

PROBLEMS AND PERSPECTIVES OF DOMESTIC TOURISM IN KAZAKHSTAN (BY THE EXAMPLE OF CHYMBULAK SKI RESORT)

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Given paper deals with the problems and perspectives of the development of domestic tourism in Kazakhstan by the example of Chymbulak Ski Resort.

One of the fastest growing areas of the world economy is a tourism. According to the World Tourism Organization (UNWTO) and the IMF, its contribution is estimated at 3.5 trillion dollars, which is equivalent to 10.9 % of world gross domestic product (GDP) and 7% of world investment. Since 2000, the tourism industry ranks first in the world exports of goods and services, ahead of the automotive, chemical, food and electronic industries, up to 45 % of the exports of the least developed countries and produces more than 75 million jobs worldwide, i.e. every 12th working place.

Kazakhstan is a vast country in the heart of Eurasia, where the blue sky merged into a unique harmony of East and West. Kazakhstan is a unique nature which paradoxically combines deep rivers, lakes with the scorching deserts and singing sands, proud peaks of mountain ranges with divine green oasis, an ancient culture that goes back to immemorial pagan times.

Kazakhstan, with a rich tourist and recreational potential, is characterized by underdevelopment of tourism. Its share in the gross domestic product is about 0.3%. In 2011, revenue from tourism activities amounted to 145.3 billion tenge, which is 2 times higher than in 2008 (77.6 billion). The amount of taxes paid to the budget of the Republic is \$20.6 billion. The number of people employed in tourism industry was 158 700 people.

In January-September 2012, revenue from tourism activities amounted to 91.8 billion tenge, which is 11.5 % more than in January-September 2011 (82.3 billion). The number of people employed in tourism organizations amounted to 26,940 people [1].

Tourism potential of recreational resources and historical and cultural heritage of the country allows to integrate into the international tourism market and to achieve rapid development of tourism in the country.

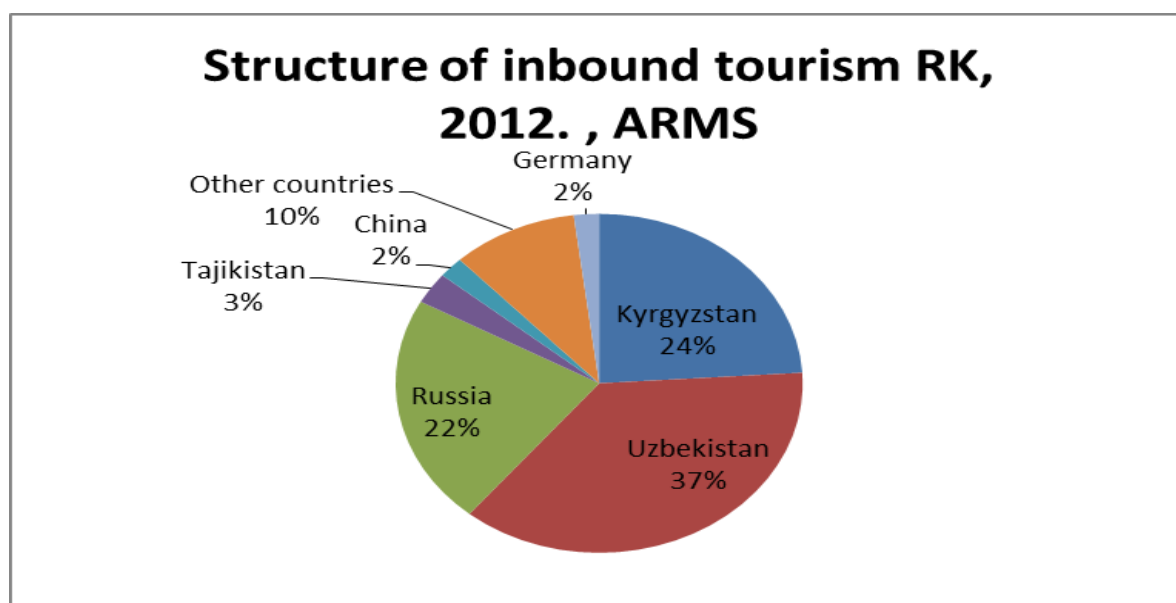


Diagram 1. Structure of inbound tourism in Kazakhstan, 2012.

During the first 9 months of 2012: inbound tourism in Kazakhstan amounted to 4 219 600.0 people, outbound tourism amounted to 6 732 700.0 people.

One of the most attractive resources for CIS countries tourists are Kazakh Mountains and Ski bases in Almaty and East Kazakhstan regions. There are 5 ski resorts (Chymbulak, Almaty, Tabagan, CSKA), 2 ski resorts (Emerald Altai, Altai Alps) in East Kazakhstan.

We examined the "Chymbulak" Ski Resort as one aspect of domestic tourism industry of Kazakhstan.

"Chymbulak" Ski Resort is located in the gorge of Zailiyskiy Alatau at an altitude of 2,260 m above sea level, 25 km from the center of Almaty. The average summer temperature is +20 °C and - 7 °C in winter. Average snow depth is up to 150 cm, the number of sunny days per year is up to 90%. The period of snow cover is November to May.

The ski slopes are serviced by two twin-chairlifts, one-chairlift and chair-lift cableways and free tow lift. Since 2003, four-seat roads came into operation, which opened a new region for fans of extreme skiing. Lifts raise you from an altitude of 2,260 m above sea level to Talgar pass (3163m), elevation is 903 m. Trails are prepared by three snowgroomers. Lifts raise to the height of 3163 meters above sea level.

Business card of Chymbulak is a variety of routes, including soft and gentle slopes for beginners, long runs for advanced skiers, FIS downhill trails, and wild valleys with pristine snow and a halfpipe for snowboarders, extreme bends for the professionals, a special track for moguls.

There are new routes in Chymbulak every year. Ski slopes of Chymbulak are certified by International Ski Federation (FIS). Downhill skiing and gigantic slalom are rightfully among the top ten most difficult trails in the world.

Resort characteristics:

- The length of the plateau - 3800 meters;
- Width - 100 to 600 meters;
- Elevation - 943 m;
- Skiing Area - 2260 - 3163 m;
- The average slope - 12-28 degrees;
- The maximum inclination of the slope - 45 degrees;
- The total area of skiing - 99 acres [2].

We ourselves visited Chymbulak Ski Resort, and tried to find out more about it. In ski resort there are Shymbulak Resort hotel and several restaurants, cafes (Shed bar, Assort, Marrone Rosse, etc.) which are close to the skiing area.

It turned out that the cost of living, food in these restaurants is high enough for Kazakhstan people. This applies not only Chymbulak Ski Resort.

Prices of hotel rooms on weekdays are shown in the table 1. And, certainly, these figures vary on weekends and holidays, that is expensive.

Table 1. *Prices of hotel rooms in Chymbulak Resort on weekdays*

<i>Description</i>	<i>Weekdays 20% off (tenge, rubles, dollars)</i>	<i>Weekdays three days - 30% off (tenge, rubles, dollars)</i>	<i>Weekdays four days -35% off (tenge, rubles, dollars)</i>	<i>Weekdays five days - 40 % off (tenge, rubles, dollars)</i>	<i>Accommodation costs for 7 days (tenge, rubles, dollars)</i>
Standard	16 000 3 400 110	42 000 8 800 290	52 000 10 800 360	60 000 12500 415	96 000 20 000 665
Junior	24 000 5000 165	63 000 13100 435	78 000 16200 540	90 000 18 700 630	144 000 30 000 995

Family Room	32 000 6650 220	84 000 17500 580	104 000 21600 720	120 000 25 000 830	192 000 40 000 1325
Family Junior Suite	40 000 8 300 280	105 000 21800 730	130 000 27 000 900	150 000 31 150 1050	240 000 49 800 1 660
Suite	44 000 9 200 310	115 500 24 000 800	143 000 30 000 990	165 000 34 300 1 150	264 000 54 800 1 850
Super Deluxe	80 000 16 600 555	210 000 43 600 1500	260 000 53950 1800	300 000 62 300 2 100	480 000 99 600 3 350

If we consider all the tourist facilities in Almaty region, the vacation in Almaty region for local residents with the average salary is expensive. For example, "Home Club" Recreation Area is functioning in the outskirts of the Kaskelen city, the average rent cottages for half a day without the additional service costs 30 thousand tenges, and 50 thousand tenges for one day.

One day stay including additional services for five people costs 80 thousand tenges. If you have \$ 1,000 you can buy a full-week travel package in resorts in Turkey, the United Arab Emirates with a good service level. Travel package includes visa, travel, accommodation and meals. For residents of Almaty region average one-week vacation costs 110 thousand tenges without spending a visa and flights.

In "Chymbulak" Ski Resort two-way gondola road costs 2,500 tenges, ski rentals cost 2000 tenges, a day ticket 7000 tenges. Prices for food in the cafe is different, the most expensive dish (appetizer) 5180 tenges and the most expensive strong drinks costs 22000 tenge [2].

These prices are acceptable for foreign tourists coming from Europe and Russia, as the exchange rates of foreign currencies like the euro, the dollar, the ruble in tenge have a great price. Basically, tourists from Russia come for a vacation in Chymbulak. And one of the reasons for this is a free entry of citizens of the Russian Federation into the territory of Kazakhstan. Kazakhstan is an exotic country for foreigners. According to many tourists, infrastructure does not play a major role for an unforgettable vacation, but adventures, impressions and adrenaline got by tourists is important.

Prices for accommodation with a high level of hotel services is much higher than similar hotels in major tourist destinations in the world. The cost of rooms in international branded 5 star hotels in the cities of Astana and Almaty are 2-3 times higher than in Europe.

Prices for services in other places of accommodation - guest houses, tourist centers, shelters, campsites, hostels for visitors and others - are much lower.

High prices associated with a sufficiently low occupancy placements, the poor competitive environment and the lack of a strong dependence on the business travelers. Proposed tourism services, including hotel, are provided with limited service.

It should be noted that the high price of accommodation and air tickets significantly increase the cost of the tour in Kazakhstan and, consequently, reduce its price competitiveness in the international market.

Kazakhstan has good prospects for the development of domestic tourism, but today tourism is a spontaneous and unorganized. With its uniqueness, Kazakhstan tourist product is not competitive enough and loses foreign counterparts on availability, price and service level of tourist services. The list of the main causes of poor development of domestic tourism in Kazakhstan:

- Poor infrastructure;
- Lack of staff;
- Incorrect pricing (high cost of services, the average wage of local residents etc. are not taken into account);
- Lack of proper advertisement of tourist attractivity of areas at national and international level;

- A weak government support and lack of interest by tour operators in the development of domestic tourism;
- Lack of interest in tourism among the residents themselves, many Kazakhs do not travel partly because they do not know where and how to visit.

Promising aspects of the development of tourism in Kazakhstan:

- Favorable and stable political environment;
- A rich cultural heritage, a huge number of historical, cultural and natural sites;
- The uniqueness and diversity of natural landscapes;
- Magnificent tourist and recreational resources.

State support of tourism is essential for sustainable development of the industry. International experience shows that active policies aimed at creating conditions for the development of tourism infrastructure to attract private investors, the formation of the legal and regulatory framework to ensure the favorable economic conditions for the activity of the subjects of the tourist industry, allow the tourism industry to occupy an important place in the socio-economic development of the country.

Also, international experience shows that the countries which are actively developing tourism, allocate the significant amount of budgetary funds for national projects and programs by providing its citizens with quality tourist services.

Currently, for reformation and development of the tourism industry in Kazakhstan, the government of Kazakhstan has developed and approved Tourism Development Program until 2020. The main objective of this program was the creation of a competitive tourism industry for employment, steady growth revenue of state and public by increasing the volume of inbound and domestic tourism.

Meanwhile, experts say that the tourism industry in Kazakhstan is gradually developing. In regions all necessary conditions for leisure tourism are being developed such as building hotels, health and leisure facilities, and improving service qualities.

In Kazakhstan it is planned to develop a labeling of attractions and directions to them. Tourist orientation system is planned to introduce in Almaty.

At first, in the major tourist centers in the country, a clear orientation system accessible to any tourists will be introduced. According to obtained information, the total budget for 2014, directed to Akimats of 16 regions of Kazakhstan, is more than 553 million tenge [3].

In conclusion, we can say that for development of tourism in Kazakhstan it is necessary to reconsider two important areas: the quality of tourism services and prices. We would also like to note that for the tourism industry to become highly profitable, it is necessary to consolidate the efforts of all stakeholders in the tourist market, public and private sectors as it was proven by world experience on development of tourism. It is needed to move from words to actions in tourism. To date, system plans to develop tourism in the regions and in the whole country is written. These tools provide solutions to all the problems that exist at the moment. Now, the main concern is that all these plans and projects started to work, and it should be carried out with a very good pace.

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