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Developing Youth Tourism Along the Great Silk Road: A Conceptual Perspective

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Abstract

This article aims to explore contemporary trends in the development of youth tourism along the Great Silk Road, focusing on historical heritage, sustainable travel practices, and the use of social media for sharing travel experiences. The study utilizes a qualitative approach to examine the interests and behaviors of young travelers. It looks at the increasing emphasis on cultural exchange and in-depth travel experiences, alongside the role of social media in enhancing these experiences. The conceptual approach is analyzed to provide a scientific basis for youth tourism development strategies. The findings reveal that young travelers are showing a heightened interest in the historical and cultural heritage of the Great Silk Road. Sustainable forms of travel and the use of social media for experience sharing are significant trends. The importance of cultural exchange and in-depth travel experiences is emphasized. The Great Silk Road is identified as a key influencer in shaping the future of youth tourism.

Keywords: Youth Tourism, The Great Silk Road, Silk Road Tourism, The Conceptual Approach, Sustainability, Circular Economy.

Introduction

More than 1.8 billion young people live worldwide, and the youth generation is the largest numerically to have ever inhabited our planet. The modern youth, aged between 14 to 35, comprises two generations – Millennials (Generation Y) and Zoomers (Generation Z). Millennials were born roughly from the early 1980s to the 2000s. Zoomers consist of individuals born from the late 2000s to around 2011s. Millennials, or Generation Y, being the largest group of adults living today, inevitably make up a significant portion of the tourism industry. The purchasing power of this generation is estimated at 200 billion dollars, making them an ideal

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The overwhelming majority of Millennials (97%) share their travel experiences on social media. Two-thirds post messages at least once a day. Social media has a tremendous impact on their booking choices: 87% of Millennials stated that Facebook inspired them to book accommodations, while over 50% mentioned that Pinterest or Twitter influenced their decisions (Widmer, 2022).

The share of Zoomers in the tourism industry will increase as they become an important market segment for travel companies. Generation Z actively utilizes technology and social media to plan and exchange information about their travels. They exert a significant influence on the digital space, spending up to eight hours a day on various online platforms. Research from the Global Web Index highlights this generation's active participation in social movements and their high screen time (Global Web Index, 2025). They consider social media as a powerful tool for expressing their opinions, creating personal brands, and actively engaging in creative content, including video content across different platforms (Porter Novelli, 2025).

These characteristics make Generation Z an ideal audience for youth tourism, which can leverage innovative technologies, social platforms, and opinion exchange to create unique and appealing offers. Young people actively seek new experiences and adventures, and the tourism industry can adapt its offerings by considering the interests and values of Generation Z. This includes not only tourist activities but also interactive and innovative forms of engagement supported by technology and social networks. In addition to sustainability and responsible travel, principles of the circular economy, such as resource sharing, reuse, and eco-innovation, are increasingly important for Generation Z travelers.

The average age worldwide is 30.5 years old (as of 2023). The largest share of youth resides in China, ranging from 14 to 28 years old. According to the United Nations (UN), youth are considered individuals between the ages of 15 and 24 (United Nations Organization, 2023). However, the World Health Organization (WHO) uses a different classification, where, from a medical perspective, young adulthood spans from 18 to 44 years old (World Health Organization, 2023).

According to the Agency for Strategic Planning and Reforms of the Republic of Kazakhstan and the Bureau of National Statistics, the youth population in 2023 increased compared to 2022, from 3,833,435 individuals to 5,726,629 individuals. This increase is not only attributed to demographic processes but also to the adopted changes in the Law of the Republic of Kazakhstan 'On State Youth Policy' dated December 26, 2022, where the boundaries of this age category were expanded (youth now encompass citizens of the Republic of Kazakhstan aged between 14 and 35) (On the State Youth Policy, 2015).

Youth not only contributes to economic development but also holds significant socio-cultural and innovative influence within the industry. The expansion of age boundaries provides a greater number of Kazakhstani citizens with the opportunity to benefit from state support measures and participate in various government programs, youth organizations, and volunteer activities. Broadening the age category of 'youth' may imply broader access to educational resources and programs for individuals who might have previously been excluded from this group. This could be particularly beneficial for those who choose to pursue education or professional training at a later stage in life.

Increased access to education can enhance the qualifications of the workforce, potentially

leading to a rise in skilled workers. This, in turn, might improve the country's competitiveness in the global labor market and contribute to economic development. Furthermore, expanding the age category of 'youth' could foster a more inclusive and diverse educational environment, potentially leading to a more tolerant and open society. A larger number of young people could nurture youth culture, ideas, and initiatives, fostering the emergence of new creative and innovative approaches, as well as facilitating the exchange of ideas and experiences among young individuals.

Regarding tourism, the expansion of the age category up to 35 years old could have a significant impact on youth tourism. It allows for broadening the target audience for youth tourism and increasing the volume of the tourist market. A wider age range means more potential tourists, which could contribute to the development of the tourism industry specialized in the needs and interests of young travelers. This creates new opportunities for tourism companies and enterprises for growth and expansion. Youth aged 14 to 35 have diverse interests and preferences. This diversity can drive the development of more varied tourism offerings to meet the needs of this audience. For instance, adventure tourism, ecotourism, cultural events, and youth festivals might become popular formats for youth tourism.

Engaging the youth can stimulate innovative solutions in the tourism sector, such as developing mobile applications, utilizing virtual reality, and other modern technologies. Expanding the age boundaries also contributes to the development of youth events, festivals, and activities that attract young travelers, fostering cultural exchange. Overall, expanding the age category of 'youth' for tourism purposes can stimulate industry growth, contribute to the development of new markets, and enrich the experiences of both young and more mature travelers.

At the same time, in the Republic of Kazakhstan, there is a lack of a comprehensive approach and insufficient attention to youth tourism as a distinct direction. The approved Concept for the development of the tourism industry for 2023-2029 (Approval of the Concept for the Development of the Tourism Industry of the Republic of Kazakhstan for 2023–2029, 2023) only mentions the creation of specialized tours targeting the youth audience, supporting entrepreneurial activity among young people to explore new areas in tourism, and actively involving youth in major tourist events, offering employment opportunities in service industries, guiding, and other fields. However, the proposed measures seem insufficient for the full development of youth tourism in Kazakhstan. Therefore, the question of the necessity to create a conceptual approach to the development of youth tourism remains relevant.

According to the research «The Power of Youth» which includes comments from experts, representatives of UNWTO, and other important organizations (The power of youth travel, 2010), the importance of youth travel was emphasized for stimulating economic and global development, as well as for the young travelers themselves. Considering that international trips are becoming increasingly appealing for new travelers with higher incomes from countries with developing economies, and the interest in youth travel continues to grow worldwide, entrepreneurs should pay special attention to this dynamic consumer group (The official website of World Tourism Organization, 2018).

The World Youth Student and Educational Travel Confederation (WYSE) and UNWTO believe that there are significant opportunities for governments to deepen their collaboration with youth traveling for economic and social benefits. This could contribute to the development and implementation of their long-term tourism policies and strategies (Sharpley, 2014).

Literature Review

Research on the development of youth tourism along the Great Silk Road represents an important area in the field of tourism and cultural connections. Dayoub, B., Yang, P., Omran, S., Zhang, Q., Dayoub, A. (2024) examine the concept of “Digital Silk Roads” and the role of the metaverse in promoting cultural tourism within the framework of the Belt and Road Initiative. The study highlights the potential of digital technologies to transform tourism experiences and enhance cultural exchange. Hall C. M. and Williams A. M. (2008) analyze the significance of innovations in the tourism sector, considering the mechanisms of their implementation and the impact on destination competitiveness. The authors explore the relationship between innovation, tourism policy and management practices. Martínez-González, J. A., Parra-López, E., & Barrientos-Báez, A. (2021) investigate young consumers’ intentions to participate in the sharing economy using an integrated model that includes behavioral and sustainability aspects of consumption. The paper analyzes the factors influencing youth engagement in sharing economy platforms, which is relevant for the development of sustainable tourism. The sharing economy model in youth tourism can be viewed as a practical application of circular economy principles, promoting resource efficiency and sustainability. Li X., Wang D., Li Y., Wu B. (2022) develop a methodology for assessing the sustainability and competitiveness of tourism destinations using data efficiency analysis (DEA). The work provides a quantitative tool for measuring tourism performance and strategic planning. Juraturgunov, H., Raimkulov, M., Ahn, Y. J., & Kang, E. M. (2023) examine the impact of tourism at Silk Road World Heritage sites on the formation of tourist loyalty. Using the example of American travelers to Uzbekistan, the perception of cultural heritage and its role in the development of sustainable tourism are analyzed. The authors investigate innovations that can effectively stimulate youth tourism, making it more appealing, convenient, and aligned with the modern expectations of young travelers.

Issues related to intercultural interaction along the Great Silk Road are examined in various studies, including those by Wangbing, L. (2024) who analyzes the opportunities and challenges of international cooperation in higher education in tourism among the Silk Road countries. The study considers the prospects for academic exchange, university partnerships, and the integration of educational programs. Chang, H.K. (2023) examines cultural interactions along the Silk Road from a historical perspective. The author considers the transnational processes of knowledge, technology, and tradition exchange between the civilizations of Eurasia. Akhmetzhanov, D., & Alimzhanova, A. (2019) analyze the intercultural interactions of the Silk Road countries, revealing the influence of cultural exchange on the formation of the modern social and economic landscape of the region. Dayoub B., Yang P., Omran S., Zhang Q., Chen X., Ahmed Noman Alabsi A. (2024) conduct a systematic review of the literature on the impact of the Belt and Road Initiative on tourism and cultural heritage along the Silk Road. The study highlights key areas for future research related to sustainable development and preservation of cultural sites. Liu, Y., Wang, Y., Dupre, K., & McIlwaine, C. (2022) study the impact of World Heritage status and heritage tourism on the living standards of local communities. Using China as an example, the socio-economic impacts of tourism development in heritage areas are analyzed. The authors delve into factors influencing youth choices for traveling along the Great Silk Road, considering the connection between youth tourism and education, emphasizing its importance in understanding the cultural heritage of the Great Silk Road. Analyzing the role of youth tourism along the Great Silk Road, researchers highlight its significance as a tool for strengthening international relations and intercultural exchange.

Trends in tourism development have been explored across multiple studies with a particular

focus on historical, cultural and economic aspects along the Silk Road. Li, X. (2020) examines the history and culture along the continental Silk Road, analyzing the processes of cultural and economic exchange between regions. Wood, J. (2023) examines the role of the Belt and Road Initiative in tourism development in the post-pandemic period, analyzing strategies for the recovery of the tourism sector. Peresolova, A. (2020) examines the potential for tourism development along the Silk Road through international cooperation, focusing on country partnerships and institutional support. Song, T., Cai, J., Niu, Y., Liu, C. and Chen, T. (2013) analyze the economic benefits of tourism using the Great Wall of China tourism area as a case study and its impact on regional development. Richards, G. (2018) reviews current research and trends in cultural tourism, considering its impact on the economy and tourist behavior. Yu, J., Safarov, B., Yi, L., Buzrukova, M., & Janzakov, B. (2023) study the adaptive evolution of cultural ecosystems and tourism heritage along the Silk Road using an analysis of 22 World Heritage sites in China. Xiaoyu, Z. (2020) examines the Belt and Road Initiative as a tool for building a co-development community, analyzing the economic and political aspects of international cooperation. Mishra, R. K. (2020) explores historical and contemporary interpretations of the Silk Road, analyzing its role in global history and contemporary geopolitical discourses. Winter, T. (2022) introduces the concept of the Silk Road as a space linking histories and future prospects, examining its significance in academic and policy debates. Kostopoulou, S., Sofianou, P.-K., & Tsiokanos, K. (2022) analyze the architectural heritage of the Silk Road and the possibilities of polycentric tourism development, proposing strategies for the preservation and use of cultural heritage sites. The authors provided an extensive overview of the history and current state of the Great Silk Road, highlighting its potential and noting the role of collaborative projects among the Great Silk Road countries in developing youth tourism and exchange. The authors discuss the challenges and issues faced by tourism developers along the Great Silk Road. Additionally, it is worth noting the report by the United Nations World Tourism Organization (UNWTO) titled 'Silk Road Tourism: Exploring New Opportunities,' which also examines the potential development of tourism along the Great Silk Road, including youth tourism (UNWTO, 2018).

Werenowska, A., & Rzepka, M. (2020) examine the impact of social media on the travel decision-making process of millennials using a case study in Poland. Cohen, E. (1979) analyzes the phenomenology of tourism experience, distinguishing between different types of tourists and their motivations. Zouni, G., Katsanakis, I., Klintsaris, C. (2024) conduct a comparative analysis of online travel behavior patterns of millennials and generation Z, identifying key differences. Pechlaner, H. (2023) examines youth tourism, its characteristics and impact on the tourism sector in an encyclopedic review. Han, J. H., & Bae, S. Y. (2022) examine the role of authenticity and nostalgia in the behavior of tourists visiting cultural heritage sites and their activity in social media. Researchers share a common focus on the experiences and behaviors of tourists, particularly youth travelers, in various contexts of heritage and global tourism. They explore themes such as the phenomenology of tourist experiences, the impact of the internet on young travelers' behaviors, and perceptions of authenticity in heritage tourism. These works collectively contribute to the understanding of how tourism is experienced and perceived by different demographics, with a special emphasis on the dynamics of youth tourism in a globalized world.

In contemporary research on youth tourism conducted in Kazakhstan in 2023, several key directions that reveal important aspects of this field stand out. In the works of authors examining the link between youth tourism and innovation, certain trends indicating the potential for

technological development in this segment are noted. Among them is the work of Tashenova L. V., Mamraeva D. G., Borbasova Z. N., Ayaganova M. P. (2023), which studies the functioning of business models and trends in the development of youth tourism in Kazakhstan. Sergeyeva A. M., Abdullina A. G., Albekova A. Y., Shumakova G. Zh. (2022) analyze how children's and youth tourism is organized in the regions of Kazakhstan, its structure, and quantitative parameters. Norboev A. I. (2023) examines measures for the development of youth tourism, the results of social surveys conducted among the population, as well as economic issues related to organizing youth tourism.

However, despite the identified trends and results of these studies, there is a lack of a conceptual approach to the development of youth tourism. The existing publications currently provide actual information and describe specific aspects, but there is a lack of a systematic view towards forming a comprehensive conceptual approach. The absence of a unified approach raises questions about the effectiveness and sustainability of current initiatives in youth tourism. Existing scientific research not only identifies existing trends in youth tourism but also emphasizes the necessity of developing a conceptual approach for more effective and sustainable development in this field. Developing a conceptual approach to youth tourism along the Great Silk Road, considering modern trends, will fill the existing gap in research.

The objective of this research is to provide a conceptual approach towards creating a structured model that will serve as the basis for developing effective strategies and programs for youth tourism development.

Materials and Methods

An interdisciplinary methodology was applied in the research, encompassing the analysis of existing literature, comparative analysis of global practices in youth tourism, observation methods, data analysis and comparison, as well as conducting surveys among the youth in Kazakhstan.

The authors conducted a sociological study among Kazakhstani youth aged 14 to 35, involving a total of 120 respondents. Among them, 70 individuals belonged to Generation Z, while the remaining 50 were Millennials. The survey spanned over 2 months and utilized online surveys created using Google Forms. This tool allowed for the creation of surveys with various question types, such as single-choice, multiple-choice, rating scales, open-text responses, and more. Google Forms facilitated sending the survey to the target audience via email or links, collecting data, and analyzing the responses using the platform's analytical tools. Microsoft Excel was used for mathematical data processing due to its extensive capabilities for working with tabular data, including functions for filtering, sorting, basic statistical analysis, creating graphs, etc. The obtained results were presented in the form of pie charts for ease of comprehension and analysis.

Based on this research, which includes an analysis of the infrastructure's state and the current situation in the youth tourism market using available statistical data (National Statistical Bureau of the Agency for Strategic Planning and Reforms of the Republic of Kazakhstan, 2025) and expert opinions gathered through discussions with tourism industry professionals – professors from our university and employees of tourism firms – the SWOT analysis was conducted to identify the prospects for the development of youth tourism along the Great Silk Road. This SWOT analysis considered data from the literature review, representing significant directions in tourism and cultural relations research.

In our opinion, the conceptual approach to studying youth tourism in Kazakhstan can be crucial

for understanding the trends in the tourism industry and developing new products and services to meet the needs of the youth, contributing to the country's economic and social development. The conceptual approach will enable:

- Inclusion of modern digital and technological aspects in tourism development since the youth are often oriented towards modern technologies and demand innovations in tourism.
- Formulation of strategies that consider and preserve the region's cultural heritage.
- Integration of sustainable practices in tourism development concerning environmental aspects and social responsibility.
- Involvement of various stakeholders, including governments, local communities, businesses, and youth organizations, to collaborate on tourism development.
- Definition of clear goals and strategies, enhancing the region's competitiveness in the tourism market.
- Establishment of a scientific basis for the development and implementation of youth tourism development strategies, which can serve as a foundation for further research and academic work.
- Creation of innovative strategies and pathways for developing tourism infrastructure, attracting youth, and stimulating interest in the history and culture of the regions that were part of this historic trade route.

Conceptual approach can be represented in the following Figure 1.

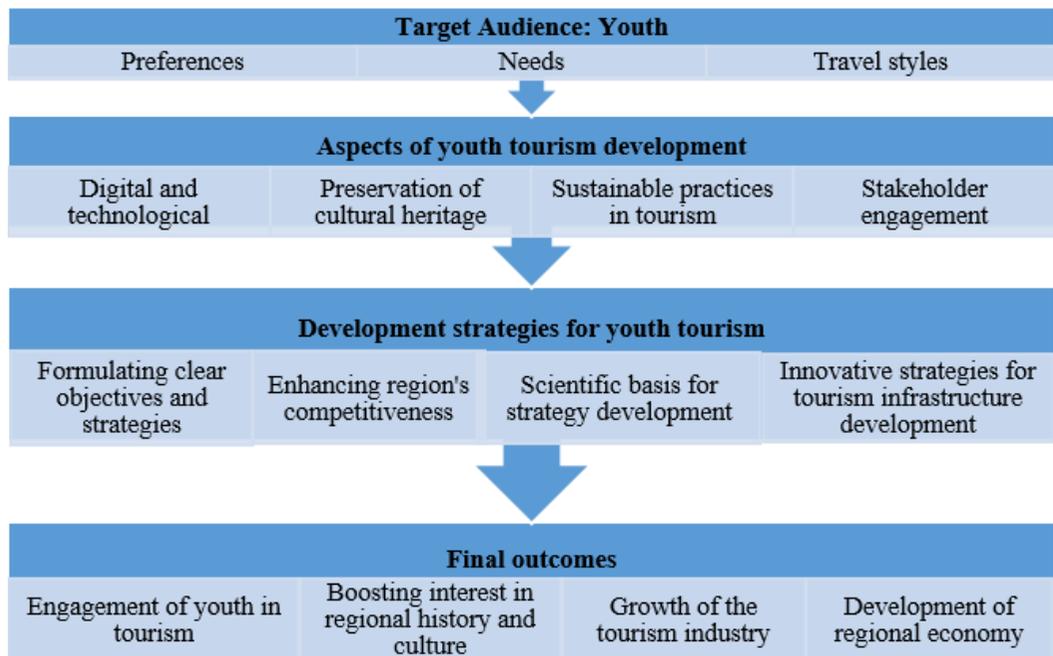


Figure 1. Conceptual Approach in Youth Tourism Development.

The conceptual approach in youth tourism development may encompass a series of unique characteristics or features compared to previous models or approaches. This approach is directed towards studying and understanding the unique interests, needs, and preferences of the youth in the tourism sphere. Focusing on the needs and preferences of the youth enables the creation of more precise and appealing offerings for this target audience. The model for youth tourism development may integrate cutting-edge technologies and innovative methods to enhance the youth experience in the tourism domain. This may involve the use of mobile applications, virtual reality, personalized approaches, among others. Special attention is given to socio-cultural interactions in youth tourism. This includes stimulating intercultural exchange, respect for local traditions and culture, as well as involving youth in local social and community initiatives at the places they visit. The model for youth tourism development emphasizes sustainable and ecological aspects. This involves promoting environmentally responsible behavior, participation in environmental conservation projects, and so forth. The conceptual approach can offer improved management and marketing strategies tailored to attract youth. This could involve more targeted and effective communication, engagement in social media, and other tools to capture the attention of the youth towards tourism offerings. The conceptual approach encompasses innovative ideas and strategies for a more successful adaptation and fulfillment of the youth's needs in the tourism sphere.

Results and Discussion

In recent decades, the Great Silk Road has undergone a renaissance, becoming a popular destination for young travelers seeking to combine the historical richness of this ancient route of global trade with modern trends in tourism. This ancient trade route, which ran through Eurasia, occupies a central place in the history of world trade exchanges and cultural contacts between East and West.

The historical aspect of the Great Silk Road attracts the youth, who seek to understand and appreciate the influence of this ancient route on culture and society. The Great Silk Road constitutes a network of trade routes connecting the East and the West and appeals to young travelers with its history, cultural diversity, and architectural heritage. Youths interested in history and culture may be drawn to travel along this route to explore ancient traditions, architecture, art, religion, and customs, thereby contributing to the preservation of historical and cultural heritage.

The youth perceive the Great Silk Road as an opportunity for profound cultural exchange. Young travelers explore architectural landmarks, museums, and artifacts along the Great Silk Road to understand how this route impacted the development of cultures and civilizations. They immerse themselves in history, reviving ancient legends, turning their journeys into not only adventures but also educational experiences. Often, they interact with local residents, learn arts and crafts, participate in local traditions and festivals, allowing them to immerse themselves in authentic culture and gain a deep and multifaceted experience. The profound experience and cultural exchange make youth travel along the Great Silk Road unforgettable. They learn to appreciate the diversity and richness of global cultures, fostering intercultural understanding and respect. The Great Silk Road stimulates intercultural interaction and exchange. Youth traveling along this route have the opportunity to acquaint themselves with various cultures, traditions, and languages, promoting understanding and respect for the diversity of historical and cultural heritage.

Various countries that the Great Silk Road traversed are developing tourist infrastructure to

attract the youth. This includes the opening of museums, restoration of historical monuments, organizing cultural events, and festivals, offering additional opportunities for young individuals to acquaint themselves with the history and culture of the route. Along the Great Silk Road, youths can engage in active forms of tourism such as hiking, cycling, car trips, and train journeys, which not only facilitate cultural exploration but also promote an active lifestyle and adventurous experiences.

The development of youth tourism along the Great Silk Road can contribute to the economic growth of regions. It creates new jobs in the tourism industry, fosters small business development, and infrastructure growth, which positively impacts local communities and cultural heritage preservation. The Great Silk Road is not merely a historical route but also a significant factor in shaping trends in youth tourism and preserving historical and cultural heritage due to its rich history, cultural diversity, and opportunities it offers for young individuals.

However, alongside the interest in the historical aspects of a plethora of active Great Silk Road, the youth is also introducing new trends in tourism along this route. Electronic devices and social media have become an integral part of young travelers' journeys, enabling them to share experiences and inspire others. Photos and stories of travels along the Great Silk Road spread through platforms like Instagram, TikTok, and others, contributing to the route's popularization. This aspect fosters the creation of virtual communities where young travelers exchange experiences and advice, stimulating increased interest in the Great Silk Road.

In modern youth tourism, particularly among Generations Y and Z, sustainability becomes a valuable aspect. Young people increasingly seek travels that not only allow them to enjoy the beauty and cultural richness of regions along the Great Silk Road but also take into account environmental and social aspects. This includes supporting local communities, participating in environmental initiatives, choosing environmentally sustainable modes of transport, opting for cycling and hiking tours, and eco-friendly accommodations. The integration of circular economy practices, such as supporting local production, minimizing waste, and promoting regenerative tourism models, aligns with youth values and could enhance sustainable development along the Great Silk Road. Regions along the Great Silk Road are starting to prioritize environmentally clean and sustainable tourism development methods. By choosing these travels, the youth actively supports these efforts and advocates for a more environmentally friendly and responsible tourism.

Contemporary young travelers actively explore new routes and travel options along the Great Silk Road, contributing to its increased popularity and development. Undoubtedly, youth tourism along the Great Silk Road is also marked by a plethora of active and adventurous choices. Young people actively create new routes, connecting different regions and cultures. They seek ways to discover cultures and natural riches, preferring cycling tours, trekking, kayaking, and other forms of active leisure. These active leisure activities attract young travelers, and in the future, an increase in sports tourism along the Great Silk Road can be expected.

The conceptual approach to studying the development of youth tourism in Kazakhstan is an important tool for shaping an effective development strategy in this area in the future. The conceptual approach to studying youth tourism holds immense significance as it allows for the establishment of a comprehensive system of views on youth tourist activities and their development within a specific context. Such an approach takes into account all factors influencing youth tourism and allows for its consideration as a complex socio-economic and

The conceptual approach to studying youth tourism is a methodological approach that involves the analysis and examination of fundamental concepts, ideas, principles, and theories related to youth tourism. This approach allows for the formation of a comprehensive understanding of the interrelationships between different aspects of youth tourism and identifies directions for its development. It is important to note that the conceptual approach enables the identification of not only the problems but also the potential of youth tourism in a specific region or country. This, in turn, facilitates the development of targeted strategies and development programs for youth tourism, as well as the implementation of effective monitoring and evaluation studies in this field. The conceptual approach is an essential tool for the analysis and development of youth tourism in Kazakhstan and other countries, enabling a well-founded and purposeful approach to its study and development.

During the Soviet period, youth and children's tourism were indeed well developed and supported by the state as analyzed by Tsipursky (2014). He studied state-sponsored tourism for Soviet adolescents during the early Cold War period from 1945 to 1953 that were used to promote communist ideology and build a sense of collective identity among youth in the Soviet Union. However, after the collapse of the Soviet Union and the transition to a market economy, many of these programs and initiatives encountered financial and organizational difficulties. Despite this, attempts were made in the post-Soviet space to support youth and children's tourism, although they might have been fragmented and not always led to tangible results. Some of these initiatives in the countries of the former Soviet Union could include:

- Camps and recreational programs: Some states kept Soviet-era camps and health centers operational, providing children and youth the opportunity to spend summer vacations in nature. However, funding for their operation was reduced, and the quality of services could deteriorate.
- Exchanges and scholarships: Some youth exchange programs between countries were maintained, allowing students to participate in student exchanges. Additionally, there were small scholarships and grants for young researchers and students.
- Sports programs: Some countries supported sports programs for youth, contributing to the development of sports tourism.
- Youth organizations: Some youth organizations and movements provided young people with opportunities to participate in various tourist events and exchanges.

However, it is worth noting that the period of restructuring and transition to a market economy was a challenging time for many countries, and financing and organizing youth tourism were challenging. In some countries, youth and children's tourism began to develop more actively only in the last decades when the economic situation improved.

Since gaining independence, Kazakhstan has gradually developed youth tourism, launching various programs and initiatives in this process. However, it should be noted that the development in this field might have been uneven and subject to the influence of economic and political factors.

Here are some programs and initiatives related to the development of youth tourism in Kazakhstan:

- Government support: At the beginning of Kazakhstan's independence, the state provided

some support for organizing youth tourist programs and events. This included financing camps, conferences, and exchanges.

- Youth exchanges: Kazakhstan actively participates in youth exchanges with other countries, promoting intercultural exchange and the development of youth tourism through programs like AIESEC, IAESTE, Erasmus +, Erasmus Mundus, "Bolashak" for master's and PhD students, and the Flex program for high school students.
- Student tourism: Universities and student organizations organize student tourist clubs and trips, encouraging active student participation in tourist activities. For example, universities arrange overseas internships for students, during which they participate in excursion tours.
- Youth festivals and competitions: Organizing youth festivals and competitions, such as extreme sports festivals, youth cultural events, interregional Olympics, tourist gatherings, climbing competitions, etc., stimulates the development of youth tourism.
- Tourist clubs and organizations: Tourist clubs and organizations have been established in various cities in Kazakhstan, bringing youth together for joint hikes and trips.
- Ecotourism support: In Kazakhstan, with its diverse natural resources, some programs promote the development of ecotourism among youth to introduce them to the country's rich nature.

The development of youth tourism in Kazakhstan continues, and in recent decades, an increasing interest among young people in an active lifestyle and travel has been observed. This is related to the strengthening of youth initiatives and the growth of tourist infrastructure in the country. However, youth tourism in Kazakhstan remains a relatively understudied sector, so conducting research in this area can provide information about the needs and expectations of young people, as well as the trends in the country's tourism industry (Nikitinsky *et al.* 2015).

The "eQonaq" information system provides real-time data through automated data collection from accommodation facilities (hotels, hostels, resorts). Currently, the system keeps track of more than 60% of foreign tourists staying in accommodation establishments across Kazakhstan (eQonaq, 2020).

According to Figure 2, it can be observed that a significant portion of tourists visiting Kazakhstan comprises young people aged 18 to 35 (44,5%). The statistics do not include youth aged 14 to 18 years (Tourstat Information System, 2023).

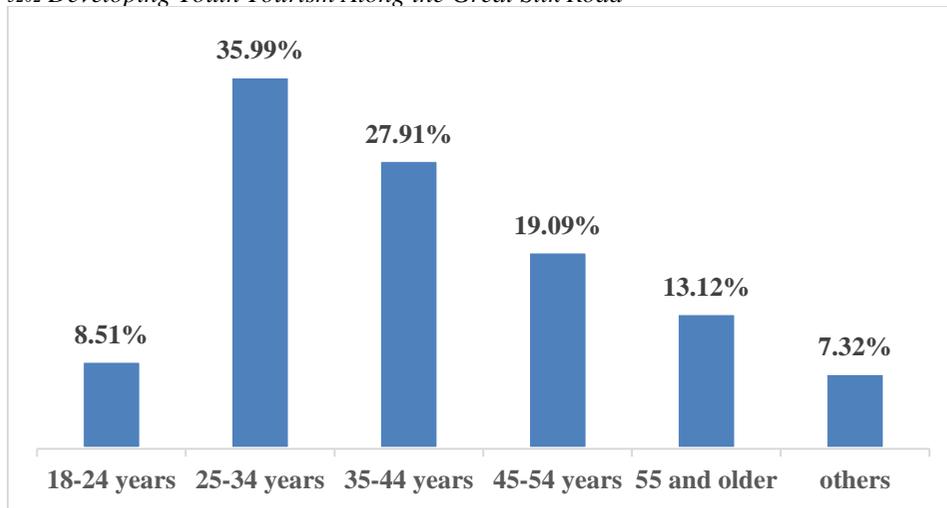


Figure 2. Tourist's Age in % [44].

Mainly, tourists come from countries such as Russia (69,51%), China (6,49%), and Uzbekistan (5,36%) (Figure 3).

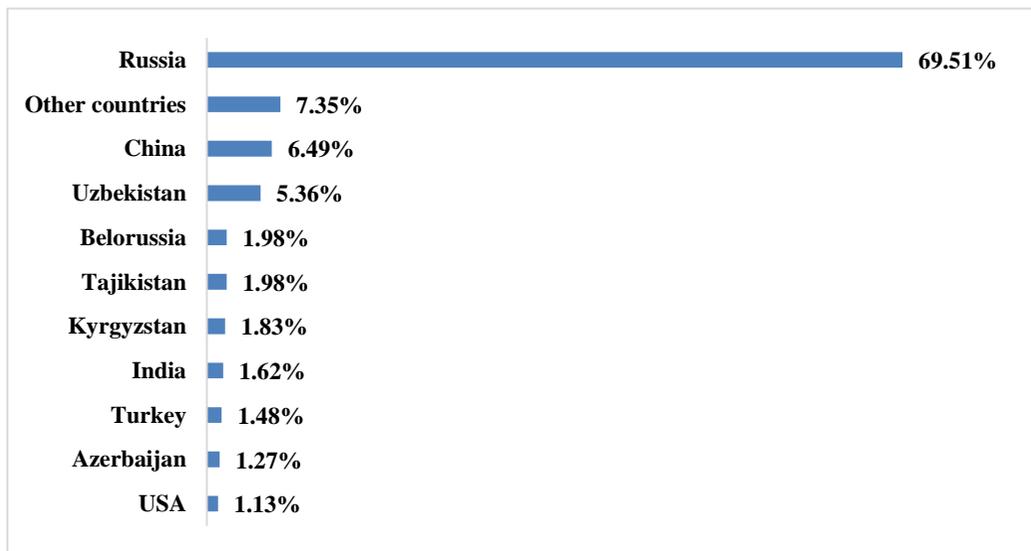


Figure 3. Top 10 Countries Where Tourists Come from in % [43].

Tourists visit primarily for tourism (50,21%), personal reasons (14,7%), and business purposes (32,41%) according to Figure 4.

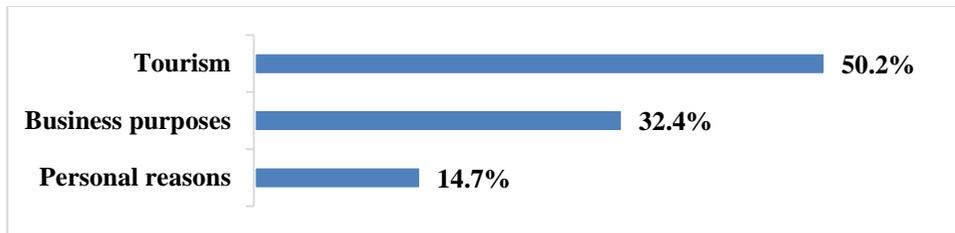


Figure 4. Purpose Of Tourists' Visits to Kazakhstan in % [43].

The primary goal of the social survey of youth is to gather information about the preferences, behaviors, and needs of young people regarding tourist activities. The survey aims to study the motivations and factors influencing the decision of youth to travel within Kazakhstan and abroad.

To conduct the sociological study, the following objectives were set:

- Investigate the factors limiting young tourists during travels within Kazakhstan.
- Identify the criteria for choosing a holiday destination that attracts young tourists.
- Explore the preferences and needs of young people in tourist services.

The participants of the study were asked to answer 15 questions that addressed the issues of scientific research. Most questions provided suggested answer options, while some required open-ended responses. As a result of the conducted research, the authors obtained the following results presented below.

The survey analysis revealed that 53% of respondents, aged 24 to 35, show interest in international travel, making one trip abroad per year. 21% prefer traveling within the country, visiting other cities in Kazakhstan, while 22% prefer short trips within the Almaty region. 4% do not go on vacation or prefer spending time in parks and mountains, organizing picnics according to Figure 5.

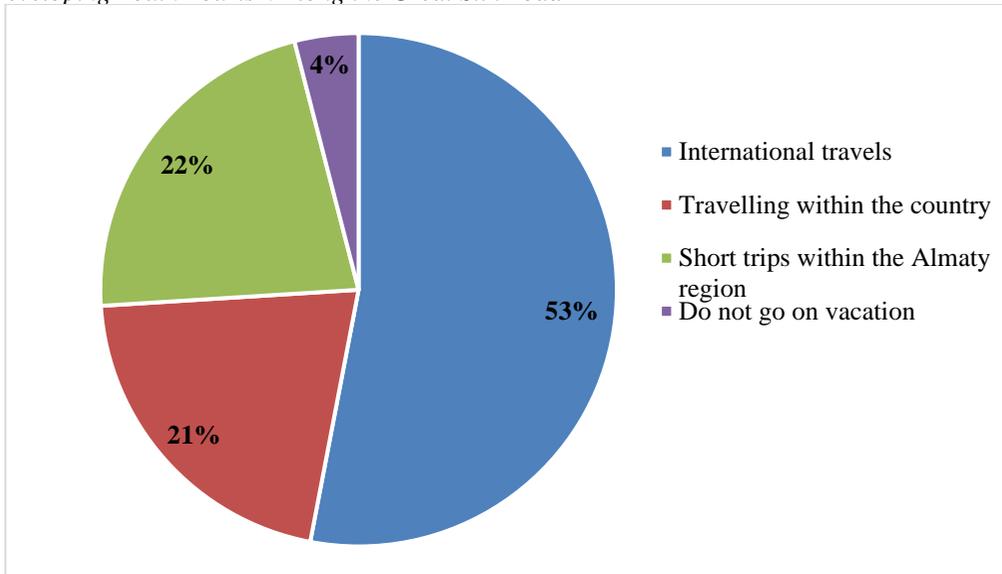


Figure 5. Preferred Types of Leisure for the Age Category from 24 To 35 Years In %.

Age group from 14 to 17 years old responded that their travels are organized by parents, and their choice of leisure activities depends on their parents' decisions. They rarely embark on international travels, mostly accompanying by their parents. Students aged 18 to 23 years old can afford short trips within Kazakhstan.

75% of those surveyed have international passports, although the remaining individuals do not wish to obtain them due to the high cost. If given the opportunity, 90% of the respondents would prefer traveling abroad, while the remaining 10% wouldn't mind trips within the country according to Figure 6.

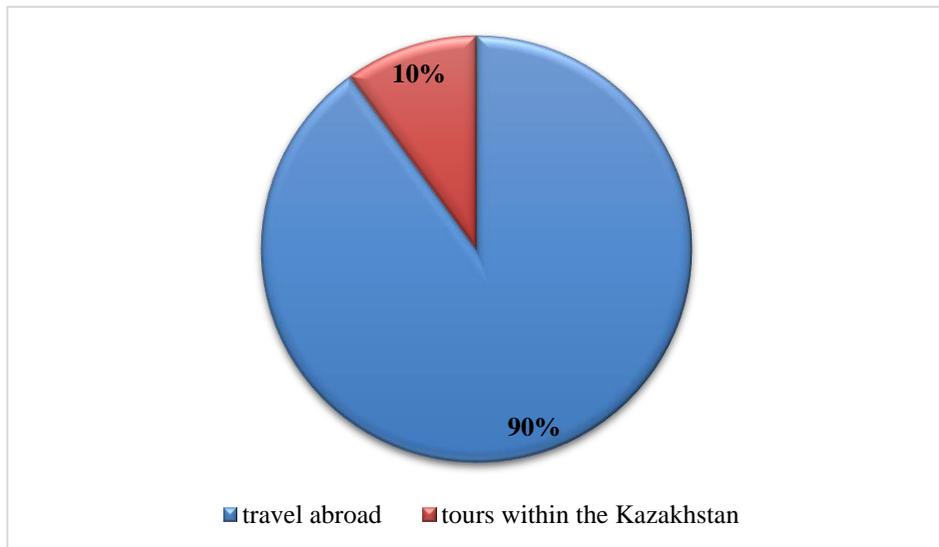


Figure 6. Travel Preferences.

The majority of respondents (80%) show interest in attending cultural and mass events. All respondents (100%) expressed a desire to have a bonus card that allows them to accumulate bonuses and provides discounts on various tourist services, such as plane tickets, train tickets, car rentals, accommodation, restaurants, cafes, as well as various events.

The city of Almaty and the Almaty region were chosen by 85% of the respondents as the most attractive destination for travel within Kazakhstan, while 10% preferred the city of Astana, and 5% selected other regions, such as the East Kazakhstan region and the city of Shymkent, according to Figure 7.

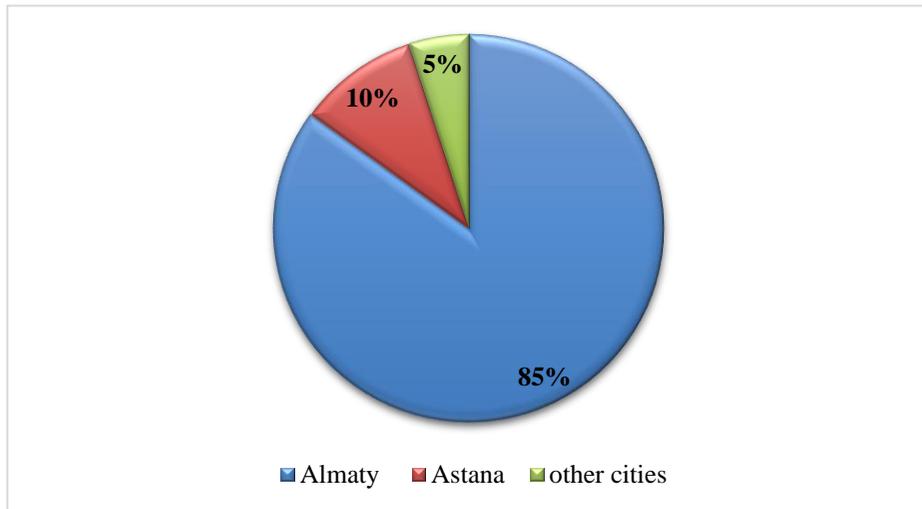


Figure 7. Preferred Destinations for Domestic Travel in Kazakhstan.

During the survey, respondents were asked about their attitude towards traveling along the Great Silk Road, which includes several countries. 75% of young people are interested in participating in a journey along the Great Silk Road route, while 25% are not interested (Figure 8).

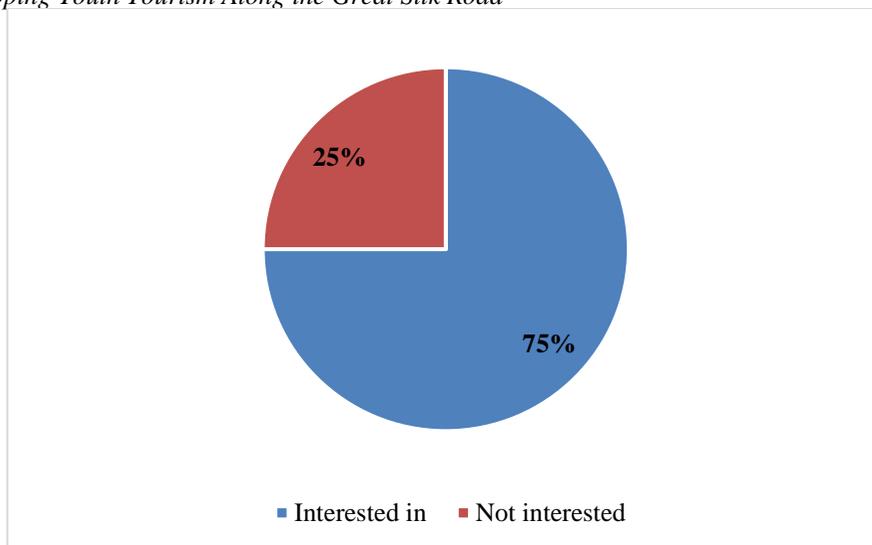


Figure 8. Interest of Young People in Participating in A Journey Along the Great Silk Road.

The respondents were offered to choose multiple options regarding the factors influencing the interest of young people in traveling along the Great Silk Road: Interest in history and culture – 52%, Desire to explore new places – 48%, Quest for adventure and new experiences – 38%, Education and learning – 25%, Social and youth events – 20%, Internet and social media – 15%, other factors – 12%, Environmental awareness – 10% (Figure 9).

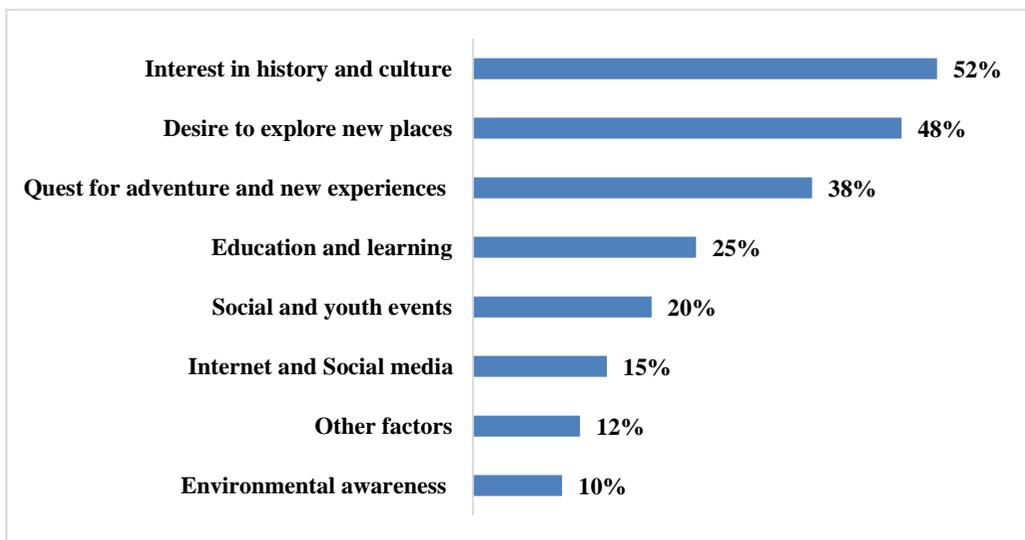


Figure 9. Factors Influencing Youth Interest in Traveling Along the Great Silk Road.

The following countries are of greatest interest to respondents: China – 60%, India – 45%, Turkey – 38%, Iran – 32%, Kazakhstan – 28%, Uzbekistan – 25%, other countries/regions – 22%, Russia – 18% (Figure 10).

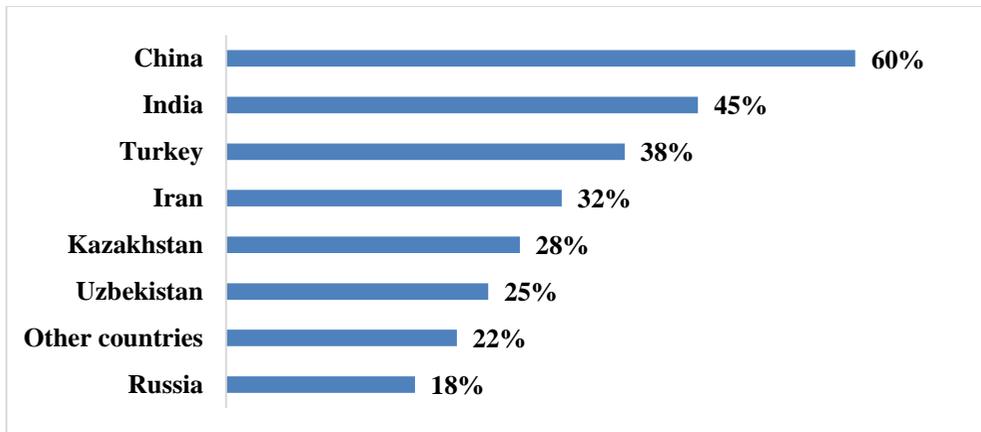


Figure 10. Countries of Greatest Interest Along the Great Silk Road.

The most attractive types of recreation and entertainment for respondents while traveling along the Great Silk Road are shown in Figure 11: research of historical monuments and culture – 62%, participation in local festivals and events – 60%, active recreation and adventure (hiking, cycling) – 55%, visiting museums and art galleries – 40%, trying local cuisine and cultural dishes – 35%, social interaction with locals – 30%, environmental and sustainable activities – 20%, other types of entertainment – 15%.

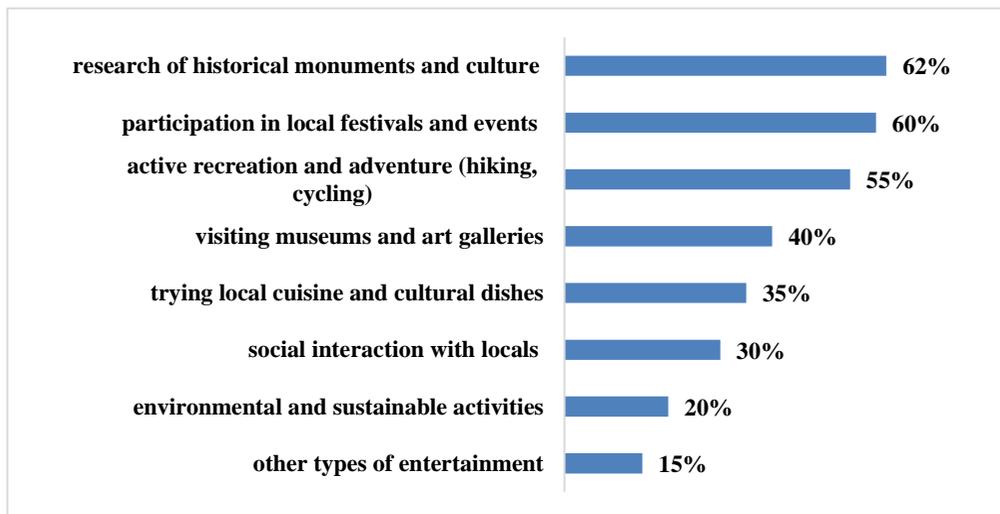


Figure 11. Attractive Types of Recreation and Entertainment.

Respondents noted factors that could limit their participation in traveling along the Great Silk Road: financial restrictions – 48%, time restrictions (study, work) – 35%, difficulties in obtaining visas and permits – 25%, political instability in some regions – 20%, health and safety – 18%, lack of information about routes – 15%, other factors – 12%, family responsibilities – 10% (Figure 12).

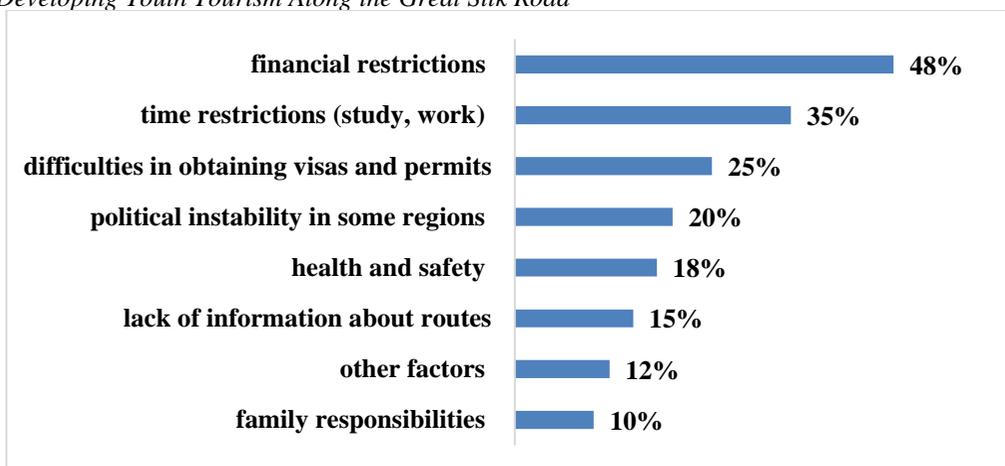


Figure 12. Factors Limiting Youth Participation in Travel Along the Great Silk Road.

85% of respondents agree that the absence of quality tourism services, caused by a lack of qualified personnel, insufficient tourism infrastructure for organizing youth tourist routes, the high cost of services provided, and the absence of roadside infrastructure, is the main obstacle to the development of youth tourism.

The study helped identify popular regions and directions for youth tourism in Kazakhstan, as well as their interest in various types of tourist activities such as excursions, natural landmarks, cultural events, and active leisure. The survey helped understand the youth's opinion about the quality of tourism infrastructure, living conditions, accessibility, and diversity of tourist services. The analysis allowed for the assessment of the current situation in the field of youth tourism in Kazakhstan and identified potential improvements that could be made to attract more young tourists.

The valuable information obtained from the conducted survey will aid in taking measures to improve conditions and promote youth tourism in Kazakhstan. This may include the development of new tourism products and programs, improvement of services and infrastructure, as well as the creation of effective marketing strategies to attract more young travelers.

Based on the conducted research, analysis of the infrastructure status, expert opinions, and market research, authors have compiled a SWOT analysis of the development of youth tourism along the Great Silk Road, which is described in Table 1.

Strengths:	Weaknesses:
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> – Historical and cultural heritage: The Great Silk Road boasts a rich history and cultural heritage, offering ample material for tourist programs that can attract young tourists interested in history and archaeology. – Unique natural landscapes: The route traverses diverse natural landscapes, including mountains, deserts, and lakes, 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> – Security: Various regions along the route pose risks to tourists' safety, diminishing the route's overall attractiveness. – Infrastructure: The tourist infrastructure remains underdeveloped at certain points along the route, complicating access to accommodation, food, and transportation while lacking essential

<p>appealing to enthusiasts of active leisure and adventure.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> – Absence of visa restrictions stimulates tourism and attracts more tourists. – Increase in job opportunities within the hospitality and tourism industry. <p>International cooperation with Kazakhstan, China, Kyrgyzstan, and Uzbekistan is characterized by a high level of interaction at the highest and high levels, supported by an impressive legal framework.</p>	<p>roadside facilities.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> – Language barriers: Young tourists may encounter language difficulties in countries where they are unfamiliar with the national language. This creates obstacles in communicating with local residents and obtaining a comprehensive cultural experience. – Economic factors: Extended trips along the route entail substantial financial expenses, potentially limiting young people due to financial constraints when planning such journeys. – Inadequate government support for the development of youth tourism. – Shortage of qualified personnel within the tourism industry. – Lack of comprehensive and reliable statistical data. <p>Insufficient promotion and popularization of travel opportunities along the Great Silk Road among young people.</p>
<p>Opportunities:</p>	<p>Threats:</p>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> – Economic development in countries along the Great Silk Road presents new prospects for investment and entrepreneurship within the tourism sector. – Potential for sustainable tourism: There is an opportunity to promote environmentally responsible tourism along the route, emphasizing the conservation of nature and cultural heritage. – Infrastructural advancement along the Great Silk Road. – Development of educational programs for youth: Establishing specialized programs and events such as educational initiatives, exchanges, internships, volunteering opportunities, sports, and cultural activities to engage young people in exploring the history, art, and culture of the regions along the Great Silk Road. – Training professionals proficient in both Chinese and English languages. – Cultural exchange opportunities: Encouraging youth to engage with local 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> – Political instability in regions along the route poses security risks, potentially discouraging tourists from visiting. – Potential cultural and environmental degradation: Heightened tourist activity may contribute to the erosion of local cultures and harm the environment. <p>Competition from alternative tourist destinations and routes might diminish the appeal of the Great Silk Road among young travelers.</p>

<p>communities, enabling them to learn about diverse cultures, traditions, and languages, fostering intercultural exchange and understanding.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> – Creation of tailored tourist packages designed specifically for young travelers, catering to their preferences and needs. <p>Utilization of modern technologies and digitalization: Implementing modern tools such as mobile applications, interactive maps, and virtual tours to enhance the travel experience for young people, facilitating access to information about the route.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Promotion of circular economy models in tourism (e.g., sustainable accommodation, zero-waste tourism events, resource-sharing initiatives) offers significant opportunities for differentiation and long-term competitiveness 	
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Table 1 - SWOT Analysis of the Development of Youth Tourism Along the Great Silk Road.

Young people in Kazakhstan are typically attracted to various events and activities during their travels, such as:

- Festivals and musical events: Youth are often interested in participating in festivals, concerts, and musical events. Music festivals, cultural performances, and music tours are a powerful incentive for travel.
- Active recreation: Youth inclined towards an active lifestyle often opt for adventure and extreme sports-related trips. This can include mountain tourism, rock climbing, cycling tours, hiking, and more.
- Cultural tourism: Exploring and immersing themselves in the culture and history of different countries attracts young people. Visiting historical sites, museums, local events, and festivals helps understand and appreciate cultural diversity.
- Themed tours: Tours related to a specific theme or interest, such as culinary tours, art tours, film or literary excursions, appeal to youth engaged in a particular sphere.
- Social trips: Volunteer programs, student exchanges, youth conferences, and forums are also powerful factors attracting youth for travel, as they offer opportunities for social interaction and experience sharing.
- Photography tours and blogger trips: Youth interested in photography or blogging are intrigued by travels that provide good photo and video material for social networks or blogs.
- Retreat tours, yoga tours: Trips are not only an opportunity for physical rest but also for spiritual growth and personal development. They are appealing to youth seeking harmony, self-improvement, and gaining new knowledge or skills.

These types of activities represent only a small part of the diversity of opportunities that attract

young people for travel.

Indeed, gathering statistics and accurate data on youth tourism in Kazakhstan poses certain challenges since information about youth travels is often not singled out separately or categorized systematically but is accounted for within general tourism statistics.

However, for assessing and analyzing youth tourism in Kazakhstan, attention can be drawn to the conceptual approach to studying youth tourism. This involves identifying key concepts and their relationships, as well as developing a concept that describes and explains the mechanisms of development of this type of tourism. This approach not only describes the current situation but also identifies the potential and prospects for the development of youth tourism.

Youth constitutes a substantial part of the tourist market not only in Kazakhstan but globally. Their interests, preferences, and behaviors while traveling significantly influence the tourism industry. Studying these factors helps better understand the needs and expectations of youth from tourism services. Youth tourism represents significant economic potential for the country. Youth contributes significantly to the economy through expenditures on accommodation, entertainment, purchases, and other tourism services.

Youth often focus on innovation and modern technologies. Studying their preferences and needs in the tourism industry can stimulate innovation in the industry and create new tourism products and services. Youth often possess a high awareness of environmental and social issues. Studying their preferences and expectations in sustainable tourism can contribute to the development of tourism projects aimed at environmental conservation and participation in socially responsible initiatives as also emphasized in the sustainability framework of Széchenyi István University (Németh *et al.*, 2023).

Developing youth tourism can help Kazakhstan strengthen its position in the tourism market. Adapting offerings to meet the needs of youth and creating attractive youth programs can enhance the country's appeal to young tourists. Research on youth tourism in Kazakhstan is relevant as it helps adapt tourism offerings to the needs and interests of youth, fosters economic growth through tourism, and supports the development of a sustainable and innovative tourism industry.

Within the conceptual approach to studying youth tourism, it is important to consider both socio-economic and cultural factors influencing its development. This may involve analyzing trends in youth consumer behavior, the specifics of forming youth culture and traditions, as well as the economic opportunities and infrastructure necessary for the development of youth tourism.

It is also essential to consider international experience and advanced practices in the field of youth tourism to develop effective strategies for the development of this industry in Kazakhstan. The conceptual approach to studying youth tourism enables the development of in-depth research and effective development strategies for this sector, considering numerous factors and features of youth culture and consumer behavior.

To attract more people to travel within Kazakhstan, given the trend of preferring international travel, it is advisable to develop diverse tourist routes and create thematic parks similar to those in Dubai. These could include natural parks, historical landmarks, cultural festivals, concerts by famous artists, theatrical and circus performances, as well as national gastronomic tours. Simplifying the visa procedure for foreign tourists, such as introducing an electronic visa or expanding the list of countries under a visa-free regime, would be a factor in attracting tourists

Moreover, leveraging the experiences of other countries, such as acquiring franchises to open a Madame Tussauds museum, a Disneyland theme park, LegoLand, among others, could draw a significant influx of tourists to Kazakhstan. Inviting global stars to perform in Kazakhstan would also capture the attention of both Kazakhstani youth and those from neighboring countries. Hosting exhibitions, festivals, and conferences to showcase Kazakhstan's tourism potential would help attract the attention of the tourism industry and potential travelers.

Conclusion

During the study of youth tourism in Kazakhstan, the issue of insufficient development of youth tourism in the country and the ineffectiveness of measures taken for its development was identified. To address these problems, the authors of the article proposed a series of practical recommendations, such as creating new tourist routes, developing infrastructure, increasing the accessibility of tourist services for young people, and improving the quality of training for personnel in this field. It is also crucial to actively attract investments for the development of infrastructure and to promote Kazakhstan's tourism potential on an international level.

The following practical recommendations have been proposed by the authors for the development of youth tourism in Kazakhstan:

- Continuation of studying youth tourism in Kazakhstan, including exploring the behavior patterns of youth in different regions of the country, as well as their needs and preferences in tourist destinations.
- To successfully develop youth tourism in Kazakhstan, there is a need to increase the number of youth tourism events and develop the infrastructure specifically tailored for youth tourism in the country.
- Creation of new tourist routes that align with the interests and demands of the youth.
- Development of infrastructure, including hospitality and transportation infrastructure, and the advancement of digital technologies to enhance the tourists' experience.
- It is important to engage the youth actively in the development of youth tourism in Kazakhstan, for instance, through establishing youth tourism clubs and organizations.
- Attention should be given not only to the development of domestic youth tourism but also to the international youth tourism, such as participating in international tourism forums and conferences.
- Emphasis on the development of tourism education for the youth to elevate their qualifications and contribute to the professional tourism sector in Kazakhstan.
- Conducting monitoring and evaluation of the effectiveness of implementing the conceptual model for the development of youth tourism in Kazakhstan to make necessary adjustments and enhancements in its implementation.
- Integrating circular economy principles into youth tourism strategies could strengthen sustainable tourism development, enhance resource efficiency, and create innovative tourism products along the Great Silk Road.

The development of youth tourism along the Great Silk Road may include the following stages

and strategies, as suggested in Figure 13.

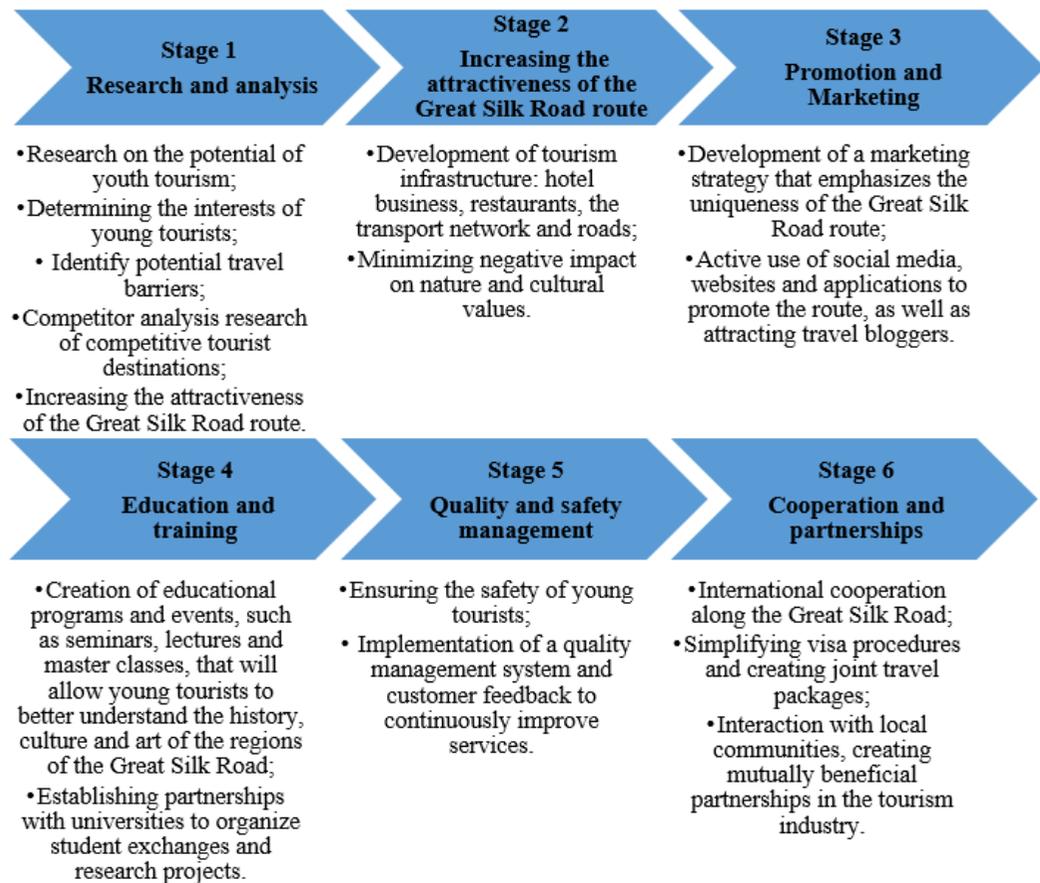


Figure 13. Stages And Strategy for the Development of Youth Tourism Along the Great Silk Road.

Research on local youth in Kazakhstan can directly relate to attracting inbound youth tourism to the country. Understanding the needs, interests, and preferences of the youth within the country enables not only the development of domestic tourism but also the formulation of effective strategies to attract young tourists from other nations. Analyzing the behaviors and preferences of local youth in the tourism sphere will identify popular destinations, types of activities, cultural interests, and other factors that may be attractive to young foreign tourists. This information allows tourism organizers to tailor offerings and create programs oriented towards the preferences and expectations of the target audience. Furthermore, this research can aid in creating an atmosphere that appeals to young tourists, for instance, through organizing youth events, festivals, concerts, specialized tourist routes, or exchange programs for foreign youth. Understanding the preferences and needs of local youth can serve as a key tool in forming measures to attract and maintain the attention of inbound youth tourism in Kazakhstan.

Therefore, studying youth tourism in Kazakhstan can be crucial in understanding trends in the tourism industry and developing new products and services for young people, which, in turn, can contribute to the country's economic and social development. The conceptual approach to studying youth tourism in Kazakhstan will enable the creation of a sustainable youth tourism

system that fosters the development of the tourism industry in the region and meets the needs of the youth and society as a whole. Employing new research methods, focusing on environmentally sustainable tourism, exploring new forms of youth tourism, and comparing youth tourism across different countries can bring innovation to the study of youth tourism in Kazakhstan. Implementing these practical proposals and recommendations will improve the development of youth tourism in Kazakhstan and create conditions for active youth participation in this process. Creating favorable conditions, improving tourism infrastructure, service quality, and developing new routes will attract a greater number of traveling young people.

For the successful long-term development of youth tourism along the Great Silk Road, active engagement from governments, local authorities, and tourist organizations is necessary to simplify visa procedures, ensure safety, develop infrastructure, and conduct educational campaigns on culture and the environment. Collaborative efforts between governments, businesses, and educational institutions can contribute to the successful implementation of such a model.

In conclusion, the main theses of this work are as follows:

- Modern youth, represented by the Y and Z generations, possess unique characteristics and features, including active use of technology, social networks, and global information exchange. These traits shape their approach to tourism, determining their interests and preferences in travels.
- Youth tourism on the Great Silk Road involves more active engagement of participants in the cultural activity of historical sites, stimulating not just observation but also participation in the lives of local communities and traditions.
- The conceptual approach to youth tourism on the Great Silk Road includes adapting and creating tourism products aligned with the interests and needs of the youth, with an emphasis on utilizing modern technology and social networks.

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