

¹Tleubayeva A.T.^a, ²Trusheva S.A., ¹Rsaldin Y.S.,
¹Siyeubayeva M.S., ¹Amrenova G.K.

¹L.N. Gumilyov Eurasian National University, Astana, Kazakhstan

²Toraighyrov University, Pavlodar, Kazakhstan

KAZAKHSTAN'S BUSINESS TOURISM PROSPECTS IN THE CONTEXT OF DIGITALIZATION

Tleubayeva Aitolkyn Tleubaykyzy, Trusheva Sharafat Aitmukhambetovna,
Rsaldin Yerlan Serikovich, Siyeubayeva Maral Serzhanovna, Amrenova Galiya Kapbarovna

Kazakhstan's business tourism prospects in the context of digitalization

Abstract. The demand for business tourism has grown alongside economic development and globalization. It plays a key role in fostering business, cultural, and scientific connections between regions and countries. International organizations such as the UN, UNWTO, ICCA, and MPI recognize its economic significance. Business tourism differs from traditional tourism in its seasonality, exclusivity, predictability, and need for specialized infrastructure. This study explores the digitalization of business tourism in Kazakhstan and its impact on organizing business events. It examines modern trends and digital tools that enhance planning and execution, including online platforms, mobile applications, and virtual reality. These technologies are reshaping corporate events, conferences, and exhibitions. The study highlights digitalization's benefits, such as improved accessibility, service quality, and cost reduction. It provides successful case studies and recommendations for implementing innovative solutions in business tourism for companies and government agencies. Additionally, the research addresses Kazakhstan's development priorities and challenges amid rapid global digitalization. By leveraging digital tools, Kazakhstan can strengthen its position in the business tourism sector, improve efficiency, and enhance its global competitiveness. The findings offer practical strategies for adapting to the evolving demands of the digital era.

Key words: business tourism, digitalization, digital technologies, business events, virtual platforms, MICE.

Тлеубаева Айтөлкын Тлеубайқызы, Трушева Шарафат Айтмұхамбетовна,
Рсалдин Ерлан Серикович, Сиеубаева Марал Сержановна, Амренова Галия Капбаровна
Цифрландыру жағдайындағы Қазақстанның іскерлік туризмінің келешегі

Аңдатпа. Іскерлік туризмге сұраныс экономикалық даму мен жаһанданумен қатар өсті. Ол аймақтар мен елдер арасындағы іскерлік, мәдени және ғылыми байланыстарды дамытуда маңызды рөл атқарады. БҰҰ, UNWTO (Біріккен Ұлттар Ұйымының Дүниежүзілік туристік ұйымы), ICCA (Халықаралық конгресстер мен конвенциялар қауымдастығы), MPI (Халықаралық кәсіби кездесулер қауымдастығы) сияқты халықаралық ұйымдар оның экономикалық маңыздылығын мойындайды. Іскерлік туризм дәстүрлі туризмнен маусымдылығымен, эксклюзивтілігімен, болжамдылығымен және арнайы инфрақұрылымды қажет етуімен ерекшеленеді. Бұл зерттеу Қазақстандағы іскерлік туризмді цифрландыруды және оның іскерлік іс-шараларды ұйымдастыруға өсерін зерттейді. Ол жоспарлау мен орындауды жақсартатын заманауи трендтер мен цифрлық құралдарды, соның ішінде онлайн платформаларды, мобильді қосымшаларды және виртуалды шындықты зерттейді. Бұл технологиялар корпоративтік іс-шараларды, конференцияларды және көрмелерді өзгертуде. Зерттеу қол жетімділікті жақсарту, қызмет көрсету сапасын жақсарту және шығындарды азайту сияқты цифрландырудың артықшылықтарын көрсетеді. Ол компаниялар мен мемлекеттік органдар үшін іскерлік туризмде инновациялық шешімдерді енгізу бойынша табысты мысалдарды және ұсыныстарды ұсынады. Бұған қоса, зерттеу жылдам жаһандық цифрландыру жағдайында Қазақстанның даму басымдықтары мен қиындықтарын қарастырады. Саңдық құралдарды пайдалана отырып, Қазақстан іскерлік туризм секторындағы позициясын нығайтып, тиімділікті арттырып, жаһандық бәсекеге қабілеттілігін арттыра алады. Зерттеудің нәтижесі цифрлық дәуірдің дамып келе жатқан талаптарына бейімделудің практикалық стратегияларын ұсынады.

Түйін сөздер: іскерлік туризм, цифрландыру, цифрлық технологиялар, бизнес іс-шаралар, виртуалды платформалар, MICE.

Тлеубаева Айтолкын Тлеубайкызы, Трушева Шарафат Айтмухамбетовна, Рсалдин Ерлан Серикович, Сиеубаева Марал Сержановна, Амренова Галия Капбаровна

Перспективы делового туризма Казахстана в условиях цифровизации

Аннотация. Спрос на деловой туризм вырос вместе с экономическим развитием и глобализацией. Он играет ключевую роль в развитии деловых, культурных и научных связей между регионами и странами. Международные организации, такие как Организация объединенных наций (UNO), Всемирная туристская организация ООН (UNWTO), Международная ассоциация конгрессов и съездов (ICCA), Международная ассоциация профессиональных встреч (MPI), признают его экономическую значимость. Деловой туризм отличается от традиционного туризма своей сезонностью, эксклюзивностью, предсказуемостью и потребностью в специализированной инфраструктуре. В этом исследовании изучается цифровизация делового туризма в Казахстане и ее влияние на организацию деловых мероприятий. В нем изучаются современные тенденции и цифровые инструменты, которые улучшают планирование и исполнение, включая онлайн-платформы, мобильные приложения и виртуальную реальность. Эти технологии меняют корпоративные мероприятия, конференции и выставки. В исследовании подчеркиваются преимущества цифровизации, такие как улучшение доступности, качества обслуживания и снижение затрат. В нем приводятся успешные примеры и рекомендации по внедрению инновационных решений в сфере делового туризма для компаний и государственных учреждений. Кроме того, в исследовании рассматриваются приоритеты и проблемы развития Казахстана в условиях быстрой глобальной цифровизации. Используя цифровые инструменты, Казахстан может укрепить свои позиции в секторе делового туризма, повысить эффективность и повысить свою глобальную конкурентоспособность. Результаты исследования предлагают практические стратегии адаптации к меняющимся требованиям цифровой эпохи.

Ключевые слова: деловой туризм, цифровизация, цифровые технологии, бизнес-мероприятия, виртуальные платформы, MICE.

Introduction. Business tourism is an effective tool for developing economic relations and integration processes. Due to its connection with many sectors of the economy, it possesses high cumulative potential and significantly impacts the sustainable socio-economic development of the region as a whole.

The development of business tourism positively influences regional economies in several ways: it contributes to economic growth, increases business turnover, supports small and medium-sized enterprises, creates new jobs, and increases tax revenues to the budget. It also attracts investments to the region's economy, improves the quality of life of residents, boosts the volume of business, cultural-cognitive, and sustainable tourism, and helps to create and promote the region's brand. Moreover, it promotes goods, services, research results, and educational services provided by enterprises, organizations, and institutions in domestic and international markets. Lastly, it strengthens international and interregional ties and establishes an infrastructure that meets the current development trends in business tourism.

Business tourism can actively assist in developing economic relations in all areas of culture between the regions of our country and foreign states, primarily neighboring countries. Additionally, it promotes the development and implementation of innovations, expands business connections, and serves as an effective tool for attracting foreign capital to Kazakhstan's economy.

The purpose of this study is to analyse the prospects of business tourism development in Kazakhstan in the context of digitalisation and to assess the im-

pact of modern digital tools on the organisation and efficiency of business events. To realise the goal, the following **objectives of the study** have been set:

- to examine the role of digitalisation in the transformation of business tourism, including the key trends and technologies shaping the industry;
- identify digital tools that enhance the efficiency of business event organisation, such as online platforms, mobile applications and virtual reality;
- evaluate the impact of digital transformation on the availability, quality and cost-effectiveness of business tourism services;
- to develop recommendations for companies and government agencies on the use of digital solutions to improve Kazakhstan's competitiveness in business tourism.

Despite the specific characteristics of each region, there are common requirements for business tourism: it should take place in regions with natural and cultural attractions or architectural uniqueness, and there should be modern infrastructure available [1]. The quality of the infrastructure is determined by the conditions of international organizations, governing bodies, and trade entities relevant to the region. The development of infrastructure should be based on public-private partnerships, utilizing modern technology and equipment when constructing business tourism facilities. Moreover, events should be comprehensive (with congresses, conferences, exhibitions, and seminars being focused on a single theme).

Kazakhstan's business tourism market is characterized by innovative and dynamic development as

well as spontaneous growth [2]. Due to the lack of concrete statistical data, it is impossible to qualitatively analyze the leading markets for business tourism in Kazakhstan. However, even the available data allows us to conclude the significance of the business tourism market's potential in our country. This sector is developing in the major cities of our country - Astana and Almaty - due, first, to the presence of the necessary infrastructure for business tourism, and second, to the availability of transportation. The financial capabilities in these regions also play an important role in supporting and developing this type of tourism. Additionally, traditional tourist centers in the regions are actively being developed, which, without a doubt, is linked to the economic growth outside of metropolitan areas.

Thus, in recent years, Kazakhstan has been increasingly taking a significant position in the global business tourism market. Considering the country's strategic location at the crossroads of important trade routes, as well as the active government policy on attracting foreign investments and promoting entrepreneurship, it is evident that business tourism in Kazakhstan holds particular importance. Digitalization, in turn, is enhancing this sector with new opportunities and standards by introducing modern technologies for organizing business events.

The transition to digital technologies not only optimizes the processes of planning and conducting business events but also significantly alters the ways participants interact. Online participation platforms, mobile applications, and project management tools are becoming integral parts of business tourism, allowing organizers to create flexible and responsive event formats. Kazakhstan, which aligns with this digital transformation, has the potential not only to attract international events but also to realize its unique ideas.

Materials and methods. The theoretical foundation of the study is based on the fundamental scientific works of both foreign and domestic scholars dedicated to the development of business tourism. The materials that constitute the methodological basis of the study include systematic and comparative analyses of primary data published on internet resources, economic-mathematical and statistical processing of information, and content analyses.

As the informational foundation of the work, the normative-legal acts, orders, and recommendations of the Republic of Kazakhstan's governmental bodies, official statistical materials, publications from international organizations (WTTC, UNWTO, ICCA), international and national digital databases, as well as publications in domestic and foreign media were utilized.

Data from government agencies, as well as reports and studies conducted by major analytical centers related to business tourism in Kazakhstan, were used. Data on the number of organized events, participants, revenues from business tourism, and other related information formed the basis of the research.

Several methods of data collection and analysis were employed to study the digitalization of business tourism in Kazakhstan and to analyze the organization of business events. The main focus was on both quantitative and qualitative aspects, allowing for a comprehensive understanding of the current state of business tourism in the country.

Semi-structured interviews with experts in the field of business tourism, representatives of the hotel industry, conference services, and related associations provided a deeper understanding of the trends and issues commonly encountered in this sector.

The study also included an analysis of scientific articles and publications dedicated to the digitalization of the tourism sector and the specific aspects of business tourism, drawing on both international and local sources.

In addition, the research employed an integrated approach, encompassing both quantitative and qualitative research methods. This allowed for a deeper understanding of the characteristics and dynamics of business tourism in the context of digitalization, which is increasingly significant for the successful development of this sector in Kazakhstan.

Thus, the methodological basis of the study is based on an interdisciplinary approach that combines elements of economic analysis, sociological research and strategic management in tourism. The methods used include:

- Content analysis of regulatory acts, strategic programs and publications of international organizations (UNWTO, ICCA, MPI), which made it possible to identify global benchmarks for the development of business tourism;

- Systemic and comparative analysis applied to various digital tools (online platforms, mobile applications, VR technologies) in order to assess their effectiveness in the context of business events;

- Economic and statistical analysis based on official data from government agencies, chambers of commerce and industry and analytical agencies (for example, data on the number of events, passenger traffic, revenue in the service sector);

- Semi-structured expert interviews conducted with representatives of exhibition companies, the hotel sector and tourism associations, which made it possible to obtain empirical confirmation of the identified trends and barriers to digitalization.

The approach to case analysis is implemented in the case method format, which included:

- selection and structured analysis of three flagship events (EXPO-2017, Astana Economic Forum, Congress of World and Traditional Religions);
- systematization of the effects of their digitalization according to the criteria: influx of participants, format transformation (hybrid events), media coverage, economic impact, infrastructure development;
- justification for the choice of cases is based on their scale, international significance and the availability of open statistical and analytical sources.

Thus, the methodological tools of the study provide a comprehensive and valid analysis

of the impact of digitalization on the development of business tourism in Kazakhstan, covering both quantitative and qualitative parameters.

Results. The development of all types of business tourism is gaining momentum in Kazakhstan, with exhibitions, forums, and conferences experiencing the most rapid growth.

Most of the companies that organize events related to business tourism have been operating in the Kazakhstani market for over twenty years. Almost all of them are concentrated in Astana and Almaty [3]. The largest of these companies are listed in Table 1.

Table 1 – List of exhibition and congress companies organizing events in the Republic of Kazakhstan

Company 1	Brief Description of the Company 2
Iteca (https://iteca.kz/ru/)	ITE Group Plc. An international exhibition company partner. Works mainly in Central Asia, including Kazakhstan. The Kazakh company ITECA positions itself as a leading company in organizing exhibitions and conferences in the market. The events cover a wide range of topics across 17 economic sectors.
TNT Productions, Inc. (https://www.tntexpo.kz/index-ru.html)	An international exhibition organizer, an American company with its main office located in Washington, D.C. It is a member of the Society of Independent Show Organizers (SISO) and the International Association of Exhibitions and Events (IAEE). It has conducted over 100 events, including in Russia, Uzbekistan, Kyrgyzstan, Armenia, Georgia, Romania, and Kazakhstan. It has been operating in Kazakhstan since 1995.
“Atakent-Expo” International Exhibition Company LLP (https://www.atakentexpo.kz/)	A leading company in Kazakhstan specializing in organizing international exhibitions and fairs. The company serves not only state corporations and large companies but also small and medium-sized enterprises.
Astana Expo Exhibition Company (https://astana-expo.com/)	An integral part of organizing exhibitions includes organizing presentations, symposiums, conferences, seminars, and roundtables with the participation of leading experts. The focus of these events is to discuss the scientific and technical aspects of enterprise activities and explore the secondary development paths of the industry.
Fair Expo Exhibition Company LLP (https://www.fairexpo.kz/)	A leading company in organizing international exhibitions and fairs. It has been operating independently since 1999.
“KAZEXPO” International Exhibition Company LLP (http://www.kazexpo.kz/)	Organizes international congresses and exhibitions in Kazakhstan, as well as Kazakhstan's exhibitions abroad. Through close cooperation with embassies and trade representatives of foreign countries, it organizes seminars, training sessions, and presentations.
NS EXPO Exhibition Company LLP (http://ns-expo.kz)	Specializes in organizing specialized exhibitions in Kazakhstan and was established in 2017.
The Chamber of Commerce and Investment of Almaty (https://alcci.kz/kk/)	One of the key service areas is organizing business events. Over 350 events have been held, with more than 26,250 participants.
“ExpoGroup” International Exhibition Company (https://eldala.kz/dannye/kompanii/6863-expogroup)	An international exhibition company specializing in organizing and conducting international and regional exhibitions and fairs, established in 2010.
“TNT EXPO” LLP (https://www.tntexpo.kz/index-ru.html)	A company specializing in organizing international exhibitions, seminars, and conferences, as well as designing and constructing exhibition stands.
*Compiled by the authors	

The companies' thematic events cover 22 different sectors of the economy, including: oil and gas, energy, mining and metallurgy, construction, tourism, transport and logistics, food industry and agriculture, medicine, and more.

These events are held with the official support of the Government of Kazakhstan, the Ministry of

Industry and Infrastructure Development, the Ministry of Energy, the Ministry of Health, the Ministry of Labor and Social Protection, the Ministry of Agriculture, the Ministry of Internal Affairs, and other relevant ministries and committees of Kazakhstan, as well as regional/city administrations and industry associations.

According to the Almaty Chamber of Commerce and Investments, in 2022 Kazakhstan hosted 70 international exhibitions [Chamber of Commerce, 2023]. The distribution by categories was as follows (%): home and office, agriculture – 11.4; construction, medicine – 8.6; transport, logistics, urban, tourism – 4.3; culture, arts, crafts – 5.7.

In 2023-2024, a total of 8,348 events are planned under the patronage of World Expo. Among these, 77 will take place in Kazakhstan: 75 exhibitions, 1 conference (in Astana), and 1 forum (in Almaty). The number of international exhibitions held in Kazakh-

stan's regions are as follows: Almaty – 39, Astana – 31, Atyrau and Pavlodar – 2 each, Karaganda, Shymkent, and Ust-Kamenogorsk – 1 each [4, 5].

The structural sectoral directions of thematic exhibitions in business tourism primarily fall into the following categories: home and office; industrial engineering; agriculture and agro; construction; transport, logistics, urban development; medicine; tourism; security and protection; automobiles and motorcycles; energy and electrical equipment; culture, arts, crafts; and food and beverages (see figure 1).

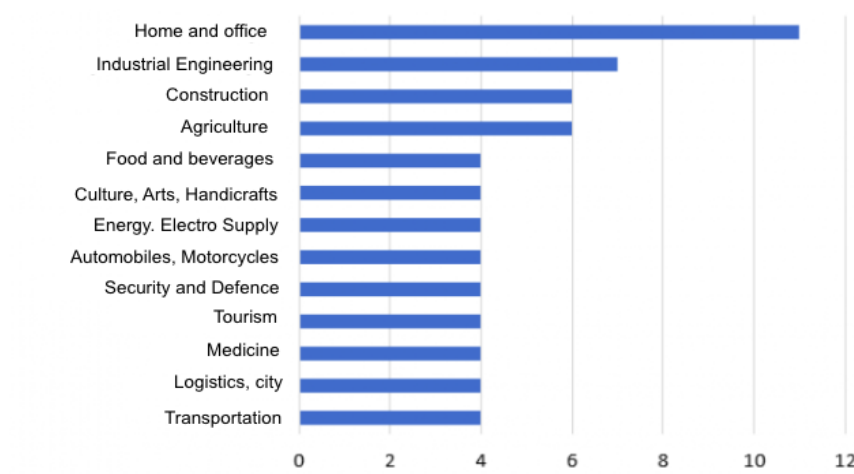


Figure 1 – Structural Distribution of Leading Sectors by Frequency of International Exhibitions Held in Kazakhstan's Regions in 2023

Note – compiled based on the source [6]

In Kazakhstan, the “Astana Travel Expo” and the “Tourism and Travel” international exhibition (KITF) are regularly held.

The “Astana Travel Expo,” which was previously known as “Astana Leisure” from 2004 to 2021, has established itself as a significant professional event and an effective networking platform for discussing and working on the latest industry trends, especially ahead of the autumn-winter tourist season. In 2019, the event's organizer gained the status of being the operator of the major international PATA Travel Mart.

The exhibitors at the exhibition include national and regional tourism organizations, tour operators, travel agencies, airlines, hotels, sanatoriums, and holiday centers. The main upgrade of the exhibition is an enhanced business program, which covers the most relevant issues and proposals in the market and provides answers to pressing questions, contributing to the training of qualified personnel using the resources of the capital platform.

Participants of the “Astana Leisure” exhibition have a unique opportunity to establish new business connections, sign contracts with international, Kazakhstani, Central Asian, Russian, Caucasian, and other tourism companies, and learn about and share innovations in the tourism industry.

The main sections of the exhibition include: National and regional tourism organizations; Tour operators and travel agencies; Airlines, Hotels, boarding houses, and sanatoriums; Trade associations and organizations; Insurance and banking services in tourism; Information technology in tourism; Medical tourism.

Over the years, more than 25,000 professionals from over 30 countries have attended the exhibition. Each year, more than 90 companies participate [7].

The KITF (Kazakhstan International Tourism Fair) has been held in Almaty since 2001. The exposition is the largest professional platform for tourism in Central Asia and is the main event in the country's tourism industry.

Within the framework of KITF, international agreements are signed, including memorandums, agreements, and programs of interregional and cross-border cooperation between countries. Additionally, national councils, plenary sessions, roadshows, seminars, presentations, and other industry events are held, demonstrating the effectiveness of the exhibition for the tourism market of Kazakhstan and Central Asia.

The annual positive dynamics of the KITF exposition is an indicator of the tourism services market. It is here that international and local companies assess market needs and consumer interest, study the competitive environment, find new tools to increase profits, and develop strategies for further work. Representatives from over 30 countries participate.

KITF is not just a regular exhibition; it is a strategically important professional event that reflects the overall state of the tourism industry, its individual trends and directions, prospects for development, and new opportunities.

Every year, KITF brings together more than five thousand tourism professionals from around the world, including tour operators, airlines, national and regional tourism organizations, representatives of accommodation facilities—hotels, wellness and medical centers, developers and suppliers of IT technologies in tourism, foreign real estate, and other sectors.

The main sections of the exhibition include: International Tourism, Domestic Tourism, Medical and Wellness Tourism, MICE-Business Tourism, and Real Estate Abroad.

The “Tourism and Travel” exhibition has established itself as a reliable platform for strengthening international and interregional industry connections. Special attention is given to the event by representatives of state companies and diplomatic missions, which bring their national stands to the exhibition.

Exhibition industry experts have awarded the KITF exhibition the UFI quality mark (World Association of the Exhibition Industry) for its compliance with the B2B international standards. Within the framework of KITF, international agreements such as memorandums, agreements, and interregional and cross-border cooperation programs between countries, as well as national agreements, plenary sessions, roadshows, seminars, presentations, and other industry events, are held. This demonstrates the effectiveness of the exhibition for the tourism market of Kazakhstan and Central Asia.

Impact of Exhibition Participation: The expansion of the client (partner) base, increased brand awareness of the company (products, services), strengthening of existing partnerships, entry into new markets, launch of new products (services), and research into the business activities of competitors [8].

In recent years, Kazakhstan has been increasingly recognized worldwide as a venue for international political and sports events. Some notable examples include the OSCE Summit (2010), the annual Astana Economic Forum (AEF) since 2008, the Congress of Leaders of World and Traditional Religions held every three years since 2003, as well as major international sports events such as the 7th Winter Asian Games (Asiada-2011), the 28th Winter Universiade in 2017, and EXPO-2017. These significant international political and sports events contribute to strengthening the country's authority and increasing its recognition on the global stage. Additionally, business, cultural, and scientific ties between regions and nations are also being reinforced.

Astana became the first city among CIS countries to host the 18th session of the UNWTO General Assembly in October 2009. This event provided an opportunity to introduce the country as a new tourist destination and enhance the investment attractiveness of the domestic tourism industry. Hosting the global summit gave a significant boost to the capital's development, allowing it to showcase itself as a city with developed infrastructure, as well as excellent congress and exhibition capabilities. The session was attended by over 700 delegates from 156 countries [9].

In December 2010, the OSCE Astana Summit brought together heads of state and government, political leaders from 56 countries, nearly 600 representatives from international organizations, and 1,500 journalists who covered the forum.

From October 9 to 11, 2019, the VIII Global Summit on Urban Tourism titled “Smart Cities - Smart Destinations” was held at the Palace of Independence. The event, organized by the Akimat of Astana and UNWTO, focused on city management, new innovations and technologies, and the widespread integration of tourism as a tool to develop sustainable and inclusive cities [10].

The Astana Economic Forum (AEF) is one of the world's major international forums. Since 2008, the AEF has annually brought together global leaders, experts, and business community representatives to seek solutions to the main economic and social challenges of our time (see Table 2).

Table 2 – Chronology of the Astana Economic Forum (AEF)

Forum	Year of the Event	Number of Participants	Number of participating countries
I AEF	2008	100	40
II AEF	2009	1150	59
III AEF	2010	2000	50
IV AEF	2011	5000	80
V AEF	2012	6500	85
VI AEF	2013	12000	132
VII AEF	2014	10000	150
VIII AEF	2015	3000	90
IX AEF	2016	4500	90
X AEF	2017	8000	100
XI AEF	2018	5000	111
XII AEF	2019	5600	74

Note – based on the source [11]

Table 2 shows that the Economic Forum was not held between 2020 and 2022 due to the impact of the pandemic [12]. The Congress of World and Traditional Religions (CWTR) is held in Astana. The events are attended by representatives from various

Christian, Islamic, Judaic, Buddhist, Daoist, Hindu, Zoroastrian, and Shinto traditions, as well as leaders from non-governmental organizations, states, and international organizations, as well as prominent political, scientific, and social figures (table 3).

Table 3 – Chronology of the Congress of World and Traditional Religious Leaders

Convention	Year of the Event	Number of delegations	Number of participating countries
I CWTRL	2003	45	13
II CWTRL	2006	29	20
III CWTRL	2009	77	35
IV CWTRL	2012	85	40
V CWTRL	2015	80	42
VI CWTRL	2018	82	43
VII CWTRL	2022	100	50

Note – based on the source [13]

Developed countries have made it a tradition over the past one and a half centuries to regularly meet and showcase their achievements and assess their successes. This tradition is known internationally as an exhibition or EXPO, with EXPO symbolizing industrialization. It is an international exhibition that highlights technological advancements and innovations, providing a platform for nations worldwide to display their achievements and artifacts in various fields of life. Today, 161 countries around the world are members of this exhibition. To organize its activities, the International Exhibitions Bureau (BIE) has been established.

Kazakhstan joined the International Exhibitions Bureau (BIE) in 1997. The BIE continually stimulates the development of countries hosting exhibitions, ensures the arrival of tourists, promotes national brands and projects, and highlights national achievements. An international exhibition serves as a powerful and

active tool in shaping a country's favorable tourist image. Millions of tourists attend these exhibitions, prompting each country to build a unique pavilion that showcases its economic and technological level to the world.

World Universal EXPO exhibitions are international events where countries present and showcase their achievements in various fields such as economy, science, technology, culture, and arts, as well as other aspects of public life. Serving as symbols of industrialization and open platforms for technological and scientific achievements, these exhibitions have become significant drivers of both global development and tourism.

In 2014, Kazakhstan officially received the right to host the EXPO-2017 international specialized exhibition. At the 155th session of the General Assembly of the BIE in Paris, the EXPO flag was handed over to Kazakhstan.

The EXPO-2017 exhibition was the first to be held in Kazakhstan among the CIS member states. The event, which took place in the city of Astana, gave a new impetus to the development of the country's tourism sector, including business tourism.

Over the course of three years, construction work was carried out on a total area of 174 hectares, with the exhibition area covering 25 hectares.

In preparation for the EXPO-2017 international exhibition, the national budget allocated 565.1 billion KZT, or approximately 2.1 billion USD, in accordance with the Law on the Republican Budget. Of this amount, 1.58 billion KZT was allocated from the budget of the city of Astana [14].

The EXPO-2017 exhibition provided a positive boost to the country's cultural life, contributed to the development of the domestic tourism sector, and made a significant impact on the national economy.

1,400 small and medium-sized businesses received orders for goods and services amounting to 640 billion KZT. The turnover of shops in Astana increased by 20%, and the number of visitors to shopping and entertainment centers doubled. The number of business entities in Astana grew by over 10%, and the revenue from the service sector in the city increased by 1.2 times [15].

Approximately 4 million people attended the exhibition, which featured achievements from 115 countries and 22 international organizations, with two-thirds of the attendees being youth and school-children. On average, 40,000 to 50,000 people visited the EXPO-2017 complex daily. The most visited pavilion was Kazakhstan's "Nur Alem," which attracted 1.3 million visitors, including 600,000 foreigners. During the international exhibition, guests visited the "Ethno Village," a national cultural complex showcasing the life and traditions of the Kazakh ethnic group. The complex also hosted the "The Spirit of Astana" modern ethnic music festival. The "Astana Opera" State Opera and Ballet Theater presented over 50 performances during the 93 days of the exhibition. The "Operalia Plácido Domingo" competition, founded and led by the world-renowned opera legend Plácido Domingo, took place in Astana, gathering 40 of the world's best vocalists. Alongside the exhibition, unique exhibits were brought to the National Museum, including "The Terracotta Army of Qin Shi Huang," "Searching for Shambhala: Masterpieces from the Nicholas Roerich Museum in New York," and "Masterpieces of Russian Art from American Private Collections." During the 93 days of the exhibition, the museum attracted 3.5 million visitors [16].

The "Eurasia" Film Festival was held during the exhibition and was accredited by international

producer associations alongside prestigious festivals such as Cannes, Berlin, and Venice. As a result, Astana became a center of global culture during EXPO-2017, which positively impacted the country's image. Firstly, foreigners visiting the exhibition had the opportunity to experience the lifestyle and culture of the people living in the country firsthand. National games were actively organized, performances such as "Kyz Zhibek" were staged, and traditional music was played. Secondly, all of this showcased the country's high level of intellectual and cultural development.

Hosting the exhibition provided a significant boost to the tourism sector. The demand for tour operators' services nearly doubled. The influx of visitors positively affected Kazakhstan's civil aviation indicators, with passenger traffic on domestic routes increasing by 88% and on international routes by 30%. During the three months of the exhibition, Astana Airport served 1.5 million people [17].

There is a noticeable increase in the use of digital solutions for organizing and conducting business events in Kazakhstan. Online conference platforms, specialized event management apps, and networking tools have become essential components in the arsenal of business tourism managers. Notably, many companies have started actively adopting hybrid event formats, which allow for the integration of face-to-face and virtual interactions.

The digitalization system undoubtedly enhances the accessibility of business events. Participants from different regions and countries can join events without the need for travel, which reduces costs and saves time. Additionally, data collected during events can be used to better direct future events and improve the overall experience for participants [18].

Despite the many advantages, digitalization can also present certain challenges. One major issue is the lack of reliable infrastructure in some regions of Kazakhstan, which can limit the ability to host virtual events. Additionally, continuous staff training and adaptation to rapidly changing technologies are required, which entails additional costs.

The successful examples of digitalization in organizing business events, such as the Astana Economic Forum (AEF) and the Congress of World and Traditional Religious Leaders (CWTR), demonstrate how digital platforms have helped attract more participants and improve interaction quality. Kazakhstan achieved a high score in the global rankings for the development of online services accessibility, with a coefficient of 0.92 out of 1 [19].

Analysis shows that despite being in the early stages of digitalization, Kazakhstan has significant potential for further development in the business tour-

ism sector. Many companies are revisiting hybrid work formats, which open up new opportunities for attracting international participants.

To successfully digitalize business tourism in Kazakhstan, attention should be given to the following:

- developing infrastructure that ensures stable internet access across various regions;
- training personnel specialized in new technologies;
- creating and implementing comprehensive strategic plans for marketing and promoting business events using digital channels.

In conclusion, digitalization of business tourism in Kazakhstan has demonstrated its importance and relevance. It is anticipated that further development and implementation of innovative technologies in the coming years will help Kazakhstan gain more active positions in the international business tourism arena.

Thus, digitalization is among the key factors contributing to the development of business tourism in Kazakhstan. Successful implementation of digital solutions can enhance the country's competitiveness and enable more effective and high-quality interactions among participants in business events.

In the section of the research work "Materials and Methods" the methods applied were previously described, which allowed to ensure the scientific validity of the following conclusions:

- the leading companies organizing business events in Kazakhstan were identified and classified (presented in Table 1);
- data on digital tools (platforms, VR, mobile applications) used in the practice of Kazakhstan exhibitions, conferences and forums are presented;
- statistics on the development of business tourism based on major events (EXPO-2017, AEF, CWTR) are provided;
- economic and image effects of digitalization are shown (increase in the flow of participants, growth of air travel, increase in business activity in the regions, etc.).

Discussion. The development of business tourism in Kazakhstan is closely linked to economic growth, globalisation and the increasing role of digital technologies. As digital technologies continue to transform the tourism sector, Kazakhstan's business tourism industry is adapting to new trends to remain competitive in the global market.

Digitalisation is changing business tourism by improving accessibility, efficiency and the overall experience of participants. Technologies such as online booking platforms, virtual event solutions, mobile applications and artificial intelligence-based tools are increasing the efficiency of business event planning

and execution. In Kazakhstan, these advances are enabling businesses and government agencies to attract international conferences, exhibitions and corporate meetings by offering seamless technology-enabled event solutions.

One of the key benefits of digitalisation in business tourism is its ability to reduce operational costs while improving service quality. Virtual and hybrid event formats that allow participants to attend conferences remotely have gained significant popularity. This not only increases accessibility, but also enhances networking opportunities for businesses. The introduction of digital solutions in Kazakhstan, including automated registration systems and analytics based on artificial intelligence, has helped to streamline event management processes, reduce inefficiencies and optimise resources.

Kazakhstan's strategic geographical location at the crossroads of Europe and Asia makes it an attractive centre for business tourism. The country's infrastructure, especially in major cities such as Astana and Almaty, is constantly improving, with the development of modern convention centres, business hotels and transport networks. In addition, government initiatives aimed at encouraging foreign investment and entrepreneurship further strengthen Kazakhstan's position as a business tourism destination.

Despite these advantages, a number of challenges remain. The limited availability of digital infrastructure in some regions, unstable internet connectivity and the lack of specialised training for digital event management hinder the full-scale implementation of digital solutions. In addition, the global nature of business tourism means that Kazakhstan will have to compete with established destinations such as Dubai, Singapore and European capitals where digital innovation is already deeply integrated into the industry.

To take full advantage of digitalisation, Kazakhstan needs to implement a comprehensive strategy that integrates modern technologies into the business tourism sector, which includes:

- increasing the use of artificial intelligence and big data analytics to personalise business travel and improve the efficiency of event planning;
- strengthening cybersecurity measures to secure digital transactions and protect the data of international business travellers;
- investing in digital infrastructure such as 5G networks and smart meeting rooms to support high quality virtual and hybrid events;
- providing specialised training for tourism and hospitality professionals to effectively manage digital tools when organising events.

By implementing these technological advances, Kazakhstan can strengthen its position as a leading business tourism destination in the region. The integration of digital solutions will not only improve the efficiency of business events, but also strengthen the country's global competitiveness in the rapidly evolving digital economy.

Conclusion. The political and cultural events held in Kazakhstan contribute to enhancing the country's business rating and promote the development of business tourism not only in metropolitan areas but also in regional centers. An analysis of the state of business tourism in Kazakhstan reveals that it is growing, particularly in the capital city.

This growth was significantly influenced by large-scale international events (such as the Astana Economic Forum (AEF), the Congress of Leaders of World and Traditional Religions (CLTR), EXPO-2017 and others), as well as the improvement of business tourism infrastructure, including the opening of new five-star hotels and other cultural facilities.

Research into the digitalization of business tourism in Kazakhstan highlights several key aspects and challenges faced by event organizers in this sector. There has been a steady trend towards the integration of digital technologies in organizing business events. The use of online platforms for participant registration, virtual conferences, and webinars has significantly streamlined the organization process and increased event accessibility for a wider audience.

Digitalization allows for the optimization of costs and resources, which is crucial for organizations aiming to enhance the effectiveness of their events. Modern tools such as CRM systems and project management platforms contribute to a high level of coordination and interaction among all participants [20].

With its strategic location and developing infrastructure, Kazakhstan has the potential to become a hub for business tourism in Central Asia. Digitalization can act as a catalyst for attracting international events and conferences, which in turn will impact the development of the country's tourism sector.

Despite these advantages, there are significant challenges. These include insufficient digital infrastructure in some regions, a shortage of skilled professionals, and the need to implement digital security standards. These factors could hinder the development of business tourism and may require additional attention from both government bodies and the private sector.

There is also a growing need to integrate new technologies such as artificial intelligence, big data, and virtual reality into business tourism. These technologies can enhance service quality, improve customer interaction, and make events more memorable.

Thus, the results of the study allow us to formulate structured conclusions and offer targeted recommendations to various categories of stakeholders, which emphasizes both the scientific novelty and the applied significance of the work (Table 4).

Table 4 - Targeted recommendations to various categories of stakeholders

№	Stakeholders	Proposals
1	For government agencies and strategic planning bodies	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Digitalization of business tourism is an important element of economic modernization and contributes to the integration of Kazakhstan into the global business space; - The state needs to develop a national strategy for digital transformation in the MICE sector, including measures to develop infrastructure (in particular, in the regions), stimulate public-private partnerships and support innovative platforms; - It is necessary to invest in the development of digital literacy and competencies of personnel in the tourism sector, including the creation of certification programs and training modules for specialists.
2	For representatives of exhibition and MICE companies	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - The use of hybrid event formats and the introduction of online platforms, CRM systems, virtual and augmented reality allows you to increase coverage, reduce costs and increase the involvement of participants; - It is necessary to adapt business models to the new realities of digitalization, integrating big data analytics and personalized services; - As successful practices, it is recommended to use the experience of organizing EXPO-2017, AEF, CWTR, where digital technologies became a tool for attracting an international audience.
3	For the scientific and academic community	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - The results obtained confirm the importance of studying digitalization in the context of regional characteristics and sectoral differences; - A promising direction for further research is to assess the effectiveness of digital solutions in the MICE industry using quantitative models, as well as analyze the impact of digitalization on the sustainability of tourism value chains; - The article forms a theoretical and methodological basis for subsequent empirical research in the field of digital tourism in the countries of Central Asia.
*Compiled by the authors		

In conclusion, the digitalization of business tourism in Kazakhstan represents a crucial step towards modernizing the sector and increasing its competitiveness on the international stage. To ensure Kazakh-

stan's prominent place in the global tourism arena, it is essential to continue investing in digital infrastructure, training professionals, and adopting innovative approaches to event organization.

References

- 1 Conference Anatomy: How to Find Yourself in the Meeting Industry. <https://www.litres.ru/aleksandra-urkova/konferenc-anatomiya/chitat> (Accessed: 12.11.2023).
- 2 Trusheva Sh.A., Syzdykbayeva B.U. The State of Business Tourism in Kazakhstan / Innovative Development of the Food, Light Industry, and Hospitality Industry: Proc. of the Int. Sci.-Pract. Conf. – Almaty: ATU, 2015. – pp. 306-315.
- 3 Exhibition Companies in Kazakhstan. https://www.kps.kz/kazakhstan/uslugi/vystavochnyie_kompanii (Accessed: 12.11.2023).
- 4 Exhibition Calendar for 2022. <https://alcci.kz/event/vystavki-kazakhstan-2021/> (Accessed: 02.11.2023).
- 5 Forums in Kazakhstan 2023-2024. <https://worldexpo.pro/country/kazakhstan/sector/turizm> (Accessed: 12.11.2023).
- 6 Events in the Tourism Category in Kazakhstan 2023-2024. <https://worldexpo.pro/country/kazakhstan/sector/turizm> (Accessed: 11.11.2023).
- 7 The 16th Kazakhstan International Tourism Exhibition. <https://leisure.kz/ru/vystavka/itogi-vystavki/itogi-leisure> (Accessed: 17.11.2023).
- 8 Results of the Exhibition. <https://kitf.kz/images/download/2022> (Accessed: 12.11.2023).
- 9 Astana Hosts Participants of the XVIII UNWTO General Assembly Session. https://online.zakon.kz/Document/?doc_id=30480507 (Accessed: 22.12.2023).
- 10 For the First Time, the UNWTO Summit on Urban Tourism Was Held in Nur-Sultan. https://www.kt.kz/kaz/state/n_r-s_itanda (Accessed: 09.11.2023).
- 11 Astana Economic Forum. https://economy.kz/kz/Issledovaniya_instituta/Astaninskij_ekonomicheskij_forum/ (Accessed: 09.11.2023).
- 12 The Astana Economic Forum Will Be Held in June 2023. <https://tass.ru/ekonomika/16659741> (Accessed: 29.09.2022).
- 13 Congress of Leaders of World and Traditional Religions Chronology. <https://www.gov.kz/memleket/entities/mfa-islamabad/press/news/> (Accessed: 10.07.2023).
- 14 Expenses of the Republican Budget of the Republic of Kazakhstan for EXPO-2017. <https://ranking.kz/reviews/banking-and-finance/rashody-respublikanskogo> (Accessed: 19.07.2023).
- 15 What Did Kazakhstan Gain from EXPO? <https://kapital.kz/economic/62882/chto-poluchil-kazakhstan-ot-ekspo.html> (Accessed: 05.07.2023).
- 16 The Impact of EXPO-2017 on the Foreign Policy and International Image of Kazakhstan. <https://yvision.kz/post/833943?category=Politika> (Accessed: 16.05.2023).
- 17 Trusheva Sh.A., Tleubayeva A.T., Sartova R.B., Zhakupov A.A., Kaidarova A.T., Dosova M. Evaluating MICE Tourism Policy in Kazakhstan Based on a Cluster Approach and Regression Model // Bulletin of the National Academy of Sciences of the Republic of Kazakhstan. – 2023. – №3(403). – pp. 558-576. – DOI: 10.32014/2023.2518-1467.529.
- 18 Roziqin, A., Kurniawan, A.S., Hijri, Y.S. and Kiss martini, K. Research trends of digital tourism: a bibliometric analysis // Tourism Critiques. – 2023. - №4(1/2). - pp. 28-47. – DOI: 10.1108/TRC-11-2022-0028.
- 19 Aliyeva E. Digital Transformation of Kazakhstan in Three International Rankings. <https://kz.kursiv.media/2022-07-20/cifrovaya-transformaciya-kazahstana-v-treh-mezhdunarodnyh-rejtingah/>. (Accessed: 19.07.2024).
- 20 Kalybekova D. Digitalization of Kazakhstan as a Key Factor of Economic Development in the Context of Modernization // Bulletin. Series of International Relations and International Law. – 2018. – №2(82). – pp. - 152-159. - DOI:10.26577/IRILY-2018-2-795

<p>Хат-хабарларга арналған автор (бірінші автор) Тлеубаева Айттолқын Тлеубайқызы, PhD, Л.Н. Гумилев атындағы Еуразия ұлттық университеті, Астана қ., Қазақстан, e-mail: aitolkyn.t@mail.ru, ORCID: https://orcid.org/0000-0002-5749-4289</p>	<p>Автор для корреспонденции (первый автор) Тлеубаева Айттолқын Тлеубайқызы, PhD, Евразийский национальный университет им. Л.Н. Гумилева, г. Астана, Казахстан, e-mail: aitolkyn.t@mail.ru, ORCID: https://orcid.org/0000-0002-5749-4289</p>	<p>The Author for Correspondence (The First Author) Tleubayeva Aitolkyn Tleubaykyzy, PhD, L.N. Gumilyov Eurasian National University, Astana, Kazakhstan, e-mail: aitolkyn.t@mail.ru, ORCID: https://orcid.org/0000-0002-5749-4289</p>
------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------	------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------	------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------

Date of submission of the article: 12.02.2025

Date accepted for publication: 12.06.2025