

Akmaral Alikulova¹**TOURISM IMPACT ON IMPROVEMENT OF POPULATION WELFARE IN KAZAKHSTAN**

The paper describes the peculiarities of tourism in the Republic of Kazakhstan. In particular, the paper illustrates the spa resorts functioning in the Southern part of Kazakhstan and presents the results on the conducted research related to the travel business development in the Southern region of Kazakhstan.

Keywords: domestic tourism; spa resort tourism; public health; tourism management.

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ВПЛИВ ТУРИЗМУ НА ПОКРАЩЕННЯ СОЦІАЛЬНОГО СТАНОВИЩА НАСЕЛЕННЯ РЕСПУБЛІКИ КАЗАХСТАН

У статті представлено особливості туризму в Республіці Казахстан. Зокрема, проілюстровано діяльність санаторіїв у південному регіоні Казахстану. Надано результати проведеного дослідження з розвитку туристичного бізнесу в південному Казахстані.

Ключові слова: внутрішній туризм; санаторно-курортний туризм; охорона здоров'я; управління туризмом.

Табл. 3. Рис. 3. Літ. 16.

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ВЛИЯНИЕ ТУРИЗМА НА УЛУЧШЕНИЕ СОЦИАЛЬНОГО ПОЛОЖЕНИЯ НАСЕЛЕНИЯ РЕСПУБЛИКИ КАЗАХСТАН

В статье рассмотрены особенности туризма в Республике Казахстан. В частности, проиллюстрирована деятельность санаториев в южных областях Казахстана. Предоставлены результаты по проведенному исследованию развития туристического бизнеса в Южном Казахстане.

Ключевые слова: внутренний туризм; санаторно-курортный туризм; здравоохранение; менеджмент в сфере туризма.

Introduction. Tourism is a complex phenomenon of social, cultural, economic and physiological nature and, therefore, may have various definitions. Some of these definitions are rather narrow and reflect the specific features of tourism; these may be social, economic and legal aspects. Others are broader, giving more comprehensive understanding seeking to find the essence of the phenomenon and considering its various characteristics in their interrelation.

The most general definitions of tourism are the following:

- tourism as a socio-cultural and leisure activity conducted through the process of free movement of people from their homes to other places within the country of permanent residence or abroad;
- tourism as an industry that produces and provides services to meet the needs during travel.

Spa resort tourism is a specific type of tourism having the abovementioned general features as well as a number of specific characteristics.

Public health in Kazakhstan is currently the issue of national importance. Spa resort tourism is one of the most effective means of public health improvement. The

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treatment people receive in spa resorts is especially important given the process of premature aging and high incidence among adults, adolescents and children.

The spa resort facilities in Kazakhstan dispose all means necessary to provide quality services: healing mineral waters, therapeutic muds and other natural healing substances. These resources are sufficient to satisfy the current and future demand and may contribute to development of the resort industry of the country.

Literature review. Tourist business is a service sector. According to A.E. Sahak and I.A. Pshenichnykh (2008) there has not been a universal definition of the notion "tourism" so far. There are 3 most common interpretations of the term. The first narrow definition reduces tourism to the notion of tourist travel. This view is shared by some experts. They argue that only a small part of organizations produce goods and services exclusively for tourists and, therefore, there is no any serious grounds to see tourism as a separate branch of industry.

Second understanding of tourism is more common in economically developed countries, it is rather consumer biased. Tourism is when people, having some spare time, spend it leaving the places of their permanent residence for some other location within or beyond the country they live for recreational, educational, vocational, business, sports, religious and other purposes. In case of tourism people do not do any paid work in the places of their temporary stay. The analysis of this definition of tourism shows that it is based on the following 3 components.

Temporary relocation from places of permanent residence;

Various purposes of visits excluding wage earning employment in a place of temporary stay;

In-country period shall last more than 24 hours but shall not exceed 6 months.

However, there is a number of cases when the abovementioned criteria are not accurate. Refugees, nomads, inmates, transit passengers who formally do not enter the country, and people escorting them. Shall all these people be called tourists? Sometimes they do. The latter case, however, is much broader than conventional understanding of tourism in terms of the business conducted by tour operators or travel agents.

The third definition of tourism is more comprehensive, it refers the use of free time spent by people beyond the places of their permanent residence and all productive activities aimed at meeting the demand for the full range of goods and services. This definition adds a "production" component as an integral part of tourist business. Accordingly, tourism industry has two integral components; supply and demand. These two major economic drivers provide the conditions necessary for normal functioning of the increasingly diverse and growing tourist traffic all over the world.

Many authors argue that tourism is an economic category because a receiving country sells local services to foreign tourists and this is how jobs are created for domestic labor force. Moreover, national tourist industry is the source of huge revenues from foreign currency import.

There are some authors who state that tourism is a separate, independent branch distinguishing its main features as the following:

1. It uses specific material and technical resources.
2. It uses specific natural and human resources.
3. It provides specific services and use specific technology of services.

4. It creates a new system of communication and management.

5. It has significant impact on social, political, economic, ethnic and cultural relationships among peoples and states.

Tourism has been a subject of detailed analysis. V.A. Tsarenko (2009) argues that the tourist industry is one of the most dynamically developing sectors of the economy capable to make a stimulating effect on other key sectors such as transport and communications, construction, agriculture, production of consumer goods. It is a catalyst of social and economic development affecting directly or indirectly the quality of life and living standards. Spa resorts are the basis for the entire tourist and recreation industry with all the abovementioned features. Their impact on public health is worth special attention as well as the change it makes in living standards and life span increase. However, the domestic literature on the market features and functioning of spa resort services, the ways to increase its efficiency under current economic climate is often insufficient, whereas the foreign experience needs to be adapted to specific conditions of Kazakhstan.

A.N. Tulembaeva (1999) studies the significance of development of tourist industry for the economy of Kazakhstan as well as the role it has in the lives of people in the country. She argues that effective management strategies of spa resort facilities increase their competitiveness, as well as profound studies to determine the characteristics of market development of spa resort services in Kazakhstan, the prospects of development and proper management techniques may have a positive impact on tourism development in Kazakhstan.

At the same time, there is a number of economists who point out poor conditions at the resort facilities in Kazakhstan. Domestic health resort infrastructure, which is a key component of tourist and recreation industry, used to play an important social role in the Soviet period. Accordingly, it is preferred only by the people of older generation and hardly enjoy any considerable demand among younger consumers.

Spa resort tourism in Kazakhstan. Individual health as a component of popular health becomes a factor to indicate the sense of life and determine the individual potential and capabilities. State of population health, in its turn, determines the level of socioeconomic, cultural and industrial development of a nation. Healthcare industry, as a comprehensively developed, socially oriented system to ensure availability, quality and continuity of health care, is one of the main priorities in national development in terms of sustainable and stable growth of popular welfare.

Public health is currently one of the major issues throughout the world. Kazakhstan is not an exception. Respiratory diseases (39.37%) are at the first place in the structure of morbidity in Kazakhstan, injury and poisoning (6.88%) are on the second place followed by genitourinary diseases (6.86%) and digestive diseases (6.46%), diseases of skin and subcutaneous tissue (6.08%), blood diseases (4.24%), circulatory diseases (3.72%), infectious and parasitic diseases (3.24%), others (23.14%) (State Program for Development of Health of the Republic of Kazakhstan "Salamatty Kazakhstan " for 2011–2015).

Reducing the number of ailing people is a political challenge for the Government of Kazakhstan. Effective policies should be based on clear understanding of the factors causing problems and effective prevention measures. Recreation tourism in general and treatment within the spa resort system in particular may be quite relevant

measure to increase the level of public health in Kazakhstan. Spa resort infrastructure in Kazakhstan nearly collapsed simultaneously with the split of the Soviet Union and after that it experienced a severe crisis. It is recovering steadily but slowly these days. The national spa resort industry aided by the government and private business is increasingly interested in developing this sphere.

The "Saryagash" health resort has been functioning for many years in the South Kazakhstan region. The city had been called Sary Agach until 1997, by the Decree of the President of the Republic of Kazakhstan on April 24, 1997 it was renamed the city of Saryagash. Saryagash is located near the Kazakh-Uzbek border, 15 km. from the Uzbek capital Tashkent. Saryagash is the center of spa resort tourism in Kazakhstan. The city also has a mineral water bottling plant.

The "Saryagash" health resort is the best known in Kazakhstan. It was founded in 1946 when the first drilling resulted in the discovery of mineral water at the depth of 1400 m (Treatment and rehabilitation center "Saryagash", 2012–2013). Since then, mineral water has been the major treatment provided at the "Saryagash" health resort. Saryagash is thermal, subsaline, mildly alkaline, hydrocarbonate mineral water. Saryagash mineral water contains a large number of organic, naphthenic acids and trace elements: potassium, sodium, calcium, magnesium, iron, chloride, and vanadium. Saryagash mineral water has a number of therapeutic effects; it relieves inflammation in stomach, intestines, gallbladder, it promotes scarring of stomach and intestines ulcers, it is a strong diuretic and cholagogue, it regulates gastric action. It has good effect on the nervous system and endocrine glands, helps to restore immunity, improves metabolism. It is especially good for treatment of the diseases of digestive system resulted from nervous and mental disorders. Additionally, Saryagash mineral water reduces the level of cholesterol in blood.

A number of new spas have been opened in the region while people are increasingly aware of the benefits of health-resort tourism development (Table 1).

Table 1. The list of resorts in Saryagash

#	Name of Spa resort	Year of Establishment
1	Saryagash	1946
2	Zhansaya	2004
3	Kokterek	2010
4	Oxi	2007
5	Aray Deluxe	2010
6	Altyn Bulak	2000
7	Zhetysu	2004
8	Altynai	2005
9	Saya	2010

Source: LTD "Saryagash Tour", 2013.

Sustainable economic growth in Kazakhstan triggered the establishment of a number of new health resorts and pushed for improvement of their services. Over the past 10 years some new sanatoriums have been opened. These facilities provide treatment using the same mineral water, the range of services provided in there is similar. Quality of the services however differs, so do the incomes of their customers.

The treatment and services rendered by the resort facilities are the following (included in price): balneotherapy, hydrotherapy, drinking mineral water, mineral baths, jacuzzi, underwater shower massage, circular douche, rising douche, jet

douche, gastric lavage, duodenal intubation, intestinal irrigation, gynecological irrigation, medical micro-syringing, gingival irrigation, physical therapy, paraffin treatment, inhalation of herbs and oils, UV therapy, sinusoidal modulated current therapy, UHF therapy, light therapy, electrophoresis, magnetic therapy, ultrasound therapy, electrosleep therapy, ECG examination, laboratory tests (blood, urine and biochemical).

Table 2. Minimum and Maximum Room Rate per Capita per Day, KZT

#	Spa resort	Minimum Room Rate per Capita per Day	Maximum Room Rate per Capita per Day
1	Saryagash	5200	15000
2	Arman	4600	15000
3	Zhansaya	7700	12000
4	Kokterek	8755	14935
5	Oxi	13900	27650
6	Aray Deluxe	35000	180000
7	Altyn Bulak	25000	88800
8	Zhetysu	7520	16280
9	Altynai	5150	13390
10	Saya	5150	17510

Source: LTD "Saryagash Tour", 2013.

Table 2 shows the cost per day. Since the entire course of treatment lasts for at least 10 days, it costs the minimum of 46,000 KZT (approximately 315 USD), the average cost of a ten-day course is 530 USD.

Case study. The market research was conducted to determine the obstacles to tourism development in the region with 5 focus groups.

Group 1 – aged 16–22 (mostly college and university students).

Group 2 – aged 23–35 (mostly young people, young families, with or without children).

Group 3 – aged 35–45 (families, families with children or without children).

Group 4 – aged 30–45 (people with active lifestyle, businessmen/women, people having sufficient income).

Group 5 – aged 46 or more (mature people, pensioners, elderly).

All the interviewed answered the questions willingly. All the respondents reside in the Southern region of Kazakhstan and are well aware and familiar with the health-resort facilities in the region.

Saryagash was chosen as the case of study because of its mineral well, number of diseases the Saryagash mineral water heals, the recreation facilities located in a climatically comfortable place. All the abovementioned factors provide a great opportunity for the development of the tourist industry to bring it to the international level.

Case Study Findings. The figure below shows awareness of the respondents about the resort facilities currently operating in the South Kazakhstan region.

Public recognition of the currently operating spa resort facilities in the Southern region of Kazakhstan is relative stable. According to the survey, the respondents indicated the basic preferences when choosing a place of resort.

The case study revealed that the 3 main factors for consumers are: the range, cost and quality of service since market economy has changed consumer attitudes. 20 years ago people would be satisfied with a "traditional" range of services that included baths, showers and massage, it is not enough these days. Today's customer

demands are much higher as the international market is growing and competition is very high. Therefore, the broader is the range of services provided by a resort facility, the more intensive is the flow of tourists. The price factor is also very important. Table 2 shows prices per room per night. Not every respondent can afford to stay in an expensive sanatorium. The success a resort may achieve also depends on how customer-friendly is the stuff.

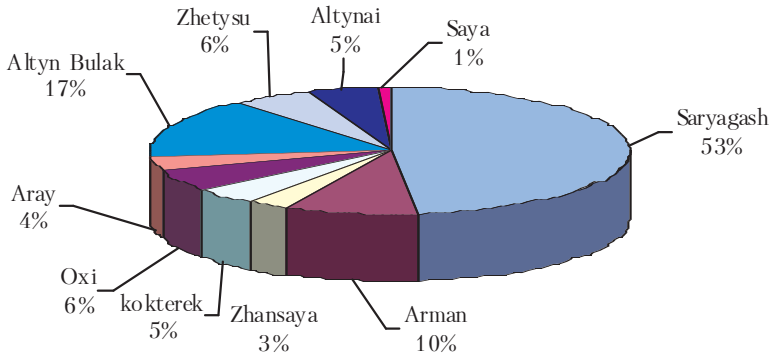


Figure 1. Awareness of the currently operating spa resort facilities, based on the analysis of public survey (2012)

Table 3. Basic preferences when choosing a place of resort, analysis of the survey

#	Preferences	Assessment
1	Cost of services	2
2	Personal experience	6
3	Range of services	1
4	Location	7
5	Reputation, prestige	4
6	Interior design	5
7	Customer friendliness	3
8	Work schedule, seasonality	8

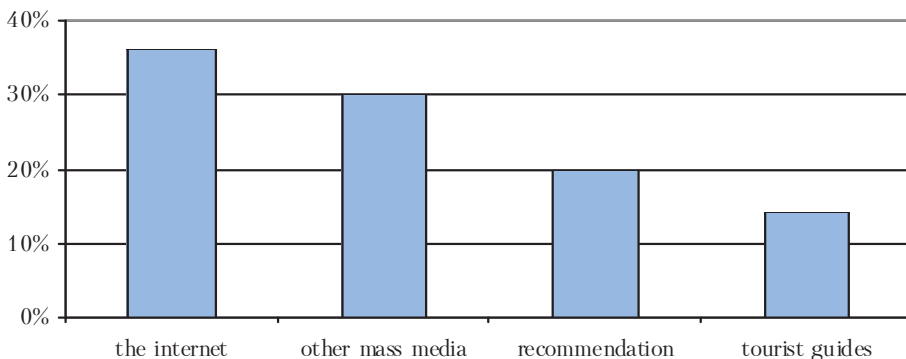


Figure 2. Importance of information sources, %, analysis of the survey

The survey showed that resort managers should consider a number of factors while conducting their advertising campaigns; the Internet is the main source of information for customers at the age of 40 or younger, unlike with more mature peo-

ple. However, a more detailed revision of the data showed that the respondents roughly equally paid attention to the information received from magazines and newspapers, television and radio.

Demographically, the market is divided into several segments. Gender and age characteristics are the most important for marketing research. The case study showed that the age composition of the tourists was divided as following: 9% of Group 1, 14% of Group 2, 18% of Group 3, 40% of Group 4 and 19% of Group 5 would choose to resort in a sanatorium.

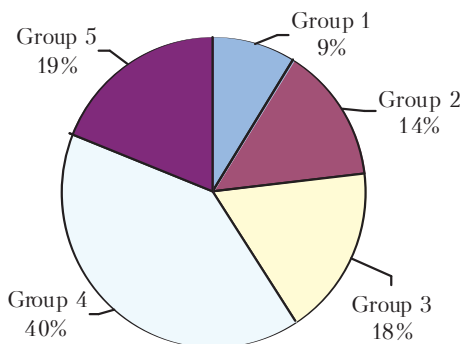


Figure 3. Age structure of tourists, analysis of the survey

Conclusion. Currently the elderly account for more than 7.7% of the total population in Kazakhstan. According the UN Kazakhstan is expected to increase the number of the elderly by 11% in the coming years. Therefore, a national gerontological care is needed in order to improve medical aid to the elderly. the development of health-resort infrastructure will positively impact on the state of population health.

During the Soviet era the resort industry in Kazakhstan was well developed; it was affordable for average people who spent their vocation there at least once a year. The best workers and public officers were granted with hotel vouchers. There were the resorts that provided their services to the employees of a particular branch (miners, furnace workers, law enforcement officers etc.). The system could be upgraded and adjusted to the current realities and improved.

The new system could serve as an instrument for the development of the national tourist industry in general and spa resort tourism as one of its branches in particular. Tourism is a comprehensive and changeable system that alters under the influence of numerous factors of different nature. Continuous monitoring of tourist activities in regions is needed to adapt timely to social and environmental changes. Possible mechanisms for such monitoring are revealed by the survey detecting the direction for further development that should both do a lot of good for vast numbers of people and contribute to the social and economic progress of the entire region.

There has not been any consistent monitoring of tourism in Kazakhstan so far. Yet there is a number of sporadic initiatives. The analysis we conducted made it possible to rank the most pressing issues for tourism in Kazakhstan:

1. Lack of information.
2. Poor advertisement.
3. Prices rise.

4. Poor development of domestic transport.
5. Shortage in work resources.
6. Lack of interest in domestic tourism.
7. Others.

The respondents said that high prices on accommodation and travel in domestic tourist industry made them choose foreign countries as their vacation destination. Paradoxically, outbound tourism is cheaper than domestic one. Besides, people are motivated to learn something new and foreign. Considering all abovementioned factors, the government is implementing a program aimed at the development of domestic tourism; the number of domestic tourists increased compared with 2005 to 762.6 ths people and at the beginning of 2010 amounted to 16,004.6 ths ("Kazakhstan in 2010" Statistical Bulletin).

Although Kazakhstan has certain achievements in demography, the level of health of women and children is relatively low. Reproductive health remains a problematic issue; 16% of marriages are infertile. Therefore, the development of health-resort infrastructure in Kazakhstan is very important.

The main directions of development of spa resort infrastructure are the following:

- Reconstruction and modernization of the national spa resort infrastructure, development of health resorts of a new type to diversify and increase the quality of services rendered for prevention, rehabilitation and treatment.
- Introduction of new effective therapeutic technologies based on the use of reclassified and reconsidered medical and natural facts.
- New kind of services focused on prevention, rehabilitation and health promotion, strengthening of tourist resort and recreational capacities of facilities.
- Introduction and distribution of the most popular SPA-technologies.
- Promotion of spa resort services both at domestic and international markets.
- Improvement of the entire social welfare and cultural life.
- Expansion of cultural and leisure infrastructure.
- Improvement of professional training of the labor force employed in the health-resort industry.
- Promoting infrastructural development as well as cash flow through investment projects of public private partnership.
- Drafting laws on regional and local levels aimed at improving spa resort industries as a principle branch of regional and local economies.

While the social sphere is being increasingly commercialized and the range of paid medical services is growing, the availability of medical care for average people is decreasing. Spa resort tourism may become complementary to medical care infrastructure in terms of diagnosis and treatment. Given social significance of popular health, the availability of spa resort tourism is increasingly important. Improvement of services may be achieved through the following measures and strategies:

- management of spa resort facilities in Kazakhstan must be reconsidered to provide for greater differentiation and specialization;
- various medical centers may be opened within spa resort facilities and additional revenues received from their services;

- resort and recreation regime must be maintained to provide for a balance of spa resort services (medical treatment above all) and entertainment (nightclubs, casinos etc. that must be properly organized and located so that they would not disturb and hamper medical treatment);

- the quality of service and food must be improved and of the range of paid services rendered expanded: pools, saunas, gyms, etc. so that spa resort faculties could be opened and operating 24/7.

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