

Yessenov M.N., Beisakhmet A.A., Kalimbetov E.A., Artemiev A.A.

Al-Farabi Kazakh national university, Almaty
e-mail: meirzhan.yessenov@gmail.com

TOURISM OPPORTUNITIES FOR KAZAKHSTAN ON THE GREAT SILK ROAD

Kazakhstan is a big country in central Asia. The Great Silk Road is one of the reasons people must visit the country because Kazakhstan was one of the key countries that participated in it. Nowadays, the history comes back again and the country is planning to become a destination that will be home for international and domestic tourists. Astana intends to invest \$10 billion, \$6 billion of which will come from private investors, and the country's tourism planners hope that it will help to develop its tourism sector by 2020. For centuries, crowds of people speaking diverse languages filled the bazaars of Asia, and long caravans crept along dusty roads carrying precious gems and silks, spices and dyes, gold and silver, and exotic birds and animals to Europe. Yet the Silk Road was to become not only a great trade route but the melting pot of two very different civilizations; those of the East and the West, with their specific cultural traditions, religious beliefs, and scientific and technical achievements. Central Asia, situated between China and India in the east, bordering on the European world in the west, spreading between the Volga and Siberia in the north, and between Persia and Arabia in the south, for almost two thousand years stood at the crossroads of the world's great civilizations and cultures.

Kazakhstan's tourism officials have expressed their desire to attract more international travelers. However, tourism planning needs something more than just money to attract tourists from targeted countries. A complicated visa and registration process is one obstacle already being addressed. Kazakhstan is hardly working on it, including the visa free access for Central Asian countries who participates in the Silk Road project. The Silk Road Action Plan 2016/2017 a comprehensive overview of UNWTO's strategies and initiatives designed to help Silk Road tourism grow more robust, competitive and sustainable is being researched. It can become one of the tools that will push further the development of Silk Road

Key words: Kazakhstan, Tourism, Silk Road, Policy, Central Asia

Есенов М.Н., Бейсахмет А.А., Калимбетов Е.А., Артемьев А.А.
Әл-Фараби атындағы Қазақ ұлттық университеті, Қазақстан, Алматы қ.,
e-mail: meirzhan.yessenov@gmail.com

Ұлы Жібек Жолындағы Қазақстан туризмінің мүмкіндіктері

Қазақстан – Орталық Азияда орналасқан үлкен мемлекет. Ұлы Жібек Жолы Қазақстанның басым бөлігін алып жатқаны үшін туристер бұл мемлекетке назарларын аударуы тиіс. Бүгінгі таңда тарих қайталануда және де Қазақстан жергілікті және халықаралық туристер үшін есіктері айқара ашпақ. Астана бұл мәселені қарастыра отырып 10 миллион доллар қаржы инвестиция салуға дайын, оның 6 миллионы жеке инвесторлардан келіп, 2020 жылға дейін туризм секторын дамытуға көмектеседі деген үмітте. Ғасырлар бойы, әр түрлі тілде сөйлейтін адамдар, Азия базарларын толтыратын, ал үлкен керуендер шаңды жол бойында, асыл тастар және жібек, дәмдеуіштер және бояғыштар, алтын мен күміс, сондай-ақ Еуропадағы экзотикалық құстар мен жануарларды тасымалдауға ұмтылды. Алайда, Жібек жолы тек қана тамаша сауда бағыты ғана емес, сонымен қатар екі түрлі өркениеттер ошағына айналуына тиіс болатын; Шығыс пен Батыс, олардың мәдени дәстүрлері, діни нанымдары және ғылыми-техникалық жетістіктері арқылы. Шығысында Қытай мен Индия арасында орналасқан, батысында еуропалық әлеммен шекаралас болған, Еділ бойы мен Сібір арасында, оңтүстігінде Персия мен Арабия арасында орналсаң Орталық Азия, екі мың жылға жуық өркениет пен мәдениеттердің тоғысқан жерінде тұрды.

Қазақстан туризм шенеуніктері халықаралық туристерді тартуға ынталы екенін білдіруде. Алайда, туризмді жоспарлау бағытталған мемлекеттерден туристерді қызықтыру үшін ақшадан басқа да нәрселерді де қажет етеді. Күрделі виза мен тіркелу процестері осындай қиындықтардың бірі және де олар шешілу үстінде. Қазақстан бұл мәселе бойынша үлкен жұмыстар жүргізіп жатыр және де барлық Жібек Жолы жобасына қатысатын Орталық Азия мемлекеттеріне визасыз кіруге рұқсатты ұйымдастыруға атсалысып жатыр. 2016-2017 Жібек жолы жоспары – Ұлы Жібек жолының туризмінің өсуі мен бәсекеге қабілеттілігі үшін жасалған БҰҰ ДТҰ-ның стратегиясы мен бастамасы зерттеудің негізгі міндеттерінің бірі болып табылады.

Түйін сөздер: Қазақстан, Туризм, Жібек Жолы, Саясат, Орталық Азия.

Есенов М.Н., Бейсахмет А.А., Калимбетов Е.А., Артемьев А.А.

Казахский национальный университет имени аль-Фараби, Казахстан, г. Алматы
e-mail: meirzhan.yessenov@gmail.com

Возможности для туризма Казахстана на Великом Шелковом пути

Казахстан – крупное государство в Центральной Азии. Великий Шелковый путь является одной из важных причин для посещения Казахстана, так как он занимал большую часть маршрута. Сегодня, история возраждается и Казахстан хочет стать привлекательным направлением для местных и международных туристов. Астана планирует инвестировать 10 миллионов долларов, 6 миллионов из которых пойдут от частных инвестиций на развитие туризма, и надеется, что это поможет развить сектор туризма к 2020 году. На протяжении веков толпы людей, говорящих на разных языках, наполняли базары Азии, а длинные караваны пробирались по пыльным дорогам, несущим драгоценные камни и шелк, специи и красители, золото и серебро, а также экзотических птиц и животных в Европу. Однако Шелковый путь должен был стать не только прекрасным торговым маршрутом, но и плавильным котлом двух разных цивилизаций; Востока и Запада, с их конкретными культурными традициями, религиозными убеждениями и научно-техническими достижениями. Центральная Азия, расположенная между Китаем и Индией на востоке, граничащая с европейским миром на западе, распространяющаяся между Волгой и Сибирью на севере, а также между Персией и Аравией на юге, почти две тысячи лет стояла на перекрестке великих цивилизаций и культуры в мире.

Представители туризма Казахстана выразили свое желание по привлечению большего количества зарубежных туристов. Но туристское планирование включает в себя и другие аспекты, помимо денежных вложений для привлечения туристов из целевых стран. Сложные процессы виз и регулирования являются одними из адресованных сложностей. Казахстан вкладывает все силы для решения данных проблем, включая безвизовый режим для всех стран участниц Центральной Азии в проекте Шелковый Путь. План действий Шелкового пути 2016/2017 – стратегия и инициатива ВТО ООН, сформулированные для роста и конкурентоспособности туризма Шелкового Пути, является одним из главных объектов исследования.

Ключевые слова: Казахстан, туризм, Шелковый Путь, политика, Центральная Азия.

Introduction

The diversity of attractions are collected in the Kazakhstan land of nomads, including picturesque lakes and mountains, hot-mineral springs, and archeological wonders. It is a paradise for adventurous tourists, where they can try their skills at alpine slopes and harsh deserts, live as a nomad on the steppes, or visit former labor camps and nuclear test sites. Urban life can be find in the capital, Astana, and the country's business capital, Almaty, where tourists who prefer big cities and buildings will find something they like.

New hotels are being built and ski resorts are being renovated, and it gives Kazakhstan the opportunity to double the number of tourists to 8 million a year by 2020. Off course, there are several

problems that Kazakhstan still has on its way to become the world's premier tourist destination. The country's target market for now is domestic tourists and visitors from former Soviet countries, primarily Russia and Central Asian states.

Kazakhstan's tourism officials have expressed their desire to attract more international travelers. However, tourism planning needs something more than just money to attract tourists from targeted countries.

A complicated visa and registration process is one obstacle already being addressed. Kazakhstan is hardly working on it, including the visa free access for Central Asian countries who participates in the Silk Road project. Kazakhstan introduced temporary visa-free entry for citizens of 10 countries, including the United States, Britain, Japan, the U.A.E., Germany, and Malaysia. This action allows travelers from the

selected states to enter and exit Kazakhstan multiple times, and stay for periods of up to 15 days, until July 15, 2015. According to Kazakh media, Astana next plans to drop visa requirements for 48 countries, mostly developed nations, by the end of the year.

Information review and research methods

Overview of Area

Kazakhstan is one of only two landlocked countries in the world that lies on two continents (the other is Azerbaijan).

With an area of 2,700,000 square kilometres (1,000,000 sq mi) – equal to size to Western Europe – Kazakhstan is the ninth-largest country in the world. During the Soviet Union time, Kazakhstan lost some of its territory to Uzbekistan and Russia. Kazakhstan has borders of 6,846 kilometres (4,254 mi) with Russia, 2,203 kilometres (1,369 mi) with Uzbekistan, 1,533 kilometres (953 mi) with China, 1,051 kilometres (653 mi) with Kyrgyzstan, and 379 kilometres (235 mi) with Turkmenistan. Major cities include Astana, Almaty, Karagandy, Shymkent, Atyrau and Oskemen. While located primarily in Asia, a small portion of Kazakhstan is also part of Eastern Europe (www.rferl.org). Kazakhstan's terrain extends west to east from the Caspian Sea to the Altay Mountains and north to south from the plains of Western Siberia to the oases and deserts of Central Asia. The Kazakh Steppe (plain) land occupies 30% of country's land and has a size of. Grasslands and sandy regions are the main characteristics of the steppes. Major seas, lakes and rivers include the Aral Sea, Lake Balkhash and Lake Zaysan, the Charyn River and gorge and the Ili, Irtysh, Ishim, Ural and Syr Darya rivers. The climate is continental, with warm summers and colder winters. Precipitation varies between arid and semi-arid conditions (www.webcitation.org).

Economy

Kazakhstan has the largest and strongest performing economy in Central Asia. Supported by rising oil output and prices, Kazakhstan's economy grew at an average of 8% per year over the past decade (www.state.gov, www.nac.gov.kz).

One of the best policies of Kazakhstan is to keep peace and stability. The government has continued to follow a conservative fiscal policy by controlling budget spending and accumulating oil revenue savings in its Oil Fund – Samruk-Kazyna. However, Kazakhstan's public borrowing increased to support the economy due to the global financial crisis. Public debt increased to 13.4 per cent in 2013 from 8.7 per

cent in 2008 (www.ft.com, www.kazakhembus.com).

The banking system of Kazakhstan is developing rapidly and the system's capitalization now exceeds \$1 billion. Deposit insurance was introduced by The National Bank in its campaign to make banking sector more strong and competitive. However, non-performing bad assets that are present in the bank sector can harm the stability of the system. Several major foreign banks have branches in Kazakhstan, including RBS, Citibank, and HSBC.

According to the 2010–11 World Economic Forum in Global Competitiveness Report, Kazakhstan was ranked 72nd in the world in economic competitiveness (Hawkins, D., www.Kazakh-tv.kz). One year later, the Global Competitiveness Report ranked Kazakhstan 50th in most competitive markets (Winter T., www.EY.com).

Demography

Population – 17 million people.

Men and women make up 48.3% and 51.7% of the population, respectively.

The ethnic Kazakhs represent 63.1% of the population ethnic Russians 23.7%, with a rich array of other groups represented, including

Tatars (1.3%),

Ukrainians (2.1%),

Uzbeks (2.8%),

Belarusians, Uyghurs (1.4%),

Germans (1.1%) (Republic of Kazakhstan Statistical Agency).

(Germans who had previously settled in Russia, especially Volga Germans), Ukrainians, Koreans, Chechens, Meskhetian Turks, and Russian political opponents of the regime had been deported to Kazakhstan in the 1930s and 1940s by Stalin; some of the bigger Soviet labour camps (Gulag) existed in the country which are now one of the attractions for dark tourism, and has very rich history of all nationalities who suffered together (www.news.bbc.co.uk).

The 1990s were marked by the emigration of many of the country's Russians and Volga Germans, a process that began in the 1970s. This has made indigenous Kazakhs the largest ethnic group. Additional factors in the increase in the Kazakh population are higher birthrates and immigration of ethnic Kazakhs from China, Mongolia, and Russia.

Transportation

Travel around Kazakhstan

Considering the main types of transport, We have divided them in to bullet points

Plane

Every regional centre of Kazakhstan and big towns have airports, where republican as well as regional air companies operate.

Flight tickets can be bought from this website (please use links below this article) and via travel agencies in Kazakhstan.

On a train

Train is a popular transport among Kazakhstan people, mainly because of relatively cheap ticket prices.

Also, train communication is more developed and unlike using a plane, even small towns can be reached using trains rather than planes.

However, since Kazakhstan has a vast territory, a trip from one region to another might take up to 10-20 hours, which is a little inconvenience of using trains in a travel around Kazakhstan.

On a bus

Bus is also a popular transport to travel around Kazakhstan, using which one can reach any point of the country. Information on bus routes and prices can be obtained at local bus stations.

On a car

Travel on a car is probably the most flexible and convenient transport to explore Kazakhstan.

Special intercity and interregional taxi can be ordered or travellers might choose to use their own vehicles.

Automobile road map shows the directions and roads to take in order to reach your destination.

Public transport in cities

Main types of public transports in Kazakhstan are buses and minibuses. Trams and trolleybuses function in some cities. Tickets are usually bought from a conductor (ticket seller and checker) in a bus. Almaty city has an underground (subway) as well (www.visitkazakhstan.kz, www.astanatimes.com, Oki, T., Kawate, K. and Toyama, A., www.primeminister.kz).

Several obstacles and problems to develop tourism

Despite the cash infusion, Kazakhstan is not yet built for tourism. There is a shortage of modern facilities and air routes within the country. Another issue is bad roads and bad service quality. Some of the hotels do not have enough services for customers, and it is a painful issue.

It is not a positive impact that will give Kazakhstan to develop, it may destroy the international visitation. If the authorities don't address the "most basic issues" in the tourism

business, the inbound tourism will stuck at the same level of development.

While the benefits of attracting tourists are obvious, Kazakhstan also risks to lose its own domestic tourists out of the market. The number of domestic visitors to Kazakh tourist destinations has fallen in recent years, in part because high prices for food, airfares, and accommodation at home make foreign destinations more appealing.

Kazakhs today spend about \$400 million annually on vacations abroad, while the number of domestic visitors and their spending are dropping year by year (www.rferl.com, Iskakov N. A).

The direct contribution of Travel & Tourism to GDP in 2013 was KZT533.2bn (1.6% of GDP). This is forecast to rise by 4.7% to KZT558.2bn in 2014. This can show the activity of industries such as hotels, travel agents, airlines and other passenger transportation services (excluding commuter services). In addition, it also includes the activities of the restaurant and leisure industries that tourists can support by their direct spending during the trip. The percentage of Travel & Tourism direct contribution to GDP is expected to grow by 5.0% to KZT911.2bn (1.5% of GDP) by 2024. The low number is understandable because there was reduction in government system of management. As a result, the Ministry of Tourism and Sports was shut down, and the functions of the abolished ministry are taken over by the Department of Tourism at Kazakhstan's newly revised Ministry of Investment and Development. These actions were done in order to modernize and improve the efficiency of the public administration system and to optimize the government machine

The total contribution of Travel & Tourism to GDP (including wider effects from investment, the supply chain and induced income impacts) was KZT1,748.0bn in 2013 (5.3% of GDP) and is expected to grow by 3.9% to KZT1,816.1bn (5.2% of GDP) in 2014. It is forecast to rise by 4.8% pa to KZT2,914.5bn by 2024 (4.8% of GDP).

137,500 jobs were created directly by Travel & Tourism industry in Kazakhstan in 2013 (1.6% of total employment) and this is forecast to grow by 2.2% in 2014 to 140,500 (1.6% of total employment). This includes employment by hotels, travel agents, airlines and other passenger transportation services (excluding commuter services). It also includes, for example, the activities of the restaurant and leisure industries directly supported by tourists. By 2024, Travel & Tourism will account for 198,000 jobs directly, an increase of 3.5% pa over the next ten years.

One of the key components for the direct contribution of Travel & Tourism is visitor exports.

KZT257.3bn of visitor exports was generated in Kazakhstan in 2013. In 2014, there is a forecast that is going to fall by 0.5%, and the country will be able to welcome around 6,069,000 international tourist arrivals. By 2024, there is a prediction that international tourist arrivals will reach 8,411,000, generating expenditure of KZT355.2bn, an increase of 3.3%.

When it comes to investments, Travel & Tourism industry have attracted capital investment of KZT370.8bn in 2013. As it was told before, investment is one of the most important strategies and policies of Kazakhstan. As a result, this is expected to rise by 2.8% in 2014, and rise by 5.7% over the next ten years to KZT661.0bn in 2024. Travel & Tourism's share of total national investment will rise from 5.0% in 2014 to 5.2% in 2024 (Travel and tourism economic impact 2014 Kazakhstan, www.economist.com)

Tourism is a priority area in Kazakhstan. The main purpose of the development of tourism in Kazakhstan is to create a modern, highly effective and competitive tourist complex, which will provide all the necessary conditions for the development of the industry as a sector of the economy, integration into the global tourism market and development of further international cooperation in the field of tourism, the inflow of investments into the country.

Tourism as a sector of the national economy produces the product, which has to correspond to the market categories of demand and supply. In this case, it is important to understand the difference between the international market, oriented to travelers from abroad that have different expectations and domestic market, intended for local communities of Kazakhstan.

International tourism market today is a giant mechanism of multibillion dollars transactions and fierce competitive struggle. Therefore, the priority goal is to determine the tourism product that has unique features that belongs only to Kazakhstan, but it also have to drive the demand around the world. After this it will be easier to understand which segments of the tourism industry are better suitable for Kazakhstan.

Based on the analysis with account of recommendations of the WTO and existing experience, there are two basic components of Kazakhstan's tourist product: Cultural Tourism on the Silk Road (pilgrimages and traditional) and closely related to it - eco-adventure tourism (safari, rafting, ornithological, tracking, mountaineering, hunting, fishing). Therefore, it's necessary to point out the regions provided with resources for eco-adventure

tourism, through which the Silk Road route passes: Almaty, Zhambyl, South Kazakhstan, East Kazakhstan and Akmola regions (Baipakov, K. M.).

Thus, Kazakhstan's tourism product can be effectively introduced in the market only as part of integrated Central Asian tourism product, which suggests the following:

- Institutional elements of tourism products should be agreed at the intergovernmental level;
- Kazakhstan's tourism product must not concede (at least in the price/quality ratio) to tourism products of neighbors in the region (www.economist.com).

Results and Discussion

There are several facts that show that Kazakhstan is still not very attractive for foreign tourists. It was discussed earlier in this paper and the main reasons were transportation, bad service and lack of infrastructure. The international experience shows that it is possible to become a competitive with many other successful countries worldwide, but the country has to create new form of integration where government, travel business and local citizens will unite into one force. In terms of affordability, services level is very low and the prices are very high to create a competitiveness in the world tourism market scale. The country couldn't create a good control over a guestroom stock. The highest guestroom stock is registered in Atyrau (49.8%) and Mangistau regions, while the lowest one is noted in North Kazakhstan (13.5%) and Almaty (13.1%) regions. The largest number of world-standard accommodation is concentrated in the important tourism centers – Almaty and Astana cities, but, even these cities have a stock out (54.1%) of 3* and 4* hotels.

In Kazakhstan, the international hotel brands are presented in small amounts and only exist in four business destinations: Astana, Almaty, Atyrau and Aktau. The room at a 5* hotel is several times more expensive than in the similar European hotels.

Poor hotel occupancy, lack of competitive environment and high dependence on business tourists cause the high accommodation prices. The current situation is a result of a low support for the sphere by the state government. The strategic plans that had been developed and accepted couldn't stimulate the development of tourism in the country and furthermore, none of the state tourism development programs has reached the required terms. Many laws adopted in this sphere are still remained only on paper without any practical application in the travel industry.

There are several major problems that keeps Kazakhstan's tourism from development:

No connection between market participants;

Legal and regulatory framework is very poor developed;

The extremely high prices for accommodation along with the quite low tourism.

The governmental support for tourism can help to develop the infrastructure, eliminate problems listed above and bring stability to the tourism business development. The main reason why government refuses to support the tourism sector is insufficient state taxation. In order to compete with the average European prices, country needs to make them cheaper, and it is necessary to apply the local tourist rent in Kazakhstan regions to be charged from the tourism companies through restructuring of other taxes. The collected funds can be invested in the development of tourism infrastructure projects and recreational facilities.

Local government or local community is not able to control the situation and solve the problems in tourism development. It requires more higher scale in national economy, and the importance of these factors must be delivered to the governmental authorities (ministers, heads of departments etc.) and the tourism operators in the global tourism system. The strict political decisions, overseeing these decisions and international cooperation between operators and agencies are required to achieve the stable tourism development.

Very comprehensive and diversified approach must be created and developed, which can be applied through the development of industry clustering. The attention to clusters and cluster policy has recently increased in the articles on tourism and hospitality. Their importance for the creation of long-term competitive advantages of areas focused on attraction of the tourist flows is highlighted.

The term "cluster" in the travel industry is used when we mean the concentration on some particular area of interrelated enterprise networks which are involved into the design, manufacture, promotion and sale of tourist products, including the enterprises operating in the related industries.

The implementation of tourism clusters can increase the region's global competitiveness through the synergy effect as a result of more efficient operation of the companies included in the cluster and to stimulate its innovation and investment activities. The region image and its industry positioning is affected positively by clusters.

The Republic of Kazakhstan has a wide resource

foundation, comfortable transport and geographic location, production facilities, labor and scientific staff to create the tourist clusters.

It is extremely important to create clusters, which is the task for the Kazakhstan travel and hospitality industry, as far as the "Concept of tourism development in Kazakhstan till 2020" published by the Government of Kazakhstan in February 2013 is based on the cluster concept.

The government highlighted several important types of tourism: business, cultural, active and adventure tourism. The visible effect from the project is planned to be seen in 4-6 years. Mountain and lake, beach tourism and short-term tours are part of the strategic services that will require vast investments.

It has been proven that any attempt to develop tourism without participation of local communities in the process, or just using them for certain types of job, will cause a negative impact on the development. In order to preserve the investments it is important to involve the local employees as active participants of the industry, and give them opportunity to be a part of decision making process and to decide in the preferable way of development for them. The political planning in tourism, its local planning and development must take the local citizens' interest into consideration the protection of cultural heritage. It's crucial to make local active communities involved in the process of management. If the local citizens entirely support the development of tourism, they should be considered to be professionally involved in the tourism business (Timothy, D., J. and Boyd, S. W., Laruelle, M.).

Investment flows to Kazakhstan can be activated by creating a partnership between the private sector and governmental authorities, which should pay attention to the land tenure, access to infrastructure and state support procedures which is the most important point. The private companies will also have an opportunity to participate in any stage of the projects. The return investment model will be offered to the private sector representative, which will return back the money investment by the state through selling the adapted land and recreation zone management services (Bulda E.A., Timothy, D., J.).

The Silk Road Action Plan 2014/2015 is a comprehensive overview of UNWTO's strategies and initiatives designed to help Silk Road tourism grow more robust, competitive and sustainable. The Action Plan aims to foster collaboration between stakeholders to stimulate investment and poverty reduction along the Silk Road, while safeguarding its cultural and environmental resources.

The Silk Road Member States are in a unique position to leverage from each other by collaborating in a number of areas such as marketing, product development, tourism route development, travel facilitation and cross border initiatives. The Silk Road Action Plan 2016/2017 is designed as a platform to facilitate this.

Member States participating in the UNWTO Silk Road Programme include: Albania, Armenia, Azerbaijan, Bangladesh, Bulgaria, China, Croatia, DPR Korea, Rep. Korea, Egypt, Georgia, Greece, Iran, Iraq, Israel, Italy, Indonesia, Japan, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Mongolia, Pakistan, Russia, Saudi Arabia, San Marino, Syria, Tajikistan, Turkey, Turkmenistan, Ukraine and Uzbekistan.

By having a common unique cultural heritage, the countries that has a connection with silk road create very extra-ordinary network of destinations, and get the big opportunities for collaborative marketing and promotional initiatives. During many years, UNWTO tried to emphasize the important potential of the Silk Road and has collaborated with major international travel fairs on numerous promotional activities. ITB Berlin is the established meeting place for Silk Road Ministers, and they meet every year to address key challenges and opportunities for cooperation. Silk Road events being held on an annual basis within the context of WTM's Social Media Mart increases a social media activity. Bloggers that have created outstanding blogs, have been sent across the Silk Road to promote its multiple attractions. UNWTO recognizes the importance of market intelligence as key to developing effective marketing and promotion campaigns. Market research conducted in 2011, showed the prominence of the Silk Road as the world's most discussed travel route online, from a total of 300,000 blogs and social media sites reviewed, 26.5% of all discussions focused on the Silk Road. In order to increase popularity and bring a significant importance to the Silk Road, UNWTO has invited major institutions to its meetings, such as UNESCO, World Bank, UNCTAD, ASEAN, ICOMOS, PATA and the Council of Europe. The goal for this kind of multi dimensional approach is to discuss important issues and get more opportunities from global collaboration.

Thousands of delegates received and opportunity to gain knowledge and expertise by participating in UNWTO Silk Road conferences and seminars since the Silk Road Programme was launched in 2010. Topics have ranged from city tourism, urban development and destination marketing to heritage management, food tourism, investment, travel

facilitation and product development. UNWTO Silk Road conferences, seminars and press trips have taken place in Samarkand (Uzbekistan), Tokyo (Japan), Baku (Azerbaijan), Dunhuang (China), Lausanne (Switzerland), Almaty (Kazakhstan), Berlin (Germany), London (United Kingdom), Altai Krai (Russian Federation) and Shiraz (Islamic Republic of Iran).

UNWTO, in close collaboration with UNESCO, has also run a series of capacity building workshops aimed at building closer collaboration between heritage and tourism stakeholders along the Silk Road. In 2013, following years of ground-breaking research by UNESCO, ICOMOS and University College London (UCL) on sites and routes of the Silk Road, the UNESCO/UNWTO Silk Road Heritage Corridors Tourism Strategy Project was launched as part of the transnational Silk Roads World Heritage Serial Nomination initiative (Satke, R. and Galdini, F.).

After great collaboration between 15 countries, UNESCO received two World Heritage Nominations for the Silk Roads Heritage Corridors in Central Asia and China with the final evaluation of the nominations due to take place in 2014. The nominations focus on two specific Silk Road Heritage Corridors: the first crossing Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, and China, and the other between Tajikistan and Uzbekistan.

Travel facilitation require a large number of factors to consider:

- abolishing or liberalizing visas; improving border procedures;
- abolishing or minimizing taxation on travel and air transport liberalization.

Visa policies are among the most important governmental formalities influencing international tourism.

The development of visa policies and procedures, as well as other important travel documents, such as passports, is closely linked to the growth of tourism.

During 2012/2013 UNWTO Silk Road meetings travel facilitation was a key component in all discussions. The reason for that is to create more favorable conditions to travel before it gains its popularity. Specialists and countries that have advanced in visa facilitation and air transport liberalization were able to share their best practices and positive results with Member States, thereby encouraging them to facilitate travel across the region. The UNWTO Secretary-General lobbied governments at the highest level during his discussions with heads of state to improve visa policies, while emphasizing the positive impacts in terms of economic growth and job creation

(Zhidkoblinova, O. V., UNWTO, Silk Road Action Plan 2014/2015, UNWTO Annual Report 2016, UNWTO, Silk Road Action Plan 2016/2017).

Conclusion

Tourism is a priority area in Kazakhstan. The government focuses on paying more attention to tourism in order to create multi industrial country, and eliminate the dependency on oil industry. 137,500 jobs were created directly by Travel & Tourism industry in Kazakhstan in 2013 (1.6% of total employment) and this is forecast to grow by 2.2% in 2014 to 140,500 (1.6% of total employment). The main purpose of the development of tourism in Kazakhstan is to create a modern, highly effective and competitive tourist complex, which will provide all the necessary conditions for the development of the industry as a sector of the economy, integration

into the global tourism market and development of further international cooperation in the field of tourism, the inflow of investments into the country.

Kazakhstan historically was a key player on the Silk Road, connecting East and West from ancient times. Being a part of great history gives Kazakhstan an opportunity to develop its tourism industry based on the Silk Road cultural heritage. Kazakhstan's tourism product can be effectively introduced in the market as part of integrated Central Asian tourism product. Several projects and routes are already in the action. However, the country is still working and negotiating with its neighbor countries on solving visa problems and border procedures. Despite a large number of problems, Kazakhstan has a great potential for cultural tourism development among the Silk Road and bright future for inbound tourism.

References

- 1 Can Kazakhstan Become A Top Tourist Destination?, <http://www.rferl.org/>
- 2 Kazakhstan – MSN Encarta. Archived from the original on 31 October 2009. <http://www.webcitation.org/>
- 3 Kazakhstan profile. <https://www.state.gov>. US State Department.
- 4 Kazakhstan unveils \$21bn rescue package. Financial Times. <https://www.ft.com>
- 5 Kazakh TV – Kazakhstan enters top 50 most competitive countries”. <https://www.Kazakh-tv.kz>. 6 September 2013. Retrieved 9 September 2013.
- 6 Kazakhstan attractiveness survey 2013. <https://www.EY.com>
- 7 Republic of Kazakhstan Statistical Agency. Archived from the original (PDF) on 23 July 2011. Retrieved 10 December 2010.
- 8 Greenall, Robert (23 November 2005). “Russians left behind in Central Asia”. BBC News. <https://www.news.bbc.co.uk> Retrieved 9 September 2013.
- 9 Travel around Kazakhstan, <http://www.visitkazakhstan.kz> 20 may 2013.
- 10 Can Kazakhstan Become A Top Tourist Destination?, <http://www.rferl.org/>
- 11 Travel and tourism economic impact 2014 Kazakhstan. The Authority on World Travel & Tourism, London, UK
- 12 Kazakhstan: the crossroads of the new Silk Road, <https://www.economist.com/news/asia/21724435-worlds-biggest-land-locked-country-open-business-only-half-ready-it-kazakhstan>
- 13 Bulda E.A., “Kazakhstan’s tourism product and its potential in the current conditions”, <http://www.rusnauka.com>
- 14 Zhidkoblinova, O. V., “State Policy of Tourism Industry Development in the Republic of Kazakhstan”. 2013, IDOSI Publications
- 15 UNWTO, Silk Road Action Plan 2014/2015
- 16 UNWTO Annual Report 2016
- 17 UNWTO, Silk Road Action Plan 2016/2017
- 18 Iskakov N. A., A R Medeu, N A Almaty. 2010. The Republic of Kazakhstan: A collective monograph. The Institute of Geography, 2: 284.
- 19 Official website of the JSC “National Analytical Center”. 2013. Analysis of the rating of Kazakhstan in the Travel and Tourism Competitiveness report 2013 of the World Economic Forum. <http://www.nac.gov.kz/news/analytics/320>
- 20 The Astana Times. 2013. Xi Jinping calls for regional cooperation via New Silk Road. <http://www.kazakhembus.com/sites/default/files/publications/The%20Astana%20Times%20of%2011%20September%202013.pdf>
- 21 The Official Website of the Prime Minister of the Republic of Kazakhstan Karim Massimov. 2013. Kazakhstan forms a network of internal logistics hubs and expand transit capacity. <http://www.primeminister.kz/program/event/view/3727>
- 22 Baipakov, K. M., (). Roza, Bektoureyeva (trans.), Medieval Cities of Kazakhstan on the Great Silk Road. Committee of Culture, Ministry of Culture of the Republic of Kazakhstan. No date
- 23 Time to create platform for international cooperation, one common, multi-lateral tourist product: Tourist Silk Road, <https://astanatimes.com/2017/08/time-to-create-platform-for-international-cooperation-one-common-multi-lateral-tourist-product-tourist-silk-road/>
- 24 Hawkins, D., E., 2004: Sustainable tourism competitiveness clusters: application to World Heritage sites network development in Indonesia. In: Asia Pacific Journal of Tourism Research, Volume 9, Issue 3, pp. 293-307. DOI: <http://dx.doi.org/10.1080/1094166042000290682>

- 25 Winter, T., 2009: The modernities of heritage and tourism: interpretations of an Asian future. In: *Journal of Heritage Tourism*, Volume 4, Issue 2, pp. 105-115. DOI: <http://dx.doi.org/10.1080/17438730802366490>
- 26 Timothy, D., J., 2014: Contemporary Cultural Heritage and Tourism: Development Issues and Emerging Trends. In: *Public Archaeology*, Volume 13, Issue 1-3, pp. 30-47. DOI: <http://dx.doi.org/10.1179/1465518714Z.00000000052>
- 27 Oki, T., Kawate, K. and Toyama, A., 1997: Asia's economic development and the role of transport, telecommunications and tourism. In: *Transport Reviews*, Volume 17, Issue 4, pp. 311-353. DOI: <http://dx.doi.org/10.1080/01441649708716990>
- 28 Timothy, D., J. and Boyd, S., W., 2006: Heritage Tourism in the 21st Century: Valued Traditions and New Perspectives. In: *Journal of Heritage Tourism*, Volume 1, Issue 1, pp. 1-16. DOI: <http://dx.doi.org/10.1080/17438730608668462>
- 29 Satke, R. and Galdini, F., 2015: Between East and West: Kazakhstan and China's new Silk Road. In: *Revista cidob d afers internacionals*, Barcelona, №110, pp. 87-112.
- 30 Laruelle, M., 2015: Envisioning a region. The US "Silk Road" as an object of academic enquiry. In: *Eurasian geography and economics*, Oxfordshire, T.56, №4, pp. 357-359.