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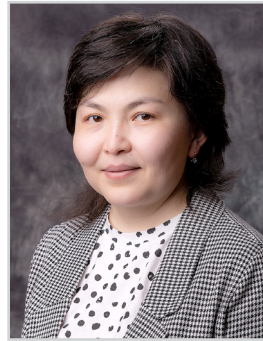
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Expert assessment and consumer preferences for the implementation of educational tourism in the learning system of universities students: the experience of Kazakhstan

Abstract. Our research is devoted to the implementation of educational tourism in the education system of higher education students, identifying the prospects for its development based on expert and consumer surveys. The article proposes the author's definition of educational tourism, reveals its essence and component composition, as well as possible positive effects from its implementation; the connection between the educational and tourist components is emphasized, the primary and secondary nature of which is determined by motivational factors. The key directions for the development of educational tourism are identified through the study of current works presented in the scientometric databases WoS and Scopus.

We conducted a study of the main participants in the educational tourism market in Kazakhstan, in particular, we analyzed the indicators of academic mobility of students and employees of scientific and educational institutions; international activities of universities in countries; as well as the number of students, teaching staff in organizations of technical and professional, higher and postgraduate education. The examples of educational tours provided by travel agencies in Kazakhstan are shown.

Based on expert surveys and polls, the features of consumer demand and supply in the field of educational tourism were identified, as well as the main communication channels for promoting this product on the market; main promising directions for the development of educational tourism; the degree of awareness of students of higher educational institutions about the essence and specifics of educational tourism; the need to include educational tourism in the educational trajectory of university students. In terms of the characteristics of consumption and provision of services in the field of educational tourism, the authors identified: seasonality and frequency of consumers' requests to obtain information, form and arrange an educational tour; key motivational factors that guide consumers when choosing an educational tour; average duration and geographic focus of organized educational tours; problems that travel companies face when designing and organizing such tours. In terms of the selection of information and communication tools used to promote educational tours, the main and additional communication channels for promoting educational tours have been identified. In terms of identifying the main promising directions for the development of educational tourism, the average expert assessment of the level of development of outbound and inbound educational tourism was determined.

Experts proposed the main promising directions for the development of educational tourism in Kazakhstan, including studying abroad, participation in educational events, learning foreign languages and ecological

tours with a scientific focus; the need to include educational tourism in the educational process of university students is emphasized.

Keywords: Educational Tourism; Learning Trajectory; Tourism Economics; Activities of Travel Companies; Student-Centered Education; Customized Tourism Product; Academic Mobility

JEL Classification: L83; Z32; M21; I23; I25; P36; P46

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Експертна оцінка та споживчі переваги імплементації освітнього туризму в систему навчання студентів вищої школи: досвід Казахстану

Анотація. наукова стаття присвячена питанням імплементації освітнього туризму до системи навчання студентів вищої школи, виявлення перспектив його розвитку на основі експертного та споживчого опитувань. У статті запропоновано авторське визначення освітнього туризму, розкрито його сутність та компонентний склад, а також можливі позитивні ефекти від його реалізації; підкреслено зв'язок освітньої та туристської складової, первинність та вторинність яких визначається мотиваційними факторами. Позначено ключові напрями розвитку освітнього туризму за допомогою вивчення актуальних робіт, представлених у наукометричних базах даних WoS, Scopus.

У статті проведено дослідження основних учасників ринку освітнього туризму в Казахстані, зокрема відображено показники академічної мобільності учнів та працівників наукових та навчальних закладів; міжнародної діяльності вишів країн; проаналізовано чисельний склад учнів, професорсько-викладацького складу в організаціях технічної та професійної, вищої та післявузівської освіти; показані приклади освітніх турів, що надаються туристичними агенціями в Казахстані. На основі експертного та соціологічного опитувань виявлено особливості споживчого попиту та пропозиції у сфері освітнього туризму, а також основні канали комунікації для просування цього продукту на ринку; основні перспективні напрями розвитку освітнього туризму; ступінь поінформованості студентів вищих навчальних закладів про сутність та специфіку освітнього туризму; необхідність включення освітнього туризму до траєкторії навчання студентами вишів. У частині особливостей споживання та надання послуг у сфері освітнього туризму авторами визначено: сезонність та частоту звернення споживачів для отримання інформації, формування та оформлення освітнього туру; ключові мотиваційні чинники, якими керуються споживачі під час виборів освітнього туру; середня тривалість та географічна спрямованість оформлюваних освітніх турів; проблеми, з якими стикаються туристичні компанії при оформленні та організації подібних турів. У частині вибору інформаційно-комунікаційних інструментів, що використовуються для просування освітніх турів, виявлено основні та додаткові канали комунікації для просування турів освітнього характеру. У частині виявлення основних перспективних напрямів розвитку освітнього туризму визначено середню експертну оцінку рівня розвитку виїзного та в'їзного освітнього туризму. Експертами запропоновано основні перспективні напрями розвитку освітнього туризму в Казахстані, включаючи навчання за кордоном, участь у освітніх заходах, вивчення іноземних мов та екологічні тури з науковим ухилом; наголошено на необхідності включення освітнього туризму до навчального процесу студентів вузів.

Ключові слова: освітній туризм, траєкторія навчання, економіка туризму, діяльність туристських фірм, студентоцентроване навчання, кастомізований туристичний продукт, академічна мобільність.

1. Introduction

Modern rates of economic development, including those dictated by the digitalization of many industries, have a significant impact on the formation of new specialists, whose skills must fully meet the requirements of the market and the competitive environment in which the future specialist plans to position himself.

Student-centered learning is an integral component of such a process, where more attention is paid to the learner's abilities and capabilities, which can be realized through a skilful pedagogical

integrated approach, in which great attention is paid to the development of communicative, cognitive and creative abilities. In turn, an effective tool for such implementation is educational tourism, which acts as a progressive educational technology that promotes the development of not only soft skills among students within the framework of interdisciplinary student-centered learning, but also creates obvious prerequisites for the sustainable development of education. Already today, educational tourism is actively implemented based on many universities in foreign countries, ensuring, on the one hand, the deep and comprehensive involvement of students directly in the educational process, on the other hand, enabling educational institutions to significantly diversify the services offered, including the formation of products with a pronounced customized component. In addition, it is important to understand the unique nature of this type of tourism: firstly, it is a consequence of the evolution and constant development of tourism as a type of economic activity, and, secondly, it contains educational and pedagogical components, which largely determine its simple implementation in the educational process. Thus, we have proposed the following comprehensive definition of educational tourism: «a type of activity based on an integrative nature, expressed in the mutual connectivity of the educational and tourist components (the primary or secondary nature of which can be determined by the purpose of the activity of the subject showing interest in knowledge, training, development), characterized by a long (more than 24 hours) or temporary stay (less than 24 hours: as a form of excursion activity) in the territory of a tourist destination, other than a permanent place of residence, for the purpose of obtaining education (at different levels, including in the structure of the concept of «lifelong learning»), professional development, language courses, creative development, as well as within the framework of a one-time inspection of individual attractions, objects of display and storytelling, which have pronounced characteristics that form sustainable tourist interest; also a form of digital knowledge of reality and virtual visits to tourist sites, through the widespread use of various information and communication technologies (VR/AR technologies; super applications; voice assistants; chatbots; sharing economy tools; online reviews, peer reviews and content generated by tourists, etc.) and unified digital platforms created to ensure connectivity between the subject (student, tourist) and components / structures of tourist interest». Graphically, the essence of educational tourism is presented in [Figure 1](#).

[Figure 1](#) clearly shows the connection between the educational and tourist components, which provide the opportunity to gain educational experience, as well as professional and personal growth within certain areas of scientific knowledge.

Obviously, when considering the features of educational tourism, the question of the primacy and secondary nature of education and the implementation of tourist goals arises, which can be resolved by identifying the key motivating factors of the traveler: so, if the main motive is knowledge through the prism of impressions, then in this case, the primary ones will be the tourist goals; at the same time, if the key aspect of travel is getting an education, then the educational aspect will be primary.

In general, educational tourism today is a tool that allows us to achieve the long-term goals expressed in:

- 1) successful formation and implementation of the potential of educational institutions and recreational areas;
- 2) development of students' creative abilities;
- 3) the ability to create new aspects of language learning, language competencies, social and intellectual skills, personal and emotional development, critical thinking among subjects of educational tourism;
- 4) interdisciplinarity and integrity of the study of educational tourism as a complex economic phenomenon capable of providing a synergistic effect, reflected in the cumulative and mutual influence on each other of such scientific and practice-oriented areas as: tourism economics, pedagogy, geography, cultural studies, ethnography, logistics, logic, philosophy, history, regional studies, linguistics and many others;
- 5) cultural and social change of countries through student exchange;
- 6) improving the quality of educational programs;
- 7) creating an exchange network of leading tourism initiatives.

Important catalysts for the development of educational tourism in countries and regions of the world are the following: the desire and readiness of tour operators and travel agents to work within this tourist destination; availability and high quality of educational programs in English in educational institutions of various levels; activation of academic mobility of students; increasing international activities by higher education institutions, including in the form of implementing

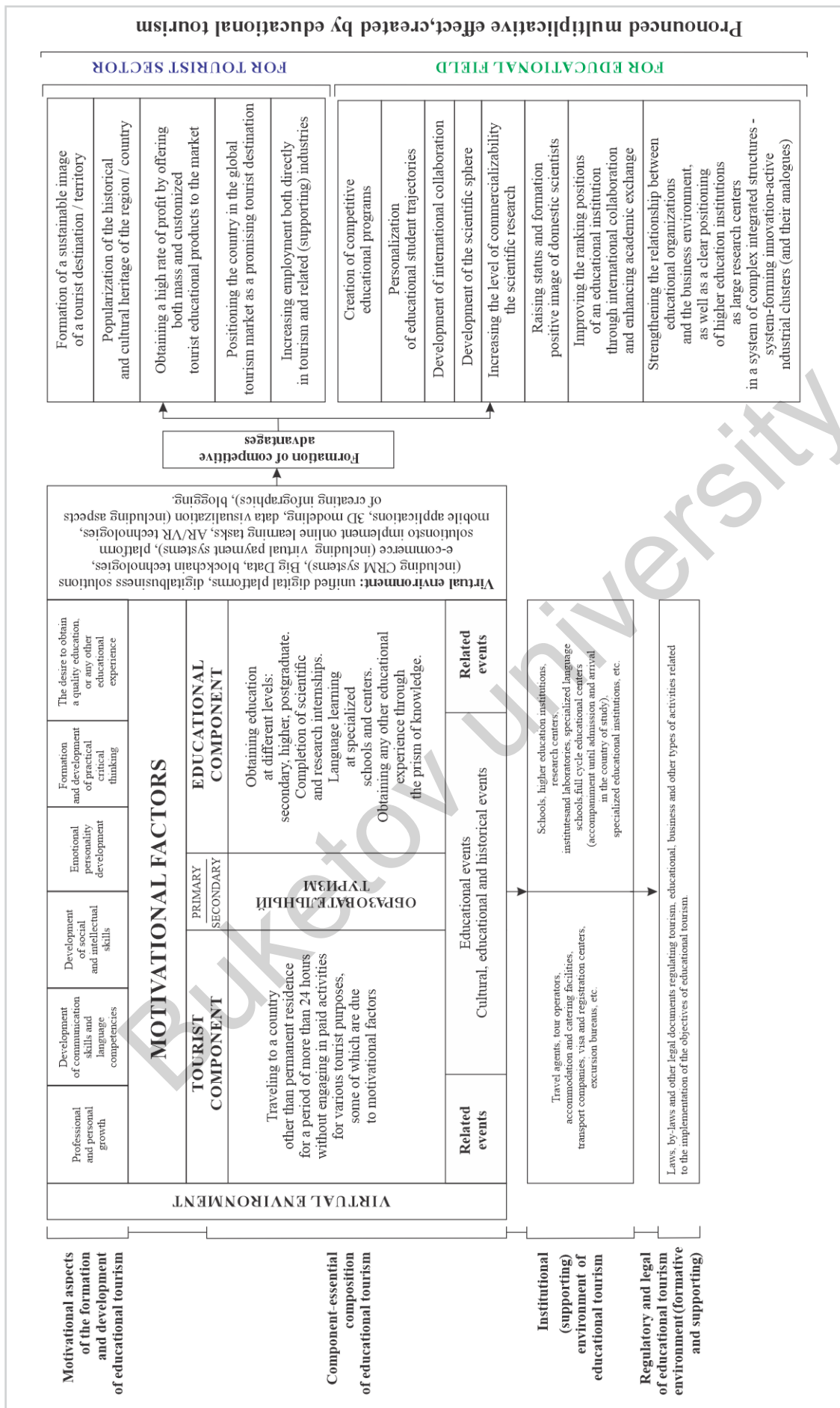


Figure 1:
The essence of educational tourism
Source: Compiled by the authors based on the research results

double degree programs, joint international projects, which largely ensure collaboration of this level, as well as through the opening of foreign branches of universities.

Educational tourism is also reflected in Kazakhstan. Thus, according to data from the National Center for the Development of Higher Education ENIC-Kazakhstan, in 2022 the indicators of inbound and outbound academic mobility (including current studies) amounted to 13101 and 3206 people, respectively; the largest number of students coming to Kazakhstan to obtain education (bachelor's-master's-doctorate) and as part of academic exchange (including online) is observed from the Kyrgyz Republic, Russian Federation, Turkmenistan, Uzbekistan, Tajikistan, USA and Azerbaijan. This is partly due to the geographic proximity of a number of the above-mentioned regions, fluency in foreign languages, the accessibility and prestige of Kazakhstan's educational programs, as well as the desire to get acquainted with the unique historical and cultural heritage of the country (Table 1).

Table 1:
Indicators of international activities of higher educational institutions of Kazakhstan with a number of foreign countries in 2022

Academic mobility of students (including ongoing studies)		Academic mobility of teaching staff (including attracting specialists)		Number of concluded international treaties*	Number of ongoing joint international projects
to Kazakhstan	from Kazakhstan	to Kazakhstan	from Kazakhstan		
Azerbaijan					
116	43	4	3	103	3
Egypt					
102	1	12	-	6	-
Republic of Kyrgyzstan					
597	127	43	71	293	9
France					
17	101	27	14	84	8
Hong Kong					
-	-	-	-	7	-
Greece					
1	4	4	5	19	6
Armenia					
16	1	3	-	21	-
Republic of Belarus					
20	21	4	4	217	9
Ukraine					
23	6	39	-	172	3
Moldova					
-	-	-	-	22	-
South Korea*					
14	150	6	-	209	1
Spain*					
2	17	10	7	68	4
Saudi Arabia**					
3	-	4	2	-	-
Russian Federation					
590	2421	335	58	2053	53
Singapore***					
2	1	3	-	9	-
United Arab Emirates					
5	In 2022, students of AMU and Narxoz University completed training under the academic mobility program at the King Salman Specialized Hospital and the American University of Ras Al Khaiman / the number of students trained is not specified	2	-	8	-
USA****					
134	12	33	18	105	31
The Republic of Tajikistan					
401	9	4	20	96	5
Turkmenistan					
1373	-	-	-	-	2
Uzbekistan					
9683	255	81	76	360	14
Hungary					
2	37	3	4	85	1
Total					
13101	3206	617	282	3937	149

Notes: *including contracts concluded before 2022, but valid in 2022; **according to the 1st half of 2023; ***based on 2023 data; ****based on data for the 2022-2023 academic year.

Source: Compiled by the authors based on the official website of the National Center for the Development of Higher Education ENIC-Kazakhstan (<https://enic-kazakhstan.edu.kz/ru/analitika/mezhdunarodnyy-opyt-1>)

In 2022, the academic mobility of residents amounted to 3206 people (including students who completed online training). The leading countries for this indicator were: the Russian Federation, Uzbekistan, South Korea, Republic of Kyrgyzstan and France.

Speaking about aspects of the development of academic mobility among teaching staff, in 2022, 282 people underwent education / professional training and retraining / internship at 21 universities / research laboratories / research institutes abroad, while 617 teachers became participants in academic exchange (offline and online), or were involved in educational and scientific activities as invited specialists.

Also, in Kazakhstan there is a large number of existing agreements between various educational institutions, laboratories and institutes (3937), which, of course, is a significant factor in the development and activation of academic exchange between researchers, scientists and university teachers, which, in turn, ensures the formation of an institutional environment for the development of educational tourism.

It should also be noted that about 149 international projects are being implemented in the Republic of Kazakhstan, in the implementation of which both Kazakh and foreign scientists are involved. On the one hand, this makes it possible to implement educational and scientific initiatives of domestic researchers, on the other hand, to carry out international collaboration, to form a favorable image of Kazakh science and education, which has a positive effect on the implementation and adaptation of the basic principles and provisions of educational tourism.

In general, it can be noted that throughout the development of Kazakhstani education, educational tourism, if not singled out as an independent direction, was somehow woven into all levels of its implementation, positively affecting the activities of educational institutions.

It is important to note that the potential market for domestic educational tourism from the point of view of demand is formed by several categories:

- 1) schoolchildren and their parents;
- 2) students, undergraduates, doctoral students of higher educational institutions;
- 3) students in technical and vocational education organizations;
- 4) teaching staff of universities and colleges;
- 5) teachers of secondary schools;
- 6) independent researchers.

Table 2 and Table 3 present the numerical composition of students and teaching staff for the period 2018-2021.

Analyzing the data presented in Table 2, one can notice that the largest increase in students at all levels of education was observed in 2018, then 2021 is characterized by a reduction in all categories under consideration. A stable increase over the period under review is observed in the number of students in secondary schools; at the same time, the number of students in technical and vocational organizations, as well as higher education, had a relatively stable increase, decreasing in 2019 and 2020 by 2.9% and 4.6%, respectively. In 2018, the number of PhD students increased by almost 70%, decreasing only by 15.8% in 2021, which is largely due to increased awareness of entering doctoral studies, as well as increased requirements for PhD - students.

From Table 3 it can be seen that the number of teaching staff with the scientific degree of Candidate of Sciences and the degree of Doctor of Philosophy (PhD) over the analyzed period, on

Table 2:
Number of students (different levels of education) for 2017-2021

Category of students	Years / changes from previous year (+/-, in %)				
	2017	2018	2019	2020	2021
Number of students in secondary schools*	3039086	3175903/+4.5	3327777/+4.8	3472182/+4.3	3589275/+3.4
The number of students studying in organizations of technical and vocational, post-secondary education	489337	489818/+0.1	475443/-2.9	477539/+0.4	494042/+3.5
Number of students in higher education organizations	269649	292231/+8.4	321643/+10.1	306799/-4.6	309000/+0.7
Number of master's students	34609	38594/+11.5	35690/-7.5	34619/-3.0	36483/+5.4
Number of PhD student	2136	3625/+69.7	4173/+15.1	4462/+6.9	3756/-15.8
Average change for the analyzed period	-	18.8	3.9	0.8	-0.6

Note - *Data presented for 2017/2018-2021/2022 academic years.

Source: Compiled by the authors according to the official website of the Bureau of National Statistics of the Agency for Strategic Planning and Reforms of the Republic of Kazakhstan

Table 3:
Number of teaching staff in organizations of technical and professional, higher and postgraduate education for the 2017/2018-2020/2021 academic years

Indicator	At the beginning of the school year:					Average increase in the indicator for the analyzed period, %
	2017-2018	2018-2019	2019-2020	2020-2021	2021-2022	
The main staff, in total, includes:	38212	38275	38470	36307	36378	-4.9
academic master's degree	12098	12337	12995	13067	13818	9.0
Doctor of Philosophy (PhD) degree	1854	2157	2635	2942	3410	53.3
Scientific Doctoral Degree in the field	208	222	235	137	138	-29.0
Scientific Degree of Candidate of Sciences	3251	3197	3274	11514	11116	251.7
Scientific title of Professor	13276	12896	12723	2280	2365	-85.5
Scientific title of Associate Professor	2349	2291	2466	5345	5235	121.5

Source: Compiled by the authors according to the official website of the Bureau of National Statistics of the Agency for Strategic Planning and Reforms of the Republic of Kazakhstan

average, increased by 251.7% and 53.3%, respectively, while the number of Doctors of Science decreased by 29%. There is also an annual increase in teachers with academic master's degree and the scientific title of associate professor, while a reduction of 85.5% is noted for teachers with the scientific title of professor: this trend is mainly associated with strengthening requirements for candidates (Order of the Minister of Education and Science of the Republic of Kazakhstan dated March 31, 2011 No. 218 with the latest changes and additions 01/09/2023).

In general, the teaching staff of universities still remains one of the main target audiences of educational tourism due to their active scientific and academic activities, as well as due to the funding of science and support for scientists from the state. So, for example, from 2022, Kazakhstani scientists are annually allocated 500 grants for internships abroad in the leading research centers and universities of the world, 1000 research grants «Zhas Galym» («Young Scientist»), 50 awards «Best Researcher» (with a premium of 6,900,000 tenge, which is about 14.500 US dollars), grant and program-targeted funding competitions are held; each of these measures provides for the possibility of business trips to foreign universities and research centers, as well as inviting foreign scientists to implement joint scientific projects.

From a supply perspective, the educational tourism market is represented by:

- 1) travel agencies and operators specializing in providing services in the field of educational tourism (both outbound and inbound);
- 2) travel agencies and operators whose main specialization is related to the provision of a wide range of tourism services, including educational tourism;
- 3) educational institutions that are ready to receive foreign and domestic educational tourists, including those providing educational programs in English and other foreign languages;
- 4) state and non-state institutions implementing tasks in the field of development of event tourism, including educational ones;
- 5) objects of accommodation, food, entertainment, transport, performing a secondary supporting function, but without which it is impossible to create a full-fledged tourist offer in the field of educational tourism.

Table 4 provides information on the main indicators of tourism development for the period 2017-2021. Unfortunately, there are no data directly reflecting the current state of the educational tourism market from the perspective of the activities of travel companies and tour operators (with the exception of the section «Distribution of students of higher educational institutions by countries of arrival» of the statistical yearbook «Tourism of Kazakhstan» for 2017-2021) in official statistics presented, therefore, the development of this type of tourism can only be discussed based on information from the National Center for the Development of Higher Education ENIC-Kazakhstan, as well as information from individual travel agencies providing services in the field of educational tourism.

Table 4 shows that over a 5-year period, the share of tourism GVA in the country's GDP varied in the range from 0.6 to 1.3%; the number of accommodation places in 2021 compared to 2017 increased by 1.2 times, the number of sanatorium and resort organizations, on average, increased by 4 units during the analyzed period; it is important to note that in 2017-2021, the number of residents who went abroad for various purposes (including educational tourism) amounted to about 38 million people, having decreased significantly in 2020-2021 due to the current restrictions caused by the COVID-19 coronavirus pandemic. At the same time, a similar situation was observed in the number of non-resident visitors who entered the Republic of Kazakhstan; starting from 2019, their number

Table 4:
Key indicators of tourism development in the Republic of Kazakhstan for 2017-2021

Indicator / years	2017	2018	2019	2020	2021*
Share of gross value added directly in tourism in gross domestic product, percent	1.3	1.3	1.2	0.6	-
Number of placements, units	2987	3322	3592	3514	3686
Number of sanatorium and resort organizations, units	144	145	145	153	162
Number of resident visitors of the Republic of Kazakhstan who traveled abroad, people	10260813	10646241	10707270	2865004	3501387
Number of non-resident visitors who entered the Republic of Kazakhstan, people	7701196	8789314	8514989	2034753	1330169

Note - *Data not available

Source: Compiled by the authors based on data from the statistical yearbook «Tourism of Kazakhstan» for 2017-2021 by the Bureau of National Statistics of the Agency for Strategic Planning and Reforms of the Republic of Kazakhstan.

rapidly decreased: in 2019 - by 3.12%; in 2020 - by 76.1%; in 2021 - by 34.63%. The tourism market of Kazakhstan experienced significant difficulties during the pandemic, which were only to some extent offset by domestic tourists: their increase in 2021 compared to 2020 was 53.5%.

According to the egov.kz¹ portal data, as of September 19, 2023, the number of tour operators in Kazakhstan is 40 units, tour operators-charterers - 8, tour operators who left the guarantee system - 11. As for the number of travel companies, their number is not officially presented to the Bureau of National Statistics, but, according to the materials of the corporate fund «Touristik Kamkor», the number of travel agencies on the payroll is 367 units. Most travel companies and operators are focused on outbound tourism, including educational tourism. Unfortunately, in Kazakhstan there is no record of organizations that have a clear, expressed specialization in the field of educational tourism, however, several examples of travel agencies in the context of regions of the country that provide services of this kind can be given (Table 5).

Table 5:
Examples of educational tours provided by travel agencies in Kazakhstan

Name of travel agency, company / location	Directions	Tourism specialization
Travel company «Idealnyi Variant» (Pavlodar city)	Malta, UK, Cyprus	Language training, vacation time (summer camps)
Travel company LLP «Asia-tour 1994» (Uralsk city)	CIS countries, foreign countries	Group tours for schoolchildren and students (including during the holidays), language training
	USA, UK, China, Czech Republic, Poland, Malaysia	Getting an education: schools, colleges, universities
Travel company «Helios» (Astana, Karaganda)	Canada, Malaysia, USA, Czech Republic	Double degree programs (Czech Republic + Canada, Czech Republic + USA), summer preparation courses for the IELTS exam, summer camps, international camp for future leaders, «Travel and English» for students and adults, etc.
Network of travel agencies «Chemodan» (Karaganda, Almaty, Baikonur, Astana, Atyrau, Kyzyl-Orda, Aktau, Aktobe, Taraz, Kostanay, Pavlodar, Shymkent cities)	England (Bristol), Canada (Toronto), USA (New York), Northern Cyprus	Summer programs (vacations + training)
Travel company «Limpopo Travel» (Ust-Kamenogorsk city)	Europe, UAE, Malta	Studying in the Czech Republic, obtaining education (various levels) in Europe, language courses for children and adults, gaining horse riding skills
Get Education (Almaty city)	Australia, Germany, Canada, New Zealand, Austria, Ireland, Cyprus, USA, UK, Spain, Malta, France, Hungary, Italy, Netherlands, Switzerland	Obtaining school education, bachelor's, master's, language courses for children and adults, group trips abroad
Myczechia.kz (Almaty city)	Czech Republic	Czech and Slovak language courses, admission to universities in the Czech Republic
LLP «EDUCATION TOP» (Almaty city)	USA, Canada, UK, Hungary, Northern Cyprus, Netherlands, Ireland, Spain, Italy, Germany, Czech Republic	Bachelor's, Master's, language courses
Logos Education Centre (Almaty and Atyrau cities)	Australia, Austria, UK, Germany, Holland, Ireland, Spain, Italy, Canada, Cyprus, China, Latvia, Malaysia, Malta, New Zealand, UAE, Poland, Slovakia, USA, Turkey, France, Czech Republic and South Korea	Business education, higher education, vacation courses, university preparation programs (foundation), language courses, secondary education

Source: Compiled by the authors based on data from travel agencies and companies as of 2023

¹ https://egov.kz/cms/ru/articles/guarantee_system_participants

It is also important to note that over the past 3-5 years, a certain pool of companies has formed in the tourism and educational market of Kazakhstan offering full-cycle study abroad services: from the moment of choosing a program to accompaniment to the place of study. On the one hand, the emergence of such companies simplifies the process of entering abroad for many schoolchildren and students, as well as their parents, on the other hand, it contributes to the development of the outbound educational tourism market. As for inbound educational tourism, it develops, as a rule, thanks to the active academic policy of universities in terms of their international collaboration and globalization of the educational environment, as well as through the implementation of various event activities to popularize the cultural and historical heritage of the country.

Considering the pronounced interdisciplinarity of educational tourism, its poor study from both the supply and demand sides in the Republic of Kazakhstan, the relevance of the presented scientific article is beyond doubt. Another undeniable advantage of conducting research within this scientific direction is the small number of publications by domestic colleagues, while educational tourism is a unique tool for the development of a successful, effective and modern educational environment, the formation of personal and professional skills, student-centered learning, as well as the implementation of the Life Long Learning concept.

In connection with all of the above, the purpose of this scientific article is to analyze the current state and problems, as well as identify prospects for the development of educational tourism based on expert and consumer surveys. Thus, the following research questions were identified:

I. In the framework of an expert survey:

1. What are the features of consumption and provision of products and services in the field of educational tourism? (RQ1).
2. What information and communication tools are used to promote educational tourism products on the market? (RQ2).
3. What are the main promising directions for the development of educational tourism, from the point of view of experts? (RQ3).

II. As part of a poll of higher school students:

1. How well are students of higher educational institutions familiar with the nature and specifics of the development of educational tourism?? (RQ4).
2. Do students consider it necessary to include the educational tourism in their educational path? (RQ5).

2. Literature Review

Recently, within the framework of the research of educational tourism, several key scientific directions have emerged related to:

- 1) analysis of the conceptual foundations of educational tourism: its essence and component composition;
- 2) development of the most effective models that complement educational tourism in the activities of, as a rule, higher educational institutions through the prism of successful foreign experience;
- 3) assessment of academic mobility of students as one of the key directions in the formation and development of educational tourism in different countries and regions of the world;
- 4) studying the relationship between key aspects of the development of educational tourism and the activities of educational institutions, mainly universities;
- 5) study of educational tourism in its relationship with the digital transformation of educational processes and the service sector.

Within the first direction, part of the scientific work is devoted to studying the problems of expanding the boundaries of knowledge (Falk et al., 2012) through the prism of travel, studying the relationship between the learning process and tourism (Gibson, 1998; Huang, 2008; Mamrayeva et al., 2023; Mamrayeva & Tashenova, 2023; McGladdery & Lubbe, 2017; Stone & Petrick, 2013; Tanina et al., 2022), as well as determining the role of educational tourism as an effective tool for realizing the tourist-recreational and cultural-historical potential of the country and region (Osipova & Kazmina, 2021; Rátz et al., 2020; Rozak et al., 2021; Suriani & Fatriani, 2022). In addition, a number of authors study the motivational aspects that shape the potential demand for educational tourism products (Abubakar et al., 2014; Castillo Arredondo et al., 2018; Michael et al., 2004; Rahman et al., 2017; Sánchez et al., 2006), or identify problems that hinder the active development of international academic exchange (Doyle et al., 2010).

Research articles of the second and third scientific directions reveal aspects of modeling educational tourism and the features of its implementation in the educational process of educational institutions (Luthfianto & Anggita, 2022; Nurrahman et al., 2022; Ojo et al., n.d.), in addition, a special role is given to aspects creating competitive advantages for sustainable tourism destinations, some of which can be formed through the implementation of educational tourism concepts and ideas (Arrasyid et al., 2021; Hussein et al., 2022; Irfan et al., 2023; Kusdiyanti et al., 2022; Suharsono et al., 2023).

The fourth pool of works is devoted to assessing the role of the analyzed type of tourism in improving the quality of educational standards of universities (Athena Smith, 2013; Suciu et al., 2022; Tomasi et al., 2020), issues of organizing tourist-oriented education (Vieira et al., n.d.), developing theoretical frameworks for academic exchange and student mobility (Cai et al., 2015; Hobbs, 2019; Maga & Nicolau, 2018), as well as determining the primary/secondary nature of the educational and tourism components that shape educational tourism (Glover, 2011).

It is also important to note that scientists pay special attention to studying the role of effective tools for managing academic activities, as well as barriers to the development of academic mobility in higher education (Albien & Mashatola, 2021; Elken et al., 2023; Gareis & Broekel, 2022; Juškevičienė et al., 2022; Liu, 2021; Lo et al., 2022; López-Duarte et al., 2021); in addition, scientific works address the issues of internationalization of universities, through the active development of student exchange, the formation of intercultural competencies, including through participation in the Erasmus+ program (Chowdury et al., 2022; Czerska-Shaw & Krzaklewska, 2022; Lesjak et al., 2015; Sierra-Huedo & Foucart, 2022; Song & Kim, 2022; Van Mol & Perez-Encinas, 2022; Zimmermann et al., 2021); also, within the framework of the scientific issues under consideration, works devoted to the study of factors in choosing universities by students in the context of academic mobility programs are highlighted (Brooks & Waters, 2022; En et al., 2021; Shkoler & Rabenu, 2022; Sidhu & Ishikawa, 2022), analysis of the impact of the pandemic COVID-19 on globalization processes, including the educational environment (Cairns & França, 2022; Ghosh & Jing, 2020; Li & Ai, 2022; Mok et al., 2021; Yang et al., 2022), as well as aspects of the transformation of academic processes exchange in modern conditions (Abdulai & Roosalu, 2022; Glass & Cruz, 2023; Kirloskar & Inamdar, 2021; Laqua, 2023; Peters et al., 2021).

Digitalization of educational activities, the acceleration of which is largely due to the COVID-19 coronavirus pandemic, has become an integral part of the service sector (Bojanova et al., 2010; Singh Bhadouria et al., 2010). Recently, the role of social media in promoting educational tourism products (Iranmanesh et al., 2022; A. Irfan et al., 2017), 3D visualization tools and 3D environments (Y.-C. Huang et al., 2012; Vlizos et al., 2021), virtual reality applications and platform solutions for solving problems in the field of education (Abdelmonem et al., 2017; Ariffin et al., n.d.; Bafadhal et al., 2021; Yung & Khoo-Lattimore, 2019), digital ecosystems (Cont̃ et al., n.d.; Sumarmi et al., 2023; Rozie et al., 2022; Tserklevych et al., n.d.; Zarzuela et al., n.d.) and SMART tools (Mamrayeva et al., 2022; Mamrayeva & Tashenova, 2022; Tashenova et al., 2022), the use of which makes it possible to individualize and popularize educational tourism destinations, as well as simplify the process of connectivity between all market participants.

Of course, given the multifaceted nature and complexity of studying this economic phenomenon, constant monitoring of publications is necessary, which would allow us to assess the current state and highlight further promising directions for the development of educational tourism not only from the position of a scientific category of certain scientific interest, but also from the perspective of an effective practical tool, the implementation of which in the educational environment of educational institutions can bring a pronounced multiplier effect.

3. Methods

The key methods that were used in this scientific article are the following:

- 1) generalization method, based on which the essence and component composition of educational tourism was determined, as well as the potential multiplier effect of its implementation;
- 2) method of systematization and content analysis, which made it possible to analyze the current state of educational tourism in Kazakhstan, as well as highlight the key directions of its development, through the study of more than 831 works from the scientometric databases WoS, Scopus and RSCI;
- 3) method of expert interviews (the total number of interviewed respondents was 63 experts, represented by 20 regions of the Republic of Kazakhstan, including cities of republican significance - Astana, Almaty and Shymkent), which made it possible to highlight the features of consumption

and provision of products and services in the field of educational tourism, to determine a set of information communication tools that are largely used to promote educational tourism products on the market, as well as to identify promising directions for the development of educational tourism, from the point of view of experts; a questionnaire was developed (in Google Forms), consisting of 4 blocks (33 questions), which was distributed among experts using a generated Internet link; in addition, some respondents (about 27%) answered the questionnaire «offline»;

4) method of poll of higher school students (the number of respondents was 231 people in the context of 20 regions of Kazakhstan, including cities of republican significance - Astana, Almaty and Shymkent), which made it possible to determine the level of students' awareness of the essence and features of educational tourism, as well as to identify potential student demand for the inclusion of educational tourism in their higher education pathways; for conducting this poll, a questionnaire was also developed in Google Forms, consisting of 3 blocks (24 questions); its distribution was carried out using social networks, as well as instant messaging services (WhatsApp, Telegram, Viber, Facebook Messenger).

4. Results

All the main results obtained within the framework of the scientific issues under study can be divided into 2 key groups: 1) the results of the expert interview; 2) conclusions drawn from the poll of higher education students.

1) 63 respondents from different regions and cities of republican significance of Kazakhstan took part in the expert interview: their brief characteristics, as well as the companies they represent, are presented in Table 6. The entire questionnaire developed for the expert survey included 4 blocks (general number of questions - 33):

Table 6:
Characteristics of experts who took part in the survey

Indicator	Description
1. General information about the companies that the respondents represent	
Region in which the organization operates	Experts from companies from all 20 regions of Kazakhstan are represented, including cities of republican significance; at the same time, the main share of respondents falls on: Astana (19%), Mangistau region (19%), Almaty (17.5%), Aktobe, Almaty and Atyrau regions (6.3% each, respectively).
Number of employees working in the company	7 or more - 66.7%; 4-6 - 25.4%; 1-3 - 7.9%.
The number of years during which the company whose representative answered the questions has been operating on the tourism market in the Republic of Kazakhstan	6-10 years - 55.6%; more than 10 years - 23.8%; 1-5 years - 20.6%.
The impact of the COVID-19 coronavirus pandemic on the nature and specifics of the company's activities	«The pandemic had a significant negative impact» - 44.4%; «Due to the impact of the pandemic, the company almost completely rebuilt its business system and revised the nature of the tourism products offered, placing greater emphasis on customization» - 44.4%; «Did not feel any significant changes after switching to the domestic market» - 15.9% of experts; «The pandemic did not have a significant impact, since it was possible to retain regular customers who were interested in other offers available during the pandemic» - 4.8%; «The impact of the pandemic was almost imperceptible on the nature of doing business» - 3.2% of surveyed representatives of tourism companies.
2. Socio-demographic characteristics of respondents	
Age	Under 25 years old - 39.7% 26-40 years old - 42.9% 41-55 years old - 15.9% Over 56 years old - 1.5%
Gender	Female - 69.8% Male - 30.2%
Position in the company	Manager - 42.9% Head of the organization - 23.8% Head of the department - 19% Head of the direction (tourism specialization) - 14.3%
The level of education	Higher education (education in tourism) - 50.8% Higher education (the education received is not related to the tourism specialty) - 23.8% Postgraduate (completed master's degree in tourism) - 14.3% Postgraduate (completed master's degree in a specialty not related to tourism) - 7.9% Secondary specialized education (college) - 1.6% Postgraduate (completed PhD / postgraduate studies in a specialty not related to tourism) - 1.6%

Source: Compiled by the authors based on the results of an expert survey

- block 1 - «Features of consumption and provision of products and services in the field of educational tourism»;
- block 2 - «Information and communication tools used to promote educational tours»;
- block 3 - «Promising directions for the development of educational tourism»;
- block 4 - «General information about the organization»;
- Block 5 - «Socio-demographic characteristics of the respondent».

From the data in Table 6 basically, the experts are representatives of medium and large tourism organizations, whose average roster exceeds 7 people; at the same time, the age of companies on the market is 6-10 years, the rest is 1-6 years old. It is also important to note that the COVID-19 pandemic had a significant negative impact on 44.4% of travel agencies; 44.4% of respondents note that due to the impact of the pandemic, the company has almost completely rebuilt its business system and reviewed the nature of the tourism products offered, placing greater emphasis on customization and the development of a unique, highly specialized tourism offer. Speaking directly about the «portrait» of the expert, it is important to note that these are mainly specialists aged 25-40 years (82.6% of all respondents), female, who are managers, heads of directions (inbound / outbound / domestic tourism) and departments, or heads of organizations who, as a rule, have higher and postgraduate education, including a tourism profile.

According to the survey, experts note:

1.1. regarding the characteristics of consumption and provision of services in the field of educational tourism (RQ1):

- the following types of tourism are the most popular among the clients: cultural and cognitive (41.3%), sports and recreational (20.6%), educational (12.7%), business, including event tourism (9.5%), pilgrimage (7.9%) and nostalgic (7.9%; including visiting relatives);
- about 57.2% of respondents believe that educational tourism has become quite popular over the past 5 years;
- a larger number of educational tours and its varieties (short-term and long-term training trips), language courses, attending master classes, etc.) are purchased by clients, as a rule, in the summer (41.3%), autumn (23.8%) and spring (19%); winter accounts for 15.9% of sales; this situation is due to the fact that a greater number of educational tourist services are implemented during the period of the beginning of university admissions campaigns abroad, the beginning of vacation time, as well as the holding of significant / thematic events during this season;
- the frequency of clients contacting for information, formation and execution of an educational tour varies from 1-2 times a month to 1-2 times a six months (72.3% of respondents), while about 9.5% of respondents note that they are contacted on this issue every day, which indicates the growing popularity of the analyzed type of tourism;
- the average duration of educational tours, according to experts, usually corresponds to the duration of language courses and / or correlates with the duration of study at a foreign university (within the framework of constant support of the student by the travel agency / tour operator);
- the regions the most often chosen by clients as part of an educational tour include: Europe (65.1%), Asia (20.6%), North America (19%) and South America (12.7%); Asia-Pacific and African countries account for only 9.6% of potential demand;
- the countries that are most popular when organizing educational tours are the following: Italy, Spain, France, Czech Republic, USA, Great Britain and South Korea; less popular - Canada, Poland, China, Singapore, Russia;
- as key motivational factors that guide clients when choosing an educational tour, experts note: the desire to get an education abroad (25.4%), business trips (20.6%), learning foreign languages, getting to know the culture of another country (19%), attending an educational event (15.9%), combining the opportunity to gain new knowledge and relax abroad (14.3%), the desire to talk about yourself, your achievements and your country while studying abroad (3.2%), and also the development of communication skills, the emergence of new acquaintances (1.6%);
- among the accommodation facilities that are most popular within the framework of an educational tour, we can highlight: when undergoing short-term training, clients mainly choose hotels, for long-term training - dormitories / houses with family accommodation / university campuses (intended for living) / hostels, etc.;
- when choosing the type of food, according to experts, clients most often pay equal attention to such options as full and half board; at the same time, some tourists consider food not the most important aspect, since they plan to resolve this issue directly on the spot upon arrival; there is

also a certain pool of consumers who would like to receive in advance a list of restaurants / cafes / canteens within the framework of their food preferences and type of food: halal, kosher, vegetarian, vegan, etc., which, of course, is also taken into account by the management of travel companies;

- among the additional services that clients usually ask to be included in an educational tour, the most prominent are the following: transfer from the airport / from the train station - to the airport / to the train station, individual transfer to the place of training / course / educational event, etc. due to unfamiliarity with the area, language and transport infrastructure, meeting and individual support (usually for people with disabilities), full documentary support, including submission of documents to an educational institution, entertainment program, including excursion services, visits to concerts, circuses, etc., as well as interesting events, searching and organizing language training in addition to completing basic training;
- according to the experts' responses, the problems that travel companies face when designing and organizing educational tours include: lack of knowledge by the organization's managers of foreign languages (English, Chinese, etc.) necessary to simplify communication with foreign colleagues and educational institutions/centers etc., the difficulty of coordinating the actions of all participants - tour organizers, lack of understanding on the part of clients of the peculiarities of the work of foreign educational institutions, as well as the reluctance of clients to pay for additional services related to the translation of documents, apostille, their forwarding, etc.;
- about 28.6% of respondents answered that educational tourism today is a fairly profitable and promising line of business; 20.6% believe that today there is a high demand for foreign educational services; 31.8% note that a wide range of educational events available to offer as a finished tourism product, as well as a large selection of educational institutions ready to provide educational tourism services abroad on a paid basis, open up new opportunities for the domestic tourism business.

1.2. regarding the selection of information and communication tools used to promote educational tours (RQ2):

- 71.5% of experts note that their agencies have their own website and pages on social networks to promote services with an average frequency of updates - weekly, as they believe that the client should constantly receive up-to-date information; about 23.8% of respondents on the basis of their travel companies use a third-party company platform to communicate with clients (for example, a travel agent uses a tour operator's website to select and design a tourism product, without having its own web page), since they do not have the financial ability to develop and site support;
- as additional communication channels to promote educational tours, companies use: television advertising, audiovisual advertising on billboards, presentation of educational tours at various schools, colleges, higher educational institutions, etc.; to a lesser extent they resort to radio advertising, classic static advertising on billboards, as well as print advertising (distributing leaflets, business cards, advertising newspapers, etc.);
- more than 72% of companies regularly conduct marketing research and surveys to determine the level of satisfaction with the quality of services provided in the field of educational tourism, using the services of either professional consulting and marketing agencies, or implementing this work independently; this measure allows us to develop recommendations for the further development of the product strategy in terms of the formation and implementation of educational services;

1.3. in terms of identifying the main promising directions for the development of educational tourism (RQ3):

- experts' assessment of the level of development of outbound educational tourism in the context of regions of Kazakhstan is as follows (a 10-point scale was used, where 1 point is «poorly developed» and 10 is «very well developed»): Almaty and Kyzylorda regions, Astana, Almaty and Shymkent cities - 8 points, Aktobe, Atyrau, East Kazakhstan and Mangistau regions - 7 points, Akmola, West Kazakhstan, Karaganda, North Kazakhstan, Pavlodar, Turkestan, Abay, Zhetisu and Ulytau regions - 6 points, Zhambyl and Kostanay regions - 5 points; **thus, the average assessment of the development of outbound educational tourism in the country is 6.6 points, which, according to a previously defined scale, can be characterized as «above average»;**
- experts' assessment of the level of development of inbound educational tourism in the context of regions of Kazakhstan was obtained as follows (a 10-point scale was also used, where

- 1 point is «poorly developed» and 10 is «very well developed»): Almaty, Aktobe, Akmola regions, Astana, Almaty, Shymkent cities - 8 points, Atyrau, West Kazakhstan, East Kazakhstan, Karaganda, Turkestan regions - 7 points, Zhambyl, Kostanay, Kyzylorda, Mangistau, North Kazakhstan, Pavlodar, Abay, Zhetisu, Ulytau regions - 6 points; **similarly, we will calculate the average assessment of the development of inbound educational tourism in the Republic of Kazakhstan, which will be 6.85 points, which corresponds to the level «above average»;**
- the obtained results of average assessments of the development of outbound and inbound educational tourism in Kazakhstan are fully correlated with the current level of supply and demand in the tourism services market;
 - **as the most promising areas for the development of educational tourism in Kazakhstan, experts highlight:** obtaining higher and postgraduate education abroad (bachelor's, master's, doctoral studies), attending educational events, taking language courses / learning foreign languages, organizing weekend tours for educational purposes, organizing environmental tours for scientific, educational and volunteer purposes, as well as organizing the possibility of conducting research work abroad (as part of scientific trips) on the basis of leading educational and research centers; **as less promising** - participation in professional practices (for example, organized for students of archaeology, historians, geographers, etc.), organization of short-term study trips for teachers / staff of colleges and universities abroad, professional retraining of personnel of various qualifications abroad, organization of trips university employees to participate in scientific and practical conferences.

2) Further in the work, a poll of higher school students was conducted (including 3 blocks of questions), in which 231 respondents over 18 years old took part. The results of the student survey allowed us to obtain the following conclusions:

2.1. in terms of studying the level of students' awareness of the nature and specifics of educational tourism (RQ4):

- 57.6% of respondents are well aware of the specifics of educational tourism and believe that this area is very relevant and has a clear prospect for implementation in the educational process, since it is very developed abroad; at the same time, most of the respondents had already encountered elements of educational tourism while studying in school, in the form of organizing hikes (for example, as part of the study of such disciplines as «geography», «biology»), getting acquainted with flora and fauna in nature, collecting herbarium, trips to museums, visits to zoos, experimentariums, etc.; as students note, thanks to this methodological approach, learning was interesting and entertaining;
- students consider the leading countries in the development of the educational services are the following: the USA, Great Britain, Canada, China, France, Russia, Germany, Spain, Poland, the Czech Republic and Turkey, which largely correlates with the opinion of experts, and also coincides with the current offer on the educational market services;
- among the types of educational tourism that are most expedient to develop in Kazakhstan, respondents noted: obtaining education (higher, postgraduate), internships of any form, language courses / in-depth language learning programs, attending seminars, master classes, cultural and sports events, receiving education (higher, postgraduate), professional development programs, organization of weekend tours for educational purposes, as well as organization of educational tours focused on self-development, achieving personal goals, self-realization;

2.2. in terms of studying the need to include educational tourism in their educational trajectory (RQ6):

- to the question «Would you like your training to include more excursions, tourist trips (to get acquainted with flora and fauna, observe the behavior of animals in real natural conditions, orienteering, constructing geographic maps, etc.), opportunities visiting summer and winter schools of other universities (including to gain new knowledge and skills, or to «upgrade» existing ones)?» the majority of respondents answered «yes», additionally indicating that this is very important for the process of cognition and mastering the material in the learning process, and also noting that the interactive approach to learning is «success in studying any discipline»;
- 99.5% of students would like «educational tourism» to be included in the educational process as an independent academic discipline and they would be given the opportunity to choose it to gain new knowledge, develop communication skills, form new skills, etc.; in particular, students

explained that such an opportunity would in many ways make the learning process more interesting, it would be a good opportunity to develop communication skills and broaden their horizons, and would also introduce more interdisciplinary nature into the learning trajectory, making it more interesting and accessible in terms of the implementation of student goals, ideas and tasks that combine knowledge from various scientific fields; in addition, such an approach would make it possible to implement the concept of student-centeredness in practice;

- as the key forms within which educational tourism should be implemented, respondents identify: internships (in Kazakhstan and abroad), attending seminars, master classes, cultural and sporting events on the topics of the discipline, organizing weekend tours for educational purposes, participation at conferences, summer and winter educational Schools, online learning (including MOOC opportunities), which involves a free and convenient schedule, a one-time inspection of a tourist site / sites, the opportunity to visit and work on the basis of various laboratories and research centers of other faculties without barriers and difficulties, since this contributes to broadening one’s horizons (for example, visiting a robotics center, despite the fact that the student is receiving a liberal arts education), as well as the opportunity to undergo a kind of internship at a university as a teaching assistant to develop communication skills within a specific discipline (disciplines).

The final block of questions in the questionnaire - «Socio-demographic characteristics of the respondent» included 2 questions, the answers to which are presented in Table 7.

Table 7:
Socio-demographic characteristics of respondents

Indicator	Answers
Age	Up to 25 years - 89.6% 26-35 years old - 5.6% 36-45 years old - 3.5% Over 45 years - 1.3%

Source: Compiled by the authors based on the research results

It is also important to note that about 58% of respondents are from the Karaganda region, the rest of the respondents are distributed among all regions of Kazakhstan, most of which are from Almaty, Kyzylorda, Ulytau, Akmola regions and the cities of Astana and Almaty.

In general, the expert survey and student poll conducted made it possible to identify the nature of the supply and consumption of educational tourism services in the Kazakhstan market, as well as to determine its promising areas of development, the implementation of which will allow, on the one hand, the development of unique customized offers (with high added value), on the other, take into account the latent demand of potential consumers, not previously taken into account. Also, the successful implementation of educational tourism in the educational trajectory of higher education students will provide an opportunity to put into practice aspects of student-centered learning.

5. Conclusion and Discussion

Within the framework of this scientific article, a comprehensive author’s definition of educational tourism was proposed, which made it possible to highlight its essential features and component composition, represented by the tourist and educational components, the primary and secondary nature of which is determined by the motivational factors of market subjects; the current state of educational tourism in Kazakhstan in terms of regions is also analyzed: it is important to note that the main players in the tourism market are mainly focused on outbound educational tours of various types: from taking language courses, participating in educational and educational events to obtaining a full-fledged education - secondary, higher and postgraduate; in addition, companies began to appear on the market providing full-cycle services in this area, starting from the moment clients choose an educational institution, ending with physical accompaniment to their destination, which, of course, eliminates language barriers, and in general, simplifies the process of communication between clients (as usually parents sending their child abroad for education) and the receiving party. Through expert interviews, a set of ICT tools was also outlined, which is widely used to promote educational tourism products on the market (among them: official websites of companies, pages on social networks, television, audiovisual advertising on billboards and «physical» presentations of educational tours based on schools,

universities and other educational institutions), the need for its further development in all regions of the country is outlined.

In turn, a poll of higher school students made it possible to determine the level of students' awareness of the essence and features of educational tourism (for example, about 58% of respondents are familiar with this type of tourism and consider it a relevant area with a clear prospect for implementation in the educational process), as well as to identify potential demand of students for the inclusion of educational tourism in their educational trajectory within higher education: more than 95% of students would like «educational tourism» to be included in the educational process as an independent academic discipline and students would be given the opportunity to choose it to obtain new knowledge, development of communication skills, formation of new skills; in turn, as the most important forms within which it should be implemented, respondents note: internships (in Kazakhstan and abroad), attending seminars, master classes, cultural and sporting events on the topics of the discipline being studied, organizing weekend tours with educational purposes, participation in conferences, Summer and Winter Schools organized at universities.

Further directions of the authors' research will be associated with the subsequent study of the world's progressive experience in eliminating the existing imbalance between «learning», «cognition» and «travelling», as well as with the development and subsequent testing models for the implementation of educational tourism in the higher education system of Kazakhstan based on the creation of a summer school program on the basis of the Karaganda Buketov University in the groups of educational programs «Service» and «Marketing and Advertising». It should also be noted that the authors of this article and the project implementers plan to develop a SMART audio guide «Tourist sites of Karaganda» as a conceptual complementary component of the system for implementing educational tourism in the learning environment of higher school students.

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