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collaboration are essential to maximize the benefits of integrating student tourism with other forms of tourism.

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DEVELOPMENT OF MICE TOURISM IN KAZAKHSTAN, USING THE EXAMPLE OF ASTANA CITY

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Abstract. The problem studied in the article allowed us to draw the following conclusions. Based on a comprehensive study of a wide range of literary sources, the author's definition of "The development of MICE tourism in Kazakhstan, using the example of Astana city" is formulated.

MICE tourism is a set of relationships and phenomena arising from the movement and placement of people during working hours, whose main motivation is to participate in various business meetings, congresses, conferences, exhibitions, fairs and incentive events. Based on statistical data, an analysis of the current state of MICE tourism in Astana was carried out, its importance in the development of the national economy of Astana was assessed. The analysis showed that as of the end of 2023, visitors to Kazakhstan travel for business and professional purposes.

This, of course, led to the fact that the socio-economic and political development of Kazakhstan on the world stage increased the interest of foreign businessmen in the development of business relations.

Keywords: tourism, MICE, Astana Hub, tourist flow, International Congress Association,

conference

Introduction. The MICE (Meetings, Incentives, Conferences, and Exhibitions) tourism sector has emerged as a vital component of the global travel industry, significantly influencing the economic and social landscapes of destinations worldwide. Defined by its focus on facilitating meetings, conferences, exhibitions, and incentive travel, MICE tourism represents a dynamic and multifaceted segment that continues to evolve in response to shifting market trends, technological advancements, and changing consumer preferences.

In recent years, the significance of MICE tourism has become increasingly apparent, as cities and regions recognize its potential to drive economic growth, foster innovation, and enhance destination competitiveness. Astana, the capital city of Kazakhstan, has positioned itself as a prominent player in the MICE tourism market, leveraging its strategic location, modern infrastructure, and growing reputation as a business hub in Central Asia.

On the global market, urban travel slightly lags behind beach tourism, with its market share accounting for about 30%. However, this creates an opportunity for the development of business tourism in the market due to its low competitiveness. Thus, business tourism, with its economic potential and job creation opportunities, has become one of the key factors in urban planning and improving the welfare of the population residing in cities around the world.

As a comparison, in 2019, Kazakhstan ranked 79th in the world in terms of MICE tourism development. In the same year, Kazakhstan attracted 18 international association events, generating revenues of \$6 million. Out of these 18 events, 12 were held in Astana, while 6 took place in Almaty.

This serves as a successful example of Astana's progress in this direction. With a consistent focus from the Ministry of Industry and Infrastructure Development on the development of MICE tourism or any other tourism sector, the existing potential in cities can be quickly realized.

Results of the study. Today, tourism, alongside other sectors of the economy, plays an important role in the economy and social life of many cities worldwide. The significance of this work is evidenced by contemporary trends and the distinctive characteristics of tourism development in Kazakhstan.

If we look at the statistical data, there are more than 3.5 thousand accommodation facilities operating in Kazakhstan, of which 20% are located in the cities under study (Astana, Almaty, Shymkent, Karaganda). Thus, about 31% of the country's room stock is concentrated in these cities [1].

According to the analytical module "EQonaq," more than 80 thousand foreign guests have been registered in over 1300 accommodation facilities connected to the system since the beginning of the year. Of these, 310 accommodation facilities, or 25%, are located in 3 cities of republican significance, and they are visited by about 70 thousand intourists - this accounts for 85% of all guests registered in the system.

Thus, it can be observed that the main tourist flow is formed in cities. According to the study, 42% of Kazakhstan's tourist flow is concentrated in 4 cities. It is worth noting that 62% of incoming foreigners stay in the cities of Astana and Almaty.

Secondly, business tourism suffered the most from the pandemic. According to "European Cities Marketing," the COVID-19 pandemic had a significant impact on the development of urban tourism worldwide. According to this organization, the average annual volume of services provided by accommodation facilities decreased by 77%.

According to official statistics, the lockdown period and existing restrictions also had a significant impact on the development of urban tourism in Kazakhstan. This is evidenced by the decrease in the occupancy rate of accommodation facilities from 23% in 2019 to 17% in 2020. If we consider cities of republican significance, the number of serviced visitors and the volume of services provided in accommodation facilities decreased by approximately 50%.

If we compare these figures with national parks, for example, if the number of visitors during the same period decreased by 35%, it will be seen that these are the cities that suffered more in terms of losing tourist flow.

Moreover, the recovery of tourist flows in cities is slower than in these national parks. This,

in turn, requires bold measures. Therefore, the development of business tourism is particularly relevant and timely.

Thirdly, the successful experience of MICE tourism demonstrates the potential of business and event tourism in our cities. To develop MICE tourism, the National Company "Kazakh Tourism" has become a member of the International Congress and Convention Association (ICCA) and has participated in international bidding platforms to attract various events to Kazakhstan. To stimulate the development of this direction, the national company has developed MICE tourism ambassador programs and provided support to organizers of international events through the Meet in Kazakhstan initiative.

In this regard, a comprehensive study on the promotion of business tourism has been conducted in the four cities of Kazakhstan, based on an analysis of tourism development. The study analyzes and evaluates global trends and factors in the development of business tourism, with particular attention to successful practices in Kazakhstan. The research was conducted by a group of experts who gathered field data to gain a deeper understanding of each city (Astana, Almaty, Shymkent, and Karaganda) selected for analysis in this study. Training seminars on urban tourism trends, opportunities, and challenges were conducted online and offline for representatives of the four city tourist attractions. Additionally, children's, excursion, transit, and tourist tours were organized in the four cities.

Recently, a conference on the topic of "Development of Business Tourism (MICE) in Kazakhstan" was held in Astana. The event was organized by the National Company "Kazakh Tourism" (NC Kazakh Tourism).

The aim of the conference was to promote MICE destination in Kazakhstan, attract international investments, and organize MICE events in Kazakhstan. Industry players from Astana participated in the event, including Skyway Travel, Marriott Astana, Triumph SAT Travel, Astana Venue Management, Astana Expo, Astana Convention Bureau, and others.

During the event, a roadshow was conducted where B2B meetings took place with representatives from international MICE agencies (India, Poland, UAE, China). Guests and conference participants had the opportunity to familiarize themselves with Kazakhstan and the city of Astana in the congress and exhibition hall[2].

Despite all the factors and events mentioned above, the level of MICE tourism in Kazakhstan remains relatively low. However, thanks to the resources and capabilities of major cities, including Astana, which is an ideal candidate for the development of a more modern, business-oriented MICE tourism. Although the capital is often criticized for its lack of architectural character, short history, and futuristic urban environment, it provides a conducive environment for business deals[2].

Due to convenient venues and a range of MICE services, MICE tourism attracts a global audience of entrepreneurs who have higher comfort requirements compared to typical tourist attractions. Their main goal is the deal itself, with location being of secondary importance[3].

Since 2018, the city council of Astana has collaborated with ICCA, submitting 29 bids to host international business conferences, eight of which were approved. Next year, the city will host five international conferences, with an estimated turnover of around \$2 million. This figure was calculated based on the average spending of delegates over the previous years, which amounted to approximately \$1438 per person.

A business tourist attending any event also utilizes the city's amenities and attractions beyond the event venue. Given the presence of restaurants and entertainment establishments, participants will use these facilities not only for relaxation after a busy day of negotiations but also for networking with colleagues in a more relaxed atmosphere. Event organizers and enterprises work synchronously to make a good impression on the consumer.

A satisfied consumer in MICE tourism is often a well-known media personality or businessman who can voluntarily assume the role of the event's ambassador. This not only serves specific venues or events but also enhances the brand image of the city or country as a whole.

Recently, Astana Hub hosted the international IT conference Digital Bridge. The two-day event was attended by 22,000 participants from 300 companies, who either used it as valuable

networking experience or as a platform to showcase their business[4]. As of the end of 2019, Kazakhstan ranked 79th in the world in terms of MICE tourism development, improving its position by 20 places compared to the previous year. The top five in the ranking traditionally included the United States (934 events), Germany (714 events), France (595 events), Spain (579 events), and the United Kingdom (567 events). Thus, according to the ICCA report, the Russian Federation ranked 35th (117 events), Kazakhstan-79th (18 events), Georgia-82nd (17 events), Ukraine-84th (15 events), Azerbaijan-90th (12 events), Armenia-98th (10 events), Belarus-114th (5 events), Uzbekistan-126th (3 events), Kyrgyzstan-131st (2 events).

The International Congress and Convention Association (ICCA) publishes annual statistics and rankings of countries and cities worldwide for MICE tourism. Kazakhstan ranked second among CIS countries and became a leader in the Central Asian region. This ranking only takes into account events organized by international associations, which are regularly held with no fewer than 50 delegates and alternate between at least three countries.

Kazakh Tourism is working to disseminate Astana's experience to other cities of republican significance, such as Almaty and Shymkent. Additionally, Kazakhstan plans to launch support programs, partnerships, and MICE ambassador programs "Meet in Kazakhstan" to stimulate MICE events.

Table 1. Funding of tourism in Astana City

Title	2019	2020	2021	2022	2023
Republic budget (RB)	367 234	345 469	418 771	494 268	489 014
Local budget (LB)	17 219	17 552	18 383	19 006	19 806
Extrabudgetary funds	199 561	201 839	64 883	68 717	59 599
Total funds	584 014	564 860	502 037	581 991	568 419
Note: Compiled by the author based on the data.					

In 2023, a total of 51,882.1 thousand tenge was allocated for the implementation of tourism sub-program activities, with 88.5% of the allocated limits for the year being expended (50,515.6 thousand tenge) [5]. Among these, 5,282.1 thousand tenge was allocated for the main activity "Increasing the level of utilization of the tourist potential of Astana City" in 2021 (actual execution - 82.7%), as seen in the following graph.

Table 2. Main Activity "Enhancing the Utilization of the Tourist Potential of Astana City"

Title	Price in thousands of tenge	Allocated funds, %
Conducting the exhibition "State National Natural Park"	696,9	99,6%
Providing subsidies to support tourism in the region	978,5	99,8%
Acquiring transportation vehicles for tourism development	1002,1	100%
Organizing educational seminars, competitions	408,7	68,1%
Creating and installing tourist navigation tools	688,0	49,1%
Conducting marketing, scientific, and social research in the tourism industry in the region	592,5	98,8%

Note: Compiled by the author based on the data.

Analyzing the conduct of the exhibition "State National Nature Park" (actual expenditure 696.9 thousand tenge - 99.6% of allocated funds); provision of subsidies for tourism support in the region (978.5 thousand tenge); acquisition of transportation for tourism development throughout the year (1002.1 thousand tenge - 100%); organization of educational seminars, competitions (408.7 thousand tenge - 68.1%); conducting marketing, scientific, and social research on the tourism industry in the region (592.5 thousand tenge - 98.8%); creation and installation of tourist navigation tools (688.0 thousand tenge - 49.1%) [6].

Thus, according to the assessment for 2023, the total number of tourist visitors compared to the same period last year increased by 3.4% and amounted to 1728.3 thousand people.

The main indicators characterizing the development of internal and external tourism in Astana city show positive dynamics and are presented in the table below.

"Table 3. Development of Domestic and International Tourism in the City of Astana"

	Title	2021	2022	2023	Dynamic 2021/2023 (+/-),%
1.	Volume of tourist flow in the city of Astana (thousands of people), including: Number of foreign tourists Volume of paid services in the tourism and recreational sector (million tenge), including: Tourist services Sanatorium and health resort services Hotel and similar accommodation services Tax revenues from the activities of hotels, restaurants, and tourist agencies to the consolidated budget of the city of Astana (million tenge)	1597,8	1671,0	1728,3	+3,4
2.	Number of foreign tourists	211,0	295,3	367,8	+24,6
3.	Volume of paid services in the tourism and recreational sector (million tenge), including:	5600,5*	6478,6*	7000,8	+8,1
4.	Tourist services	2153,2*	2415,0*	2837,9	+17,5
5.	Sanatorium and health resort services	1299,1*	1549,4*	1572,9	+1,5
6.	Hotel and similar accommodation services	2148,2*	2514,2	2590,0	+3,0
7.	Tax revenues from the activities of hotels, restaurants, and tourist agencies to the consolidated budget of the city of Astana (million tenge)	759,2	869,9	991,5	+14,0
Note: Compiled by the author based on the data.					

Based on the provided data, it is evident that the tourism sector in Astana has experienced overall growth and positive dynamics from 2021 to 2023.

1. Tourist Flow: The total number of tourists visiting Astana has increased steadily over the three-year period, with a notable 3.4% growth from 2021 to 2023. This indicates an increasing interest in the city as a tourist destination.

2. Number of Foreign Tourists: The number of foreign tourists has seen a significant increase of 24.6% from 2021 to 2023. This suggests that Astana is becoming more attractive to international travelers, potentially due to marketing efforts or improved infrastructure.

3. Revenue from Tourism Services: The revenue generated from tourism services, including

tourism, sanatorium, and hotel accommodations, has demonstrated consistent growth. There has been an 8.1% increase in overall revenue from 2021 to 2023, with tourism services experiencing a notable 17.5% growth during the same period. This indicates a positive trend in the tourism industry's contribution to the city's economy.

4. Tax Revenues: The tax revenues from hotels, restaurants, and tourism agencies have also shown a significant increase of 14% from 2021 to 2023. This suggests that the tourism sector's expansion is contributing positively to the city's fiscal health.

Overall, the data reflects a promising trend in the development of tourism in Astana, characterized by an increasing number of visitors, growing revenue streams, and positive contributions to the city's economy. These trends underscore the importance of continued investment in tourism infrastructure, marketing initiatives, and service quality to sustain and further enhance Astana's position as a vibrant tourist destination.

Conclusion. The development of MICE tourism in Astana represents a promising direction for strengthening the city's status as a key tourist hub in the region. Thanks to the active efforts of both government and private sectors, as well as participation in international events and program initiatives, Astana demonstrates significant potential for attracting corporate and business events. This growth is supported by increased investments, expanded infrastructure, and a variety of services, enhancing service quality and attracting new segments of the tourism market. However, for further development, attention needs to be given to marketing and research initiatives, as well as ensuring a high level of service and convenience for visitors. Overall, the development of MICE tourism in Astana opens up new opportunities for economic growth and strengthens the city's position on the global tourism stage.

In conclusion, an analysis of the tourist potential of the city of Astana has resulted in the following recommendations:

- 1) Providing financial assistance to the tourism industry of the city of Astana;
- 2) Interest-free financing for global tourism companies and SMEs;
- 3) Abolishing taxes and fees in the tourism sector of the city of Astana.

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АЛМАТЫ ОБЛЫСЫНДАҒЫ ЭКОТУРИСТИК КӘСІПОРЫНДАР ҮШІН ОРНЫҚТЫ ДАМУ СТРАТЕГИЯЛАРЫ

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