

UDC 338.488

MAIN TRENDS IN THE TOURISM INDUSTRY OF KAZAKHSTAN

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1. Introduction

Tourism is currently not a highly profitable or investment-attractive business in Kazakhstan. Tourism accounts for only 1.8 percent of Kazakhstan's GDP structure [1]. Restrictions on foreign tourist movement associated with Covid-19 have a negative impact on worldwide incoming tourist flow and Kazakhstan is not an exception. International tourism came to a near-complete halt in 2020, leaving domestic and local tourism as the only viable options. Improvements have been made in 2021, but only in a minor sense, since limitations remain in place and several nations retain their borders closed entirely or partially.

It's tough to make a prediction for 2022 because no one knows how the pandemic will develop. It is feasible, however, to discuss the new tourism trends that are expected to emerge:

- deepening and expanding digitalization and automation in the provision of tourist services;
- popularization of ecotourism in the country;
- shift from international to local;
- growth of contactless payment.

The purpose of this study is to identify and analyze the main probable trends in the tourism industry of Kazakhstan.

2. Popularization of ecotourism in the country.

Ecotourism is a type of tourism that involves visiting natural areas where the environment has been kept in a nearly unspoiled state. The goal of such journeys is to provide travelers with new

information about the ecology of the place they are traveling through, as well as the cultural and anthropological characteristics of the location where they will be staying. The integrity of the surrounding ecosystems is not jeopardized during the ecological journey.

Kazakhstan has a significant potential for ecotourism development due to its wealth of unspoiled and pristine natural things. Even the most discerning traveler will not be disappointed by breathtaking natural vistas, unique ecological routes, and ethno-cultural tourism. Ecotourism is currently a priority industry that adds to the economy's long-term viability. It is the tourist industry's fastest-growing sector, accounting for 25% of global tourism. Ecotourists are on the rise, according to the World Tourism Organization, with an annual growth rate of 20%.

Kazakhstan was ranked 87th in the Global Wildlife Travel Index 2019 based on the number of national parks, biodiversity, the risk of extinction of red book species of plants and animals, and other factors [2]. Nonetheless, due to its vast natural areas, diverse flora and fauna, natural monuments, and UNESCO World Heritage sites, the country possesses all of the requirements for the development of ecotourism.

The State National Nature Parks (SNNP) are developing ecotourism as part of the State Program for the Development of the Tourism Industry, which runs from 2019 to 2025. The overall number of visitors to protected areas in 2021 was estimated to be around 1.5 million. The Almaty region's mountain cluster, which encompasses the lands of four SNNP ("Altyn-Emel", "Kolsai Kolderi", "Ile-Alatau", and "Charyn"), is the main engine of ecotourism. To date, investors have completed 2.2 billion tenge worth of investments. For example, according to the provisions of the agreement, these parks will receive 26.5 billion tenge in investments between 2021 and 2025. Over 2 million tourists are predicted to visit throughout the forecast period, resulting in the creation of over 1,200 employment [3].

3. Deepening and expanding digitalization and automation in the provision of tourist services.

In 2020, the Kazakh tourism national company will continue to create specialized automated systems and proposals that will provide full assistance for Kazakhstan's domestic and inbound tourism development.

3.1. eQonaq Information System (eHotel)

In 2020, the eQonaq digital product with a developed system and a mobile application will ensure an up-to-date register of accommodation places, the analysis of big data on incoming and domestic tourists, and the modeling and forecasting of tourist flow using Big Data [4].

Integration with the National Security Committee of the Republic of Kazakhstan's "Berkut" information system and the Committee of the Migration Service of the Ministry of Internal Affairs of the Republic of Kazakhstan's information system has been completed, allowing the process of notifying the internal affairs bodies of the arrival of foreign tourists to accommodation to be automated [4]. On the one hand, this simplifies visa and migration procedures for arriving tourists, while on the other hand, it increases the transparency of hotel and registration activities for international visitors [4].

The eQonaq information system has already been installed in 123 hotels with 4-5 stars in Nur-Sultan and Almaty by 2020 [4].

3.2. Information system "Tourism Online"

The Joint-Stock Company has built a unified online communication platform tourisonline.kz in order to create a platform for a tourism ecosystem that unifies market participants. On its foundation, an online academy of domestic tourism (academy.tourisonline.kz) has been established, where specialists in the domestic tourism business may share their knowledge and discuss the newest trends in tourism via a forum, chatbot, and webinars. In 2020, 50 subjects were discussed with around 3,000 people in attendance, and more than 35,000 people watched webinar recordings [4].

3.3. Automated project management information system "View Project"

The online monitoring and interaction with akimats in the development of infrastructure and innovative projects in Kazakhstan's tourism destinations has been developed using an automated

project management system called "View Project". Tourist destinations of Kazakhstan are shown on a digital interactive map. The system will be accessible to local government agencies, partners, investors, and other interested parties [4].

4. Shift from International to Local

Due to different travel limitations and many people's unwillingness to traveling overseas, many in the tourist sector are focusing on domestic rather than foreign clients. This does not imply a complete abandonment of foreign travelers, but it will almost certainly necessitate a shift in your fundamental marketing efforts.

When it comes to hotels, it may be preferable to emphasize the types of amenities that will appeal to the local market, such as your restaurant, gym, Wi-Fi, and even the fact that your hotel rooms are perfect for remote work. Domestic tourists may need to be prioritized by airlines and tourism management firms.

For example, prior to the outbreak, Germany was a major tourist destination for Spain, France, Italy, Turkey, and Egypt. Wealthy Germans took joy in traveling across the world, photographing sites, lounging on beaches, and paying homage to local cuisine. After the borders were closed, and before tight quarantine restrictions were imposed within Germany, some Germans who were unable to travel overseas took advantage of the chance to relax within the nation.

Kazakhstan has begun to actively boost domestic tourism in recent years. The number of persons traveling within the nation has increased by 9.6% since the beginning of the year.[7]

5. Growth of Contactless Payments

Customers no longer need to carry a debit or credit card to pay for meals, hotel stays, transportation, and other services, thanks to the introduction of solutions like Google Pay and Apple Pay.

By allowing contactless payments, tourist businesses have been able to eliminate friction and enhance check-in and check-out times. It also implies that things may be paid for quickly, which encourages impulse purchases. With the outbreak of the coronavirus, contactless payments are more popular than ever, since employees and consumers want to avoid handling currency.

Experian's study shows that digital wallets are on the increase. These devices, of course, come with a variety of identification checks, including touch ID, passcodes, and even biometric facial scans. Digital wallets have already had a huge impact on the financial industry's long-established 'balance of power,' impacting everything from banking to payments.[6]

In Kazakhstan, contactless payment devices are used in more than 72% of transactions. Apple Pay and Garmin Pay were released in the nation in 2018-2019, followed by Samsung Pay in early 2020.[8]

A digital wallet may be used in a variety of ways, all of which are secure. Disney, for example, has created a MagicMobile service to take the place of its MagicBand. A new service adds a digital pass to Apple Wallet that may be scanned or used on the iPhone or Apple Watch via Near Field Communication.[6]

New capabilities include the ability to link PhotoPass to the app and then use it to unlock hotel rooms. The same logic could easily be extended to any airline or railway tickets that are stored in a user's digital wallet, allowing consumers to get push notifications about gate changes or departure delays.[6]

Conclusion

In the past year, tourism has been one of the most affected sectors throughout the world. 2020 will go down in history as a watershed year. All professionals linked to the world of tourism would have expected anything but market paralysis. People from the tourism sphere should put their finger on the pulse of the tourist industry, no matter what area of it their company is involved in. Previously popular concepts and products are being phased out in favor of more current ones that are taking a larger share of the market. The sector has seen significant changes as a result of new directions, technology, and modes of transportation. It is critical to adapt to new trends as soon as possible.

A trend is a broad shift in a condition or behavior, or the overall direction in which events take place. A variety of diverse advances in the field of tourism have resulted in changes in consumer behavior and corporate operations, resulting in the birth of new tourist trends.

A fundamental shift in the way technology is employed, particularly in the areas of artificial intelligence and machine learning, is one such breakthrough.

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