to become more acquainted with their local heritage (Figure 3.5).

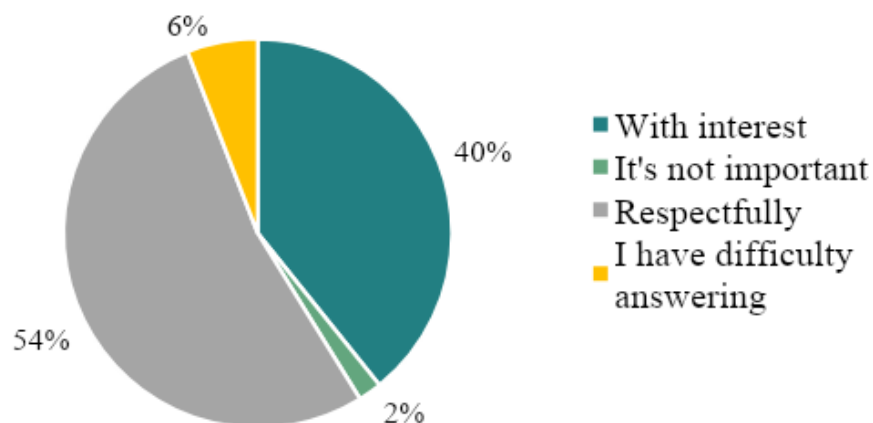


Figure 3.5 – Distribution of the responses to the question: How do you feel about the cultural heritage sites of your region?

6. The majority of respondents, specifically 59%, are aware of state programs for the preservation and utilization of cultural heritage objects in the Republic of Kazakhstan. Nevertheless, there is still a significant percentage (30%) who are unaware of these programs. Additionally, 10% find it challenging to provide an answer, which may indicate a lack of detailed knowledge or uncertainty about the topic. These data underscore the importance of intensifying public awareness campaigns to ensure that the majority of the population is informed about the efforts and initiatives related to the preservation of cultural heritage in Kazakhstan (Figure 3.6).

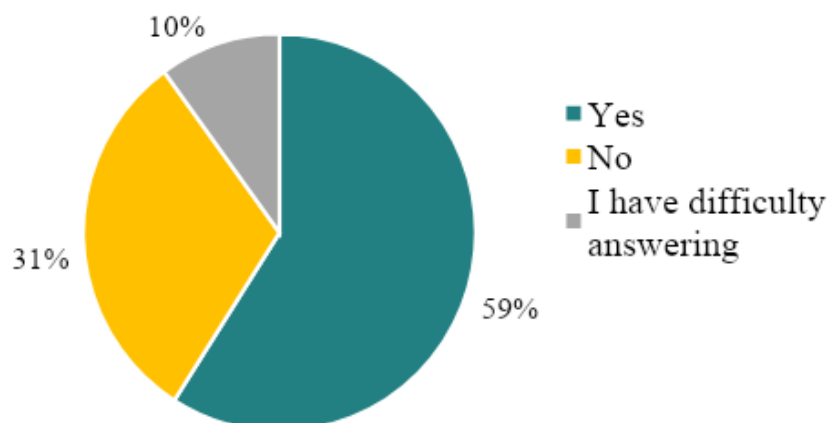


Figure 3.6 – Distribution of the responses to the question: Are you familiar with the state programs for the preservation and use of cultural heritage objects in the Republic of Kazakhstan?

7. It is evident from the presented data that the top priority for respondents in shaping state programs is the «Preservation of the historical appearance of districts». This underscores the prevailing societal desire to maintain the authentic historical appearance of specific areas. Following with less emphasis are considerations about «Infrastructure development» (20%) and

achieving «Achieving an optimal balance between development and green areas» (15%). These preferences highlight the aspiration for urban development that integrates functionality with environmental concerns. As government programs are developed or updated, decision-makers must take these public preferences into account to garner broader support and ensure effective implementation (Figure 3.7).

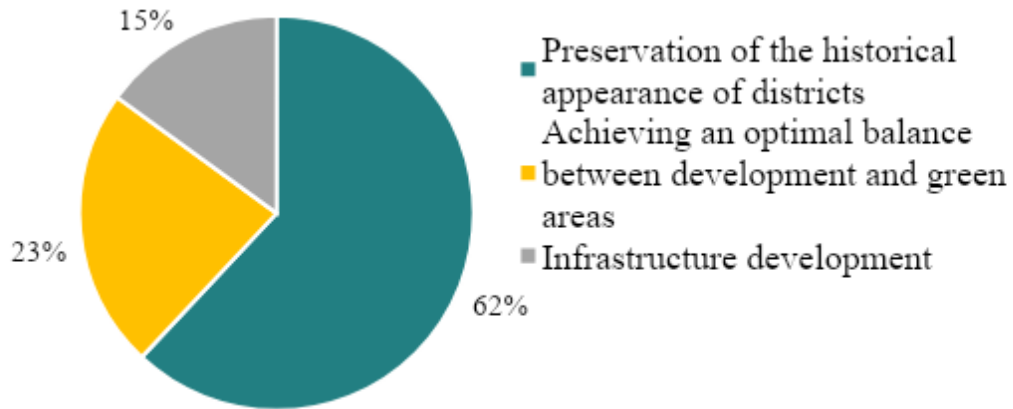


Figure 3.7 – Distribution of the responses to the question: In your opinion, what should be the primary focus when shaping the aforementioned programs?

The survey data offers insights into the public’s perspectives on various aspects of cultural heritage and urban development. A prevailing consensus centers around the significance of preserving the historical appearance of the districts, reflecting the respondents’ profound appreciation for authenticity and heritage. Furthermore, although infrastructure and balanced urban planning receive somewhat less emphasis, they underscore a holistic perspective in which history, functionality and the environment are integral components of the urban landscape.

To promote domestic tourism through historical and cultural heritage, prioritizing conservation and restoration efforts essential to maintain the authenticity and appeal of cultural heritage sites. Collaboration with local communities and businesses can enhance site management and create compelling experiences for tourists while leveraging digital platforms can effectively promote and showcase these destinations to a wider audience. Sustainable approaches should be incorporated into all tourism initiatives to ensure the preservation of cultural heritage sites for future generations [15].

Conclusion. The inherent value of historical and cultural heritage transcends mere echoes of a nation’s past; it is an essential driver of domestic tourism. Cultural heritage sites serve not only as landmarks but also as symbols of national pride. Successfully integrating these facilities into the tourism landscape requires a delicate balance between environmental conservation, public engagement and contemporary promotional strategies. Digital platforms, coupled with sustainable tourism practices, prove to be potent tools in this endeavor. Public feedback reflects a profound respect and keen interest in preserving the genuine historical essence of their regions. As countries aim to fortify their tourism sectors, the rich palette of their history, manifest in these locations, can unlock the potential for economic, cultural and educational growth.

Furthermore, it is exceedingly crucial to incorporate educational initiatives that deepen the perception and understanding of the historical and cultural significance of these objects for both residents and visitors. By upholding a symbiotic relationship between heritage preservation and tourism development, we contribute to the enrichment of our cultural heritage and nurture a sense of shared responsibility and reverence for our collective legacy. Thus, further advancement and research in this field pave the way toward sustainable socio-economic development, cultural enrichment, and global connectivity.

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Қазақстанның мәдени мұрасын жан-жақты зерттеу және оның ішкі туризмге әсері

Аңдатпа. Мәдени мұра – бұл өткеннің статикалық іздері ғана емес, сонымен қатар елдің қазіргі және болашақ әлеуметтік-экономикалық құрылымына динамикалық үлес болып табылады. Мақалада Қазақстан Республикасының мәдени мұрасы мен ішкі туризмнің өсіп келе жатқан саласы арасындағы серпінді өзара байланыс қарастырылады. Зерттеу Қазақстанның бай мәдени мұрасын ішкі туризмнің орнықты өсуін ынталандыру, ұлттық мақтаныш пен мәдени бірегейлікті нығайту үшін стратегиялық түрде қалай пайдалануға болатынын бағалауға бағытталған, сондай-ақ бірнеше негізгі мақсаттарды қамтиды: Қазақстанның мәдени мұрасының жай-күйін талдау; оның әлеуетін ішкі туризм үшін даму факторы ретінде бағалау; мәдени мұра объектілері туралы хабардар болу деңгейін бағалау; ішкі туризмді дамыту үшін мұраны пайдалану бойынша прагматикалық ұсыныстарды тұжырымдау. Зерттеудің ғылыми маңыздылығы мәдени мұра мен туризм туралы академиялық дискурсты қамтиды, ал практикалық бөлім саланың мүдделі тараптары үшін даму жоспарын ұсынады. Жүйелі әдістемені пайдалана отырып, зерттеу кеңірек академиялық ландшафт шеңберінде зерттеуді контексттеу үшін әдебиеттерді синтездейді және туристер мен туризм мамандарынан эмпирикалық деректерді жинау үшін сауалнамалар сияқты сандық әдістерді пайдаланады. Бұл аралас әдістемелік тәсіл Қазақстанның мәдени объектілеріне қатысты қабылдау туралы жан-жақты түсінік алуға мүмкіндік береді. Зерттеу нәтижелерінің практикалық маңыздылығы Қазақстанда ішкі туризмді дамыту бойынша ұсынымдарды ұсына отырып, мәдени мұраны сақтауды интеграциялау үшін стратегиялық негізді қамтамасыз ету болып табылады. Талдау мен нәтижелер Қазақстанның туристік секторын дамыту траекториясындағы мәдени мұраның негізгі рөлін айқындайды. Осылайша, материалдық және материалдық емес элементтерді қамтитын мәдени мұра ішкі туризм үшін күшті ынталандыру ретінде қызмет ететіні анықталды.

Түйін сөздер: ішкі туризм, мәдени мұра, даму, тарихи мұра, мемлекеттік бағдарламалар, ЮНЕСКО.

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Всестороннее исследование культурного наследия Казахстана и его влияние на внутренний туризм

Аннотация. Культурное наследие – это не просто статичные отпечатки прошлого, но и динамичный вклад в нынешнюю и будущую социально-экономическую структуру страны. В статье рассматривается динамичная взаимосвязь между культурным наследием Республики Казахстан и растущей сферой внутреннего туризма. Исследование сосредоточено на оценке того, как богатое культурное наследие Казахстана может быть стратегически использовано для стимулирования устойчивого роста внутреннего туризма, укрепления национальной гордости и культурной самобытности, а также охватывает несколько ключевых целей: проанализировать состояние культурного наследия Казахстана; оценить его потенциал как фактора развития для внутреннего туризма; оценить уровень осведомленности об объектах культурного наследия; и сформулировать прагматичные рекомендации по использованию наследия для развития внутреннего туризма. Значимость исследования с научной точки зрения охватывает академический дискурс о культурном туризме, а практическая часть предлагает план действий для заинтересованных сторон отрасли. Используя систематическую методологию, исследование синтезирует существующую литературу

для контекстуализации исследования в рамках более широкого академического ландшафта и использует количественные методы, такие, как опросы для сбора эмпирических данных от туристов и профессионалов туризма. Этот смешанный методический подход позволяет получить всестороннее представление о восприятии и поведении в отношении культурных объектов Казахстана. Практическая значимость результатов исследования заключается в обеспечении стратегической основы для интеграции сохранения культурного наследия, предлагая рекомендации по развитию внутреннего туризма в Казахстане. Анализ и результаты проясняют ключевую роль культурного наследия в траектории развития туристского сектора Казахстана. Таким образом было выявлено, что культурное наследие, включающее в себя как материальные, так и нематериальные элементы, служит мощным стимулом для внутреннего туризма.

Ключевые слова: внутренний туризм, культурное наследие, развитие, историческое наследие, госпрограммы, ЮНЕСКО.

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