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Features of the regional tourism product promotion of Mangystau region in the context of the “Experience Economy” development

Abstract

Object: The main goal of this study is to identify the specifics of promoting the regional tourism product of the Mangystau region in the context of the influence of the “Experience Economy” on it. The hypothesis of this study is that the level of development of infrastructure and, in particular, accommodation facilities is not a determining factor in the influx of incoming tourists (non-residents).

Methods: To achieve this goal, the following scientific methods were used: generalization method, structural analysis, quantitative analysis, graphical method.

Findings: It is known that the tourist product largely consists of intangible services, the use value and value of which is measured mainly by emotions, new sensations and impressions among tourists. The main source of added value in tourism, according to the concept of the “Economy of Experiences”, today is not just tourist services, but positive impressions and feelings of consumers. In particular, certain dimensions of the experience economy are hypothesized to shape perceptions of well-being. In addition, it is assumed that the perception of well-being can lead to two managerial outcomes: brand identification and intentions to return to it, which will shape the promotion strategy of the tourism product.

Conclusions: In the context of growing internal and external competition in the tourism services market, on the one hand, and the increasing spread of the concept of the “Experience Economy”, its influence on the promotion of RTP, it is important to diversify promotion channels in terms of strengthening their emotional component.

Keywords: regional tourism product, marketing tools, Experience Economy, Mangystau region, structural analysis, quantitative analysis, graphical method.

Introduction

The Mangystau region has great opportunities for the development of various types of tourism. According to JSC NC Kazakhtourism, the regional tourism product of Mangystau today can be formed on the basis of beach holidays, health tourism, ecotourism, caravanning tourism, and jeep tourism. The most important components of the regional tourism product of the region are sacred and cultural tourism, for the development of which there is a large number of sacred places, historical and cultural monuments: 362 holy places and 13,000 historical monuments that are under the protection of states. Back in 2018 Mangystau has been designated as a priority tourist area with a potential of 750,000 tourists per year. In the tourism sector, 13 projects are planned for the period 2021–2025, creating more than 2,000 job places. By 2025, the flow of tourists is expected to increase 4.6 times or up to 740 thousand due to an increase in the number of accommodation places, recreation centres development in resort areas of the region, expansion of the list and improvement of the quality of services provided (www.invest.kazakhstan.travel, 2023).

The relevance of the topic lies in the fact that this object of study, as a developing destination, needs to create its own strategic and systematic approach to decision-making for the development and promotion of a regional tourism product. At the same time, the tourism potential of the Mangystau region has not yet been fully realized. It seems that the reasons for this are related not only to the insufficiency of tourism infrastructure and staffing. This is, first of all, low awareness among potential consumers, which is due, in our opinion, to the lack of a scientifically based approach to the selection and use of marketing tools to promote a tourist region. This, in turn, requires clarification of the specifics of promoting the regional tourism product of Mangystau.

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The purpose of this article is to identify journal articles on the consumption of tourism products through the lens of the Experience Economy that are likely to report interdisciplinary research that will further clarify the most accurate marketing tool to promote them.

The novelty of the article is the contribution of the authors in identifying structured and systematic channels and tools for promoting a regional tourism product through the prism of the Experience Economy.

It is known that the tourism product largely consists of intangible services, the use value and value of which is measured mainly by emotions, new sensations and impressions among tourists. In the conditions of a highly competitive tourism market, the presence of many standardized tour packages, and the interchangeability of tourism products, including regional ones, the choice of consumers will be for services that, already in the process of their promotion, promise clients future positive emotions. Obviously, local Destination Management Organizations (DMOs) should take into account the fact that the main source of added value in tourism, according to the concept of the “Experience Economy”. Today it is not just tourist services, it is also positive impressions and feelings of consumers. These aspects require serious theoretical understanding.

Literature Review

Recently, more and more works have begun to appear in the scientific literature devoted to the study of marketing tools for promoting tourism products and tourist destinations. In particular, among the fundamental works of scientists on the problems of using marketing tools in promoting tourism products, one can note Kotler P. (Kotler & Armstrong, 2007; Kotler, 2014), Durovich A. (Durovich et al, 2005), Lankar R. (Lankar et al, 1993). However, special studies on the promotion of regional tourism products have not yet received adequate coverage in the scientific literature.

At the turn of the 20th-21st centuries, a new vision of economic development began to take shape. They even began to talk about a new stage of world economic development — the “Experience Economy”. This concept was first proposed by American marketers Joseph Pine II and James Gilmore (Pine et al., 1999; Pine et al., 2011). Nowadays, people are surrounded by an intangible economy in which beauty, entertainment, enjoyment, and spiritual enrichment are all economically valuable (Bunich & Startsev, 2012; Murtazina, 2020). It was an emphasis on innovative aspects in tourism appears in the focus on promoting impressions and emotions.

The development and study of the concept “Experience Economy”, within the framework of which the modern sphere of tourism is developing, was also carried out by Nijs D. (2003) and Morgan M., Elbe J. & Curiel J. (2006; 2009). They define the key elements of the concept as a view of consumer behaviour on which administrative management should base its strategic decisions.

It is necessary to determine the main aspects of the development and application of innovations in the tourism business to develop the experience economy. This aligns with Benur and Bramwell’s idea that diversifying tourism products increases destinations’ competitiveness by offering more than just standardized products (Benur & Bramwell, 2015). The other scholars of this study cite the differences between the experience economy and the economy of services, as a new direction that involves organizing and improving creative activity in business (Novichkov et al., 2018). By incorporating the experience economy’s tenets into the travel and tourism sector, the multiplier effects of tourism can reduce the gap in income between subjects and increase the competitiveness of domestic travel agencies. Moreover, it will lead to the non-resource sector development and strengthen interregional ties between subjects (Pogorleckij, 2021; Lebedeva, 2023). A modern consumer’s decision to buy a product or service is increasingly influenced by the emotions and perceptions that will accompany the purchase (Lygina et al., 2019; 2020). The experience economy creates an emotional and sensory colouring of cultural phenomena, which receives the most complete expression in a person’s general satisfaction with his own existence (Chernikov, 2020). Furthermore, the paper examined researches based on the experience economy of Kazakhstan and contribution of the local population in developing the territory’s tourism potential (Petrenko, 2009; Dautova, 2018; Denisov et al., 2020).

It is highlight the contribution of scientists from the Netherlands and Great Britain, Yeoman and McMahon-Beattie, who in 2019 identified the key trends characteristic of the tourism and hospitality sector within the framework of the “Experience Economy” concept (Yeoman & McMahon-Beattie, 2019). Among them, the most characteristic and important for Kazakhstan are the following:

- the desire to receive exclusive experiences that are more valuable to tourists in terms of acquiring unique experiences and skills, increasing cultural awareness, and ultimately realizing deeper psychic ambitions;

- rejection of mass-produced goods in favour of authentic products and services that have a clear connection with the place, time or culture of the destination in which the tourist is located;
- the emergence of “hybrid” tourists and the gradual abandonment of segmentation based on the income level of consumers of tourism services, associated with the digitalization of the tourism and hospitality sector, and the emergence of the opportunity to refuse the services of travel agencies in favour of more expensive experiences;
- a shift in markers of success from material to empirical indicators, since the main souvenir remaining with the tourist are memories, impressions received and emotions experienced.

It is obvious that when developing programs to promote tourism services in the region, the above trends in the field of tourism, formed as a result of the influence of the “Experience Economy”, should be taken into account.

Furthermore, the authors note certain changes in the development of the “Experience Economy” concept itself during the pandemic and post-pandemic period. In particular, this is the digitalization of tourist display objects, the development of virtual tourism, the introduction of augmented and virtual reality technologies, which literally contribute to immersion in another reality (one of the areas of impression). One of these studies was conducted by scientists from the University of Delhi, Gurleen Kaur and Chanpreet Kaur, who outlined new vectors for the development of the impression paradigm (Kaur & Kaur, 2020). One of the main innovations that COVID-19 has brought is the inclusion of more and more companies and consumers in the modern digital fabric. Antropov V. outlined such features as the widespread dissemination of impressions with the help of modern technologies and the individualization of created impressions, i.e. the need to adapt them to specific people each time (Antropov, 2022).

Among the works of Kazakhstani scientists in the field of tourism in Mangystau, one can highlight the works of Mamutova K., Smykova M., Nikiforova N. (2020). Their research assessed consumer preferences by types of attractions in Mangystau.

Thus, the content analysis showed that most scientists often derive the specifics of promoting a tourism product from its immateriality, intangibility, and complexity. This connects with Birzhakov’s view on the challenges of promoting tourism as an intangible product, requiring creative marketing tools to make the experience appealing (Birzhakov, 2007). In recent years, research into the specifics of promoting tourism products has begun to take into account the influence of the “Experience Economy” paradigm. Agreeing with this position, it is worth noting that the regional tourism product is an even more complex structure and its promotion is of a very specific nature. In addition, in a competitive market, it is not so much the product itself that should be promoted, but the impressions and emotions that a tourist can receive from a future trip. Thus, tourism service providers have an increased chance of a successful sale.

Based on the literature review, there are highlighted the following features of promoting a regional tourism product (RTP):

1. Goals in the field of promoting RTP must be interconnected with the goals of the socio-economic development of the region.
2. The choice of methods and tools for promoting RTP should be based on promotion goals.
3. Promotion of RTP should be aimed at a specific target audience and based on preliminary market segmentation.
4. It is necessary to select in advance not only the channels of communication with target audiences, but also to predict what their response will be, what impressions they expect to receive from the trip and how feedback will be provided to them.
5. It is necessary to demonstrate to customers what impressions they can get from purchasing a tourism product. Considering that the RTP is moving forward, these impressions should be comprehensive.
6. The selection and use of marketing tools for promoting RTP should be differentiated from the point of view of the geography of incoming tourist flows.
7. It is necessary to take into account the stages of the RTP life cycle when choosing certain marketing promotion tools.
8. The intangibility of most tourist services implies the need for their visualization, materialization, reflecting objects of tourist interest as fully as possible and reducing the degree of uncertainty for tourists (for example, demonstrating a virtual trip to a destination using the Internet and technologies, such as augmented reality, etc.).
9. In conditions of “distrust” in direct advertising, it is advisable to use traditional and proactive content marketing tools to promote RTP. Thus, the importance of product placement increases.

10. Demonstrating authenticity, genuineness, the rich culture of the region and the intensity of the experience is essential to building a distinctive image and brand of the RTP.

11. Tourist information centres (TICs) play an important role in promoting the regional tourism product and facilitating services for tourists in destinations.

Methods

The main goal of this study is to identify the specifics of promoting the regional tourism product of the Mangystau region in the context of the influence of the “Experience Economy” on it.

The hypothesis of this study is that the level of development of infrastructure and, in particular, accommodation facilities is not a determining factor in the influx of incoming tourists (non-residents).

To achieve this goal, the following scientific methods were used: generalization method, structural analysis, quantitative analysis, graphical method. During the preparation of a theoretical review of scientific works on this issue, the generalization method was used. A generalization is a form of abstraction technique whereby common characteristics of particular cases are formulated as general concepts. Additionally, the researchers evaluated factors related to competitiveness.

To identify the potential for tourism development in Mangystau, a quantitative analysis of statistical indicators was used. The source of statistical data was the official website <https://stat.gov.kz/>. Sampling and analysis of Big Data was made from the number of tourist flows and related infrastructure. To substantiate the weak dependence of incoming tourist flows on the sufficiency of infrastructure, the method of correlation analysis was used.

Results

Mangystau has great potential for the development of various types of tourism. Moreover, in recent years, there can be observed generally positive dynamics in the main indicators of tourism. Mangystau region was visited by more than 310 thousand tourists from abroad and other regions of the country in 2022. This is 6 % more than in the previous year. The volume of services provided in the field of tourism in the region amounted to 11.5 billion tenge. Since the beginning of the year, the number of passengers transported by Aktau International Airport has increased by 14 % compared to the same period in 2022, reaching 407,490 passengers. As part of the development of resort areas, four projects were implemented by local investors in 2022. As a result, more than 80 new job places were created, attracting more than 1.1 billion tenge of investments: construction of the Sartas Visitor Centre, Recreation Centre “Flamingo Resort”, Glamping Teniz Village, Recreation Centre “AURA” (www.lada.kz, 2023).

Over the past five years, there can be noted the growth of all indicators presented in Table.

Table. Dynamics of tourism development indicators in Mangystau region

Indicator	2018	2019	2020	2021	2022
Number of placements, units	82	92	91	97	99
Number of visitors served at accommodation sites, people.	240 798	222 539	160 504	225 558	310 217
Visitors served with accommodation for inbound tourism (non-residents), persons.	28 720	24632	8 356	11 977	41338
Volume of services provided by placements, thousand tenge	4 923 660,8	5 136 245,4	4 378 018,1	5 717 236,5	11 459 380,3

Note — compiled by the authors based on data <https://stat.gov.kz/>

Moreover, tourism in the region managed not only to recover to the values of the pre-pandemic period, but also to significantly increase them. Thus, as a result of the development of the accommodation infrastructure and the growth in the number of visitors, the volume of services provided by accommodation places more than doubled from 2019 to 2022 (by 123.1 %). At the same time, Mangystau’s contribution to the tourism development in the country remains modest in comparison with other places, including those classified as priority tourist areas.

In terms of the number of visitors served in accommodation places among the regions of the Republic of Kazakhstan, Mangystau still ranks only 8th after Almaty, Astana, Shymkent, Akmola region, East Kazakhstan region, Almaty and Zhetysu regions. In terms of the number of accommodation places, despite their annual increase, the region occupies an extremely low position — 18th place out of 20 regions, which to a

certain extent negatively affects the region’s ability to attract incoming tourists. However, there is not always a direct relationship between the performance of accommodation sites and tourist flows.

Figure 1 shows that in 2019 the number of accommodation places increased by 12.2 % compared to 2018, while the number of visitors served in accommodation places, on the contrary, decreased by 7.6 %, including an even greater reduction in inbound tourism — by 14.2 %. In 2019, systemic changes were made to develop the industry, which were associated with the approval of the State Industry Development Program for 2019–2025.

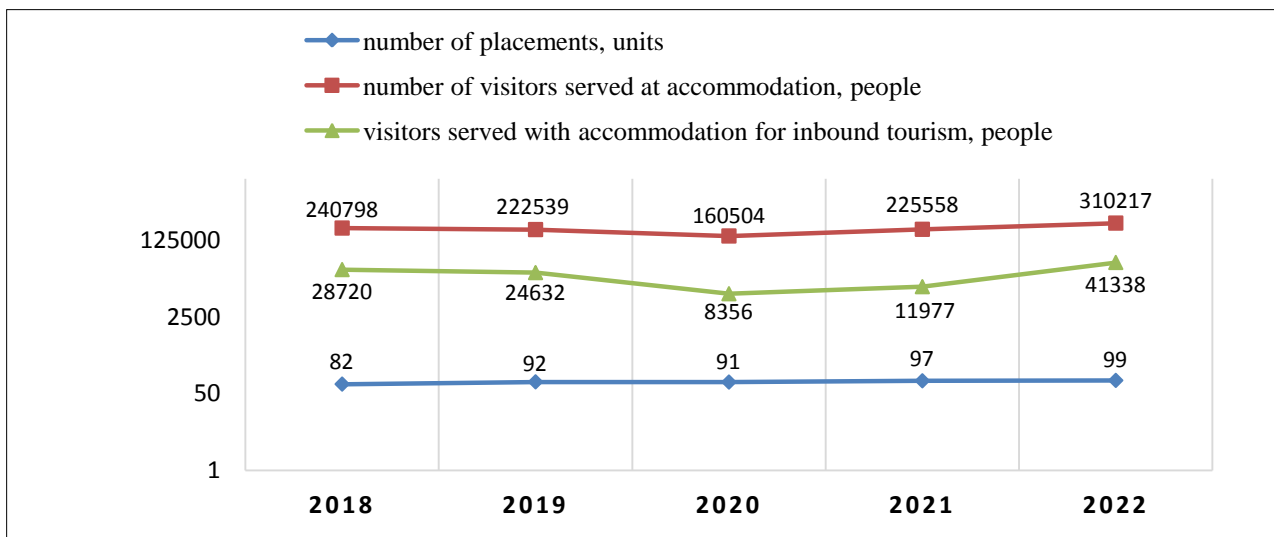


Figure 1. Number of visitors served at accommodation sites and the number of visitors served at outbound tourism accommodation sites

Note — compiled by the authors based on data <https://stat.gov.kz/>

This explains the increase in the number of accommodation places in the Top-10 tourist regions. However, there was a positive impetus for strategic activities only in 2022.

It seems that the growth of tourist flows today is ensured in Mangystau due to “wild” tourism. Today, visitors, especially foreign ones, are drawn to places with untouched nature and interesting landscapes. Here they can be alone with themselves, experience new sensations and a whole kaleidoscope of impressions.

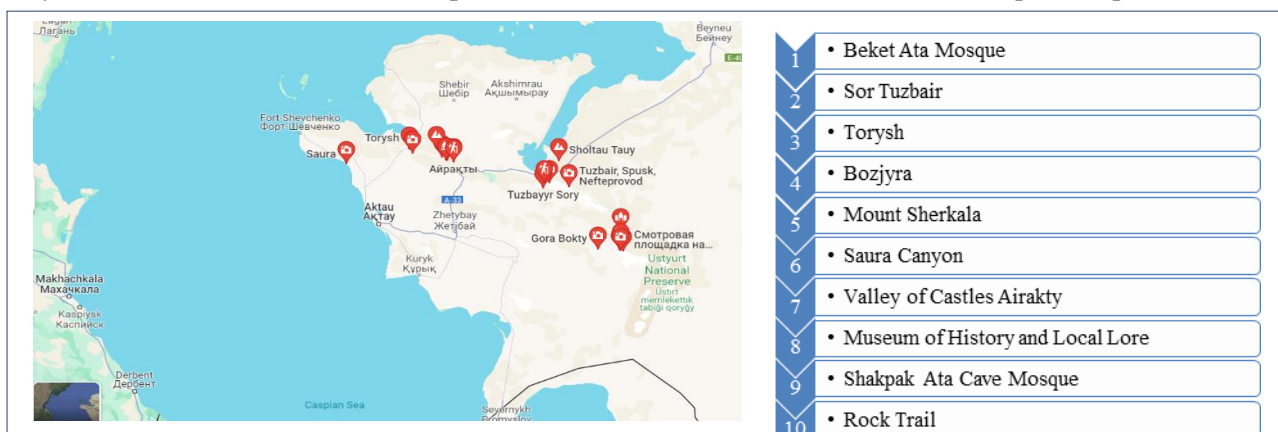


Figure 2. Top-10 tourist attractions in Mangystau region

Note — compiled by the authors based on data <https://www.tripadvisor.ru>

It is no coincidence that adherents of wild tourism note that you can come to Mangystau and see those landscapes for which some people have to travel around several countries. Reviews left on TripAdvisor indicate that tourists are attracted by the pristine nature, the “cosmic” landscape, and their sensations are equal to that of having visited Mars. Therefore, among the 31 attractions of Mangystau noted by tourists on the website in 2022, the Top-10 include mostly natural objects (Fig. 2).

Tourists note on the website that visiting these places provides an opportunity to immerse oneself and the depth of the area, awakens one to cosmic consciousness or causes emotional delight, such as Bozjyra. This once again confirms that tourists come to Mangystau for new positive experiences.

The above confirms the idea that the creation of new accommodation places, the construction of hotels and sanatoriums in itself will not ensure an influx of tourists, especially foreign ones. There are also lovers of “wild” tourism. It is necessary to correctly select promotion tools and their targeted use, taking into account the target audience and the specifics of the regional tourism product.

Discussions

Tourists come to our regions in search of authenticity, and why not already at the stages of promoting a regional tourism product not demonstrate the nomadic and semi-nomadic lifestyle of the local population using modern digital technologies. The same can be said with regard to the natural landscape of the area. Mangystau region is precisely a multifaceted region in terms of tourism and recreational opportunities. This region has preserved the traditions of culture and mentality of the Kazakh people, which are reflected in the existing historical and cultural attractions.

One of the key problems hindering the realization of the region’s tourism potential is the lack of scientifically based programs for promoting the regional tourism product, taking into account all its features.

Other reasons that reduce the effectiveness of RTP promotion programs are:

- limited and lack of diversity in the use of marketing tools to create awareness of services and preferences among potential tourists both on the part of JSC NC “Kazakhtourism” and local authorities;
- lack of clear market segmentation and positioning of the components of the regional tourism product;
- uncertainty regarding the target audience and, as a consequence, the “blurring” of marketing activities to promote RTP;
- weak involvement of opinion leaders, local communities, experts, social networks for active promotion;
- weak cooperation or its complete absence with other regions in matters of joint promotion of RTP to foreign markets.

Costly methods and promotion tools are often used (participation in international exhibitions, events, etc.), which are more effective in promoting RTP to corporate clients rather than to end consumers — tourists.

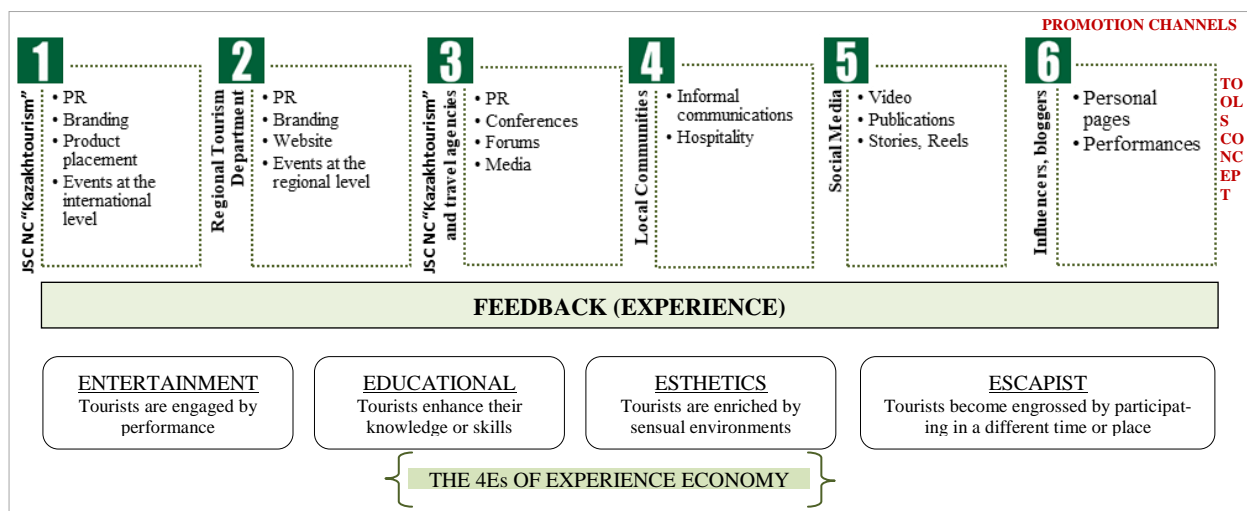


Figure 3. Main channels and tools for promoting RTP Mangystau

Note — compiled by the authors based on scheme of Saayman & Merwe (2014)

In the context of growing internal and external competition in the tourism services market, on the one hand, and the increasing spread of the concept of the “Experience Economy”, its influence on the promotion of RTP, it is important to diversify promotion channels in terms of strengthening their emotional component. In particular, impressions of a regional tourism product can be promoted through social networks, where bloggers, influencers, and representatives of local communities can share their positive feelings from the trip in stories, reels, etc. Figure 3 illustrates the channels and the main tools for promoting the Mangystau RTP.

It seems that such diversification of channels and marketing promotion tools will make it possible to more effectively build communications with both corporate clients and end consumers. Moreover, tourists can be informed in advance in more attractive and accessible forms about the “range” of sensations, impressions and emotions that they can receive as a result of visiting the region.

All over the world, the role of local communities in popularizing and promoting their destinations is now growing. The state and local authorities should encourage the development of networks and partnerships based on local communities and direct them in the right direction in order to enhance the promotion of the regional tourism product.

Conclusions

Analysis of the problems and features of promoting the regional tourism product of the Mangystau region allowed us to draw the following conclusions and propose recommendations.

1. The RTP has a complex structure due to the multi-composition of its elements and the relationship between them. This affects the features of its promotion.

2. Undoubtedly, the specifics of RTP promotion should be taken into account when choosing its tools. Perhaps, here we should not be talking about the use of promotion tools for the entire RTP, but about their differentiated application in relation to certain elements of a given product.

3. Successful promotion of the Mangystau RTP to the external (international) market can be facilitated by cooperation with other countries of the Caspian region and other regions of the Republic of Kazakhstan. This could be co-branding, the creation of a single Tourist Information Centre, holding joint exhibitions and fairs (for example, souvenirs, handicraft products), etc.

4. It is necessary to diversify channels and promotion tools for more successful and rapid promotion of RTP, the formation of its positive image and preferences among internal and, especially, external visitors to the destination.

Thus, taking into account the features and problems in promoting the RTP of the Mangystau region will contribute to the formation of a more balanced and scientifically based approach to the selection of marketing tools.

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«Әсер ету экономикасын» дамыту контексінде Маңғыстаудың аймақтық туристік өнімін ілгерілету ерекшеліктері

Аңдатпа:

Мақсаты: Зерттеудің негізгі мақсаты Маңғыстау облысының аймақтық туристік өнімін ілгерілетудегі ерекшеліктерін «әсер ету экономикасының» ықпалы контексінде анықтау. Бұл зерттеудің гипотезасы инфрақұрылымның және атап айтқанда, орналастыру орындарының даму деңгейі келуші туристер (резидент еместер) ағынының анықтаушы факторы болып табылмайды.

Әдісі: Мақаланың мақсатына жету үшін келесі ғылыми әдістер қолданылды: жалпылау әдісі, құрылымдық

талдау, сандық талдау, графикалық әдіс.

Қорытынды: Туристік өнім көбінесе материалдық емес қызметтерден тұратыны белгілі. Оларды пайдалану құны мен құндылығы негізінен туристер арасындағы эмоциялармен, сезімдермен және өзіндік әсерлермен өлшенеді. «Әсер ету экономикасы» концепциясы бойынша туризмдегі қосымша құнның негізгі көзі бүгінгі таңда тек туристік қызметтер ғана емес, тұтынушылардың жағымды әсерлері мен қабылдауы. Атап айтқанда, «әсер ету экономикасының» белгілі бір өлшемдері жағымды әлеуметтік ортаны қалыптастыруға әсер етуші күш болып саналады. Сонымен қатар, жайлылықты қабылдау екі басқарушылық нәтижеге әкелуі мүмкін деп болжанады: брендті сәйкестендіру және туристік өнімді жылжыту стратегиясын қалыптастыратын брендке оралу ниеті.

Тұжырымдама: Туристік қызметтер нарығындағы ішкі және сыртқы бәсекелестіктің күшеюі және «әсер ету экономикасы» концепциясының ауқымдылығы, аймақтық туристік өнімді ілгерілету арналары көмегімен олардың эмоционалдылығын күшейту маңызды.

Кілт сөздер: аймақтық туристік өнім, маркетинг құралдары, әсер ету экономикасы, Маңғыстау облысы, құрылымдық талдау, сандық талдау, графиктік әдіс.

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Особенности продвижения регионального туристского продукта Мангыстау в контексте развития «Экономики впечатлений»

Аннотация:

Цель: Основной целью данного исследования является выявление специфики продвижения регионального туристского продукта Мангыстауской области в контексте влияния на него «Экономики впечатлений». Гипотеза данного исследования состоит в том, что уровень развития инфраструктуры и, в частности, средств размещения, не является определяющим фактором притока въездных туристов (нерезидентов).

Методы: Для достижения данной цели были использованы следующие научные методы: метод обобщения, структурный анализ, количественный анализ, графический метод.

Результаты: Известно, что туристский продукт по большей части состоит из нематериальных услуг, потребительная стоимость и ценность которых измеряются, главным образом, эмоциями, новыми ощущениями и впечатлениями у туристов. Основным источником добавленной стоимости в туризме, согласно концепции «Экономики впечатлений», становятся сегодня не просто туристские услуги, а положительные впечатления и ощущения потребителей. В частности, предполагается, что на формирование восприятия благополучия влияют определенные измерения экономики впечатлений. Кроме того, предполагается, что восприятие благополучия может привести к двум управленческим результатам: идентификации бренда и намерениям вернуться к нему, что и будет формировать стратегию продвижения турпродукта.

Выводы: В условиях растущей внутренней и внешней конкуренции на рынке туристских услуг и все большего распространения Концепции «Экономики впечатлений», ее влияния на продвижение РТП важно диверсифицировать каналы продвижения в плане усиления их эмоциональной составляющей.

Ключевые слова: региональный туристический продукт, маркетинговые инструменты, экономика впечатлений, Мангыстауская область, структурный анализ, количественный анализ, графический метод.