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Silk Roads Routes. Sustainable Tourism after COVID-19

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Abstract:

Since ancient times, people have traveled and exchanged goods, technology and ideas with neighboring settlements. The vast Eurasian continent has traditionally been a crossroads of trade routes, which helped create the increasingly famous Silk Road. Sea routes were created connecting East and West by water, which were mainly used for the trade in spices, which gave rise to the "spice route". Numerous road networks helped not only in the transportation of goods and luxury goods, but also in the transfer of knowledge, ideas, culture and beliefs, and had a great influence on the history and development of the Eurasian civilization, as well as the development of tourism and its various directions.

This research paper intends to provide an analysis covering countries near and far abroad in the field of tourism and travel, tourism policy with indicators of sustainability and comparison of indicators of sustainable consumption and production patterns. Summarizing the results obtained, we concluded about the potential areas for improvement in the tourism industry and proposed a new set of recommendations for their evaluation.

Keywords: sustainable development performance; intangible and tangible heritage; tourism policy, great silk road.

JEL Classification: Z30; Z32.

Introduction

Protecting the historical and cultural heritage of the world and preserving them for future generations is most in line with the goals of sustainable development. The Silk Roads were an interconnected web of routes linking the ancient societies of Asia, the Subcontinent, Central Asia, Western Asia and the Near East, and contributed to the

development of many of the world's great civilizations. The Central Asian Silk Roads were an essential component of the Silk Roads network from the 2nd century B.C. to the end of the 16th century B.C., facilitating cultural, religious and economic exchange between civilizations and leading to significant advances in urban planning, architecture, monumental art, science, technology and craftsmanship (<https://whc.unesco.org/>).

Modern processes of globalization leave no room for immovable territorial organization, demonstrating the rapid movement of goods, capital, financial resources, information, technology and people within the global space. The current stage of globalization involves a profound transformation of the existing forms of territorial organization at various regional, subregional and subglobal levels.

1. Research Background

Activities on ongoing identification, conservation and nomination a number of projects along the Silk Roads aimed to facilitate the global recognition of the crucial role and relevance of the Silk Roads - not only as tangible heritage but also as routes that allowed a variety of artistic, philosophical, religious and economic exchanges (www.unwto.org)

Thanks to the efforts of UNESCO and support of Japan FIT fund the first two nominations of Silk Roads corridors were examined at the 38th session of the World Heritage Committee from 15-25 June 2014 in Doha, Qatar and the "Silk Roads: the Routes Network of Chang'an-Tianshan Corridor", jointly submitted by China, Kazakhstan and Kyrgyzstan was inscribed on the World Heritage List. The 33 components included in the routes network of Chang'an-Tianshan Corridor of the Silk Roads include capital cities and palace complexes of various empires and kingdoms, trading settlements, Buddhist cave temples, ancient paths, posthouses, passes, beacon towers, sections of The Great Wall, fortifications, tombs and religious buildings. Among those 33 components, 8 sites are located in Republic of Kazakhstan, 22 sites in People's Republic of China and the other 3 sites in Kyrgyz Republic.

Further activities on identification and documentation of cultural and natural heritage, providing a basis for the on-going procedure for the Silk Roads World Heritage Serial and Transnational Nomination will contribute to tourism sector of Central Asian Republics - Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan, Turkmenistan and Uzbekistan - which jointly have 15 sites nominated (UNESCO). But what are "the costs and benefits" of the sector and how they could be measured? Are the sector projects' goals integrated into the SDGs in order to prevent and mitigate tourism impacts? And what are the impacts of COVID-19 to consider in future in order to mitigate a risk to sustainability?

Tourism development and operations have contributed to the depletion of natural resources, leading to water shortages, loss of biodiversity, land degradation and pollution, among other impacts. Tourism's contributions to global warming are estimated at 5% of total worldwide CO₂ emissions (United Nations World Tourism Organization 2020, 2021).

Ensuring the integration of development resources, mechanisms and instruments plays an important role in achieving sustainable development goals. Immediate integration is especially needed in the largest and fastest growing industries in the world, such as the tourism industry. The success of integration, in turn, depends on an adequate assessment of resources, the correct choice of mechanisms and the purposefulness of the use of development tools.

2. Research Methodology

Our research paper has been realized based on secondary data provided by World Economic Forum and is focused on the countries mentioned above with analysis of their tourism policies, where these are available, and main indicators in line with the Sustainable Development Goals' (SDG). Starting with overall competitiveness state of these countries we found that the tourism sector statistics of the countries under analysis, compared the Food Waste Index as one of important SDGs for conclude that lack of data on food waste, have limit the availability of tourism sector data in countries under analysis.

The World Economic Forum has published the latest data from the Travel and Tourism Competitiveness Index (TTCI), which is published every two years and measures the competitiveness of the travel and tourism (T&T) sector in approximately 140 countries. TTCI "ensures the sustainable development of the travel and tourism industry and measures a range of factors and policies that in turn contribute to national development and competitiveness, and includes four sub-indices, 14 core areas and 90 individual indicators distributed across a range of areas. The report is not only serves as a platform for dialogue among various stakeholders at the national level to develop appropriate policies and actions It also takes a global approach by analyzing industry trends and provides unique perspectives from global industry leaders, international organizations and

governments on the key issues that need to be addressed to ensure long-term competitiveness of the travel and tourism industry. The top 10 TTCl indicators remain unchanged. Spain tops the list for the third year in a row, ahead of the US, while the UK's competitiveness has declined slightly.

In most of the countries covered by the study, the improvement was rather slow. China has made impressive strides since 2015, moving into the top 20 from 45th in 2013. Afghanistan, Turkmenistan and Uzbekistan are not included in the ranking, perhaps due to insufficient data. Countries with natural and cultural resources can benefit from ranking far away from many others, such as China. Key factors in China's competitiveness are its exceptional natural resources (fourth place) and the highest TTCl score for cultural resources. China is by far the largest travel and tourism economy in the Asia-Pacific region and ranks 13th in the world in terms of competitiveness (up two positions from 2017). It attracts more foreign tourists than any other country in the region, and the travel and tourism industry benefits from a large and growing domestic market.

Other four countries under analysis are placed in "middle 50%" (ranks 36–105) of performance rankings. Interesting to note that 3 of these 5 countries – Iran, Kazakhstan and Kyrgyz Republic – were in the list of top 10 on "Pillar 8: Price Competitiveness". Kazakhstan ranks 4th globally on "Price competitiveness" thanks to reduced hotel (17th) and fuel (13th) prices, greater purchasing power (23rd) and low-ticket taxes and airport charges (6th) (World Economic Forum 2020, 2021). Kazakhstan, especially among the CIS countries, is the slowest to increase its competitiveness, climbing one place to 80th in the world, improving performance in most TTCl indicators, but limited by the deterioration of the business environment (from 36th to 49th place), the labor market (from 47th to 57th place) and hygiene (from 6th to 12th place). The Kyrgyz Republic has improved its performance compared to two years ago, but remains the least competitive economy in Eurasia in T&T (110th). In particular, further investment is needed in underdeveloped infrastructure (131st).

Not only the competitiveness but the impact of tourism is the main topic of this article. The impact of tourism on the environment is complex and very diverse: air pollution from transport, tourist transportation, depletion and pollution of water resources, and an increase in the mass of household waste. Tourism infrastructure development can be treated as a value added to the national economy with positive trends in employment too.

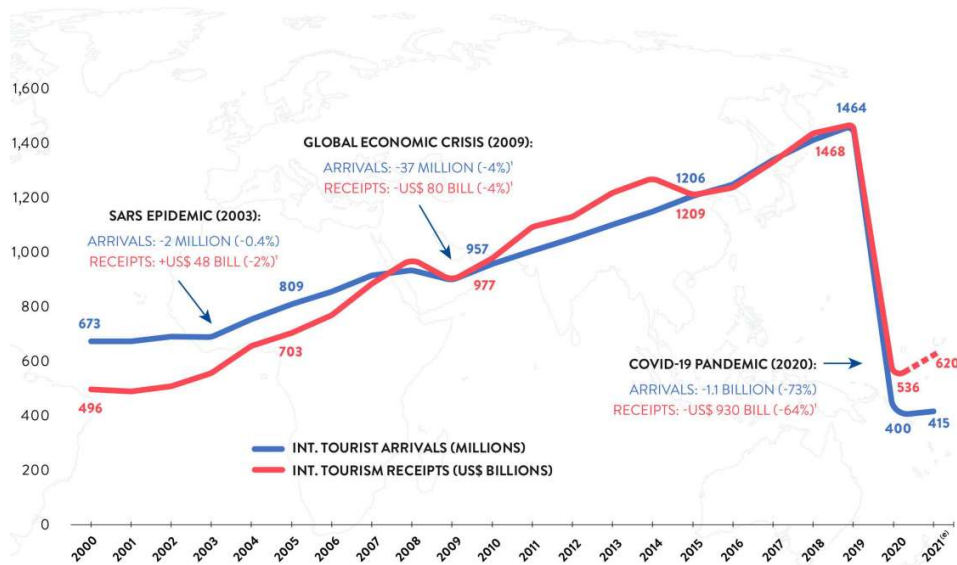
The number of international tourists reached 1.5 billion in 2019, up 4% from 2018 and matching a record set a decade ago when tourism grew faster than the global economy as a whole. Domestic tourism added another 8.8 billion arrivals. Globally, this sector generates US\$1.5 trillion in exports and directly or indirectly employs one in ten people.

Numerous studies have focused on the connection between tourism and economic process. Some countries are attractive thanks to their cultural, historical, natural resources, unique styles of recreation offered to tourists, like Germany with unique wineries and a well-developed winemaking infrastructure that directly affects the economy (Haller *et al.* 2020, Motsa *et al.* 2021).

Since mid-March 2020, the number of tourist arrivals has decreased. At the beginning of the year, the number of international tourist arrivals fell by 56%, and in May - by 98%. This means a loss of almost \$320 billion, more than three times the amount of the entire 2009 global financial crisis. From Italy, where tourism accounts for 6% of GDP, to Palau, where tourism accounts for almost 90% of exports, no country has escaped the collapse of the tourism sector. The crisis could be a major shock to developed economies and an emergency for the most vulnerable and developing countries. Tourism provides a livelihood for many people and allows billions of people to experience a different culture and nature than their own. In some countries, tourism accounts for more than 20% of GDP and is the third largest export sector of the global economy as a whole.

Unfortunately, as UN Sustainable Development Group states, the tourism is one of the sectors most affected by the COVID-19 pandemic, impacting economies, livelihoods, public services and opportunities on every continent. Based on preliminary data (and estimates for countries that have not yet reported their results), the worst-case scenario for 2020 has materialized and the global impact of COVID-19 on international tourism is the loss of 1 billion international tourists, according to the UNWTO's 2020 Results Review, based on preliminary data and \$1.3 trillion in export earnings. As a result, international tourism has fallen to the level of the 1990s, 30 years ago.

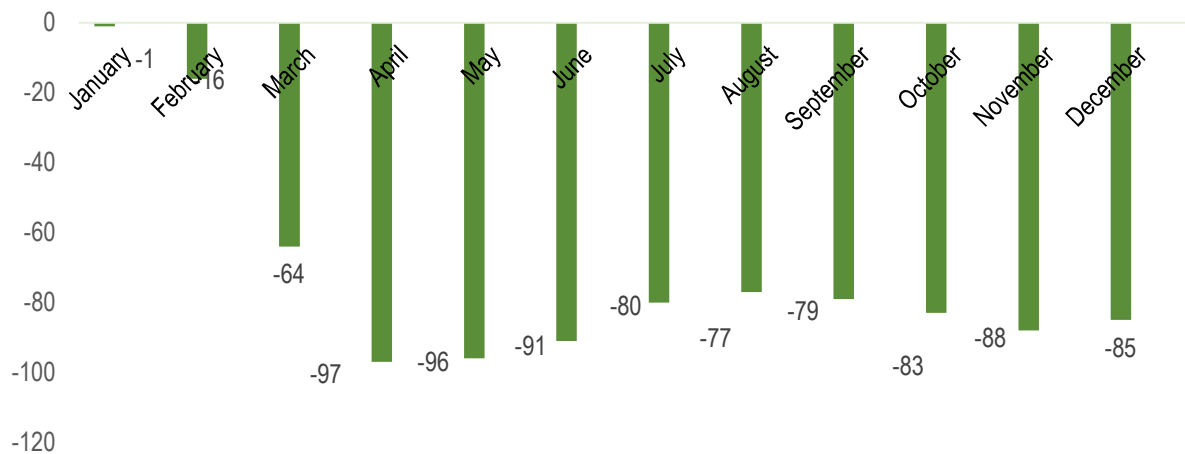
Figure 1. The estimations for international tourist arrivals, in millions



Source: compiled by authors according to UNWTO

The data provided by the above Figure 1 is in the line with the study of Simchenko *et al.* (2021) which state that while demand for international tourism has plummeted and still remains low, domestic tourism began to gain momentum by mid-2020 and continued to grow in several major markets such as China, where domestic air travel has returned to pre-Covid levels. Also, interesting remarks related to the international tourism were found in the research study of Nyoni (2021) in which after the modeling and forecasting of international tourism demand in Zimbabwe, using ARIMA approach, we could consider that pre-COVID-19 data denotes a lot of opportunities to be used for next periods.

Figure 2. International tourist arrivals in 2021 (monthly change compared to the previous year, %)

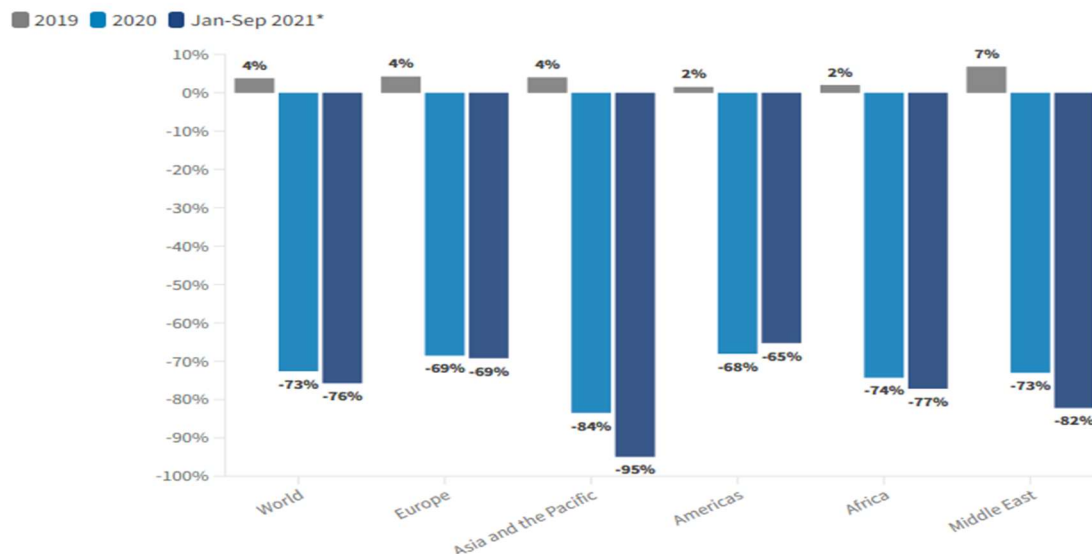


Source: compiled by authors according to UNWTO

Despite an improvement in the third quarter of 2021, the pace of recovery remains slow and varies by region. This is due to differences in travel restrictions, vaccination coverage and traveler confidence: while Europe (-53%) and the Americas (-60%) saw a relative improvement in Q3 2021, Asia-Pacific travel restrictions remained unnecessarily tight for many destinations, with arrivals down 95% from 2019. Africa and the Middle East recorded a decline of 74% and 81% respectively in the third quarter compared to 2019. According to the information currently available (UN World Tourism Organization), between July and September 2021, Croatia (-19%), Mexico (-20%) and Turkey (-35%) showed the best results.

In July-September 2021, the number of international tourists (overnight visitors) increased by 58% compared to the same period in 2020. However, it remained 64% lower than in 2019. The number of international tourists worldwide in January-September 2021 decreased by 20% compared to the same period in 2020, but was 76% below the level of 2019.

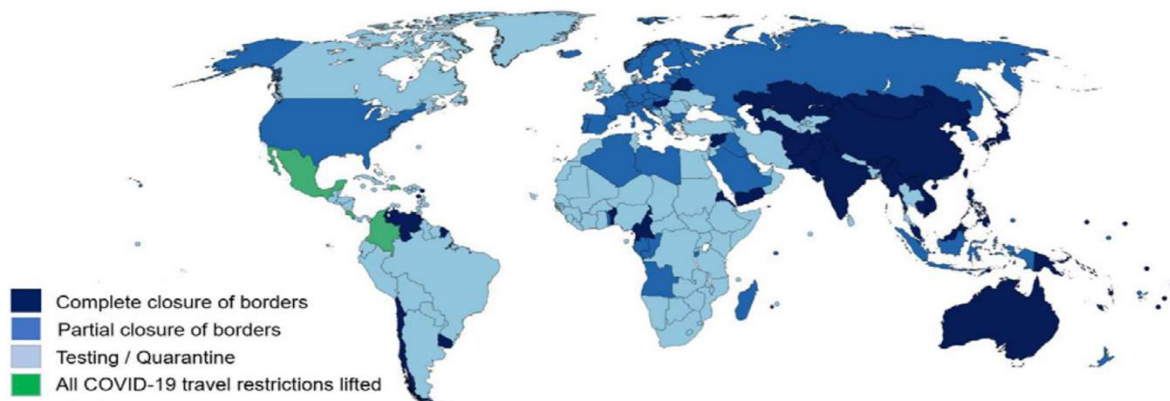
Figure 3. International tourist arrivals, % change



Source: compiled by authors according to UNWTO

Tourism's direct economic contribution is estimated at \$1.9 trillion in 2021 (measured by tourism's direct gross domestic product), well below the pre-pandemic figure of \$3.5 trillion.

With travel restrictions (100% worldwide as of April 2020) and full border closures to international tourism (27% of all destinations), according to the UNWTO report on travel restrictions, as of November 1, 2021, at risk there are between 120 and 120 million direct tourism jobs. 46 destinations, or 21% of all destinations in the world, are now considered to have completely closed their borders to tourists, and 26 of them have completely closed their borders since at least the end of April 2020. 55 destinations, or 25% of all destinations worldwide, have partially closed their borders, and the latest study shows that 98% of all destinations have some form of travel restriction.

Figure 4. Destinations with travel restrictions for international tourism, 1st November, 2021

Source: compiled by authors according to UNWTO

The UNWTO Panel of Experts in their latest survey shows a mixed outlook for 2021 in which 45% of respondents envisaged better prospects for 2021 compared to last year, while 25% expect a similar performance and 30% foresee a worsening of results in 2021, see <https://www.eunwto.org/doi/abs/10.18111/wto/barometereng.2021.19.1.1>.

Most experts do not see a return to pre-pandemic levels happening before 2023. In fact, asymmetric analysis of tourism and economic growth in the South Asian countries could be used to understand the lessons for policymakers towards mitigating the adverse effects of Covid-19, as Jayaraman and Makun (2022) conclude that a positive shock in tourism earnings has a beneficial effect on long-run growth but the negative shock in tourism earnings leads to a substantial reduction in growth both in the long and short run.

Travel restrictions, slow virus containment and the economic environment noted as main barriers to the recovery of international tourism. UNWTO's extended scenarios for 2021-2024 indicate that it could take two-and-

a-half to four years for international tourism to return to 2019 levels. In the past few days, the emergence of the Omicron variant has led dozens of countries to reinstate restrictions on arrivals, or to delay relaxation in COVID-19 travel and testing rules, leading to wide uncertainty for demand for travel.

3. Results

While sustaining arena-related livelihoods should be a priority, tourism recovery is also a chance for transformation when attention is paid to harnessing its impact on the destinations visited and building more resilient communities and businesses through innovation, digitalization, sustainability and partnerships. Tourism sustainability is characterized by the economic development of tourism destinations, heritage management, nature conservation, the maintenance of cultural values and global climate change.

The corona crisis is an opportunity to rethink the tourism sector and its contribution to people and the planet.

UNWTO has identified the challenges facing the restart of tourism and the key opportunities to come back stronger and better. Building on the progress made before the pandemic, UNWTO-led initiatives are helping to restore confidence in travel and, together with businesses and destinations, harness the power of innovation and digitalization.

According to the Travel and Tourism Competitiveness Index (TTCI) 2019, these 5 countries we surveyed all rank low on Pillar 9: Environmental Sustainability, with Switzerland (1st out of 140) topping the list with a score of 6.0. Iran ranks 107th and Tajikistan 113th with a score of 3.9, followed by Kazakhstan (108), China (120) with a score of 3.8 and the Kyrgyz Republic (123) with a score of 3.6. This component is associated with: strict environmental regulations, ensuring compliance with environmental regulations, sustainability of the travel and tourism industry, solids concentration (2.5), number of ratifications of environmental treaties, base water load, 9.07, endangered species, change in forest cover, sewage treatment. 9.10 status of fish stocks.

Researchers suggest their view and approaches to evaluation of sustainability of T&T industry along with the factors what affect the pro-environmental behavior of consumers (Beatriz *et al.* 2020, Hateftabar 2020, Kim *et al.* 2021, Pronello *et al.* 2018). A tourist's choice and engagement with the host community are often tormented by cultural norms, legal guidelines and native hospitality. The individual is socially driven which social processes could also be mediated by psychological states. Understanding the determinants of pro-environment behavior and explaining intentions and behaviors are two different tasks that require to take into consideration a large spectrum of subjective characteristics of people which explain why people are so diverse. These characteristics are very different in nature, acquire play at various levels of consciousness and differ in degree of persistence over time.

COVID-19 highlighted one of fundamental bases of the sector associated with the risk of tourism. Besides of a pandemic and political situation, the risk might be there due to a lack of communication, low quality of accommodation and food services, roads and/or transportation system. And security in the broad sense of the word may impact on a route's accessibility. *For example*, informing timely on weather and climatic conditions, or on routes of movement passing through hard-to-reach terrain, water, mountain, speleological and other objects associated with an increased risk to life, causing harm to the health of tourists and their property is vital to mitigate or avoid the risk. Studying appropriate documents on tourism sector of several countries we summarized interrelationship of the factors of both "attractiveness" and "accessibility" of destinations. The matrix may be expanded and used in order to evaluate a country's tourism sector.

Table 1. Destination attractiveness and accessibility matrix

Attractiveness Accessibility	Concentration of historical, cultural and natural landmarks	Visa regime	Service quality
Tourist infrastructure (hotels, resort, cultural and entertainment facilities)	✓	-	✓
Air traffic openness	✓	-	✓
Highways/car roads quality	✓	-	-
Presence of rental companies	✓	-	✓
Accessibility of railway lines and appropriate service	✓	-	✓
Simplification of visa procedures	✓	✓	✓
Proper regulation and procedures associated with the organization of routes/excursions	✓	✓	-

Source: compiled by authors

Economic growth and social progress have led to an increase in the volume of not only business trips, but also trips for cognitive goals. Concentration of historical, cultural and natural landmarks in the Silk Roads routes is an opportunity for the countries of Central Asian Republics. Post-COVID interventions of governments may be used for construction of various facilities contributing to investments into main capital. *For example*, during 2020 more than 100 sanitary facilities and 60 roadside service facilities were constructed in Kazakhstan. In addition to a GDP contribution, tourism is characterized by high level of efficiency and rate of return on investments.

According to the concept on tourism development in Kazakhstan, it is planned to nearly double investments into main capital. Social effect of the sector development may be expressed by labor intensive process and in acting as a pioneer in the development of new areas. Tourism has a significant impact on such key sectors of the economy as transport and communications, construction, agriculture, production of consumer goods and others. Despite the efforts of tourism destinations worldwide to improve their competitiveness, what depends on many factors, it is impossible to provide a universal set of competitiveness indicators that can be applied to all destinations at all times. Therefore, there is a need to measure the competitiveness of tourism destinations according to the requirements of the place and time of the research but the set of indicators would be inadequate without sustainability measures and engaging in pro-environmental behavior such as energy saving, recycling, water management, and waste management for environmental conservation outcomes.

At an industry level, food surplus and waste on-farms across the United Kingdom is estimated at 3.6 million tonnes and price £1.2 billion. This project has extended that assessment to produce an estimate of the financial implications for people farms of functioning on food surplus and waste. Modelled on standard industry data and validated with farmers, the analysis shows a possible 20% increase in profits for farm enterprises if food surplus and waste is reduced to the minimum reported rates (United Nations Environment Programme).

Despite the fact that the characteristic features of international tourism in recent decades are its active development, the ever-increasing influence on the world economy and international relations, the legal regulation of international tourism relations still lags behind the requirements of life. This can be explained by the active growth of international tourism, primarily in terms of the number of people visiting foreign countries, which is largely ahead of its formation as a subject of international legal regulation, as well as the slowness of a number of states in solving practical issues of developing and stimulating foreign tourism. The fact that the development of international tourism in different countries at different levels, due to which the national tourism management bodies that exist there have different rights and powers may be given as another reason of international tourism regulation issues.

4. Discussions

The existing as well as new issues of the international tourism development were well highlighted by COVID-19. It should be noted that government agencies and national tourism administrations play a significant role in ensuring the safety of tourism and reducing the risk of travel, which, in turn, must ensure an appropriate level of interaction and coordination with all participants in the tourism process. The urgent need for timely and constant exchange of information between countries, national tourism administrations and other institutions in the tourism sector, high-quality mutual assistance and coordination with the adequate role of the media, the responsibility of governments and states in eliminating problems that complicate the development of international tourism are noted. The safety of tourism should be based on a carefully thought-out, purposeful complex system of measures in order to prevent any incident with a tourist. At the same time, the introduced security measures should not adversely affect the interests, rights and freedoms of the tourists themselves and local residents. Development of a long-term strategy for the tourism sector, taking into account the characteristics of regions and industries, coordination of these plans at the economic level and within the framework of international cooperation are important issues of tourism development what could be resolved at the state level. In the meantime, still there are issues when the joint efforts of the governments of many countries is required.

"Silk Roads route" is one of 56 heritages of China. The item is in the list of heritages of Kazakhstan and Kyrgyz Republic being one internationally recognized by UNESCO. Iran is rich by its 26 natural and cultural heritages inscribed on the World Heritage List. The number of heritages of Kazakhstan, Kyrgyz Republic, Tajikistan, Turkmenistan and Uzbekistan in total is 15 including Silk Roads route. The list may be enlarged while the enlargement might be postponed because of pandemic restrictions. Afghanistan has two items inscribed on the World Heritage List and one of the regions needed in international support in its development.

Another benefit of the tourism sector is contribution to small and medium enterprises (SME) increase what was directly affected by tourism's halt and 70% of the loss of the world's GDP in 2020. Decrease of tourism GDP in Kyrgyz Republic to 2,9% from 5,1%, dynamics of international tourists' arrivals (355 thousand in Jan-Sep 2020

compared to 946 thousand in Jan-Sep 2019) confirms direct tourism GDP cut at least by half in all regions (Agency on statistics of Tajikistan and Kyrgyzstan). The UNWTO Tourism Recovery Program in Member States includes the Sustainable Tourism Development Program (ADB) in Tajikistan, launched with the support of the European Bank for Reconstruction and Development (EBRD), Asian Development Bank (ADB), Japan International Cooperation Agency (JICA) and the United Nations Development Program (UNDP); COVID-19 in Uzbekistan 17 projects, including "Support for Post-Accident Tourism Recovery" (EBRD), "Common Protocol on Health and Safety in the Almaty-Bishkek Corridor" (ADB) and the development of a vehicle classification system. Worldwide consumption and production - a actuation of the worldwide economy — rest on the employment of the natural environment and resources in a very way that continues to own destructive impacts on the world. Developing, adopting or implementing policy instruments aimed toward supporting the shift to sustainable consumption and production is one amongst targets in accordance with the SDG 12.

According to the UNEP Waste Product Index Report 2021, waste from households, retail establishments and also the food industry totals 931 million tonnes annually. The Report reveals that the worldwide average of 74 kg per capita of food wasted every year is remarkably similar from lower-middle income to high-income countries, suggesting that the majority countries have room to boost waste reduction offers multi-faceted wins for people and planet, improving food security, addressing global climate change, saving money and reducing pressures ashore, water, biodiversity and waste management systems (see <https://wedocs.unep.org/handle/20.500.11822/1>)

We noted lack of data on food waste and the limited availability of tourism sector data in countries under analysis (Agency for Strategic planning and reforms). The Report on food waste index states the same and very low confidence level of the estimates. Average household food waste in kg per capita during a year, given by region in the Report, has a significant range from the lowest 61 kg per capita in Eastern Europe to the highest 110 kg per capita of Western Asia. The second largest region is Sub-Saharan Africa with 108 kg food waste per capita, with more 18 kg food waste per capita than the Southern Europe (90) or more 26 and 27 kg than the South-Eastern Asia (82) and Australia and New Zealand (81), respectively. Five regions amongst 17 listed have no data, including the Central Asia where the most of Silk Road countries are located.

Further research is needed to quantify the environmental, economic and social impacts and understand the causes of this food waste. To do this, at least the following aspects of the assessment should be taken into account. Data and studies on food waste should be structured in order to determine the causes of the waste of products and to create a detailed classification of products. Minimizing the loss of valuable food resources should be a cross-cutting goal in all relevant strategic and program documents. Quantitative assessment of the consequences should be based on consumption norms generally accepted or determined by the relevant national departments, since consumption norms may depend on the weather, climate, cultural and living conditions.

Effective decision-making requires reliable information. Our study of strategies and or intentions, where available, on a country's tourism sector development reveals that the most of Central Asia republics did not either start the process of the proper data accounting of food waste or the accounting process result is not enough to report on. What is not accounted cannot be measured.

According to the statistical information of the Republic of Kazakhstan, an annual volume of municipal waste is doubled by 2021 comparing to the year 2005 and reaching 4.006.493 tons. The waste per capita is about 200 kg from which only 12-13 % in average is annually reused and recycling. Kazakhstan have achieved a progress in gathering information on the waste and the database management.

Table 2. Kazakhstan. Municipal waste management, 2019-2021

Municipal waste management	unit	2019	2020	2021
Solid waste	Mln. tones	4.7	4.6	4.2
Municipal waste collected	Mln. tones	2.9	2.8	3.2
Household waste	%	70.7	71.4	65.6
Manufacturing waste (equivalent to household waste)	%	15.7	14.6	20.2
Street garbage	%	10.3	9.9	10.5
Other waste	%	1.7	2.2	2.2
Waste deposit	%	65,3	68,6	65,9

Source: compiled by authors

Studying the details of corresponding statistics on waste management reveals the fact of low level of household food waste. Referring to the current status of data management in the country which is under development we assume that the results may be misleading: accuracy and completeness of the data are subject

to a further study. Nevertheless, the main indicators for the years 2020 and 2021 are as follows while the details for the previous years are not available.

Table 3. Kazakhstan. Indicators of waste management, 2020-2021

Year	Total volume of collected (Managed waste)	Total volume of received (delivered waste)	Volume of sorted waste	Sorted waste to received	Food waste in the total volume of sorted waste	Food waste in the total volume of sorted waste	Household waste, total	Household waste to Total received	Population	Household waste, per capita
	tones	tones	tones	%	tones	%	tones	%	thousand people	kg per capita
2020	3,708,488	3,752,516	1,114,797	30%	18,166	1,6	2,009,342	54%	18,879.6	106,4%
2021	4,006,493	3,922,140	1,191,690	30%	35,949	3,0	2,091,745	53%	19,169.6	109,1%

Source: compiled by authors

In addition to a low level of household food waste the analysis shows a low volume of a waste sorted out annually and a significant level of household waste. We note that the data on waste management can be found in the section on environment and impact assessment tourism requires an additional data accounting.

The national tourism planning is mostly focused on the economic angle. While the overall commitment of national tourism policies to sustainable consumption and production (SCP) and sustainable development is there, currently the concept of SCP is not commonly used by tourism policymakers. References to the development of mechanisms to monitor the impacts of sustainable tourism development are also commonly found in national tourism policies with a focus on monitor the environmental aspects of the sustainable development of tourism but there is no evidence available on the impacts of tourism. Mainly reporting on economic performance of the sector, countries do not display data related to social and environmental aspects of the sector development. Therefore, there is a need to better monitor, share and disclose the sustainable development impacts of tourism.

SDG Target 12.b. outlines, “the development and implementation of tools to monitor sustainable development impacts of tourism” are of utmost importance to plan and manage the development of the sector in a relevant and timely manner, in respect of planetary boundaries and ensuring both local and visitor satisfaction. Strategic approaches to outline SCP policy instruments to pave the way towards implementation of policies, to support the regular and timely measurement of SCP for effective implementation and to incorporate geospatial data to visualize the interactions of tourism with the environment should be a part of a country’s tourism policy.

Integration of Sustainable Consumption and Production in Tourism Policies with commitment to develop sound tourism policies and ensure their effective implementation could be performed through reporting on “SCP impact areas” such as biodiversity protection and sustainable land use, energy efficiency, greenhouse gas emissions reduction, water use efficiency and waste reduction. We emphasize on some key next steps in the delivery of SDG 12.3, particularly recommended by UNEP (<https://wedocs.unep.org/handle/20.500.11822/1>):

- Use the Target Measure Act approach developed by Champions 12.3 to organize action, use ‘Enhancing NDCs for Food Systems’ to raise ambition in national climate strategies by integrating food loss and waste.
- Participate in a Regional Food Waste Working Group. These Working Groups will provide capacity building and training to participating countries in measuring food waste, developing a national baseline and designing national strategies for food waste prevention. They are intended to bring to life the methodology, creating opportunities for member states to ask technical questions, work through problems, and learn from and support their peers in the development of food waste measurement processes.
- Report regularly on food waste, using the methodology jointly developed. It is an ambitious target, with important impacts, on hunger, economies, climate, nature, and pollution. This report and these next steps will equip member states and other entities to manage what they measure.

- In addition to SCP and SDG targets, the world needs to reconfigure its accounting and reporting tools in order to prioritize the way forward from “crisis to transformation” outlined at the 24th UNWTO General Assembly, which is to:
 - maintaining pandemic preparedness and protecting tourism jobs and businesses;
 - restoring mobility, promoting safe travel, strengthening cooperation, gaining consumer confidence and helping the sector survive.
 - seizing the opportunity of innovation and digitalization to accelerate the transformation of the sector into a more resilient, inclusive and sustainable future.

Some of indicators in assessment of sustainability of tourism sector such as jobs, companies and/or SME support are easiest ones to be accounted while the sustainable future might require development of internationally standardized indicators and evaluation methodology (Omarova *et al.* 2021). Development of roadmap intended to decrease tourism's contributions to global warming (estimated at 5% of total worldwide CO₂ emissions) would be another step-in tourism sector's impact evaluation and its sustainability. By developing the tourism industry, it is necessary to develop intercultural communications, which also affect the development of diplomatic relations between countries. Focusing on the impact of tourism on the culture of the host country, a distinctive feature is the cultural and historical phenomena and problems of tourism in the process of intercultural communication (Dulatbekov 2021).

The main issues, challenges and political priorities for the development of tourism are focused on supporting small and medium-sized businesses to develop their competitiveness and unlock their potential for growth and employment. Governments of countries are rethinking on the industry development. For the "reanimation" of the tourism industry, support in a form of tax easing, interest-free loans, start-up projects promotion, grants, subsidizing interest expenses on loans are provided. On the background of the recovery after COVID-19 still there is a lack on approaches and measures of sustainability of the sector development.

The best practices from UE related to the recovery packages denote the fact that it should be the emphasize on: maximizing the use of technology, promoting the digitalization of micro, small and medium-sized enterprises (MSMEs), facilitating networking for innovative solutions, and investing in digital skills development. For example, in the Netherlands, start-ups and expansion companies can apply for a Corona-Overbruggingslening (Corona Bridge Loan) loan of between €50,000 and €2 million. On May 20, the government announced the allocation of the second part of the loan in the amount of 150 million euros, which will help increase the liquidity of innovative companies (newly created and expanding their activities). In the case of Portugal, “Mezzanine” fund and also in other countries was approved the creation of special funds to support or finance start-ups during the COVID-19 pandemic for the start-ups in the tourism sector, or for the companies with low liquidity through debt instruments convertible into equity.

The new requirements that are caused by the spread of coronavirus infection, imposed to the countries that are traditional leaders in the development of international tourism determine them to face with rapidly growing requirements and rules for the provision of tourist services in a pandemic, as follows: a clear understanding of the changes taking place in the industry; analysis of new consumption trends and tourists' behavior; finding a ways to innovate in this activity in order to attract and maintain new financial sources.

Table 4. International tourist arrivals by region of origin for the period from 2010-2020, in mln.

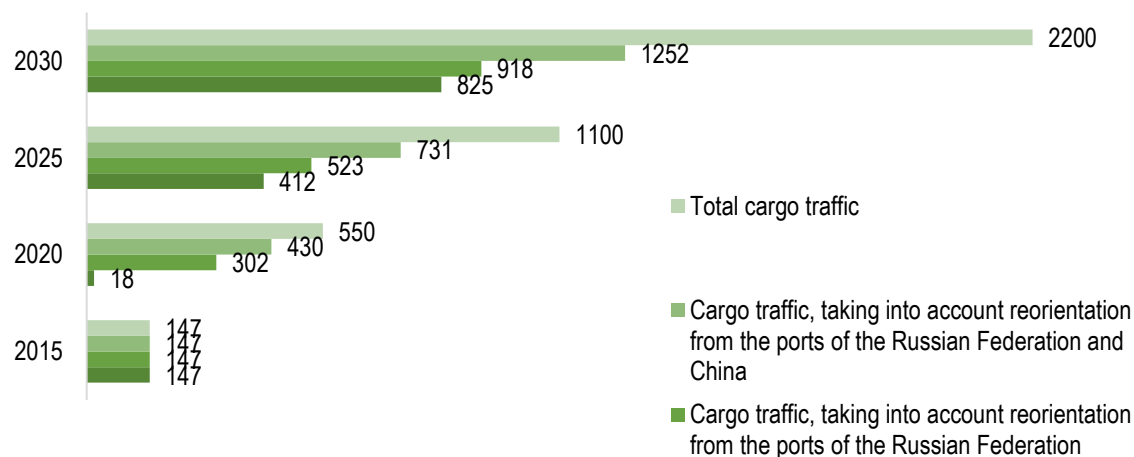
Indicator	2011	2012	2013	2014	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020	2021
Arrivals around world, including:	953	1,003	1,040	1,088	1,138	1,203	1,245	1,333	1,408	1,460	381
from Europe	496,7	512,0	537,7	560,7	567,6	581,8	592,8	636,6	676,0	702,7	221,2
from America	155,6	163,3	170,8	175,9	188,6	200,2	211,6	227,3	239,3	244,7	69,0
from Asia Pacific	206,0	220,7	236,5	253,7	272,0	293,6	314,4	337,6	367,7	381,7	57,2
from Africa	28,3	30,1	31,0	32,0	34,4	36,0	39,6	42,5	45,3	47,0	17,8
from Middle East	33,5	31,9	33,3	35,1	37,6	39,7	36,3	36,8	40,4	43,8	16,2

Source: compiled by authors

Related to the growth of Kazakhstan's enterprises engaged in the tourism sector, Omarova *et al.* (2021) indicates that annually financial resources are invested in this industry in the form of investments. So, the investments in the tourism of KZ have reached a record value in the history of the country, 153.7 billion tenge; in 2019, the total contribution of tourism according to the WTTC methodology in total GDP amounted to 5.6%; at the same time, by 2025 it is planned to increase the contribution of tourism to the country's economy up to 8%.

To this end, it is necessary to expand the scope of services aimed at the development of tourism activities. Thus, one of the important transit and transport centers within the framework of the Chinese One Belt, One Road initiative was the Kazakh - Chinese logistics terminal in the port of Lianyungang, put into operation in 2014 and thanks to which Kazakhstan gained access to the Pacific Ocean. The creation of a logistics and trading platform center in the port of Lianyungang contributed to an increase in the volume of cargo transportation through Kazakhstan to Europe and back, and contributed to the development of tourist trips, both for the purpose of a business trip (work) and personal trips.

Figure 5. Analysis of forecasting the volume of freight traffic. Port of Lianyungang forecast for 2030, thousand tons



Source: compiled by authors

As of 2020 alone, which has become quite difficult due to the pandemic, 58% of goods were delivered from China to EU countries by sea through the Suez Canal, and 26% by air. 9% and 4% of goods, respectively, were delivered to the EU by road and rail transport, an impressive part of which passes through the territory of Kazakhstan. From 2013 to 2020, China invested about 18.5 billion US dollars in Kazakhstan, of which 3.8 billion US dollars were directed specifically to the transport sector.

According to some reports, Chinese investments in Kazakhstan amounted to more than 70 billion US dollars, or about 80% of all Chinese investments in the region. The World Bank predicts that at the current growth rate, the Belt and Road Initiative could increase Kazakhstan's GDP by 21%. This is just one example of mutually beneficial and successful cooperation under this initiative.

The Great Silk Road, thanks to a developed network of caravan roads, once passed through the Mediterranean, Central and East Asia, connected China and Japan with Europe. Thanks to the Silk Road, culture, science, art spread, trade developed not only in silk, but also in many other goods that were very important for that time. Nearly 10 years after the announcement by President of the People's Republic of China Xi Jinping of the creation of the One Belt, One Road Initiative, it has become a grandiose project covering most of Eurasia. Today, the One Belt, One Road, like the Great Silk Road in ancient times, unites 148 countries and 31 international organizations, thus connecting both developed and developing countries, as well as countries with a "new economy". The route of the One Belt, One Road initiative is China's international initiative to improve existing and create new trade and transport corridors.

The results of the analysis of tourist and recreational zones of Kazakhstan made it possible to determine one of the priority forms of inbound tourism based on the materials from South of Kazakhstan:

- pilgrimage tourism - due to the presence of sacred places in the city of Turkestan;
- cultural and educational - on the historical cities of the Great Silk Road;
- environmental - due to the global environmental catastrophe of the Aral Sea.

In 2021, despite quarantine measures, work continued under the special project "Sacred Geography of Kazakhstan" of the "Rukhani Zhangyru" program. 60 archaeological works were carried out at the monuments as part of scientific research, which is 50% more than the planned figure. Also, scientific and restoration work was carried out at 29 objects of historical and cultural heritage. 13 scientific archaeological and applied studies have been implemented, the level of which was positively assessed by the National Scientific Council.

Currently, together with Uzbekistan, Kyrgyzstan and Tajikistan, work is underway to prepare nomination documentation to promote the transnational nomination "The Great Silk Road: the Fergana-Syrdarya Corridor" for

the inclusion of unique historical and cultural monuments of Kazakhstan in the UNESCO World Heritage List. The territory of Kazakhstan includes objects Sauran, Zheti Asar (Altyn Asar), Zhankent, Syganak, Otrar, Kultobe-Yassy (Turkestan).

Within the framework of the special project "Modern Kazakh culture in the global world" 20 events were held.

As part of the implementation of the State Program for the Development of the Tourism Industry of the Republic of Kazakhstan in 2019-2021, 126.1 billion tenge of state investments were allocated for the implementation of 80 projects, including 39 projects worth 59.8 billion tenge were financed in 2021 (Table 5).

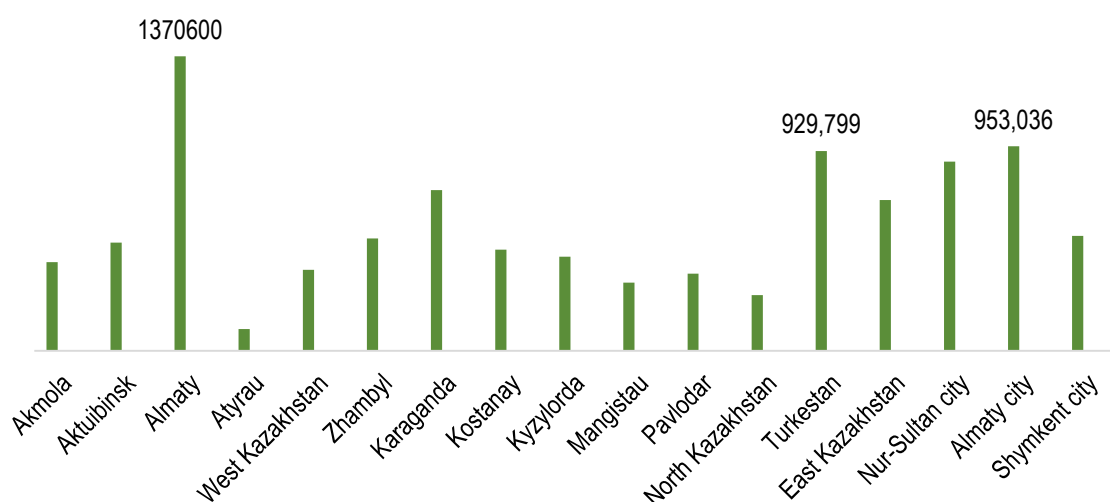
Table 5. Number of projects with the amount of financing, billion tenge

№	Destination	Number of projects	Funding amount
1	Alakol	6	18,0
2	Alakol (East)	7	9,0
3	ShchBKZ	28	29,0
4	Turkestan	6	2,5
5	Mangistau	9	51,2
6	IShKZ	2	0,43
7	Bayanaul	8	1,2
8	AGK	6	1,25
9	Balkhash (including Ulytau)	8	3,5
Total:		80	126,1

Source: compiled by authors according to <https://primeminister.kz/>

The growth rate of the tourism sector in Kazakhstan continues to show a positive trend. Consider the development trends of the tourism industry in Kazakhstan in the regional aspect for 2021 (Figure 6). As can be seen from Figure 6, the top three regions of Kazakhstan in the tourism industry in 2021 include (trips): Almaty – 1,370,600, Almaty city – 953,036, Turkestan – 929,799.

Figure 6. Trends in the development of the tourism industry in Kazakhstan in the regional aspect



Source: compiled by authors according to <http://www.stat.gov.kz>

Table 6. Leaders in the development of the tourism industry in Kazakhstan for 2021

Region	Total	By purpose of travel					
		Personal	Including types of tourism		Business and professional	Including by types of tourism	
			Internal	Visiting		Internal	Visiting
Almaty	1.370.600	1.311.234	1.233.456	77.778	59.366	56.238	3.128
Turkestan	929.799	902.252	858.478	43.774	27.547	25.415	2.132
Almaty city	953.036	792.399	619.634	172.765	160.637	96.500	64.137

Source: compiled by authors according to <http://www.stat.gov.kz>

The framework of the Great Silk Road cluster at the macro level, as indicated, includes several regional clusters along the route. They are built on the basis of the identification of important centers of the Silk Road in the form of large shopping centers, around which large satellite cities have appeared. In contrast, the center of regional clusters has significant tourism resources, and have high rates of tourism development. So, for example, for South Kazakhstan with 5 reserves and 2 national natural parks, with the spiritual center of Turkestan, the location of the Baikonur rocket and space complex is the development of cultural, educational, ecological, excursion, health, sports, ethno-tourism, spiritual, ecological, space tourism.

The tourist cluster South Kazakhstan, centered in Shymkent, represents the heritage of the Silk Road and historical symbols, as well as the Baikonur Cosmodrome, which is an attraction in itself (Table 7).

Table 7. Cluster diagram

Indicator	Cluster South Kazakhstan
Landscape	Deserts, steppes
First impression	Great Silk Road
Positioning	Heart of the Silk Road
Visitor impressions	Silk Road in all its glory with modern elements

Source: compiled by authors

For the first half of 2021, according to Forbes research, the East Kazakhstan region is in the lead, then the South Kazakhstan region, Almaty and Astana (Table 8).

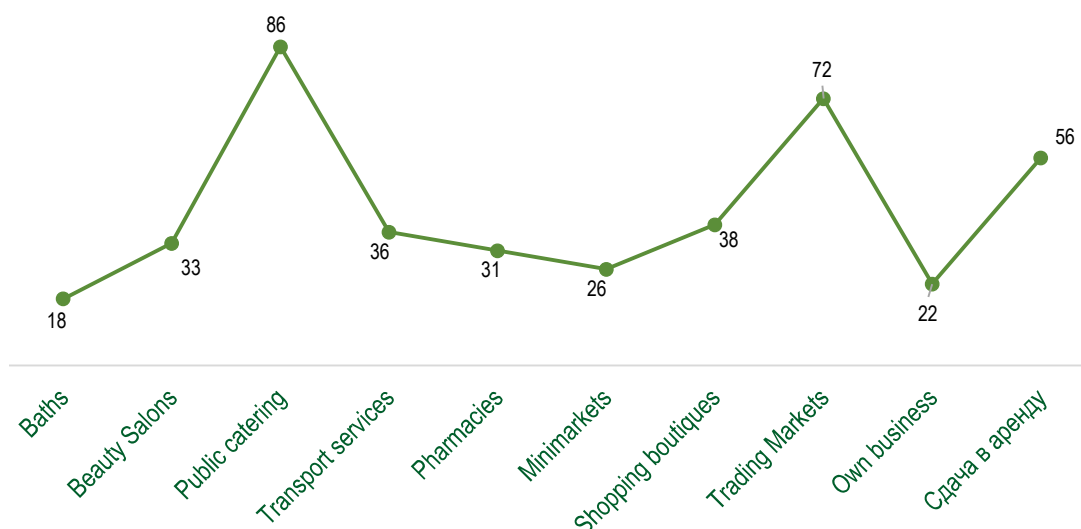
Table 8. Strategic development of South Kazakhstan

Region	MICE-tourism	Culture tourism	Active tourism	Rest in the mountains and on the lakes	Beach tourism	Short-term tourism
Shymkent	+++	+++	-	-	-	++
Sairam-Ugam SNNP	-	+	+++	+++	-	-
Aksu-Zhabagly State Nature Reserve	-	+	+++	+++	-	-
Otyrar oasis	+	+++	-	-	-	-
Turkestan / Mausoleum	++	+++	-	-	-	-
Sauran	-	++	-	-	-	-
Kyzylorda	+	++	+	-	-	+
Baikonyr	+	+++	-	-	-	-
Taraz	+	+++	-	-	-	-
Saryagash	+	+	-	-	+++	++

Note: "-" - no potential, + - low potential, ++ - medium potential, +++ - high potential

Source: compiled by authors

Figure 7. Rating of profitability of entrepreneurial activity in Turkestan



Source: compiled by authors

It is within the framework of cultural tourism that the most efficient use of the tourist resources of the Silk Road and the sustainable development of tourism in the respective territories is possible. The UNWTO Silk Road Action Plan notes that the demand for cultural tourism is experiencing unprecedented growth and currently accounts for about 40% of global tourism. Accompanying and consulting during the Hajj and your own convenient transfer (from Almaty and Astana to Turkestan and back) is an important service, as it was noted by 83% of experts, 52% highlighted the provision of hot takeaway food (allowed for Hajj, etc.), ethnographic music show "The Great Silk Road", Turkish / Saka baths and service at the level of world standards. One of the objectives of the study was to determine the profitability of entrepreneurial activity along the Great Silk Road, namely in the city of Turkestan (Figure 7).

The results of the studies showed that of the listed areas of business, the largest income in Turkestan is brought by: catering - 86%, trade markets - 72%, leasing of premises - 54%.

Conclusion

We believe that the tourism sector performance indicators should allow an evaluation of SCP impact areas such as biodiversity protection and sustainable land use, energy efficiency, greenhouse gas emissions reduction, water use efficiency and waste reduction. 30-years-back impact of COVID-19 should not affect the policies approved before and the proper maintenance of natural and cultural heritage is a must. Sustainable tourism development means both to meet the current needs of tourists and the host area and to focus on protecting and enhancing opportunities for the future. Some benefits of a heritage like Silk Road route in a form of social resilience, what will increase in communities with access to information and new knowledge dissemination, are immeasurable.

National tourism planning is a well-established practice among national authorities with national tourism policies covering on a time frame of 5-10 years and addressing the important thematic areas across regions, but planning methodologies and techniques also tend to place more emphasis on the economic angle. Aspects connected to the environmental performance of tourism should be addressed in national tourism policies altogether with aspects such as human resource development, investment, marketing and promotion, employment.

The development of tourism has caused environmental difficulties due to the additional construction of roads, laying tourist routes: while these assets may add value to the development of region and/or country, they might cause an impairment of natural and cultural heritage. We noted absence of any approaches (and/or information on results of) to valorization of tangible and intangible heritage what is one of four main objectives of the project on "Silk Roads Heritage Corridors". Valorization process may require development of methodology considering each element of heritage as a unique thing in nature, data gathering and analysis, expert's assistance and other actions to be in place.

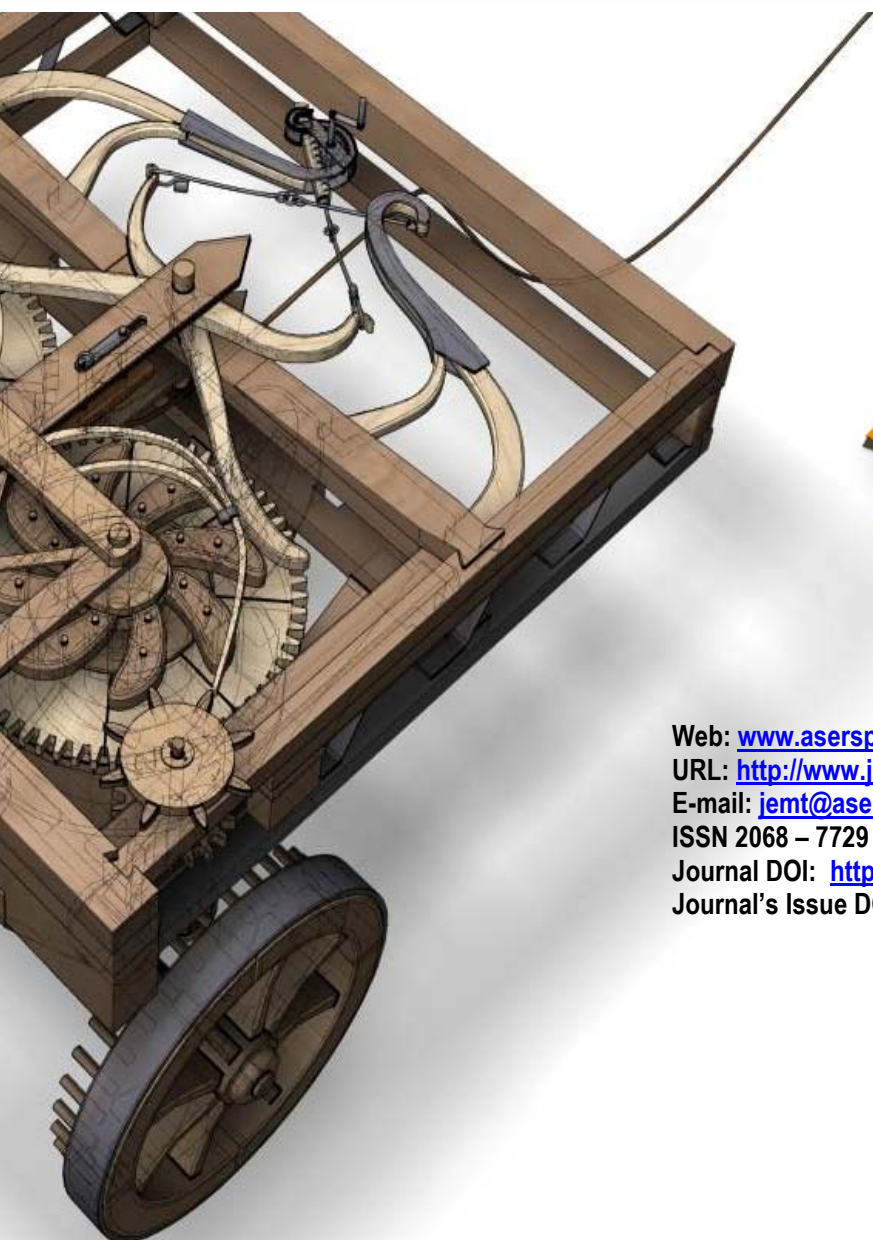
Despite of attractiveness as a historical heritage the Silk Road route's development as a tourism route is dependent on the infrastructure of both domestic of each country and international covered all the countries in the route. This means that tourism policymakers of these countries could work together to achieve the goal of sustainable development through joint efforts in maximizing opportunities and minimizing the negative impact of tourism. Evaluating the costs and benefits" of the sector, we must not forget about the contribution of tourism to the development of mankind through the study of history, culture and the laws of nature, which is priceless. Norms of compliance with environmental standards at tourist sites and the introduction of economic and statistical methods that will allow for correct observations and objective control over the state and development of tourism are at the responsibility of the state as the important areas to develop for the sector improvement. While there are no internationally agreed norms, the sustainability measurement tool could be developed by efforts of countries on "Silk Roads Heritage Corridors" and aligned with an international framework when the one is ready.

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