

ADVANCING TOURISM DESTINATION AMIDST COVID-19 IN KAZAKHSTAN: A FOCUS ON SOCIAL TOURISM INITIATIVES

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Abstract: This research is focused on advancing tourism destinations in Kazakhstan amidst the challenges posed by the COVID-19 pandemic, with a specific emphasis on encouraging domestic tourism. Over the past year, the Kazakhstani tourism market has exhibited significant potential for the growth of domestic tourism, highlighting the need to explore innovative approaches to counter the widespread disruptions caused by COVID-19 in the global tourism industry. The pandemic has not only resulted in considerable financial losses and damages to the tourism sector worldwide but has also had a profound impact on individuals' stress levels and their overall satisfaction of essential needs. This paper conducts a comprehensive analysis of domestic tourism trends in recent years, evaluates the current state of the tourism industry in the face of a pandemic, and explores mechanisms that can effectively attract local tourists, encouraging them to explore their own country and contribute to the development of domestic tourism destinations. It is important to note that prior to the pandemic, Kazakhstani tourists predominantly favored outbound travel destinations, resulting in a notably low proportion of local tourists. Nevertheless, this investigation reveals that tourism destinations can be advanced by targeting local tourists, particularly those engaging in social tourism initiatives. One notable strategy for destination promotion is to motivate the local population to explore the diverse offerings within their own country, fostering a sense of pride and excitement about domestic travel experiences. This research thus offers valuable insights into the potential revitalization of the tourism sector in Kazakhstan amidst the ongoing challenges posed by COVID-19.

Key words: Destination marketing, destination promotion, domestic tourism, social tourism, COVID-19

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INTRODUCTION

The Kazakhstan tourism industry can be categorized into three primary segments: international inbound tourism, domestic tourism, and outbound tourism (Baiburiev et al., 2018). Among these, domestic tourism historically contributed the least to the Kazakhstani economy. Domestic tourism is characterized by citizens traveling within the country without crossing its borders temporarily (Cohen and Cohen, 2015). It involves a departure from one's permanent residence to explore various areas or regions for one or more tourism-related purposes (Cooper and Hall, 2007). Domestic tourism is intricately linked with international tourism as it acts as a catalyst for increasing the number of incoming tourists from other countries. In comparison to outbound tourism, domestic tourism offers several advantages (Nurov et al., 2021):

- it is a cost-effective travel option.
- there is no need for a passport or visa application.
- it eliminates acclimatization issues.
- it allows citizens to explore their homeland, visit historical and cultural sites and attractions.

All nations are interested in promoting domestic tourism to bolster the tourism sector and retain financial resources within the country (Archer, 1978). The COVID-19 pandemic has had a catastrophic impact on international tourism, potentially causing global economic losses exceeding \$4 trillion in 2020 and 2021, as reported by the OECD Policy Responses to Coronavirus. The tourism industry is currently facing challenging times, necessitating significant interventions and the adoption of new technologies to usher in novel trends and development approaches (El Archi and Benbba, 2023a). This includes restructuring the industry's functioning and supporting tourism businesses and regions (Cheng et al., 2023). During the pandemic, the primary goal is to balance tourists' recreation with their safety and to implement anti-crisis measures that support the tourism sector during and after the pandemic (Szromek, 2021).

The pandemic has brought about a near-complete standstill in the tourism industry, not only in Kazakhstan but across the globe. In many countries, tourism is a dynamic and highly profitable economic sector, contributing 10.4% to global GDP and generating 1 in 4 new jobs worldwide (WTTC, 2021). The mobility of people, both domestically and internationally, significantly addresses employment issues and results in substantial income for the state and various tourism enterprises (Tóth and Dávid, 2010). A well-organized tourism industry enhances foreign exchange earnings and tax revenue for the government (Zaei and Zaei, 2013). Moreover, tourism, in all its forms, serves both commercial and social purposes, with the primary focus being on meeting individuals' needs for relaxation, travel, and health maintenance, including rehabilitation and recreation (Puczko, 2010). Additionally, the educational and cultural aspects of tourism play a pivotal role in this context (Lengyel et al., 2019; Issakov et al., 2023a; Ayzhan et al., 2021).

BACKGROUND OF THE DEVELOPMENT

Kazakhstan, a vast and breathtakingly beautiful landlocked country located in Central Asia, boasts an impressive ethnic diversity with over 150 nationalities coexisting within its expansive 2.7 million square kilometers of territory. The country emerged as a modern nation, gaining its independence in 1991 following the dissolution of the Soviet Union. Situated at the heart of the Eurasian continent, Kazakhstan shares its borders with Russia to the north and west, China to the east, and Kyrgyzstan, Uzbekistan, and Turkmenistan to the south (Figure 1) (Allayarov et al., 2021; Aktymbayeva et al., 2021; Issakov et al., 2022). The modern borders of Kazakhstan emerged in the 20th century as a Soviet creation when it became a Soviet republic in 1920. Following the Soviet Union's dissolution, Kazakhstan declared itself an independent state and adopted a unitary republic of presidential-parliamentary type. Kazakhstan possesses an abundance of tourism resources, with numerous scenic landscapes, historical sites, and a rich cultural heritage (Nagy, 2019). The roots of tourism development in Kazakhstan can be traced back to the 1920s and 1930s when the Soviet Union promoted outdoor activities. During this period, the nation saw the construction of tourist centers, rest homes, and sanatoriums. From the 1960s until the Soviet Union's collapse, tourism experienced widespread and rapid growth (Issakov et al., 2023b). It encompassed the entire population, supported by a vast network of tourism organizations, agencies, and accommodations across the Soviet territory.

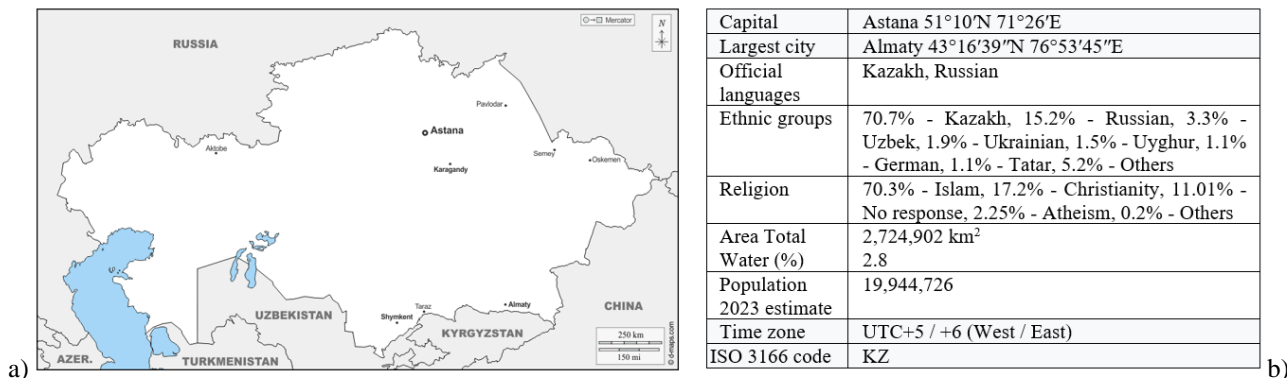


Figure 1. Republic of Kazakhstan: a) countries bordering; b) general information.

Following independence, Kazakhstan began attracting foreign tourists who were captivated by the country's stunning natural beauty, including its steppes, semi-deserts, numerous lakes, and mountain ranges. Additionally, the country's historical monuments, such as the rock paintings of Tamgaly-tas, the rocky mosques of Mangistau, and the mausoleums of

Jochi Khan (the eldest son of Genghis Khan) and the enlighteners Khoja Akhmed Yasavi and Zhusup Kopeyev, hold significant appeal for travelers and pilgrims. The development of international tourism in Kazakhstan is influenced by various external and internal factors, as well as market conditions and demand for services. The industry showed stable growth in the previous decade, but in 2020, the COVID-19 pandemic led to significant challenges in the tourism sector (Omarova et al., 2021). The economic well-being of many sectors, including tourism, is closely tied to the epidemiological security of countries worldwide (Corvalan et al., 2005). Social tourism, recognized as a type of tourism in European countries, has a long history dating back to the 19th century. It played a pivotal role in democratizing travel for a wider population during the 20th century (McCabe and Diekmann, 2015). Today, numerous organizations promote and develop social tourism in Europe, with significant financial turnover in this field estimated to be in the millions of euros (Panasiuk and Wszendyby, 2021). Social tourism has been in existence for more than 60 years and is well-established in some countries. However, its definitions vary across different nations and contexts. In Western sources, the concept was initially defined by W. Hunziker in (1957) as "the relationships and phenomena in the field of tourism resulting from the participation in travel by economically disadvantaged or otherwise marginalized segments of society" (Ryan, 2002). Arthur Haulot emphasized that social tourism aligns with the principles of a just, noble, and satisfying life for all individuals in a modern society (Haulot, 1981).

A more recent definition from the International Organization of Social Tourism characterizes it as "the connections and phenomena related to the participation of individuals from disadvantaged backgrounds, or those unable to partake in tourism, holidays, and their benefits, for whatever reason" (Minnaert et al., 2012). This definition underscores the social and moral dimensions of social tourism. Recognizing that the tourism market cannot cater to everyone, interventions are necessary to ensure accessibility for all. A more recent and comprehensive definition, proposed by L. Minnaert et al., highlights that social tourism is "tourism with added moral value for the host or guest parties of the tourist exchange," further emphasizing its moral aspects (Minnaert et al., 2006). Another perspective on social tourism is based on the "right to rest." According to the Declaration of the World Tourism Conference in Manila (1980), "Social tourism is an objective which society must pursue in the interest of those citizens who are least privileged in the exercise of their right to rest". J. Haukeland defines social tourism as follows: "The concept of 'social tourism' means that everybody, regardless of economic or social situation, should have the opportunity to go on vacation. Seen in this light, holiday travel is treated like any other human right whose social loss should be compensated by the welfare state" (Haukeland, 1990).

Table 1. Comparative analysis of definitions of social tourism

Author	Object	Subject	Funding	Goal
(Hunziker, 1957)	Undefined	Poor and disadvantaged	Undefined	Participation in tourism
(ISTO, 2010)	Social organizations	Poor people	Undefined	Participation in tourism
(Minnaert et al., 2006)	Receiving / guest country	Receiving / guest country	Undefined	Add additional moral value to tourism
Manila Declaration on World Tourism (UNWTO, 1980)	Society	All citizens	Undefined	The right to recreation and tourism
(Haukeland, 1990)	State	All citizens	Undefined	The right to recreation and tourism
(Committee European Economic and Social, 2006)	Undefined	All citizens	Undefined	The right to recreation and tourism
(Birzhakov, 2011)	State, state and non-state foundations and other charity organizations	Schoolchildren, students, pensioners, war and labor veterans, and others	State, state and non-state foundations and other charity organizations	Participation in tourism
Law "On the Basics of Tourist Activities in the Russian Federation"(Law, 1996)	Undefined	Undefined	State	Travel
Draft Federal Law "On Social Tourism", Committee of the State Duma of the Russian Federation on Tourism and Sports	Undefined	Weakly protected citizens	Undefined	Meeting the needs of tourism
Draft Federal Law "On Social Tourism", the Russian Association for Social Tourism and the Moscow Center of the Academy of Tourism	Undefined	Citizens of the Russian Federation	State and others	Exercise of the right to travel
(Serdobolskaya, 2003a)	Undefined	All citizens	Undefined	Subsidized tourism
(de Almeida, 2011)	State	Individual	State	Psychophysical rehabilitation and socio-cultural development

The Economic and Social Committee of the European Union sees social tourism as organized by associations, cooperatives, and trade unions in some countries. It aims to provide travel access to a broad range of people, especially from vulnerable populations. Their definition is, "Everyone has the right to rest on a daily, weekly, and annual basis, and the right to free time, which allows them to develop every aspect of their personality and their social integration. The right to tourism is a concrete expression of this general right, and social tourism is a tool for achieving a universally accessible means to realize this right" (European Commission, 2011). In Soviet and Russian contexts, definitions of social tourism

vary. Birzhakov's (2011) definition characterizes it as "a type of tourism subsidized from funds allocated for social needs to create conditions for travel for schoolchildren, young people, pensioners, war and labor veterans, and other citizens receiving social support from the state, state and non-state funds, and charitable organizations".

Serdobolskaya (2003) offers a different perspective, defining social tourism as a type that encompasses all social strata and age groups, with trips subsidized based on the social category of the citizen. This includes privileged categories such as children, students, pensioners, war veterans, civil servants, military personnel, clergymen, and employees whose travel may be subsidized by their employers. Almeida (2011) sees social tourism as "a type of tourism socially and politically promoted by the state for psychophysical rehabilitation and socio-cultural development of an individual in accordance with the principles of sustainable development, which should be expanded at the places of visit, i.e., in tourist regions". For a comparative analysis of these definitions based on various criteria, refer to Table 1.

Belanger and Jolin conducted a study on the International Social Tourism Organisation (ISTO), recognizing its significance in facilitating the exchange of experience among participating countries and the coordination of collaborative efforts. The establishment of ISTO has played a pivotal role in advancing social tourism on a global scale (Bélanger and Jolin, 2011). A systematic analysis of social tourism schemes in Europe was carried out by A. Diekmann and S. McCabe. They identified various schemes for implementing social tourism, including public funding, public-private partnerships, and charitable donations. This research also pinpointed the target groups for social tourism and assessed the potential risks associated with the increasing commercialization of social tourism, which may exclude socially vulnerable groups and reduce the number of beneficiaries. The work comprehensively examines multiple aspects of social tourism in Europe (Diekmann and McCabe, 2011). P. Hunter-Johnson conducted a study on the involvement of charities in social tourism. Despite limited funding and a shortage of qualified personnel, charitable organizations play a significant role in advancing social tourism (Ogutu et al., 2023). The study emphasizes the need for cooperation among charitable organizations, the commercial sector, and the state to ensure broader access to social tourism services for the population (Hunter-Jones, 2011).

FEATURES OF DOMESTIC TOURISM DURING COVID-19

Kazakhstan is traditionally considered a country that primarily supplies tourists rather than attracting them. This practice is often associated with highly developed nations boasting substantial industrial potential and elevated living standards. In many economic aspects, Kazakhstan lags behind such countries, making it essential for the country to focus on attracting tourists to stimulate an inflow of capital. As depicted in Figure 2, the structure of tourism types in Kazakhstan exhibits significant imbalances. Outbound tourism significantly dominates the landscape, accounting for 68%, while inbound tourism constitutes only 7%, and domestic tourism makes up 25% (National Bureau of Statistics, 2019). Consequently, there are substantial disparities in the development of different types of tourism within the Republic of Kazakhstan. This pronounced prevalence of outbound tourism results in an inconspicuous outflow of capital. For Kazakhstan's sustainable development, it is imperative to foster the growth of inbound and domestic tourism. Inbound tourism contributes to foreign exchange earnings for the country's economy, while domestic tourism facilitates the rejuvenation of the local population, directs monetary gains from tourism toward domestic recreational facilities, and bolsters the internal economic infrastructure. Domestic tourism also serves educational purposes, promoting patriotism and instilling a sense of pride in the nation among its citizens.

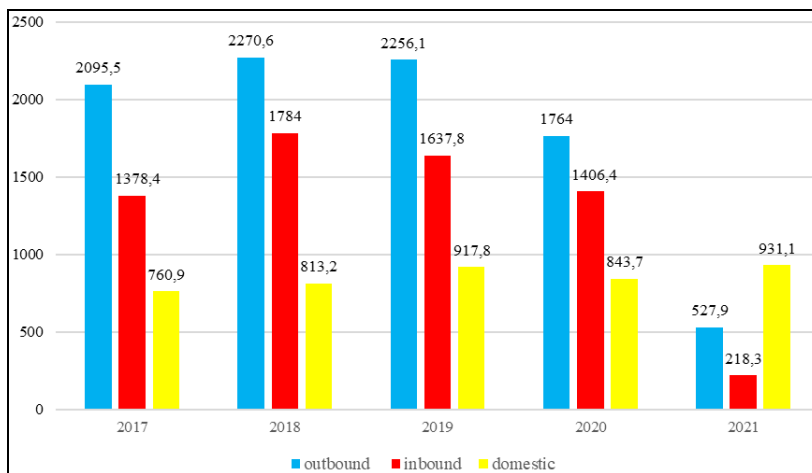


Figure 2. The number of tourists January-March, thousand (Source: National Bureau of Statistics, 2021)

In the first quarter of this year, the number of both inbound and outbound tourists in Kazakhstan experienced significant declines compared to the same period last year, with drops of 6.4 and 3.3 times, respectively, resulting in figures of 218.3 thousand and 527.9 thousand people. In contrast, domestic tourism witnessed growth, with a 10.4% increase in the number of tourists over the year, reaching 931.1 thousand people. Examining another crucial factor - hotel occupancy - reveals intriguing insights. In 2019, the average hotel occupancy in Kazakhstan was a mere 24.9% (National Bureau of Statistics, 2020). This means that accommodations like hotels, sanatoriums, and resorts remain largely unoccupied, constituting an inefficient use of their available capacity. However, these properties remain profitable, indicating that their current low utilization covers all fixed costs. This opens up the possibility of offering social vouchers at a cost that only covers direct expenses. By increasing occupancy to at least 50%, an additional 7.56 million bed-days could be provided, equating to a week's vacation for over a million Kazakh citizens. This analysis suggests a potential improvement in the strategy for developing domestic tourism. Instead of directing substantial investments into creating new resorts and hotels, maximizing the use of existing facilities by Kazakh citizens could greatly boost the industry and establish an institute of social tourism.

The COVID-19 pandemic has led to a significant decrease in international travel, with air travel permitted in only ten countries globally. Travelers abroad must contend with various restrictions, including quarantine, lockdowns, curfews, bans

on intercity movement, and the closure of restaurants and museums. In this context, companies specializing in domestic tourism, including hotel owners, have found themselves in a favorable position (UNWTO, 2020).

Another noteworthy observation from this "coronavirus season" is the increased desire of people to explore the wild and remote corners of the country. This trend has led to the popularity of glamping (glamorous camping), glampervans (comfortable mobile homes), camps, lodges, and eco-friendly hotels. For example, the Burabay National Park, a three-hour drive north of the capital, Astana, has become a preferred option for city dwellers. In Almaty, the Ile Alatau mountains, located to the south, offer similar attractions. Guesthouses and hotels in these areas have experienced a surge in demand, with guesthouses in mountain villages like Zhaidakbulak, near the Charyn Valley and the Kyrgyz border, being fully booked weeks in advance during the previous summer (Leiper, 1989).

METHODS

To analyze and summarize the material systematically, it should be sorted and screened using acceptable methodologies. In this paper, a systematic review was employed to comprehensively rearrange the literature on social tourism policy studies. The process of locating and assessing papers related to a given subject of study is referred to as a systematic review (Montori et al., 2003). The goal is to complete and expand on the current literature on research problems, as well as to provide a theoretical foundation for scientific study. This method is chosen to address the shortcomings of narrative reviews, which may lack objectivity and comprehensiveness. By conducting a more extensive literature collection and employing

rigorous inclusion criteria, systematic reviews offer more authentic and reliable conclusions (Tranfield et al., 2003). Numerous studies in the field of tourism have undertaken systematic literature reviews (El Archi et al., 2023b; Rahmat et al., 2023). The decision to undertake a systematic review was motivated by the need to generate a robust conceptual framework that policymakers can use to understand the policy implications of social tourism during lockdowns and how social tourism can be harnessed for the development of domestic tourism. The systematic review process involved several key steps (Figure 3):

- **Defining research questions and objectives:** The first step was to define clear research questions and objectives that guided the review. In this case, the primary focus was on understanding the policy implications of social tourism during lockdowns and its potential role in domestic tourism development (Hunt et al., 2018).

- **Search strategy:** A comprehensive search strategy was developed to identify relevant literature. This involved using various academic databases, search engines, and specific keywords related to social tourism policy, lockdowns, and domestic tourism development (Nightingale, 2009).

- **Inclusion and exclusion criteria:** Inclusion and exclusion criteria were established to determine which studies would be included in the review. These criteria helped ensure that the selected studies were directly relevant to the research questions. For instance, studies that did not focus on policy implications or domestic tourism were excluded (Meline, 2006).

- **Study selection:** A rigorous process was employed to select studies. Initially, all identified records were screened based on title and abstract. Subsequently, full texts of potentially relevant papers were reviewed to determine their eligibility (Rother, 2007).

- **Data extraction:** Data from the selected studies were extracted systematically. This included information on study objectives, methodologies, findings, and policy implications related to social tourism (Jonnalagadda et al., 2015).

- **Quality assessment:** Each selected study was critically appraised for its methodological rigor and the quality of evidence presented. This step was crucial to ensure the reliability and validity of the findings (Kitchenham et al., 2009).

- **Synthesis of results:** The data from selected studies were synthesized, and common themes and patterns were identified. This synthesis aimed to provide a clear overview of the existing literature on social tourism policy during lockdowns and its relevance to domestic tourism development (Sampaio and Mancini, 2007).

- **Conceptual framework development:** The review's findings were used to develop a robust conceptual framework that policymakers can utilize to understand the policy implications of social tourism during lockdowns and its role in promoting domestic tourism (Morioka and de Carvalho, 2016). By employing a systematic review methodology, this study aims to offer policymakers and researchers a well-structured and comprehensive understanding of the policy implications of social tourism in the context of lockdowns and how it can contribute to the development of domestic tourism. This approach ensures the reliability and objectivity of the research, leading to more authentic and actionable insights.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The tourist destination is a decisive element of the tourist system (Manhas et al., 2021). It can be described as a center (territory) with all kinds of amenities, facilities and services to meet all kinds of needs of tourists. In other words, a tourist destination includes the most important and decisive elements of tourism that tourists need (El Archi et al., 2023c). The region of the tourist destination is one of the most important in the tourist system, since the tourist destinations themselves and their image attract tourists, motivate the visit, thus activating the entire tourist system. The



Figure 3. Research Flowchart (Source: compiled by the authors)

term “tourist destination” was coined by Leiper in the mid-1980s. Now the destination is a geographic area with certain boundaries, which can attract and satisfy the needs of a fairly wide group of tourists (Mccabe, 2009; Setiawan et al., 2021). A destination is a combination of the following components: an attraction (natural wealth or man-made, that is, what prompts a tourist to travel); amenities (accommodation, food, entertainment, as well as retail and other service businesses such as banks, exchange offices, hairdressers, medical enterprises, i.e. everything that not only provides shelter and food, but also creates a general feeling hospitality of tourists by this destination); accessibility (remoteness of the destination from tourist markets makes them vulnerable to lower demand, since such a destination can only be reached by long journeys (Kim and Yoon, 2003; Lojo et al., 2020). Therefore, the development and maintenance of effective transport links with tourist markets is necessary for the success of the destination (Prideaux, 2000).

But for tourists it is not only physical accessibility that is important. destination, i.e. external transport links with it, but also the presence of developed internal transport links (Khadaroo and Seetanah, 2008). In other words, services such as car rental, provision of local transport for sightseeing tours and transfers to accommodation in the destination are important for them); support services that provide services such as advertising the destination, coordinating and managing its development, providing the population and organizations with the necessary information and reservation services, providing equipment (catering, sports, etc.), providing the destination with management personnel.

The destination has cultural value: visitors should find the destination attractive and worth the time and money spent traveling. Thus, it is important to maintain the distinction of the destination environment from the usual “home” environment with good design and management, in order to avoid the development of a “unified tourist landscape”.

The destination is inseparable, i.e. a tourism product is consumed where it is produced, and in order to experience it, tourists must be physically present at the destination. It should be noted that the processes of production and consumption of a tourist product coincide not only in space, but also in time, i.e. destinations cannot be stocked up (hotel rooms, theatre tickets, etc. cannot be set aside in the “off season” for later sale during, for example, the theatre season). Thus, the seasonality of the destination is the most important problem, as it reduces their profitability and makes them ineffective in terms of the use of fixed assets of the destination. For a seasonal destination, peak season (3-4 months) should provide a major contributor to fixed costs that are payable throughout the year. Services and amenities of the destination are used not only by tourists, but also by other people: local residents and employees of this destination. Thus, the enterprises of the destination cannot be focused only on local residents or only on tourists, they must focus on both.

To meet the definition of sustainable tourism, destinations must apply interdisciplinary, holistic (holistic) and integrative approach that includes four main goals / indicators (El Archi et al., 2023d):

- 1) Demonstration of sustainable destination management.
- 2) Maximizing social and economic benefits for local communities and minimizing negative impact.
- 3) Maximizing benefits for local communities, visitors and facilities cultural heritage with minimal impact.
- 4) Maximizing environmental benefits and minimizing negative influence.

These criteria are intended to be used by any type of destination and scale. When considering the phenomenon of social tourism in the world, it is obvious that, first of all, one should focus on the developed capitalist countries. There is a big difference in the mentality and in the structure of state systems, and this hinders the conduct of scientific research, since it is difficult to separate the cultural differences of different countries from the peculiarities of the implementation of the social tourism system. At the same time, if the analysis of the system is carried out in only one country, then there is a high probability of obtaining a too specific solution that cannot be applied in Kazakhstan. Due to the above circumstances, the most convenient for studying the world experience of social tourism would be a group of countries with similar values and with approximately the same level of socio-cultural and economic development, and belonging to developed countries.

The analysis of social tourism systems highlights the similarities and differences, and provides explanations for the similarities in the ways of organizing connections between the factors of supply and demand. The demand for social tourism is described first, followed by an analysis of the various systems. The next step is to define the role of intermediaries between recipients and providers of social tourism. It also analyzes the relationship between the social and commercial sectors of tourism and analyzes the benefits of such cooperation. Despite different definitions and historical differences in social tourism, there is a set of elements that are the same for all approaches. The greatest similarity of systems can be observed in target groups and delivery methods of tours. Figure 4 shows a generalized structure of the social tourism organization system in Europe. Supply and demand factors and their key elements are similar throughout Europe, and important system elements such as financing methods and intermediaries can vary

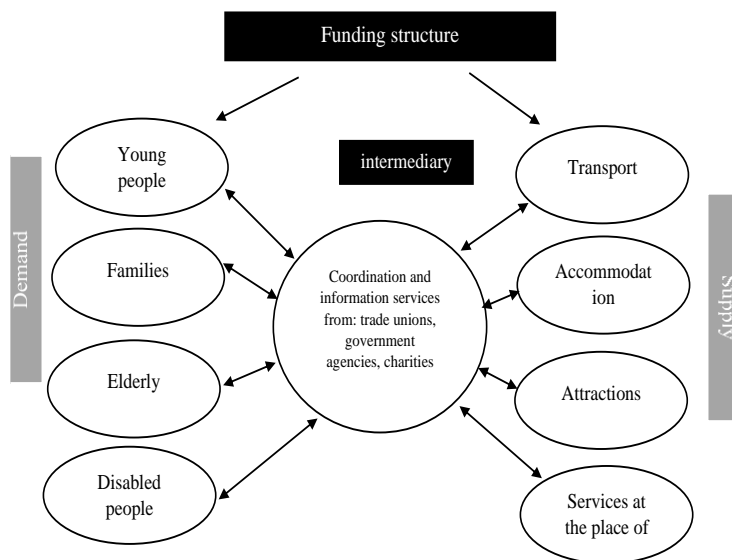


Figure 4. Generalized structure of the system of organizing social tourism in Europe

greatly from country to country. Common elements of demand are based on the fact that the target audience of social tourism is approximately the same in all countries. As mentioned earlier, there are 4 target groups for the development of social tourism: young people, elderly people, people with disabilities and families. Social tourism systems are highly dependent on the funding structures and conditions in the country. Despite this, we can distinguish three main sources of social benefits, which are shown in Figure 5. It should be noted that many countries use more than one scheme. The choice of these target groups may have two drawbacks. First, the definition of groups is not precise enough: not all young and old people, families and people with disabilities are excluded from the tourism process and therefore must reap the benefits of social tourism. Secondly, these target groups do not cover all social groups that are excluded from tourism.

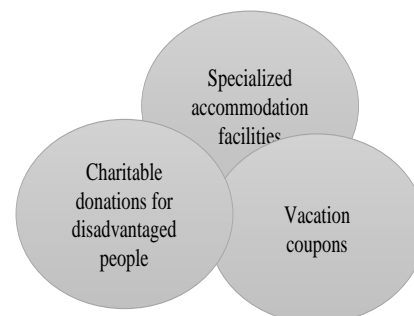


Figure 5. Main sources of social benefits

For example, one socio-demographic group is obviously excluded from these groups – they are single people aged 30-65 who do not fit either the Family or Elderly category. There are different approaches to supporting these groups: in some countries they are funded on a targeted basis, in others they are included in more universal structures. The elements of the offer may include transportation, accommodation and recreation services. In some countries, this may be part of a commercial tourism supply chain. World experience indisputably proves that the massiveness of publicly available social tourism covers its cheapness with the total inflow and rapid turnover of real money, which increases employment, investment in tourism directly on the ground, and at the same time tax revenues to municipal and federal budgets. It should be noted that in Kazakhstan country the inhibiting factors for the development of tourism are: first of all, the low technical level of equipment of the tourism industry, the low level of professionalism of the tourist personnel. Both of these factors currently do not allow attracting a powerful tourist flow from abroad, and, thereby, stimulating the development of domestic tourism and its social sphere.

Meanwhile, social tourism, especially in relation to people with disabilities, people with disabilities, youth and the elderly, is widely used in Western countries. Their projects are interesting, first of all, by the mechanisms of work, the degree of cooperation and involvement of clients and partners, and the forms of public-private partnership.

Important participants in the social tourism sector in Europe are non-profit and social organizations, the volunteer sector, public associations, economic communities, social cooperatives, social and solidarity economy, that is, production structures that are neither public nor private companies, but focused on individual and social goals, not profit. France, Belgium, Portugal and Spain often use the term “social and solidarity economy” for this type of organization, as they are generally characterized by five principles: free membership, limited profitability, democratic and active governance, collective or social purpose, and public funding. and private foundations. For example, the charter of the National Union of Tourism Associations (UNAT) in France provides for the following tasks:

- guarantee access to tourism and recreation for a large number of people from different social strata;
- emphasize the humanistic and collectivist values of tourism for society and the role of tourism in the growth of personal well-being and social cohesion;
- to achieve economic benefits through the support of social organizations, youth and family associations working in the social and solidarity economy;
- to support the sustainable development of the tourist destination, respecting the ecological and socio-cultural characteristics of the destination.

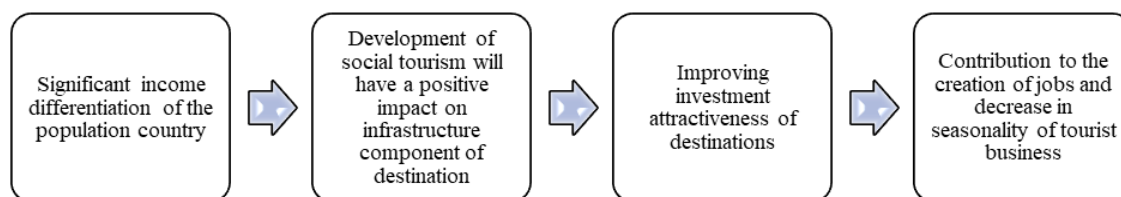


Figure 6. The need to develop the sphere social tourism in the Kazakhstan is due to the following factors (Source: compiled by the authors)

The development of social tourism contributes to the creation of infrastructure of tourist areas, their sustainable development. Development of social tourism is of great importance for consumers of tourist products and services. Not rising only general cultural development part of the population, but also its health due to all kinds of social programs. World experience clearly shows that the mass character of publicly available social tourism covers its cheapness with the total inflow and fast the turnover of real money, which increases employment, investment in tourism directly in the destination, and at the same time tax receipts (Eusébio et al., 2016; Ianioglo and Rissanen, 2020; Issakov et al., 2023c). Now in Kazakhstan there is approximately 1 million people with disabilities, and more than 12 million people, i.e., almost half of the population is young and old. They belong to socially unprotected categories of citizens, and their opportunities to travel, if not reduced to zero, then at least are extremely limited. One can imagine what changes will take place in Kazakhstani tourism if a significant part of these people is involved in trips, outdoor activities – i.e., set them in motion. It will be at least 10 million people (National Bureau of Statistics, 2022). For the analysis of social tourism in the Republic of Kazakhstan, the SWOT analysis method was chosen as the most suitable for developing strategies for creating new products. Since SWOT analysis is the main tool of factor analysis in this work, the preference is given to the quantitative method of analysis.

Table 2. SWOT analysis of social tourism in the Republic of Kazakhstan (Source: compiled by the authors)

	Positive	Negative
INTERNATIONAL	<p style="text-align: center;">Strengths</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Promotes human development and socialization. • Increases the level of social responsibility of the country and business. • Promotes infrastructure development. • Involves an additional number of people in the tourist exchange. • It is recognized in developed countries as the norm of life 	<p style="text-align: center;">Weaknesses</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • It is possible to develop dependent attitudes in the population. • Depends on government funding or business patronage. • It is not widely known among the population, and has a strong association with the USSR. • Lack of a regulatory framework governing the industry
EXTERNAL	<p style="text-align: center;">Opportunities</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A large market for social tourism. • Social tensions associated with the destabilization of the economy. • The state's focus on the development of the tourism industry. • Low occupancy of accommodation facilities and the sanatorium complex in particular 	<p style="text-align: center;">Threats</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Refusal of business to cooperate. • Refusal of the state to support social tourism. • Refusal of the population to participate in social tourism. • Corruption

For the successful development of social tourism in Kazakhstan, a systematic approach and sequence of actions is required. It is necessary to initially develop strategic and tactical plans for the development of the industry. These measures are the result of an analysis of world experience and a SWOT analysis of social tourism. With the implementation of the measures described in this part of the dissertation, the likelihood of the successful development of social tourism in our country will greatly increase. As one of the measures to counter the threats to social tourism, we propose the creation of a social tourism coordinator. The development and implementation of measures for the development of the social services sector will increase number of tourists by providing opportunity for more citizens of Kazakhstan to exercise their right to rest and work, and the growth of investments with parties to the budget and private investors will contribute to the development of the infrastructure component of the territory.

CONCLUSION

A significant portion of Kazakhstan's population, currently not engaged in tourist exchange, represents a substantial reservoir for the growth of domestic tourism. Stimulating these individuals to travel and take breaks within the country is of paramount importance. Social tourism can serve as a valuable method for this stimulation. It's worth noting that when discussing the benefits of domestic travel, the emphasis should be placed on the safety of stays, accessibility to medical care, absence of language barriers, and the state's natural beauty. These factors contribute not only to physical rejuvenation but also to intellectual, spiritual, and creative development, along with instilling patriotism in younger generations.

The development of the tourism industry in the region yields several positive outcomes. It significantly boosts the gross regional product, increases profits for local businesses in the tourism and related sectors, augments tax and non-tax revenues for the regional budget, and fosters a multiplier effect in the local economy. Additionally, it plays a pivotal role in enhancing the structure of the regional payment balance, reducing unemployment, and elevating the average income of the economically active population. The development of a tourism destination is a multifaceted and gradual process that involves defining a territory as a potential tourist destination and subsequently transforming it into one. This progression is influenced by a variety of factors within the internal and external environment. Leveraging social tourism for destination development ensures the optimal utilization of natural resources, a fundamental element in tourism development. It also supports crucial ecological processes, aids in preserving natural resources and biodiversity, and ensures the sustainability of long-term economic operations. Furthermore, it provides equitable distribution of socio-economic benefits, including sustainable employment and income opportunities, social security for host communities, and, in turn, contributes to poverty reduction.

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