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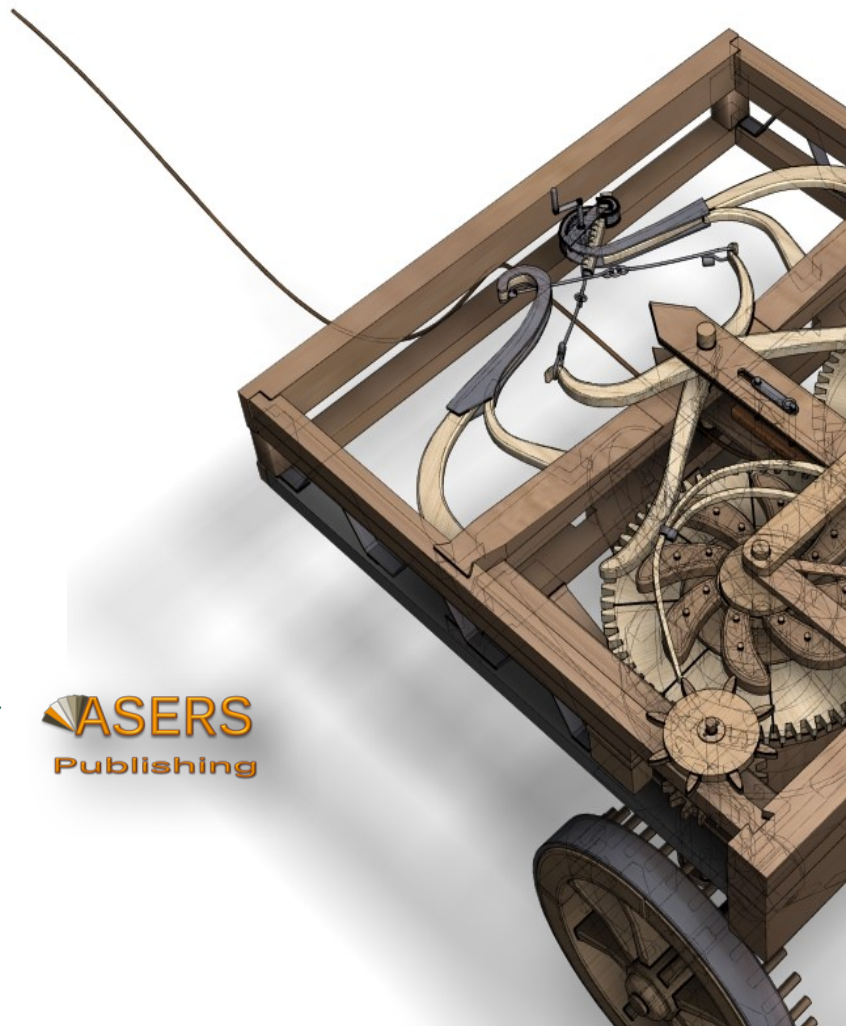
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# Call for Papers

## Winter Issues 2023

### Journal of Environmental Management and Tourism

**Journal of Environmental Management and Tourism** is an open access, peer-reviewed interdisciplinary research journal, aimed to publish articles and original research papers that contribute to the development of both experimental and theoretical nature in the field of Environmental Management and Tourism Sciences. The Journal publishes original research and seeks to cover a wide range of topics regarding environmental management and engineering, environmental management and health, environmental chemistry, environmental protection technologies (water, air, soil), pollution reduction at source and waste minimization, energy and environment, modelling, simulation and optimization for environmental protection; environmental biotechnology, environmental education and sustainable development, environmental strategies and policies.

Authors are encouraged to submit high quality, original works that discuss the latest developments in environmental management research and application with the certain scope to share experiences and research findings and to stimulate more ideas and useful insights regarding current best-practices and future directions in Environmental Management.

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The journal takes an interdisciplinary approach and includes planning and policy aspects of international, national and regional tourism as well as specific management studies. Case studies are welcomed when the authors indicate the wider applications of their insights or techniques, emphasizing the global perspective of the problem they address.

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## The Influence of University-Business Cooperation in the Development of Local Tourism in Kazakhstan: Documentary Analysis

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**Abstract:** Cooperation between universities and businesses has become a potent tool for driving innovation, economic growth, and societal development. Through this partnership, universities and business companies can pool their resources, knowledge, and practical experience. Universities have significant expertise in tourism research, education, and training that can be used by businesses to enhance their products, services, and operational procedures. Businesses, in turn, offer useful insights and real-world problems that influence academic research and curriculum development. The purpose of this study is

to examine the impact of university-business cooperation on the expansion and enhancement of the local tourism industry in Kazakhstan. This study uses documentary analysis as a research approach and examines current legislation, reports, policy papers, existing literature, and other pertinent sources to find out more about the role of university-business cooperation in the tourism industry. The findings emphasize the importance of university-business collaboration in fostering innovation and technological advancement, facilitating knowledge transfer and skills development, contributing to regional economic development, addressing societal challenges, and promoting sustainable development. It stresses that university-business cooperation is essential to the growth of local tourism. By fostering knowledge exchange, innovation, and collaboration, these partnerships create a supporting ecosystem that promotes the competitiveness and sustainable expansion of the local tourism sector.

**Keywords:** university-business cooperation; local tourism; legal acts; Kazakhstan.

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

## Introduction

University-business cooperation has become essential in the tourism sector as a means of accelerating national and regional economy and development. Through collaboration, these stakeholders can leverage their respective strengths to encourage sustainable practices and foster innovation in the tourism sector. The quality of tourism products and services can be greatly improved by giving priority to the training of tourism staff and innovative strategies. This article examines the substantial advantages and potential that university-business collaboration offers in the growth of local tourism in Kazakhstan. To analyze the role of university-business cooperation in the tourism industry, this study uses a documentary analysis methodology. Documentary analysis involved the systematic examination and interpretation of various documentary sources, including the existing legislation and policy documents of Kazakhstan such as the State Program for the Development of the Tourism Industry for 2019-2025, the Concept for the Development of the Tourism Industry of the Republic of Kazakhstan for 2023-2029. Findings indicate that although it has great promise, university-business collaboration in the tourism sector of Kazakhstan encounters difficulties such as communication impediments, conflicting expectations, and institutional barriers. Addressing these difficulties is crucial as it enables the realization of the full potential of such partnerships. University-business cooperation is essential as a catalyst for innovation, societal advancement, and economic progress, as it combines the strengths of academia and industry to foster knowledge transfer, drive technological advancements, improve workforce development, promote regional economic development, and tackle urgent societal issues.

## 1. Literature Review

University-business cooperation has proven to be highly effective in fostering the development of a knowledge-based society while acting as a fundamental pillar in establishing and operating modern regional innovation systems. According to the Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD) expert's recommendations, it is imperative for all member nations to engage in collaborative efforts aimed at advancing this objective (OECD, 2019). This mutual interaction, broadly endorsed and actively promoted in all developed countries, represents a positive development in the pursuit of this goal. However, studies on this topic have provided a general overview of university-business cooperation and few studies have been undertaken on the influence of this collaboration with the tourism sector. In particular, there have been no studies exploring the impact of such cooperation on the development of domestic tourism in the context of Kazakhstan. Consequently, in this study, the authors attempt to study this phenomenon in the national context.

OECD recommendations on university-business cooperation have been accepted by many countries and taken into account by many experts and academics and have resulted in studies in different national contexts (OECD, 2019). For example, Chatterton and Goddard (2000) conducted case studies and used secondary data presented at multiple conferences that primarily examined the experiences in Australia, the Baltic States, Scandinavia and continental regions. They examined the function of universities as purveyors of knowledge and the importance of diffusing this knowledge among local communities. The authors found that HEIs should respond effectively to requests from various actors and agencies involved in regional development, thus helping to achieve national goals. The impact of universities on local economy has also been emphasized by Drucker and Goldstein (2007), who posit that universities have the potential to exert a substantial impact on the local economy by means of their entrepreneurial endeavors, innovative practices, and commercialization of research outcomes. They found that the development of economic policies, strategies and initiatives can be influenced by collaborative efforts with industry and government. Hall (2010) and the OECD (2020) have also suggested that universities can contribute to the development of effective economic strategies for local businesses and

governments by providing their research and strategic planning expertise. Thus, we can see that OECD experts and scholars believe that cooperation between universities and businesses can have a positive impact on the development of the local economy.

A number of specific techniques have been proposed to overcome the problem of the impact of university-business cooperation on domestic tourism in national contexts. The strategic partnerships established between academic institutions and businesses can play a pivotal role in bolstering the advancement of local tourism growth. For example, Rinaldi *et al.* (2020) carried out a comprehensive case study of an EU project in Italy. They found that universities have the potential to contribute to the growth of tourism and hospitality industries in urban areas through the provision of recreational and sports facilities, as well as the establishment of accessible lecture halls and exhibition venues. This project highlighted the active involvement of a local university in the development of a town and its rural surroundings as a destination for gastronomy and exemplary sustainable food tourism. The university has been instrumental in working with a variety of stakeholders to achieve this ambitious goal. According to Huggins and Johnston's (2009) assertion, the collaboration between academic institutions and business enterprises has the potential to establish inventive networks that foster sustainable tourism growth. In addition, the collaboration can facilitate the promotion and establishment of the regional tourism sector, as posited by Kotler *et al.* (1993) and corroborated by the OECD (2020).

Other researchers also highlighted the benefits of such cooperation between universities and businesses. In particular, Mowery *et al.* (2001) posited that collaborations between universities and businesses have the potential to stimulate regional economic expansion by facilitating the creation of innovative tourism products. Another study conducted by Rampersad (2002) suggests that it is possible to introduce up-to-date curricula in tourism in order to cultivate a skilled workforce that can effectively respond to the changing needs of the industry. It, therefore, seems necessary to develop innovative tourism products and renew higher education programs. However, the OECD's recent report indicates that the global suspension of international tourism during the pandemic, coupled with significant limitations on domestic tourism in various countries, has resulted in a decline of 1.9 percentage points (to 2.8%) in tourism's direct contribution to GDP and a decrease of 10.6 percentage points (to 9.9%) in the share of service exports in OECD countries, on average. Domestic tourism played a crucial role in sustaining numerous jobs and businesses during the pandemic. It is anticipated that domestic tourism will return to pre-pandemic levels by 2023. Meanwhile, the complete recovery of international tourism is now projected to extend until 2025 or later (OECD, 2022).

The symbiosis between academia and business can immensely contribute to the economic sector, leveraging a knowledge-driven economy and fostering local development (Bayanbayeva *et al.*, 2023; Etzkowitz *et al.*, 2000). Universities have long ceased to be just centres of knowledge and are increasingly playing an important role in the development of urban infrastructure and local tourism (den Heijer and Curvelo Magdaniel, 2018; Hebbert, 2018). Etzkowitz *et al.* (2000) proposed the Triple Helix Model as a significant theoretical framework for comprehending the effects of that collaboration on the advancement of tourism at the local level. This model posits that collaboration between universities, industries, and governments can result in improved economic outcomes, such as the promotion of tourism. Academically speaking, universities are widely acknowledged as crucial sources of knowledge, while industries are viewed as entities responsible for implementing stated knowledge. Additionally, governments are seen as facilitators and regulators in this process. Since the development tourism industry in developing countries such as Kazakhstan is usually realised with the government's support and university-business cooperation is also facilitated by state efforts this study will be based on the Triple Helix Model of interaction. For example, Altynbassov *et al.* (2021) conducted a case study research based on a document analysis in Kazakhstan. They found that to support local tourism in the southern regions of Kazakhstan, it would be appropriate to set up international university campuses. In addition, researchers found that the legal status of Kazakhstan's HEIs has been transformed into business-like entities which enable them to collaborate with external stakeholders (Altynbassov *et al.*, 2020). They also suggested that the government should give tax breaks to local companies that perform philanthropic acts, as well as free plots for universities. In their view, the establishment of international university campuses can draw hundreds of thousands of students from neighbouring countries such as Uzbekistan and Kyrgyzstan. They believe HEIs in the south of Kazakhstan have great opportunities to develop academic tourism as a sector of the economy.

On the other hand, it can be a real impetus for developing emerging tourism sectors like academic tourism and MICE (Meetings, Incentives, Conferences, Exhibitions) tourism (Altynbassov *et al.*, 2022). Kazakhstan is currently prioritizing the advancement of MICE tourism as a significant area of focus. That data is evident through the State Program for the Development of the Tourism Industry for the period of 2019-2025, as well as the Concept for the development of the tourism sector in the Republic of Kazakhstan during the years 2023-2029.

With a considerable economic impact, it has developed into a highly specialized tourism niche (Rogers, 2008). MICE tourism has been identified by various scholars as a crucial contributor to infrastructure development, income generation, employment opportunities, and foreign exchange inflows (Rogers, 2008; Davidson and Cope, 2003). It is considered of significant importance within the realm of higher education institutions. They assert that universities frequently serve as significant locations for conferences and gatherings, thereby stimulating MICE tourism. Additionally, the dissemination of knowledge during these gatherings can enhance scholarly inquiry and augment the prestige of academic institutions. Furthermore, scholarly research has examined the correlation between universities and MICE tourism, particularly in the realm of education. This has resulted in universities providing courses and degree programs that concentrate on event management and MICE tourism, ultimately offering individuals professional training and generating a specialized workforce for this sector (Getz, 2012).

In summary, a collaboration between universities and the business community is supported by serious international organizations like the OECD and its recommendations are considered by many countries. Some studies have been conducted on the impact of such collaboration in the tourism sector in a domestic context. Unfortunately, research into issues related to university-business cooperation and its impact on domestic tourism has received little attention in Kazakhstan's context. The literature reviewed here demonstrates this immaturity. It is particularly necessary to categorize the problems caused by this collaboration in the field of tourism and to develop an effective government strategy to address them.

## 2. Research Methodology

This study employed a documentary analysis, a research technique in the social sciences which enables the methodical interpretation and assessment of documents to comprehend phenomena (Bowen, 2009). The process entails the examination of tangible or intangible objects, including but not limited to reports, administrative records, memos, and correspondence (Prior, 2012). The process of document analysis typically adhered to a systematic approach, encompassing a series of stages such as selection, evaluation, and interpretation. The process of selection pertained to the identification and acquisition of documents that encompass pertinent information pertaining to the research subject (Scott, 1990). The process of evaluation necessitated that researcher undertook an assessment of the genuineness, reliability, inclusiveness, and significance of the documents (Corbetta, 2003). The conclusive phase of the process entailed inferring the fundamental connotations, implications, or decisions that can be extracted from the records, as stated by Denzin and Lincoln (2011). For these reasons, this study was based on the analysis of the current Laws related to tourism, State Program for the Development of the Tourism Industry for 2019-2025, the Concept for the development of the tourism industry in the Republic of Kazakhstan for the years 2023-2029, the Law of the Republic of Kazakhstan 'On Amendments and Additions to Certain Legislative Acts of the Republic of Kazakhstan on Tourism', The Roadmap of Employment

## 3. Research Results and Discussion

### 3.1 Analysis of the Concept for Tourism Industry Development in Kazakhstan: Government Strategies, Economic Impact, and Legislative Improvements

The state documents such as the recent Concept for the development of the tourism industry in the Republic of Kazakhstan for the years between 2023 and 2029 pertaining to tourism development indicate significant alterations in the prioritisation of the industry, financial allocation, and business support. According to the Global Travel and Tourism Competitiveness Index of the World Economic Forum-2021, Kazakhstan has achieved a rank of 66th out of 117 countries, indicating a significant improvement of 14 positions from its previous position of 80th in the 2019 index. The nation exhibits a considerable capacity in the comprehensive assessment based on distinct sub-indices. Kazakhstan ranks first in terms of price competitiveness (Concept, 2023). This enhances the appeal of the country to budget-conscious travellers and positions it as a prominent player in the region for prospective international visitors. However, the impact of price competitiveness on the tourism industry is significant as it affects the attractiveness of a destination and the decision-making process of travellers (Eugenio-Martin, 2003). Despite the potential of alluring pricing to attract tourists, it is necessary to maintain a balance with high-quality service maintenance (Dwyer *et al.*, 2010). In addition, excessive price competitiveness may result in over-tourism and resource degradation, as highlighted by Koens *et al.* (2018). Hence, the achievement of prosperous tourism development necessitates a comprehensive approach that considers pricing within the wider competitive landscape.

In addition, it has been noted that there has been a favourable trend in certain domains, such as the prioritisation of the tourism sector, which has experienced a positive shift of 15 positions and currently holds 68th



place in the ranking of the country's brand strategy and other related indicators. However, other areas such as International Openness, Natural Resources, and Tourist Service Infrastructure have only seen a modest increase of no more than four positions (Concept, 2023). This demonstrates the degree to which the nation is emphasising the advancement of the tourism industry. However, it should be stated that focusing solely on particular segments within the tourism industry may result in uneven progress. According to Tosun (2002), although specific areas may experience growth, this can potentially result in the stagnation or decline of other sectors. The mentioned approach has the potential to further aggravate social disparities, as it may result in advantages being bestowed upon specific stakeholders while others bear the brunt of the consequences (Bramwell and Lane, 2011). Therefore, the government might need to follow the balance policy on the improvement of all tourism related sectors.

The Government of Kazakhstan is currently interested in developing the tourism sector and is providing a variety of incentives to do so. In December 2012, the President's Message to the people of Kazakhstan 'Strategy 'Kazakhstan-2050': a new political course of an established state' set a new strategic objective for the country to join the 30 most developed nations by 2050. 'Kazakhstan-2050' stressed economic modernization. Several policy documents followed to modernise key economic sectors, including tourism. The tourism industry has been identified as one of the 16 potential areas for receiving preferential loans and subsidies (Tileuberdinova *et al.*, 2019). The following outcomes were achieved during the 2019-2022 period as a result of the execution of the State Program for the years 2019-2025. The implementation of the 'Tax-Free' system enabled non-native individuals to obtain a reimbursement of value-added tax on their acquisitions. Additionally, the number of countries exempt from visa requirements increased to a total of 79. Furthermore, the obligation for non-citizens to possess migration cards and register their presence for a maximum of 30 days was eliminated (Concept, 2023). Although the implementation of tax-free and visa-free policies has the potential to enhance tourism by augmenting its accessibility and affordability, it can also impose a burden on resources and give rise to security concerns (Neumayer, 2006). Moreover, the implementation of such policies aimed at fostering cultural exchange may potentially result in environmental and cultural disturbances (Koens *et al.*, 2018). Further, visa-free policies may potentially heighten the likelihood of unauthorised immigration and security concerns, especially considering the current ongoing geopolitical turbulence within the region related to the migrants from Ukraine and Russia. Thus, despite that these accomplishments are expected to significantly increase the influx of tourists, both regionally and globally, cautious actions must be undertaken to estimate potential hazards.

The tourism sector's legislative framework has been enhanced through the adoption of the Law of the Republic of Kazakhstan 'On Amendments and Additions to Certain Legislative Acts of the Republic of Kazakhstan on Tourism.' This law aims to implement systematic and comprehensive measures for government assistance of the tourism industry. The aforementioned measures encompass the provision of financial support to tour operators through a subsidy of 15,000 tenge per foreign tourist, reimbursement of 25% of expenses incurred in procuring equipment and machinery such as ropeways, snow groomers, and snow generators for ski resorts, partial reimbursement of expenses related to the construction and renovation of tourist facilities and roadside service facilities at a rate of 10%, and a 25% subsidy for the acquisition of tour buses (Concept, 2023). According to Tileuberdinova and Salauatova (2018), the industry has the potential to tackle societal concerns, promote national progress, and generate fiscal income, thereby leading to a rise in the gross domestic product. The Triple Helix Model suggests that the above mentioned initiatives serve as evidence of the government's pivotal role as a facilitator in fostering industrial growth (Etzkowitz *et al.*, 2000).

According to the 2019-2025 State program, the tourism industry has been assigned the objective of augmenting its contribution to the GDP composition to 8% by 2025. Whereas more recently, as per the report published by the World Tourism and Travel Council (2021), Kazakhstan ranks 129th in the list of countries with respect to tourism, with a contribution of 6.2% to its GDP and a cash volume of \$7.9 billion in the year 2021. In contrast, according to Tileuberdinova *et al.* (2019), although there has been an increase in the number of tourists between 2014 and 2019, the GDP contribution indicator has remained constant at 1%. This clearly shows a substantial expansion of the tourism sector within the nation, with statistical evidence indicating a promising surpassing of the predetermined objective.

Such a success of tourism development in a relatively short period can be explained by the government's prioritization and investment strategy. The local implementation of tourism industry projects has facilitated the generation of a considerable quantity of enduring employment opportunities. According to the OECD (2022), domestic tourism has emerged as a crucial source of support for numerous enterprises and employment opportunities. For example, the primary objective centred on the allocation of funds within the 'Employment Roadmap' initiative, which facilitated the development of 23 projects valued at 14.8 billion tenge, as well as 99

sanitary and hygienic facilities valued at 1.0 billion tenge, throughout the year 2020. A total of 58 projects were funded, amounting to over 26 billion tenge, with a loan duration of up to 10 years. Under the auspices of the 'DKB 2025,' a sum total of 60 billion tenge was allocated to fund 177 projects, with a loan duration of up to 5 years. In an effort to enhance the investment climate within the tourism sector, the threshold for identifying a tourism investment project as a priority has been lowered from 2 million MCI to 200,000 MCI (at present, the monthly calculated indicator stands at 3,450 tenge), thereby enabling the acquisition of investment preferences. Based on the projections, it is anticipated that the implementation of these novel measures will result in a minimum of 2,500 units being covered by entrepreneurs by 2029 (Concept, 2023). In contrast, according to Tleubergenova *et al.* (2019), the proportion of regions' gross value added generated by tourism can be evaluated by analyzing the number of active entrepreneurs, when compared to the pre-pandemic scenario. For instance, between 2013 and 2017, there was only 1.6-fold increase in the quantity of active individual entrepreneurs and small and medium-sized enterprises operating within the tourism industry. This shows how the government support is focused on the engagement of all types of entrepreneurs. The allocation of funds by the government towards tourism has the potential to stimulate economic progress, augment the appeal of destinations, and promote objectives related to sustainable development, as evidenced by various studies. The tourism sector has a noteworthy impact on employment generation and the mitigation of unemployment, chiefly by means of fostering tourism-based entrepreneurship.

### 3.2 Trends and Challenges in the Advancement of Domestic Tourism in Kazakhstan: An Analysis of Official Documentation

The Concept (2023) has identified significant challenges pertaining to the advancement of the tourism sector in Kazakhstan. The areas of tourist attraction suffer from inadequate infrastructure development, logistical challenges, a scarcity of accommodation options, limited variety and subpar quality of tourist offerings, unsatisfactory levels of customer satisfaction, inadequate digitalization of tourist services, a shortage of skilled personnel in the industry, insufficient promotion of regional and international tourism potential, a dearth of regular international events in Kazakhstan, and insufficient progress in the development of MICE tourism. Some of these major problems were reflected by Kenzhebekov *et al.* (2021) who conducted a survey in which experts identified that the lack of developed infrastructure is a significant hindrance to the progress of tourism in Kazakhstan. This was indicated by 81% of the respondents. Moreover, the proposition that a shortage of skilled personnel poses a significant obstacle to the advancement of the tourism industry in Kazakhstan. The quality of service in the tourism industry is a noteworthy concern, as indicated by 77% of the survey participants. Earlier, Bazhikova and Shayekina (2015) expressed optimism regarding the growth of regional tourism in Kazakhstan, while also noting that it is largely characterized by a lack of organisation and spontaneity. However, over the years, including the pandemic, Kazakhstan's government has shown much effort in adapting to the required changes.

For example, upon analysis of the new strategy for tourism development implemented this year, it was observed that a significant proportion of the public opted to visit proximate natural recreational areas, national parks, and resort zones. Domestic tourism has experienced a relatively smaller decline in comparison to inbound and outbound tourism. In contrast, as per the reports, there has been a surge in the count of international visitors availing lodging services, exhibiting a 2.9-fold rise as compared to the corresponding period of the preceding year (208.5 thousand), and reaching a total of 610 thousand individuals. The year 2022 witnessed a notable rise in the volume of visitors to national parks, setting a new record. The quantity of visitors rose by 400,000 individuals in comparison to the previous year, resulting in an estimated total of 2 million visitors (Concept, 2023). These figures indicate encouraging outcomes for the imminent advancement of the tourism industry and clearly shows how the pandemic period have significantly influenced the inner tourism.

On the other hand, according to the statistics, the shortage of accommodation facilities indicated during pre-covid period has seen record improvements (Concept, 2023). For instance, the services rendered by accommodation facilities amounted to 129.2 billion tenge, indicating a significant increase of 63.7% as compared to the corresponding period of the preceding year (78.9 billion tenge). The numbers exhibit a substantial increase in comparison to the yearly benchmark established in 2019, which was recorded at 120.5 billion tenge. Such increase in the aftermath of the pandemic is viewed as a collaborative achievement between government initiatives and nearby enterprises, which have significantly bolstered the surrounding communities. However, there is still a question of service and facilities quality that are more difficult to measure. This is also supported by the fact that one of the most noteworthy matters identified pertains to standardization. The country does not have a compulsory mandate for the categorization of tourist accommodation (Concept, 2023). As per the statistical data of 2021, among the total of 3,686 tourist accommodation establishments, a mere 147 were assigned a

specific category denoted by a 'star rating'. In the year 2020, a mere 150 establishments out of a total of 3,514 were categorized as hotels. Similarly, in the year 2019, only 205 out of 3,592 establishments were classified as hotels (Concept, 2023). Enforcing a compulsory mandate for the categorization of tourist lodgings or devising strategies to encourage and stimulate categorization would guarantee that visitors are provided with amenities that align with the designated hotel classification. Standards function as a mechanism to guarantee the level of services provided. The provision of high-quality service plays a crucial role in the advancement of regional tourism. According to Kozak and Rimmington (2000), visitor satisfaction is significantly impacted by this factor, resulting in increased rates of loyal visitors and favorable referrals; thereby conferring a competitive advantage in comparison to alternative locations (Parasuraman and Zeithaml, 1988) and contributing to economic sustainability through its capacity to stimulate revenue growth (Cronin and Brady, 2000); and most importantly, the presence of high service quality has the potential to attract a larger number of tourists, resulting in positive impacts on local economies and the overall well-being of the community (Budeanu, 2005). However, in 2020, a study was conducted which found that tourism establishments, particularly those located in regional areas, exhibit significant non-compliance with established standards (Concept, 2023). Furthermore, a considerable number of these entities are not cognizant of the existence of any regulations that could potentially enhance the quality of their services, as well as customer satisfaction and loyalty. These findings indicate a large gap to focus on and ensure high-quality service for tourists. It seems that current system lacks sufficient organisation to guarantee the active execution of these regulations by enterprises operating within the tourism sector. Apparently, the attainment of service compliance confirmation is reliant upon voluntary certification. Consequently, there exists a necessity for the development of a system that provides incentives and encourages businesses to conform to the established standards and implement novel educational standards that cater to the industry's requirements.

Other problems identified such as inadequate infrastructure and logistical challenges might be related to the country's geographical location. Laruelle (2018) asserts that Kazakhstan's challenging topography, characterized by expansive mountainous regions, deserts, and steppes, coupled with a relatively low population density, renders infrastructure development technically demanding and financially burdensome. Seken *et al.* (2019) analysed articles that reflected state programmes for the development of regional tourism. They identified and described the potential of rural tourism in various aspects such as agriculture, climate, organisation and distribution, socio-geography, culture and history, material and technical factors, as well as institutional and economic factors. The participation of both public and private sectors holds significant importance in the process of designing a tourist destination as it facilitates the attainment of consensus and alignment of strategies among various companies and institutions towards a common objective (Presenza and Cipollina, 2010). The proficient handling of the varied connections between stakeholders is crucial in guaranteeing the enduring expansion of regional tourism. This is because each stakeholder possesses unique resources and viewpoints that aid in the comprehensive advancement of the sector. As a result, some regions may possess more potential for the development of tourism industry than others.

For example, in order to tackle issues pertaining to quality and regional competitiveness, the notion of a priority tourist territory has been introduced, as per previous state documents. This refers to a specific area that possesses a unique potential for the development of tourism and is listed as a republican-level object on the tourism map. The government has prioritised the allocation of funds towards infrastructure development and the identification of six distinct tourism clusters based on regional and tourist-specific characteristics. According to Niyazbayeva and Yessengeldina (2016), the creation of clusters within the tourism sector is a crucial priority for Kazakhstan in enhancing the competitiveness of its administrative and territorial divisions. While all clusters are important for the growth of individual economic sectors, Kenzhebekov *et al.* (2021) identifies only one specific cluster in the Almaty region that generates a synergistic effect for all stakeholders involved. This were also highlighted by Tleuberdinova and Salauatova (2018) who conducted a study on business activity in different regions of Kazakhstan. The study ranked the regions based on their entrepreneurial activity in the tourism industry. The results showed that the southern regions and the capital city were more developed in terms of the number of tourists, and local businesses, and attracted investments. Kenzhebekov *et al.* (2021) refer to other clusters as protoclusters, claiming that they will be able to form fully-fledged cluster models if the involvement of local community will be fulfilled to create different tourist products. This statement aligns with Freeman's (1984) stakeholder theory, which advocates for the inclusion of all stakeholders in the decision-making process to enhance the quality and adaptability of the product. The authors emphasise the notable potential of two regional destinations, namely the areas adjacent to the Caspian Sea and the historical and religious hub of Turkestan. The southern region of Kazakhstan, which is the most densely populated, possesses a more conducive climate for the establishment of an educational institution, especially in newly separated region of Turkestan, for the

enhancement of local tourism (Altynbassov *et al.*, 2021; Altaibayeva *et al.*, 2020). Thus, it should be highlighted that every region needs to consider the local climate and distinct characteristics while formulating tourism strategies.

In fact, a notable development in this regard is the establishment of the International University of Tourism and Hospitality in the city of Turkestan in 2020, which is recognised as a hub of cultural significance. The state officials have emphasised the efforts fostering 'heritage tourism' that revolves around the preservation of historic sites, thereby making a significant contribution to the development of tourism in the region. This highlights the imperative for collaboration between universities, businesses, and government entities to effectively address regional tourism needs, thereby yielding favourable outcomes for development.

Other examples from Eastern region in Kazakhstan show the necessity of the involvement of all stakeholders, including the local community for the achievement of common goals. The study written by Ziyadin and Takhtaeva (2014) delves into the challenges associated with the growth of the tourism industry in the East Kazakhstan region. The authors examine the repercussions of these challenges on the tourism and recreational sector of Kazakhstan. They also propose the need for the creation of theoretical and methodological frameworks, as well as organisational and economic mechanisms, to facilitate comprehensive strategic management of the regional tourism sector. One frequently recommended approach is to conscientiously involve local stakeholders in the consideration of managerial decisions. Daye *et al.* (2020) conducted qualitative and quantitative research on Kazakhstan's involvement in the Great Silk Road starting from China. The study suggests that government planners should take into account the possibility of undermining favourable views of the country if there is an excessive focus on China's soft power activities. It is advisable for government planners to exercise caution when promoting Chinese cultural awareness as a strategy to foster trust and support within the local community. Thus, it is suggested that the management should utilise a bottom-up approach that involves consultation with citizens during the implementation of the project in various communities.

### 3.3 The Role of University-Business Collaboration in Developing Domestic Tourism

The analyzed texts consistently prioritize the enhancement of tourism personnel, training programmes, and innovative strategies aimed at improving the quality of touristic products. Recent studies suggest that human resources in the tourism industry constitute a significant factor in an organization's competitive advantage. It is argued that a crucial factor in the advancement of regional tourism is the incorporation of collaboration between the government, universities, and businesses. According to the proposal presented on January 17, 2014, regarding Kazakhstan's aspiration to join the ranks of the top 30 developed nations, underscored the importance of aligning higher education with the demands of a knowledge-intensive economy. The attainment of this alignment is anticipated to be accomplished by integrating universities and vocational schools with emerging intellectual and innovative clusters. The incorporation of pedagogical modules on innovation, entrepreneurship, and financial management into foundational curricula at national universities is emphasized by the conceptual framework. In fact, entrepreneurial universities have made a significant impact on the advancement of the tourism industry through their provision of specialized entrepreneurship education and training for professionals in this sector (Oktadiana and Chon, 2017; Tomasi *et al.*, 2020; Vaduva *et al.*, 2020). Hence, as outlined in the Concept (2023), the primary aim is to establish methodological principles for the development of educational programmes in the field of tourism, involving experts from around the world. Additionally, it seeks to enhance the involvement of industry representatives and stakeholders in the design of educational programmes and instructional materials. Furthermore, it aims to explore the viability of integrating concise instructional sessions into current training curricula.

Educational institutions that provide training for individuals in the tourism industry typically engage in cooperative efforts with employers, stakeholders within the tourism market, as well as those in the restaurant and hotel sectors. The objective of this collaboration is to emphasize education that is geared towards practical application within specific fields of study, and to facilitate the integration of practical training sessions at tourism and hospitality establishments. Rampersad (2002) suggests that the implementation of specialized curricula centred on the field of tourism presents a favourable prospect for the cultivation of a proficient workforce capable of competently adapting to the evolving demands of the tourism industry. In addition, academic institutions have the potential to aid local enterprises and governmental bodies in formulating efficient tourism tactics by utilising their proficiency in research and strategic planning, which involves the participation of scholars and researchers from the region (OECD, 2020). For instance, the Cornell University School of Hotel Administration in the US is known for its hotel and hospitality collaborations. The region's tourism industry benefits from the individuals' creative solutions to industrial issues. The university's Centre for Hospitality Research publishes publications that

benefit local tourism businesses, boosting regional tourism (Cornell University). Similarly, the School of Hospitality and Tourism Management (the University of Surrey) is known globally for its groundbreaking industry research. The University of Surrey has conducted tourism-boosting research with several industries which promoted sustainable practices and improved customer experience. The main goal is to connect academic research to local tourism enterprises to revitalize the industry by involving the local stakeholders.

However, as per the data provided by the Bureau of National Statistics of Kazakhstan, in the year 2021, despite that over 2,000 students successfully completed their vocational and technical secondary education programmes in the fields of 'Tourism' and 'Restaurant and Hotel Management', the tourism sector's practical needs are not entirely met by current academic programmes, as they lack practical orientation (Concept, 2023). It might be a concern that individuals who have obtained degrees from specialized educational institutions might be experiencing a low level of demand in the job market. Thus, it is recommended that teaching staff in specialised disciplines should include industry practitioners to augment the quality of instruction.

In this regard, the education and training of individuals in the tourism sector is being conducted by 49 institutions of higher education within the nation. The combined enrollment of these academic institutions totals to 12,000 students. Tourism organisations in Kazakhstan, including Kazakh Tourism JSC, the Kazakhstan Tourist Association, and the Kazakhstan Association of Hotels and Restaurants, collaborate with partners to cultivate practical skills among students (Concept, 2023). These partnerships serve not only as a means of training, but also as a platform for the professional development of future specialists in the tourism and hospitality industry. For example, in the European context, industrial internships comprise 50%-70% of academic programmes, whereas in the US personnel agencies are created in educational institutions facilitate training. These agencies collaborate with the tourism industry by utilising an information system that monitors labor market demands and recruits specialized personnel (Concept, 2023). Similar trends have appeared in the context of Kazakhstan's HE since joining the Bologna Process (Amandykova *et al.*, 2016). The collaboration between universities and businesses in the context of local tourism development is a multi-stakeholder framework that encompasses various entities such as local communities and government bodies. This framework, as proposed by Freeman (1984), aims to foster cooperation among these diverse stakeholders. Consequently, the quality of service in tourist organisations is contingent upon the knowledge, skills, and conscientiousness of their personnel.

Although collaboration between universities and businesses holds significant potential for advancing the growth of regional tourism, there are frequently encountered obstacles that arise in these joint ventures. Collaborative efforts may encounter hindrances such as communication challenges, incongruity of anticipations, and institutional obstructions, which have the potential to curtail their efficacy. Communication challenges can arise due to conflicting interests and goals among various stakeholders. Divergent objectives and timelines or mismatch of expectations are frequently observed between the academic and business domains. Scholars may prioritise extensive and sustained research endeavours, whereas commercial enterprises may prioritise prompt and pragmatic resolutions to operational challenges. Drucker and Goldstein (2007) addressed the issue of misalignment and proposed that universities and businesses should establish mutual expectations and outcomes to bridge the gap. For example, Issabekov *et al.* (2022) have asserted that presently, within the tripartite framework of 'university-science-business,' prospective partners lack a shared objective that is mutually appealing to all parties involved. 'University plus enterprise equals new enterprise' was their most logical interaction scenario which allows the university build new popular products and services. They claim that modern corporations are increasingly consumer-oriented, anticipating academic benefits and reluctant to invest in the complete result, whereas national corporate managers are awaiting of the fast benefits of this collaboration and prioritising speedy gains. In this regard, the incongruity of anticipations can be resolved by establishing a common comprehension through collaboratively determined initiatives and communal goals (Drucker and Goldstein, 2007). Thus, the establishment of regular and structured communication channels, as well as the creation of common platforms for knowledge exchange, can effectively overcome communication barriers.

The expansion of the tourism sector can be facilitated by entrepreneurial universities through various means, including research and innovation, business training and education, involvement in local community and regional development, partnership with the industry and cooperation, incubation and acceleration, as well as technological transfer and commercialization (Guo *et al.*, 2022; Hall and Williams, 2019; Novelli, 2023; Pugh *et al.*, 2022; Rinaldi *et al.*, 2022; Xiajie, 2021). However, there might be institutional barriers arise due to the distinct institutional contexts and norms that govern the operations of universities and businesses. The presence of bureaucratic obstacles may impede efficient collaboration. It is also important to consider the type of educational institution to establish the most efficient cooperation among different stakeholders. For example, public university rectors possessed sole decision-making power, making corporate governance difficult (Sagintayeva *et al.*, 2018).

Thus, the government issued a special order to convert 28 public institutions into non-profit JSCs in 2019 to constitute a board of directors. The Ministry of Science and Higher Education and the Agency for the Protection and Development of Competition approve charter changes and new ventures for public universities. The shareholder and Ministry of Finance decide this under Article 177 of the Law 'On State Property'. As a result, public colleges can legally attain financial independence and react to market conditions, essential to building the entrepreneurial university model. Thus, education institutions might emulate corporate boards by emphasising strategic planning, accountability, financial management, and stakeholder engagement. The implementation of flexible institutional arrangements and supportive policies can serve as facilitators for successful collaboration, particularly in the context of institutional barriers.

One of the key objectives in the establishment of entrepreneurial universities is to improve the effectiveness of research and innovation institutions, in accordance with existing legislation. The achievement of this goal requires the enhancement of legal frameworks pertaining to venture capital funding, safeguarding intellectual property, providing assistance for research and innovation, and facilitating the transformation of research discoveries into commercial products. Furthermore, it is suggested that governmental authorities should grant permission for the transfer of licenses pertaining to the commercial utilization of research funded by academic institutions, research bodies, and small-scale enterprises. These initiatives highlight the dedication of the Kazakhstani government to cultivate a favorable environment for entrepreneurial universities. Nevertheless, a thorough analysis of strategic documents and websites of higher education institutions (HEIs) in Kazakhstan indicates that these measures may lack the necessary comprehensiveness for the establishment of entrepreneurial universities. The development of entrepreneurial universities in Kazakhstan faces significant challenges, primarily due to the lack of a robust innovative and entrepreneurial ecosystem within academic institutions. Additionally, there is a shortage of qualified management personnel for effectively facilitating technology transfer. These obstacles greatly hinder the progress of entrepreneurial universities in the country.

Regarding this, to create more appropriate environment for university-business cooperation, according to the Code of the Republic of Kazakhstan (2017), mining enterprises, whether foreign or domestic, are required to allocate 1% of their contract sum towards research and training. This provision aims to facilitate the accumulation of funds by universities through collaborations with industrial companies. The new Concept (2023-2029) aims to implement legislative modifications to enhance tax incentives, thereby augmenting the advantages for private enterprises engaged in partnerships with universities. Various Western countries, with the United States being particularly prominent, have implemented comparable measures, such as the Tax Reform Act of 1969. This legislation formally solidified tax deductions for charitable entities, thereby stimulating philanthropic and corporate contributions and promoting collaborations between universities and industries (Mozumi, 2022). The aforementioned strategies are implemented with the objective of enhancing the financial resilience and competitiveness of universities within the context of academic capitalism. These strategies involve acquiring external funding through various means such as government grants, industry agreements, donations, endowments, patent commercialization, and international partnerships (Tijssen *et al.*, 2019). The entrepreneurial university model, through the diversification of funding sources and decreased dependence on traditional funding, has the potential to bolster the university's institutional capacity and promote collaboration between the university and industry. This, in turn, can facilitate effective knowledge creation, commercialization of innovations, and contribute to positive regional development.

### 3.4 MICE Tourism as a Developing Potential

Another relatively new aspect of tourism industry which is highlighted in the last two state programs on the development of tourism is MICE tourism. It is identified as a prospective avenue for the advancement of local tourism with a huge potential. The MICE tourism industry pertains to a distinct segment within the broader tourism sector, which is dedicated to the organisation, coordination, and facilitation of meetings, incentives, conferences, and exhibitions (MICE) (Kim *et al.*, 2022; Rojas Bueno *et al.*, 2020). In 2019, Kazakhstan demonstrated a notable advancement in its global standing for MICE tourism development, as per the rankings published by the International Congress and Convention Association (Concept, 2023). The country ascended by 20 positions and secured the 79th rank. As per the data provided by the association, Kazakhstan managed to secure 18 international association events in the year 2019, which resulted in a revenue generation of USD 6 million. One of the prominent examples, the staging of the World Expo in 2017 resulted in a significant increase in the number of international tourist arrivals to Kazakhstan, reaching a peak of 4,559,500 in that year. This influx of tourists contributed US\$ 3077.5 million or 1.6 percent of the country's GDP (Daye *et al.*, 2020). This has shown a positive correlation between a country's investment in tourism promotion and the revenue generated by tourist activity

within the country. Tourists make a direct contribution towards the growth of GDP, hotel occupancy rates, tourist arrivals, and expenditures in the respective destinations, thus, positively influencing the local businesses and communities.

It is argued that universities can play a crucial role in developing MICE tourism in Kazakhstan. Minister of Science and Higher Education in his recent interview has highlighted the bold ambition of Kazakhstan becoming a new regional academic hub (Imangali, 2023). The President's proposal in 2022 to establish five branches of renowned international universities in Kazakhstan by 2025 was primarily motivated by regional dynamics. The demographic shifts observed in Eurasia, specifically attributed to a significant population growth in Central and South Asia, Africa, and the Middle East, have resulted in a rise in both international academic mobility and the demand for high-quality educational services (Lem, 2023). Moreover, the current geopolitical developments in Ukraine have brought about significant changes in the educational framework of Eurasia, thereby presenting strategic prospects for nations such as Kazakhstan. Given the increasing influx of students from India, Pakistan, Africa, and the Middle East in search of educational prospects, thus, showing that Kazakhstan has the potential to establish itself as a burgeoning academic center.

Nevertheless, the process of becoming a regional education centre necessitates significant financial investments in infrastructure to effectively accommodate a large number of international students. Furthermore, the minister stresses that it is crucial to emphasize the meticulous planning and implementation of information campaigns aimed at promoting the 'Study in Kazakhstan' brand on a global scale. In this regard, there have been tremendous improvements in the direction of international cooperation between universities.

For example, in 2022, Kazakhstan commenced the establishment of four university branches, commencing with the British De Montfort University. This initiative involved a substantial investment of more than \$15 million to establish a comprehensive campus in Almaty. Subsequently, the Moscow Engineering and Physics Institute established a partnership with Al-Farabi University in Almaty. Additionally, Gubkin Oil and Gas University engaged in collaboration with Atyrau Oil and Gas University. Furthermore, the University of Arizona continues to cooperate with Kozybayev University in Petropavlovsk.

In 2023, the government has established more ambitious objectives, aiming to inaugurate an additional six internationally recognised campuses of high status. The examples encompass the presence of various international educational institutions in different regions of Kazakhstan. Notably, Heriot-Watt University has established a campus at Zhubanov Aktobe Regional University, thereby designating Aktobe as one of the four global locations hosting Heriot-Watt campuses. Similarly, Seoul National University of Science and Technology has formed a partnership with Kyzylorda Korkyt-Ata Regional University, while the German Engineering Institute has established a campus at Yessenov University in Aktau. Additionally, Tianjin University has established a branch at Serikbayev East Kazakhstan Technical University. Additionally, there are proposals in place to establish satellite campuses of Ghazi University and Hacettepe University, both of which are renowned institutions based in Turkey. In summary, according to the minister, Kazakhstan has set a target to accommodate around 12 branch campuses of diverse international universities by the year 2025. It should be noted that these collaborations have resulted not only in international/regional attraction of academic and students into the country, but also have resulted in unprecedented movement within the country, for instance, universities students from the Northern regions first time ever receiving students from far Southern regions who are willing to relocate for dual education. To sum up, MICE tourism has a great potential for the development of the country and the tourism industry, especially considering the fact of the involvement of universities, local businesses, and government support.

## Conclusion

To sum up, the influence of university-business cooperation on the development of local tourism is undeniable. Collaboration between academic institutions and the business sector fosters knowledge exchange, skill development, and strategic planning, which promotes sustainable growth and increases competitiveness for destinations. Harnessing the power of this collaboration is becoming increasingly important in the development of the tourism industry and in creating a sustainable and prosperous business. The results highlight the significant role of the tourism industry in job creation, unemployment reduction, and entrepreneurship support. Despite some difficulties, recent statistics show the industry is growing favorably, with bright possibilities for exceeding predetermined goals. The government has taken proactive steps to advance the tourism sector as seen by incentives, preferential loans, and legal changes. However, there is still potential for improvement in some areas, and ongoing work is required to boost infrastructure growth and competitiveness. Overall, the analysis underlines the potential of the tourism industry for further expansion and the government's commitment to the sector's

growth in Kazakhstan. Additionally, the rise of MICE tourism in Kazakhstan offers a chance to strengthen the regional tourism sector and support economic development. Kazakhstan may realize its potential as a popular destination for conferences, exhibitions, and meetings by addressing challenges such as limited promotion, a dearth of international events, and an underdeveloped MICE sector. Through partnerships with business stakeholders, active involvement in international forums, and strengthening the capabilities of tourism professionals, Kazakhstan can position itself as a competitive player in the international MICE tourism sector. Findings also show some positive changes have been made in employment and economic value in the tourism sector of Kazakhstan despite obstacles including infrastructure, skilled staff, and service quality. Further progress depends on addressing these issues and involving relevant parties. Opportunities for expansion can be found in the prioritization of tourist destinations and the creation of tourism clusters based on local characteristics.

### Limitations

It is important to acknowledge that document analysis may have certain limitations. The combination of diverse research methods, such as interviews or surveys, in a methodological triangulation approach (Denzin and Lincoln, 2011) can result in a notably efficacious outcome. In order to augment the credibility and comprehensiveness of the research outcomes, and to attain a more intricate and refined comprehension of the research issue, it is recommended that this research should utilize qualitative research methodology, incorporating empirical data. This is due to the absence of any prior empirical research studies pertaining to the subject matter, specifically concerning the involvement of university management in the advancement of local tourism. According to Silverman (2016), documents may exhibit diverse biases that are contingent upon their authors, objectives, and historical circumstances. Hence, it is imperative to exercise prudence in their utilization while also recognizing their constraints.

### Credit Authorship Contribution Statement

**Sholpan Yessimova** - Investigation, Methodology, Writing – original draft, Supervision, Validation, Writing – review and editing.

**Yerkesh Rakhymzhanov** - Conceptualization, Software, Investigation, Methodology, Writing – original draft, Writing – review and editing.

**Bagdat Spanova** – Investigation, Writing – original draft, Writing – review and editing.

**Sulushash Baizhanova** - Investigation, Writing – original draft, Writing – review and editing.

**Marat Seidakhmetov** - Investigation, Writing – original draft, Writing – review and editing.

**Aiman Yessenova** - Investigation, Writing – original draft, Writing – review and editing.

**Bakhyt Altynbassov** - Conceptualization, Methodology, Writing – original draft, Supervision, Writing – review and editing, Visualization.

### Declaration of Competing Interest

The authors declare that they have no known competing financial interests or personal relationships that could have appeared to influence the work reported in this paper.

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