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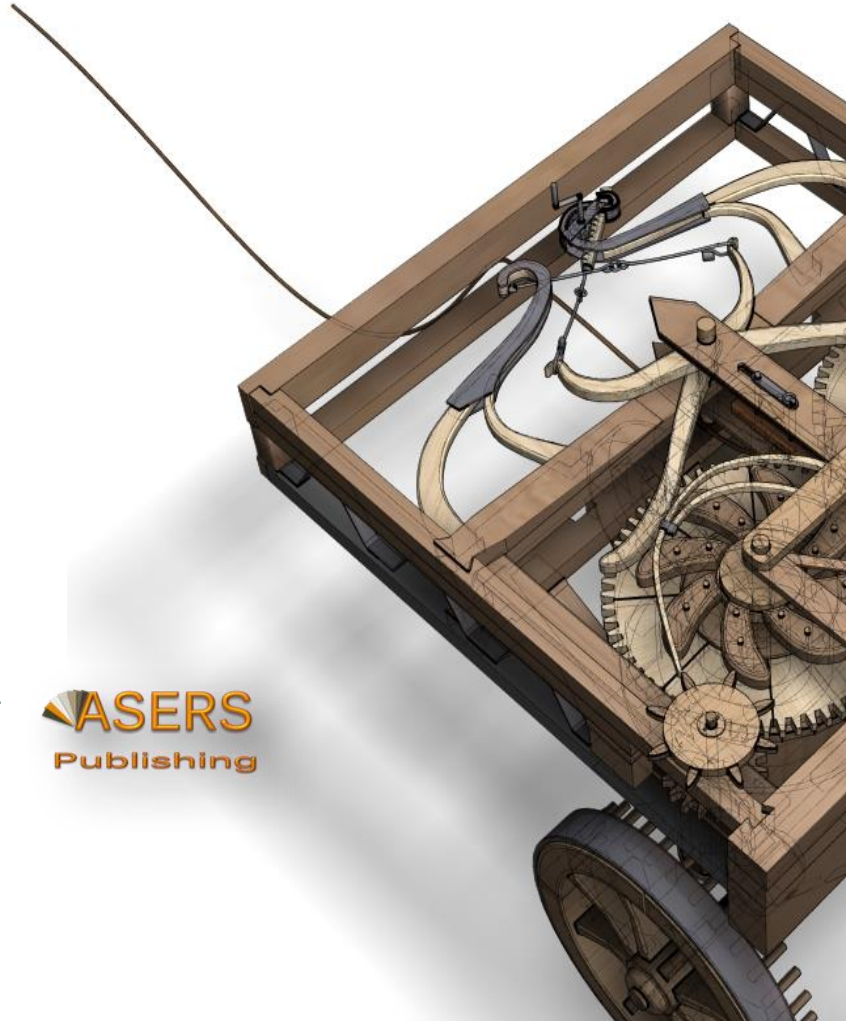
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**Journal of Environmental Management and Tourism** is an interdisciplinary research journal, aimed to publish articles and original research papers that should contribute to the development of both experimental and theoretical nature in the field of Environmental Management and Tourism Sciences.

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## The Transformational Role of Entrepreneurial Universities in Fostering Tourism Sector of Kazakhstan: Legal Documentary Analysis

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### Abstract:

This article examines the role of entrepreneurial universities in shaping Kazakhstan's tourism industry by fostering tourism innovation. It focuses on the ways in which these universities contribute to the development of the tourism sector in Kazakhstan, including curriculum enhancement, research projects, industry partnerships, and the promotion of entrepreneurial culture. By using documentary analysis as a research method, this study seeks to examine existing literature, reports, policy documents, and other relevant sources to gather insights on the contributions of entrepreneurial universities in the tourism sector. This article sheds light on the unique challenges and opportunities that Kazakhstan faces in the development of its tourism sector. It stresses the role of entrepreneurial universities in addressing these challenges to promote Kazakhstan as a compelling tourism destination. The findings of this study highlight the significance of entrepreneurial universities in promoting innovation, knowledge transfer, and entrepreneurship education within the tourism sector and provide valuable information for policymakers, the academic community and industry professionals in understanding the crucial role of entrepreneurial universities in advancing the tourism sector in Kazakhstan. It concludes that by promoting partnerships between universities, government, and industry stakeholders, Kazakhstan can create an ecosystem that encourages tourism innovation and sustainable development of the tourism sector. By leveraging the

resources, knowledge, and networks of entrepreneurial universities, Kazakhstan can develop a dynamic tourism sector that draws tourists from across the world and promotes economic growth.

**Keywords:** entrepreneurial universities; tourism; legal acts; Kazakhstan.

**JEL Classification:** I23; I28; K15; L30; L33; Z32; R11.

## Introduction

Text of the introduction. The tourism sector plays a vital role in the development and growth of economies around the world. The tourism industry has great potential to drive economic prosperity and advance sustainable development in Kazakhstan, a country with a wealth of natural beauty, cultural heritage, and diverse landscapes. To maximize this potential, it is critical to explore innovative approaches that promote tourism development and enhance the competitiveness of the tourism industry. In this regard, entrepreneurial universities can serve as key catalysts for advancing tourism innovation. Entrepreneurial universities offer a new perspective for educating and preparing future professionals in the tourism industry. By including entrepreneurship education in their programs, these universities give their students the skills, perspectives, and information they need to recognize and seize entrepreneurial opportunities in the tourism industry. Additionally, research projects carried out by entrepreneurial universities offer valuable perspectives, evidence-based recommendations, and innovative solutions for the growth of the tourism sector. Entrepreneurial universities are also actively engaged in the tourism industry through collaboration and partnerships. These collaborations facilitate knowledge exchange, investment in industry and concrete projects, closing the gap between academia and the tourism sector. Overall, this article aims to shed light on the transformative role of entrepreneurial universities in fostering tourism innovation and shaping the tourism industry in Kazakhstan and offers potential avenues for collaboration between entrepreneurial universities, industry stakeholders, and policymakers, with the ultimate goal of positioning Kazakhstan as a competitive and sustainable tourism destination. The main argument of this article is that entrepreneurial universities, through their focus on innovation, entrepreneurship education, industry collaboration, and research, have the potential to shape and enhance the tourism industry in Kazakhstan.

## 1. Literature Review

### 1.1 The Concept of the Entrepreneurial University

The concept of an entrepreneurial university encompasses higher education institutions that actively support entrepreneurship and innovation inside and outside the academic community. The entrepreneurial university goes above and beyond the typical academic roles of research and teaching to take an active part in knowledge transfer, the commercialization of research, and partnership with business and industry (Pita *et al.* 2021; Sam & van der Sijde 2014). Entrepreneurial universities are considered active players in the socio-economic development of the region (Issabekov *et al.* 2022). They support economic growth and development within their local community and beyond, promoting a culture of entrepreneurship and innovation. (Audretsch & Belitski 2021; Ruiz *et al.* 2020). In other words, the main difference between classical and entrepreneurial universities can be seen in their policy, the integration of entrepreneurial activity into organizational and managerial processes, the formation of systems that stimulate entrepreneurial activity, and the development of entrepreneurial education programs and technologies. Thus, in response to the changing demands of the contemporary economy, the idea of the entrepreneurial university has evolved.

The concept of "entrepreneurial university" was introduced into the research and academic community by Clark (1998), who highlighted its main characteristics: 1) strengthening the managerial core of the university, 2) expanding ties with groups and organisations outside the university, 3) diversifying funding sources, 4) stimulation of the entrepreneurial activity of university departments, 5) development of a comprehensive entrepreneurial culture. Thus, unlike traditional universities, entrepreneurial universities combine teaching, research and entrepreneurial activities and generate revenues, while having innovative infrastructures in their structure. Most importantly, these types of universities are aimed, on the one hand, at training and graduating generations of innovators, and on the other, at the production of innovative ideas and products for various sectors of the economy.

There are many unique characteristics of entrepreneurial universities, but the most common is the development of supporting infrastructure; strengthening the interdisciplinary research base; diversification of funding sources; entrepreneurial culture; the commercialization of knowledge, close interactions with business and government, a high level of independence (Audretsch & Belitski 2021; Etzkowitz 2008a; Ruiz *et al.* 2020; Schulte 2004). According to Etzkowitz (2008), MIT is an excellent illustration of an "entrepreneurial university." Entrepreneurial universities are characterized by a range of initiatives such as business incubators and

accelerators, and industrial collaborations that are aimed at promoting entrepreneurship and innovation (Audretsch & Belitski 2021; Ruiz *et al.* 2020).

The idea of the entrepreneurial university is tightly connected with the Triple-Hélix model (TH model) (Cai & Lattu 2022; Etzkowitz & Leydesdorff 1995). The TH model was first developed by Etzkowitz and Leydesdorff (1995) to describe dynamic interactions between university, industry (business), and government in supporting entrepreneurship, innovation, and economic progress. The TH model represents a perfect union between government, business and academia, which are key components of each country's innovation system. The TH model demonstrates the involvement of certain institutions in the interaction at each step of the creation of an innovative product. According to this model, universities play a key role in this interaction and are considered as centres that generate new technologies and new forms of entrepreneurship, while also reserving the right to critically evaluate a particular project.

### **1.2 The Role of Entrepreneurial Universities in the Development of the Tourism Sector**

Various authors stress that universities have a significant impact on the local economy, especially in the tourism industry (Guo *et al.* 2022; Tomasi *et al.* 2020; Vaduva *et al.* 2020). The entrepreneurial university contributes to the development of the regional economy and, through partnerships with other organizations, to the economic development of the country (Pugh *et al.* 2022; Schulte, 2004). In general, entrepreneurial universities can contribute to advance innovation in the tourism industry through research, education, incubation, collaboration, and commercialization (Audretsch & Belitski 2021; Hall & Williams 2019; Pugh *et al.* 2022). Audretsch and Belitski (2021) argue that the three-ring entrepreneurial university's role extends beyond merely funding knowledge through research and teaching and includes the follow-up entrepreneurial activity intended to transform and commercialize knowledge between academia and business. Similarly, Pugh *et al.* (2022) posit that entrepreneurial universities differ in their approaches to fostering regional prosperity and they identified three roles that entrepreneurial universities can play in a regional economy based on the analysis of university engagement in a program for regional economic development in 15 city-regions of England: supporter, steerer and driver. Altynbassov *et al.* (2021) found that the establishment of international university campuses had a positive effect on the development of academic tourism in Kazakhstan. They also found that developing HEIs and attracting international students may be beneficial to the local tourism industry.

Entrepreneurial universities offer the tourism industry invaluable knowledge and insights by conducting research activities. Their contributions support the growth and competitiveness of the tourism business by assisting stakeholders in the sector in understanding trends and emerging opportunities, resolving issues, and making choices (Hall & Williams, 2019; Rinaldi *et al.* 2022). Research activities in tourism industry typically involve tourism market analysis and consumer behavior studies, destination development and sustainability research, innovation and technology adoption, policy analysis and recommendations (Belias *et al.* 2021; Soroker *et al.* 2023). Hall and Williams (2019) highlight the importance of innovations in developing the tourism industry and argue that universities can offer new products and services or help create environmentally and culturally responsible tourism. For example, the case study by Rinaldi *et al.* (2022) indicates a significant role of a regional university in transforming a city and its surroundings in Italy into a sustainable gastronomy and food tourism destination by collaborating with a range of partners. Other scholars found that entrepreneurial activities should focus on the environment and produce environmentally friendly products (Aidarova 2023). Therefore, the entrepreneurial universities support the growth, competitiveness, and sustainability of the sector by performing market analysis, sustainability research, innovation studies, and entrepreneurship-focused research.

The educational mission of entrepreneurial universities can contribute to the training and teaching of future tourism professionals. Specifically, training professionals in tourism marketing, hospitality management and sustainable tourism development ensures the innovative development of the tourism sector (Oktadiana & Chon 2017; Tomasi *et al.* 2020; Vaduva *et al.* 2020; Xiajie 2021; Zhang 2017). Oktadiana and Chon (2017) examined designing the curriculum for undergraduate programmes in hospitality and tourism in universities of Southeast and East Asia and found that a major consideration and the cornerstone of curriculum development is meeting tourism sector needs.

As for the third mission of universities, entrepreneurial universities can facilitate collaboration between different stakeholders in the tourism sector, including industry, business, the government, and non-governmental organizations. Universities can encourage creativity and teamwork by bringing these groups together, which can result in the creation of new tourism products and services (Novelli 2023; Walters & Ruhanen 2019). For instance, Novelli (2023) examined the role of the British Council – Innovation for African Universities project – Accelerating Youth Entrepreneurship and Innovation for Sustainable Tourism collaboration in fostering tourism

ecosystems co-creation in African countries and found that this project has addressed revealed problems such as high unemployment rates amongst youth and inadequate curriculums by offering effective measures: inspiring youth, exchanging knowledge, exhibiting success and sustaining the future.

In conclusion, the literature suggests that entrepreneurial universities can play a decisive role in the development of the tourism sector. It also indicates that the importance of entrepreneurial universities as a central element of the knowledge-based economy will grow in the promotion of innovation and entrepreneurship in the tourism sector and it will primarily depend on country-specific characteristics. As noted above, this requires harmonious interaction between universities, business structures and government, according to the TH model, to promote innovative development and entrepreneurship and to commercialize research in the national economy.

## 2. Methodology

This study used documentary analysis as its research approach, which entails a thorough review and analysis of diverse documentary sources pertaining to entrepreneurial universities and the tourism industry. It involved conducting a comprehensive literature review to identify scholarly articles, books, and reports that discuss the role of entrepreneurial universities in fostering tourism innovation and shaping the tourism industry and relevant policy documents and government reports related to tourism development and entrepreneurship in Kazakhstan. Specifically, the main policy documents and legal acts of Kazakhstan such as the State Program in the development of higher education and science 2023-2029, Strategy "Kazakhstan-2050" Concept for Kazakhstan's entry into the ranks of the 30 most developed countries in the world, the Law on public procurement, the Law on state property, the Concept of development of the tourism industry of the Republic of Kazakhstan for 2023 – 2029 were analyzed. Thus, the most relevant and reliable documentary sources that align with the research objectives were selected. Data were analyzed using thematic analysis techniques to identify common themes, patterns, and trends that emerge from the documentary sources, relating to the role of entrepreneurial universities in fostering tourism innovation (Braun & Clarke 2006). Therefore, the relevant information from the selected sources with an emphasis on themes such as entrepreneurship education, innovation initiatives, industry collaborations, and the impact of entrepreneurial universities on the tourism sector in Kazakhstan was systematically extracted.

It is critical to acknowledge the limitations of the documentary analysis method. The findings of this study heavily rely on the quality and availability of the selected documentary sources. Thus, there may be biases in the sources that were included or omitted. Additionally, the documentary analysis approach can have a limiting ability to provide an in-depth analysis of current practices compared to interviews or surveys (Köhler *et al.* 2022). Despite these limitations, the documentary analysis method offered valuable insights into the role of entrepreneurial universities in fostering tourism innovation in Kazakhstan.

## 3. Findings and Discussion

### 3.1 Legal Opportunities for The Evolution of Entrepreneurial Universities in Kazakhstan

The documentary analysis revealed that currently Kazakhstan's universities have legal opportunities to transform to the entrepreneurial universities. In particular, State Program in the development of higher education and science 2023-2029 allows public universities to fully engage in entrepreneurial activities including the opportunity to raise funds from business and industrial companies, receiving charitable assistance from individuals, creation alumni associations and endowment funds. At the legislative level, a number of acts are being prepared that will allow public universities to engage in entrepreneurial activities. In addition, in 2021, the Ministry of Education and Science of the Republic of Kazakhstan adopted the Corporate Code of higher and postgraduate education.

The government of Kazakhstan with the ambitious plan to develop national economy adopted several strategic policy documents that highlighted aims for transforming national higher education sector, including focusing on the development of entrepreneurial universities. In December 2012, in the Message of the President to the people of Kazakhstan "Strategy "Kazakhstan-2050": a new political course of an established state" a new strategic goal was set for the country to enter the ranks of the 30 most developed countries in the world by 2050. The key message of the Strategy "Kazakhstan-2050" was the modernization of the national economy. Subsequently, several policy documents were adopted that aimed to modernize important sectors of the economy, including higher education. For example, Concept for Kazakhstan's entry into the ranks of the 30 most developed countries in the world dated January 17, 2014 stressed that increasing the adaptation of higher education to the needs of a knowledge-intensive economy will occur through the integration of universities and vocational schools with the created intellectual and innovative clusters. The concept highlighted that for this purpose, training modules on innovation and entrepreneurship, as well as financial management, will be



introduced into the programs of all basic courses in national universities. Furthermore, the Concept prioritized the creation of the entrepreneurial universities in Kazakhstan. It stressed the importance of the accelerated formation of the infrastructure of a knowledge-intensive economy and highlighted that the driver of demand for innovation is the national innovation system, which unites universities, business and the government in innovation clusters, while big cities will become centers of attraction for research, innovation, investors, large companies and new initiatives. It is expected that entrepreneurship practices at universities will be stimulated so that students could gain entrepreneurial experience and implement projects as part of their studies that will help existing small and medium-sized enterprises in solving their specific issues. In this regard, Altynbassov *et al.* (2020) argue that the legal status of state universities in Kazakhstan has changed to non-profit joint stock companies (JSC) which allowed them to fully involve in entrepreneurial activities with various stakeholders and to attract funds, thus, behave as entrepreneurial enterprises. On the other hand, the further development of science and education in such universities will contribute to the formation of positive human capital in the country (Amandykova *et al.* 2016).

Moreover, according to the current legislation, one of the aims in the establishment of entrepreneurial universities is increasing the effectiveness of institutions for the development and support of research and innovation. To this end, the issue of improving legislation on venture financing will be worked out, as well as legislation on protecting intellectual property, supporting research and innovation, and commercializing research developments. Additionally, universities, research institutes and small businesses will be given the right to transfer licenses for the commercial use of government-sponsored research. These initiatives show intention of the government of the Kazakhstan to create supporting environment for entrepreneurial universities. However, the analysis of strategic documents and websites of HEIs of Kazakhstan indicate that these measures are not sufficient to the establishment of entrepreneurial universities in Kazakhstan. The problems associated with the necessary innovative and entrepreneurial ecosystem in universities and the lack of qualified managers in technology transfer can be considered as major hindering factors to the development of the entrepreneurial universities in Kazakhstan. Furthermore, the law on public procurement of 4 December 2015 is not in favor of public universities and complicates the procurement process. Meanwhile, there is a stimulating practice for the academic staff at private universities to attract funds from outside. For example, if a university employee attracts external funds or students on a paid basis, then the founders allocate remuneration to this person in the amount of 10% of the funding. That is why private universities in Kazakhstan have potential to become entrepreneurial and, in terms of financial independence, are far ahead of public universities. Whereas for public universities there are many different unreasonably invented legal barriers. Furthermore, many researchers emphasize the unpreparedness of the academic community to understand how the entrepreneurial university model may be used in practice, and Kazakhstan is no exception. Such a failure to recognize the entrepreneurial university as a potent engine of innovative growth poses a significant barrier to the growth of entrepreneurship in Kazakhstani universities. Therefore, stimulating the development of entrepreneurial universities by the government through creating favorable conditions for the interaction of universities and business is a necessary element of state regulation of higher education towards the establishment of the entrepreneurial universities in Kazakhstan. For this, identifying the innovative development model is crucial. As a successful model of the entrepreneurial university the TH model that discussed in the literature review offers a simple, persuasive model for maximizing the interactions between the government, business, and university (Cai & Lattu 2022; Etzkowitz & Leydesdorff 1995; Etzkowitz 2008).

In addition, it is important to consider governance issues at public universities of Kazakhstan. So far, public universities are governed by the board of trustees and supervisory boards in Kazakhstan. The legal status and functional responsibilities of these boards were regulated by the "Law on the state enterprise" and "Law on State Property" of the Republic of Kazakhstan. Previously the rectors of public universities had sole authority to make decisions, and it was hard to establish suitable corporate governance bodies (Sagintayeva *et al.* 2018). Consequently, the government set target to change the legal status of public universities into non-profit JSC in order to create a board of directors and issued special order to transform 28 public universities into non-profit JSC in 2019. Public universities are currently allowed to modify their charters and get permission for new endeavours with the approval from the Ministry of Science and Higher Education and the Agency for the Protection and Development of Competition. According to Article 177 of the Law "On State Property", this is decided by the shareholder and approved by the Ministry of Finance. Thus, public universities now have a legal way to gain financial independence and to adapt to market conditions which is crucial in developing the entrepreneurial university model. Consequently, adoption of corporate governance practices allows universities to resemble

corporate boards with a greater emphasis on strategic planning, accountability, and financial management as well as more participation from external stakeholders.

Furthermore, according to the Code of the Republic of Kazakhstan on subsoil and subsoil use dated December 27, 2017, foreign and domestic enterprises engaged in mining must allocate 1% from the sum of their contract for research and 1% for training, which allows universities to raise money from industrial companies. In addition, the new State Program (2023-2029) has established that the ministry will produce a set of legislative amendments, which will provide for tax incentives in the amount of one and a half times for private companies cooperating with universities. In developed Western countries, there are various mechanisms to encourage universities to raise funds from outside as well as tax incentives for private companies that donate to universities. For example, The United States adopted the Tax Reform Act in 1969, which provided legal foundations for tax discounts ranging from 20% to 50% for charitable organizations (Mozumi & Mozumi 2022). As a result, well-known philanthropists and corporations started to actively participate in charity in order to receive tax discounts and enhance their brand recognition. This is a strong incentive for business and industrial companies to invest in universities and build partnerships. In turn, it allows universities to create endowment funds. Overall, these strategies aim to improve the financial viability and competitiveness of universities and are a part of the larger trend of academic capitalism. Common mechanisms to attract external funding include government grants, industry partnerships and contracts, philanthropic donations, endowments, and alumni giving, commercialization of intellectual property, and international collaborations and partnerships (Tijssen *et al.* 2019). These and other mechanisms give universities the chance to diversify their financing sources and reduce their reliance on traditional government funding or tuition fees. Consequently, the implementation of the entrepreneurial university model will have a positive impact not only on the university itself but will also lead to increased interaction between universities and enterprises, which will contribute to more efficient generation of new knowledge and commercialization of innovation and overall positive impact on regional development.

### 3.2 Entrepreneurial Universities as Catalysts for Fostering the Tourism Industry in Kazakhstan

Kazakhstan is a central Asian country known for its plethora of natural beauty, rich cultural heritage, and emerging tourism sector. The government of Kazakhstan has worked hard in recent years to build and promote tourism as a vital industry for economic diversification and growth. In particular, the government adopted the Concept of development of the tourism industry of the Republic of Kazakhstan for 2023 – 2029 on 28 March 2023 with an aim to advance the tourism sector. According to this strategic document, some key aspects in the development of the tourism sector in Kazakhstan include natural and cultural attractions, tourism infrastructure, visa liberalization, ecotourism and adventure tourism, marketing and promotion. The tourism sector is significant to Kazakhstan's economy, contributing to drive job growth, regional development, and foreign exchange profits. The tourism industry has an economic impact on a number of industries, including agriculture, transportation, retail, and hospitality, and it creates employment possibilities (Ainakanova 2023; Altynbassov *et al.* 2022).

According to Article 4 of the Law on tourism activities in the Republic of Kazakhstan dated June 13, 2001 the types of services in the tourism industry: tour services; accommodation services; catering services; information, advertising services; transport services; services for the provision (including booking, sale and delivery) of tickets for all types of transport and tickets for attending events; entertainment services; other tourist services provided for by the contract for tourist services. In the meantime, the Concept of development of the tourism industry of the Republic of Kazakhstan for 2023 – 2029 dated March 28, 2023, highlighted major problems in the development of the tourism industry in Kazakhstan: insufficient development of infrastructure in places of tourist attraction, poor logistics, a limited number of accommodation places; lack of assortment and low quality of tourist products, insufficient level of tourist satisfaction, insufficient level of digitalization of tourist services; lack of professional staff in the industry; insufficient level of promotion of tourism potential at the regional and international levels, lack of regular international events in Kazakhstan, insufficient development of MICE tourism (Meetings, Incentives, Conferences, Exhibitions - business tourism); ensuring the safety of tourists in tourist facilities. Universities in Kazakhstan can significantly contribute to solving major problems in the development of the tourism industry by addressing key challenges and working collaboratively with industry stakeholders and the authorities. As the literature review indicated, there are several ways in which the entrepreneurial universities can contribute to the expansion of the tourism sector: research and innovation; entrepreneurship education and training; community engagement and regional development; industry partnerships and collaboration; incubation and acceleration; technology transfer and commercialization (Guo *et al.* 2022; Hall & Williams 2019; Novelli 2023; Pugh *et al.* 2022; Rinaldi *et al.* 2022; Xiajie 2021).

The development and expansion of Kazakhstan's tourist business depend greatly on research and innovation. Some significant elements of research and innovation in Kazakhstan's tourist sector embrace research on tourism trends and market analysis, sustainable tourism practices, destination development and planning, tourism product development and diversification, technological innovations in tourism and international collaboration and networking. For example, in order to find opportunities and target market segments, research can be conducted on consumer behavior, market trends, niche markets and tourism trends recommendations (Belias *et al.* 2021; Soroker *et al.* 2023). The findings of such research can guide policy choices, investment plans, and marketing initiatives to boost tourism in Kazakhstan.

Another major contribution of the entrepreneurial universities to the development of the tourism sector is entrepreneurship education and training specialists for the tourism sector (Oktadiana & Chon 2017; Tomasi *et al.* 2020; Vaduva *et al.* 2020; Zhang 2017). Training for the tourist sector is essential for creating a trained labor force, enhancing customer satisfaction, and fostering the sector's expansion. Training in the tourism sector of Kazakhstan can include formal education programs, professional certification and accreditation, skills development programs, internships and on-the-job training, industry-academia collaboration, professional associations and networking, and language training. According to the Concept of development of the tourism industry of the Republic of Kazakhstan for 2023 – 2029, currently, training in the field of tourism is carried out in 49 universities of Kazakhstan and in total around 12,000 study tourism. Additionally, tourist organizations such as JSC "NC "Kazakh Tourism", the Kazakhstan Tourism Association, and the Kazakhstan Association of Hotels and Restaurants are actively working and creating consortia with partners not only on education but also on the professional practice of future specialists in tourism and hospitality. Moreover, in 2020, the International University of Tourism and Hospitality was established in Turkestan. However, there are still problems associated with the development of the effective education curriculums. For example, Novelli (2023, p.3) argues that “it emerged that universities’ curriculum did not provide learners with an entrepreneurial mindset, primarily promoting salaried employment, a theoretical rather than practical approach and failing to engage key sector stakeholders in its development and delivery”. Therefore, for Kazakhstan’s universities it is essential to develop education programs that meet the requirements of the modern tourism industry. Furthermore, it is crucial to train tour guides and other tourism experts who are fluent in popular languages including English, French, Chinese, and others. By aligning their curriculum with the tourism industry’s needs and trends, universities can ensure that graduates are equipped with the necessary knowledge and abilities to succeed in the tourism sector and eventually can contribute to the development of the tourism industry in Kazakhstan.

Additionally, collaboration between universities and business partners is an effective strategy for advancing new ideas and tackling problems related to tourism. Such partnerships can offer numerous benefits including financial support, industry-relevant research, knowledge transfer and innovation, job placement and economic development (Audretsch & Belitski 2021; Pugh *et al.* 2022; Ruiz *et al.* 2020; Walters & Ruhanen 2019). Universities are hubs of knowledge and research, whereas businesses bring practical expertise and market insights. Universities and business partners who work together can share knowledge, and best practices, and capitalize on their individual strengths (Novelli 2023; Walters & Ruhanen 2019). This exchange of knowledge enables a deeper understanding of the challenges and opportunities in the tourism sector, including MICE tourism, and helps in developing innovative solutions. Moreover, collaboration between universities and business partners can encourage an innovative and entrepreneurial culture in the tourism industry. Together, they can identify new trends, investigate new business ideas, and create innovative products, services, and technologies. In addition to promoting economic growth and a culture of innovation, this partnership can help startups and entrepreneurial endeavors in the tourism sector expand.

Finally, universities can substantially contribute to the development of the MICE tourism in Kazakhstan. According to the Concept of development of the tourism industry of the Republic of Kazakhstan for 2023 – 2029, MICE tourism is one of the underdeveloped sectors of tourism in Kazakhstan as well as one of the priorities of the government in the development of tourism in Kazakhstan. The MICE tourism industry is a specialized area of the tourism sector that focuses on the planning, management, and hosting of meetings, incentives, conferences, and exhibitions (MICE) (Kim *et al.* 2022; Rojas Bueno *et al.* 2020). It is a significant industry that supports knowledge sharing, networking among businesses, and economic growth. International practice indicates that the MICE tourism is common in developed countries such as UK, USA, Australia, Singapore (Kim *et al.* 2022; Mena-Navarro *et al.* 2022). Developed nations often have well-established infrastructure, such as modern conference centres, hotels, and transit networks, making them desirable destinations for holding large-scale business events. Furthermore, the economies and industries of these nations are frequently robust and capable of supporting the organisation of conferences and fairs. However, many other emerging economies such as China and United Arab

Emirates also invest significantly in developing MICE tourism sector. Therefore, given the economic potential of this sector, the government of Kazakhstan adopted the strategic plan to develop MICE tourism in Kazakhstan. In the context of Kazakhstan, entrepreneurial universities can play significant role in the development of MICE tourism. As this universities are focused on innovation, research, and collaboration with industry partners, they can promote MICE tourism in several ways: research and innovation, curriculum development, incubation and entrepreneurship support, and hosting MICE events. By holding such events, they advance the university's standing as a knowledge hub, foster networking possibilities, and boost the local MICE tourist industry.

To sum up, entrepreneurial universities are essential to the growth of the tourism industry due to their contributions to the growth, innovation, and sustainability. These universities serve as catalysts for innovation and knowledge exchange, promoting cooperation across the public, private, and academic sectors and support the creation of new firms, the expansion of the tourism industry, and the advancement of innovative and sustainable practices through their research, instruction, industry partnerships, and community involvement.

## Conclusion

In conclusion, this study revealed that entrepreneurial universities have a pivotal role in shaping and fostering the tourism industry in Kazakhstan. As Kazakhstan seeks to strengthen its position as an attractive tourism destination, these universities make significant contributions by focusing on innovation, entrepreneurship education, industry collaboration, and research. As the literature review indicated, entrepreneurial universities are focused on the development of entrepreneurship, support entrepreneurial initiatives of academic staff and students, and are characterized by close interaction with business and industry partners.

Entrepreneurial universities serve as catalysts for innovation and by integrating entrepreneurship education into their curriculum, these universities prepare future tourism professionals to navigate the dynamic and competitive landscape of the tourism industry. Through partnerships with tourism firms, organizations, industry partners and the government, entrepreneurial universities build a solid network of stakeholders working towards shared objectives. These collaborations promote knowledge exchange, practical experiences, and real-world initiatives, ensuring that educational programmes are in line with market demands and trends. Research initiatives conducted by entrepreneurial universities offer perspectives and evidence-based recommendations to guide destination development plans, legislative decisions, and sustainable tourism practices. These universities support the development and competitiveness of Kazakhstan's tourist industry by researching market trends, consumer behaviour, and cutting-edge technologies. Additionally, by encouraging entrepreneurship, innovation, and sustainability, entrepreneurial universities raise the tourist destinations' profile and create an environment for innovative entrepreneurship in cities and regions.

As Kazakhstan continues to make investments in the expansion of its tourism sector, it is essential to recognize and promote the role of entrepreneurial universities. It is important to consider that fostering an ecosystem that encourages tourist innovation, entrepreneurship, and sustainability requires cooperation between universities, government, and industry partners. Kazakhstan can develop a thriving tourism industry that draws tourists from across the world, promotes economic growth, and protects its distinctive cultural heritage by utilising the resources, knowledge, and networks of entrepreneurial universities.

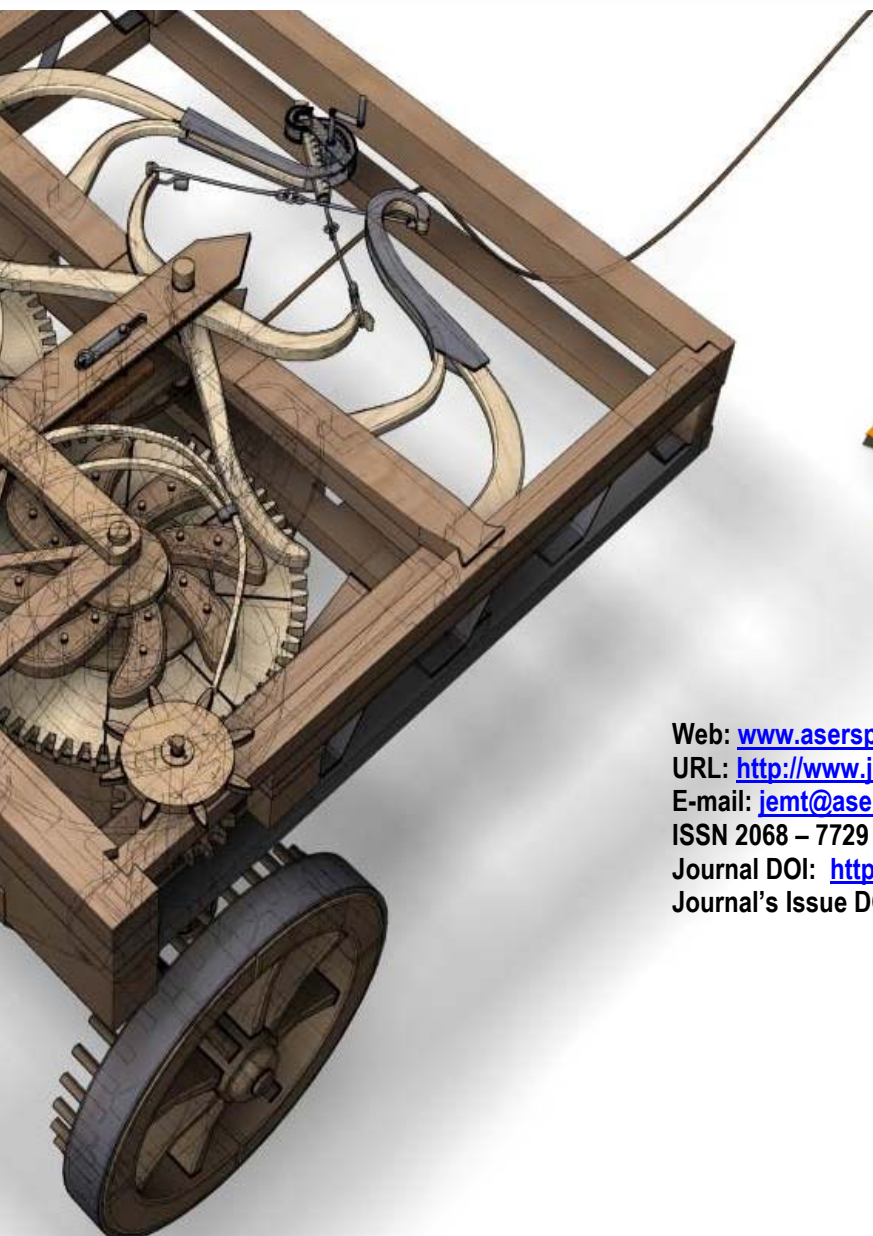
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