



# ТУРИЗМ/ TOURISM/ТУРИЗМ

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# Strategies for Enhancing the Competitiveness of Tourism in the Aktobe Region through Sustainable Development

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**Abstract.** The article is devoted to the development of comprehensive strategies to increase the competitiveness of tourism in the Aktobe region of Kazakhstan with an emphasis on sustainable development, which is becoming particularly relevant and important for the region. The study focuses on the untapped potential of the Aktobe region in the light of the progressive importance of tourism in the global economy. In this article, the authors discuss the important need to integrate sustainable practices to increase the competitiveness of tourism, taking into account current trends and the needs of tourists. They also provide examples of world experience in sustainable tourism development and their applicability in the Aktobe region. In the study, the authors pay special attention to the involvement of local communities, infrastructure development, the use of innovations, technologies, as well as marketing and educational aspects of tourism development. Based on the results of the study, a SWOT analysis is presented, which reflects the strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and threats to increase the competitiveness of tourism in the region, offering strategic recommendations for its further development.

**Keywords:** sustainable development, tourism, marketing, competitiveness, Aktobe region.

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# Introduction

Relevance of the research topic. In the modern world, tourism is one of the most dynamically developing areas of the global economy. This industry is unique in that it has a significant positive impact on various sectors of the economy, including transport, culture, sports and agriculture.

Although Kazakhstan's tourist destinations are not yet widely recognized in the international community, the country has significant potential for tourism development due to its geographical location, a variety of natural landscapes and rich historical and cultural heritage. This is especially true for the Aktobe region, which can offer many unique tourist opportunities [1].

Research in this area can help identify the potential and opportunities for creating a new strategy to increase the competitiveness of tourism, improve quality and attractiveness for tourists.

The research by Brych and Galish (2020) suggests a resource-based approach to the strategic management of tourism enterprises, which significantly affects their competitiveness. The authors emphasize how important it is to use this method to increase the productivity of travel companies in a competitive environment [2].

Heath's research (2003) highlights the importance of involving all stakeholders in strategic planning so that tourist destinations become more competitive. Increasing the competitiveness of tourism in regions such as Aktobe region can be achieved using the proposed model of sustainable competitiveness [3].

The study on the analysis of sustainable tourism development notes that economic, social and environmental aspects are necessary to increase the competitiveness of tourist destinations. This is especially important for places that strive for sustainable growth [4]. The study by Kovalev and co-authors (2022) examines methods of planning strategic tourism development at the regional level, focusing on the fact that in order to develop effective strategies, it is necessary to conduct a thorough analysis of the current socio-economic situation of the region [5].

A study of the Aksubaigli Nature Reserve has shown that tourism revenues limit sustainable development. Local residents believe that income distribution is low, which reduces their participation in tourist activities and causes general dissatisfaction with the development of tourism [6]. In the study, Aimagambetov E. proposed a model of sustainable development of the tourism industry in Kazakhstan, based on the principles of economic, social and environmental sustainability. The model is useful for evaluating current indicators and developing strategies for sustainable tourism development in the region [7]. Research by Yrza B. assesses how sustainable development is included in the management plans of tourist destinations in Kazakhstan. The study showed that a lack of knowledge and insufficient involvement of the local community in the planning process led to little acceptance of these principles [8]. The study by K.Mamutova examines the management systems of the tourism industry through destination management organizations (DMOS), as well as new methods such as cluster policy and public-private partnerships (PPP) for the growth of domestic and inbound tourism in Kazakhstan [9].

The strategy of increasing the competitiveness of tourism in the Aktobe region should take into account current trends and changes in the behavior and preferences of tourists. Today's tourists are looking for unique, personalized and technologically advanced travel experiences.

A successful strategy should therefore include the development and promotion of travel offers that meet these requirements [10].

The strategy should be based on the use of innovations and digital technologies in the promotion of tourism. This may include the development of mobile applications for guides to the region, virtual tours of historical sites, online booking and personalized recommendations for travelers. It is important that these technologies are integrated in such a way that they enhance, rather than replace, the real experience of visiting the Aktobe region [11].

In addition to technological integration, the strategy should also include an interdisciplinary approach combining knowledge from the fields of ecology, culture, sociology and economics. This will help ensure that tourism development is sustainable and does not harm local culture or the environment. For example, programs can be developed that support local communities and contribute to the preservation of cultural heritage, while attracting tourists [12].

Ultimately, the goal of the strategy is not only to increase the number of visitors to the Aktobe region, but also to make sure that the development of tourism contributes to economic growth, social well-being and the preservation of the natural and cultural wealth of the region [13]. This is an approach that ensures that tourism in the Aktobe region will not only be competitive, but also sustainable in the long term.

The novelty of the research lies in the approach to integrating sustainable practices into the tourism industry of the region, which will not only attract more tourists, but also preserve natural and cultural values for future generations.

The problem that this article solves is the need for a balance between the development of tourism and the preservation of the unique cultural and natural heritage of the Aktobe region.

The purpose of the study is to develop comprehensive strategies to increase the competitiveness of tourism in the Aktobe region through sustainable development.

The objectives of the study include:

- Analysis of the current state of the tourism industry in the Aktobe region.
- Study of the world experience of sustainable tourism development and its applicability in the conditions of the region.
- Development of proposals for the integration of sustainable practices into the tourism activities of the region.

# Research methods

The following research methods were used in the course of the study:

- Documentary analysis. This method included the identification of the main sources of documents in the field of tourism, such as legislation, reports, research papers and strategies related to the tourism industry. The study of these materials made it possible to identify key concepts, terms, trends and problems characteristic of tourism in Kazakhstan and the Aktobe region.
- Using the case method. This approach included an analysis of the current state of the tourism industry in Kazakhstan and the Aktobe region, including consideration of growth dynamics, key players and the distribution of tourist flows by geography. The case study examined various

factors affecting tourism, including economic, political, social and environmental aspects. The various tourist products offered in the region were also examined, with an analysis of their advantages and disadvantages.

- Statistical analysis. This method made it possible to objectively evaluate and compare key quantitative indicators in tourism, such as the number of tourists, income from tourism, average duration of trips and other important parameters. The analysis of data for various time periods made it possible to assess the effectiveness of tourism development programs and identify factors that influenced positive changes in the industry.
- SWOT analysis. As part of this analysis, an assessment of the current state of tourism in the Aktobe region was carried out. The industry's strengths and weaknesses, growth opportunities and potential threats have been identified. This allowed us to develop strategies to exploit advantages, improve weaknesses, maximize opportunities and minimize risks.
- Comparative analysis. In the course of this analysis, the tourism industry of Kazakhstan was compared with other countries. The role of Kazakhstan in the global tourism market was assessed and the financing of measures to regulate tourism at the national and regional levels was studied. The analysis of data for different years helped to identify trends and changes in the development of tourism, as well as to assess the effectiveness of financial investments at different levels of management.

# Discussion and results

Aktobe region is a region with a rich cultural and natural heritage, which makes it attractive for tourists from different parts of the world. Despite the many advantages, the tourism industry of the region is still in the initial stage of its development and has not used its full potential.

Statistics show that in 2022, 186 thousand tourists were served by the region, which is 28% more than in the previous year. The majority of tourists are local, while foreign visitors make up only 5-10% of the total, and their influx depends on the season.

Due to its geographical location, Aktobe region has significant prospects for the development of tourism. New entrepreneurs are actively involved in the region, and work is underway to improve the infrastructure of tourist facilities. An example is the Aktolagai chalk massif in the Bayganinsky district, which is comparable in beauty to the famous Bozzhyra object and even surpasses it in scale. A project is being implemented here to create recreation areas, including glamping, with the support of local businessmen and the state [14].

Work is also underway to equip recreational facilities, such as the installation of gazebos, benches, toilets and garbage cans. Weekend excursions, information tours for media and bloggers, as well as tour operators are organized. The Barkyn sands with a unique pine forest and the procedure of "psammotherapy" are popular in the Wilsky district. The recreation center operates here all year round and has expanded the range of services with state support [15].

Kargaly district attracts tourists with its nature and the Kargaly reservoir. The Qargaly Resort project is being implemented here, including the construction of an entertainment park with guest houses, a ski base, a sanatorium, a racetrack and other entertainment. The state program supports infrastructure projects.

The plans for the development of domestic tourism in Aktobe region include improving infrastructure, modernizing the material base, building new facilities, developing and improving the quality of local tourist products, rational use of natural and cultural resources, developing small businesses and services, advertising and information support for the industry, training qualified personnel, as well as creating conditions for investment and financing in the tourism sector.

Today there are more than 70 companies operating in the field of tourism in Aktobe region, but only three of them have a tour operator license. Among these companies, most are engaged in the organization of outbound tourism, while only one company offers domestic and inbound tourism services, which indicates the lack of development of tourism services within the region [16].

In 2023, more than 60 thousand tourists visited Aktobe region, which indicates a growing interest in the region. Of particular interest are the Irgiz-Turgai Nature Reserve, which is home to rare species of animals and birds, as well as the mausoleum of Abat-Baytak, a unique monument of the times. However, there are also factors hindering the development of domestic tourism, including insufficient infrastructure and difficulties with access to some tourist sites. Aktobe region has unique natural and historical sites that distinguish it from other regions. Such objects include the Zhamanshin meteorite crater and the Yeset Batyr memorial complex. In comparison with other regions of Kazakhstan and world examples, Aktobe region can stand out due to its rich cultural heritage and unique nature.

The development of tourism promises to increase the GRP of the region, create new jobs and improve the economic situation. However, in order to achieve these goals, it is necessary to improve the transport infrastructure and the quality of tourist services. Tourism directly affects the economy through the spending of tourists on housing, food, transport and entertainment. These expenses generate revenue for local businesses and contribute to GRP growth. Examples of countries where tourism accounts for a significant part of GDP include France (7% of GDP) and Thailand (17.7% of GDP). Tourism also has an indirect impact on the economy through the supply chain. For example, travel companies buy local goods and services, creating demand for products from other sectors of the economy. This includes everything from food to building materials, which contributes to economic growth and job creation in various sectors. Spending by tourists in the region can have a multiplier effect, as every dollar spent can be reused in the economy. The greater the share of tourists' expenses spent within the region, the higher the multiplier effect. This supports the local economy and contributes to the creation of additional jobs.

By 2022, 99 tourist accommodation facilities (hotels, hostels and campsites) and more than 60 travel agencies are operating in the region. To date, there are 75 sacred sites in the Aktobe region, of which 27 are objects of national and 48 of local significance.

Currently, in addition to visiting sacred and cultural and historical sites in the Aktobe region, the following types of tourism are popular: ecological tourism: Kargalinsky Reservoir (sturgeon ponds, Aschelisai ("wolf") waterfall), the chalk mountains "Aktolagai", Irgiz-Turgai natural reserve; therapeutic (medical) tourism: sanatorium-pantotherapy clinic "Zaru", sanatorium-dispensary "Shipager", sands "Barkyn"; entertainment tourism: aquapark "Tree of life Aktobe", recreation and entertainment park "Green land", recreation park "Yurta park". There is also a tourist portal dedicated to the region www.visitaktobe .kz,tourist information desks have been installed at the airport and on the Arbat in Aktobe.

On August 28-29, 2022, the first international tourism festival "Qarg'aly Fest" was held. The number of participants is more than 25,000 people.

Travel companies specializing in domestic tourism in the Aktobe region offer various types of tours. This includes weekend tours to natural attractions, historical monuments, places associated with historical figures such as Hero of the Soviet Union Aliya Moldagulova, as well as visits to the Koblandy Batyr Memorial complex, Abat Baitak mausoleum, Toleubulak petroglyphs, chalk mountains and other significant places. In addition, they offer tours to various areas of the region.

Table 1. SWOT analysis of tourism in Aktobe region

#### Weaknesses Strengths - Rich cultural and natural heritage: The region - Insufficient development of domestic tourism: has unique natural landscapes and historical Most travel companies focus on outbound and cultural monuments that are attractive to tourism, while domestic tourism remains undeveloped. tourists. - Infrastructure development: Projects to - Limited number of licensed tour operators: improve the tourist infrastructure, such as the Only three companies in the region have a tour creation of recreation areas and entertainment operator license, which may limit opportunities parks (for example, "Qargaly Resort"), contribute for tourism development. to the attractiveness of the region. - Seasonality: The influx of foreign tourists - Support for local entrepreneurship: The depends on the season, which can lead to involvement of local businessmen and instability of tourism income. government support contribute to the - Insufficient fame: The tourist destinations of development of tourism and related sectors. the Aktobe region are not yet widely known at - Variety of tourist products: The region offers the global various types of tours, including cultural, natural level. and historical routes. **Opportunities** Threats Marketing and promotion: Active promotion Competition with other regions: Strong of tourist routes and facilities can attract more competition from other tourist destinations both domestic and foreign tourists. within Kazakhstan and abroad. - Development of new tourism products: The - Economic instability: Global economic factors development of unique tourism products and and internal economic fluctuations can negatively services based on local characteristics can affect the tourist flow. increase the influx of tourists. - Environmental problems: The need to preserve - Expansion of infrastructure: The construction natural and cultural resources in the context of a of new hotels, restaurants, entertainment and growing tourist flow. sports facilities will increase the attractiveness of - Changes in consumer preferences: The the region. need for constant adaptation to the changing - Cooperation with international partners: requirements and interests of tourists. Partnerships with foreign tour operators and organizations can contribute to international recognition.

In order to develop a comprehensive strategy to increase the competitiveness of tourism in the Aktobe region through sustainable development, an analysis of the world experience of sustainable tourism development and its applicability in the conditions of the region was carried out.

Examples of sustainable tourism from different countries:

Bhutan: The principle of "high value, low impact" is implemented through strict entry requirements and tourist tax, which goes to infrastructure development and social programs. For Aktobe region, such an approach may consist in the development of tourism programs that contribute to local economic and social development.

Fiji: Development of sustainable tourism facilities such as the Six Senses Resort, powered by solar energy and carrying out rainwater harvesting and water filtration on site, eliminating the use of single-use plastic bottles. In Aktobe region, the possibility of using renewable energy sources and waste recycling systems in tourist facilities can be considered.

South Africa: An example of sustainable tourism is Mdumbi, a community-run ecotourism hostel that supports local culture and engages in energy conservation, solar energy and waste management. For Aktobe region, this may mean supporting initiatives managed by local communities and involving them in the process of tourism development.

Belize: Volunteer tourism programs allow tourists to participate in the work of local environmental conservation organizations. Aktobe region may consider the possibility of creating similar programs that attract tourists to participate in environmental projects.

Switzerland: The Swiss Solidarity Fund for Tourism supports projects aimed at improving the lives of people in tourist destinations and contributes to the sustainable development of tourism. Similar funds or programs can be created in Aktobe region to support sustainable tourism initiatives.

These examples and practices can serve as a source of inspiration and a model for developing strategies for sustainable tourism development in the Aktobe region.

Over the past 20 years, various methods have also been developed to determine the competitiveness of tourist regions. These include four principles of competitiveness of tourist regions, namely: favorable conditions for the development of the industry, tourism is a leading industry, the presence of strong sales channels in various markets and a fast-growing private sector. All scientific research on the international competitiveness of tourist regions is based on the paradigm of comparative and competitive advantages. Fundamentally different approaches are put forward in economic theory and management sources to develop a theoretical concept of the problem of international competitiveness. The issue of increasing the competitiveness of a tourist region has been the subject of various studies. In the process of its research, such methodological approaches as strategic planning and management, marketing of tourist regions, market positioning, image and branding, price competitiveness, environmental protection, and the concept of sustainable development were used.

In our opinion, the variety of tourism needs, depending on the purpose of the trip, arise on a 7M scale and reflect seven aspects of competitiveness, that is, the competitiveness of the country's tourism sector depends on the quality of the services offered by an individual entrepreneur (guide, artisan, waiter, taxi driver) on a monoscale, a national guest house with the status of

a family enterprise on a mini-scale, catering enterprises, hotels and tour operators on a micro scale, the activities of regional offices for the development of tourism on the meta and mesoscale. The country's tourism competitiveness (macro) occurs due to the gradual improvement of each link in the tourism sector from the bottom up on a 7M scale, the introduction and support of self-government systems and clusters based on the principles of mutual competition, as well as the implementation of reforms based on the principles of the concept of sustainable development. We believe that sustainable tourism development is the introduction of mechanisms for the formation of appropriate production models and consumption culture while maintaining economically stable growth and socio-ecological balance of tourist regions

In our opinion, the sustainable development of tourism in the Aktobe region can be based on the following principles: the implementation of sustainable tourism development in a combination of supply and demand; the introduction of sustainable tourism development on a scale of 7M (mono, mini, micro, meta, meso, macro and mega); the introduction of a tourist offer system based on programs suitable for tourism-generating, tourist and information spaces.

Sustainable tourism development should take into account the economic, social and environmental aspects of all services and goods consumed by visitors during travel, which is the first principle. And the second principle provides for development on a 7M scale. The last principle of sustainable tourism development provides for the implementation of measures to promote a business model based on the concept of sustainable development in spaces where travel is carried out in cooperation with business entities that generate travelers and the implementation of measures to develop consumer culture, as well as the gradual formation of the image of Uzbekistan as a sustainably developing tourist region. Economic, political, informational globalization and integration have led to changes in the tourist space. The global tourism industry is becoming increasingly integrated, and the interconnectedness of the countries that make up it is gradually increasing. The main condition for assessing the real competitiveness of tourism and travel of a certain country and the constant increase in its attractiveness requires a systematic analysis of the tourist supply system and from the point of view of the situation in the countries generating travelers and the information space that surrounds this system.

Based on a systematic geographical approach to tourism, a model consisting of a region generating travelers, a tourist region (destination) and a transit zone is widely used, which combines the previous two components and is an approach to tourism as a system consisting of tourists, the tourism industry and geographical elements. In addition, more advanced models of the tourism system have been developed, considered as a system consisting of the environment of the tourist region, the market generating travelers, a complex of promotional events, as well as transport and communications. Therefore, tourism can be defined as an open system that consists of elements that move and work together in a specific environment that is influenced by political, economic, social, technological and environmental factors

# **Conclusion**

Aktobe region has significant tourism potential, which can be realized through comprehensive strategies aimed at sustainable development. The introduction of innovations, infrastructure

development, cooperation with local communities and an emphasis on the unique natural and cultural resources of the region can contribute to improving the competitiveness of Aktobe region as a tourist destination. However, in order to achieve sustainable results, it is necessary to constantly analyze and adapt strategies in accordance with changing conditions and trends in global tourism.

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# The contribution of the authors.

**Ramazanova Ayagul** – literature review, formulation of hypotheses, choice of methodology, preparation of tables and figure, preparation of the main text of the article.

**Kunurkulzhayeva Gulnar** – preparation of the article according to the requirements of the journal, discussion of results.

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# Тұрақты даму арқылы Ақтөбе облысында туризмнің бәсекеге қабілеттілігін арттыру стратегиялары

Аңдатпа. Мақала Қазақстанның Ақтөбе өңірінде туризмнің бәсекеге қабілеттілігін арттыру үшін өңір үшін ерекше өзектілігі мен маңыздылығына ие болып отырған орнықты дамуға баса назар аудара отырып, кешенді стратегияларды әзірлеуге арналған. Зерттеу жаһандық экономикадағы туризмнің үдемелі маңыздылығын ескере отырып, Ақтөбе облысының пайдаланылмаған әлеуетіне назар аударады. Бұл мақалада авторлар туристердің заманауи трендтері мен қажеттіліктерін ескере отырып, туризмнің бәсекеге қабілеттілігін арттыру үшін тұрақты тәжірибелерді біріктірудің маңызды қажеттілігін талқылайды. Сондай-ақ, туризмнің орнықты дамуының әлемдік тәжірибесінің мысалдары және олардың Ақтөбе өңірінде қолданылуы келтірілуде. Зерттеуде авторлар жергілікті қауымдастықтарды тартуға, инфрақұрылымды дамытуға, инновацияларды, технологияларды пайдалануға және туризмді дамытудың маркетингтік және білім беру аспектілеріне ерекше назар аударады. Зерттеу нәтижелері бойынша SWOT талдауы ұсынылған, онда аймақтағы туризмнің бәсекеге қабілеттілігін арттырудың күшті, әлсіз жақтары, мүмкіндіктері мен қауіптері бейнеленген, оны одан әрі дамыту үшін стратегиялық ұсыныстар берілген.

Түйін сөздер: тұрақты даму, туризм, маркетинг, бәсекеге қабілеттілік, Ақтөбе өңірі

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Актюбинский региональный университет имени К.Жубанова, Актобе, Казахстан

# Стратегии повышения конкурентоспособности туризма в Актюбинской области через устойчивое развитие

Аннотация. Статья посвящена разработке комплексных стратегий для повышения конкурентоспособности туризма в Актюбинском регионе Казахстана с упором на устойчивое развитие, которое приобретает особую актуальность и значимость для региона. Исследование акцентирует внимание на неиспользованном потенциале Актюбинской области в свете прогрессирующей значимости туризма в глобальной экономике. В данной статье авторы обсуждают важную необходимость интеграции устойчивых практик для повышения конкурентоспособности туризма, учитывая современные тренды и потребности туристов. А также приводят примеры мирового опыта устойчивого развития туризма и их применимость в Актюбинском регионе. В исследовании авторы особое внимание уделяют вовлечению местных сообществ, развитию инфраструктуры, использованию инноваций, технологий, а также маркетинговым и образовательным аспектам развития туризма. По результатам исследования представлен SWOT-анализ, где отражены сильные, слабые стороны, возможности и угрозы для повышения конкурентоспособности туризма в регионе, предлагая стратегические рекомендации для его дальнейшего развития.

**Ключевые слова:** устойчивое развитие, туризм, маркетинг, конкурентоспособность, актюбинский регион.

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