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## THE ROLE OF GUEST HOUSES IN THE DEVELOPMENT OF RURAL TOURISM IN THE ALMATY REGION

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**The role of guest houses in the development of rural tourism in the Almaty region**

**Abstract.** The article examines the role of guesthouses in the development of rural tourism in the Almaty region. The aim of this article is to explore and analyze the role of guesthouses in the development of rural tourism in the Almaty region. The research employs methods of systematization, analysis, data selection, and grouping, as well as statistical and comparative analysis. Domestic and international literature were reviewed, and a SWOT analysis and surveys were conducted. The study highlights that guesthouses play a key role in the development of rural tourism by creating attractive conditions for tourists and contributing to the economic growth of rural areas. An analysis of the operation of guesthouses in the Almaty region was conducted, identifying their strengths and weaknesses. The study also examined international practices in the development of guesthouses for rural tourism. Recommendations for improving the management of guesthouses were proposed, including methods to enhance their competitiveness, improve service quality, and foster a welcoming atmosphere.

**Key words:** rural tourism, guest houses, Almaty region, agrotourism, service, tourism industry.

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**Алматы облысындағы ауыл туризмінің дамытудағы қонақжайлардың рөлі**

**Аңдатпа.** Мақалада Алматы облысындағы ауылдық туризмнің дамуына қонақ жайлардың рөлі қарастырылады. Мақала мақсаты – Алматы облысындағы ауылдық туризмін дамытудағы қазіргі замандағы қонақ жайлардың рөлін анықтау және талдау. Зерттеу барысында жүйелеу, талдау, іріктеу және топтастыру әдістері, сондай-ақ статистикалық және салыстырмалы талдау қолданылды. Отандық және шетелдік әдебиеттер зерттеліп, SWOT талдауы және сауалнамалар жүргізілді. Зерттеу барысында қонақ үйлердің ауылдық туризмнің дамуына айтарлықтай үлес қосып, туристер үшін тартымды жағдайлар жасай отырып, ауылдық аймақтардың экономикалық өсуіне ықпал ететіні атап өтілді. Алматы облысындағы қонақ үйлердің қызметі талданып, олардың күшті және әлсіз жақтары анықталды. Зерттеу барысында ауылдық туризмді дамытудағы қонақ жайлардың халықаралық тәжірибесі зерттелді. Қонақ үйлерді басқаруды жақсарту бойынша ұсыныстар, олардың бәсекеге қабілеттілігін арттыру әдістері, қызмет көрсету сапасын жақсарту және қонақжайлылық атмосферасын құру бойынша ұсыныстар берілді.

**Түйін сөздер:** ауыл туризмі, қонақ жайлар, Алматы облысы, агротуризм, қызмет көрсету, туризм индустриясы.

Дюсекеева Еркегуль Талгатовна, Кадырбекова Динара Сериковна, Мирзакаримова Анара Нурмухамедовна

**Роль гостевых домов в развитии сельского туризма Алматинской области**

**Аннотация.** В статье рассматривается роль гостевых домов в развитии сельского туризма Алматинской области. Цель данной статьи – исследовать и проанализировать роль современных гостевых домов в развитии сельского туризма Алматинской области. В процессе исследования применены методы систематизации, анализа, выборки и группировки, а также статистический и сравнительный анализ, изучены отечественная и зарубежная литература, проведен SWOT анализ, анкетирование. Отмечается, что гостевые дома играют ключевую роль в развитии сельского туризма, создавая привлекательные условия для туристов, способствуя экономическому росту сельских территорий. Проведен анализ работы гостевых домов Алматинской области, выявлены их сильные и слабые стороны. В ходе исследования был изучен международный опыт развития гостевых домов в развитии сельского туризма. Предложены рекомендации по улучшению управления гостевыми домами, предложены методы повышения их конкурентоспособности, улучшения качества услуг и создания атмосферы гостеприимства.

**Ключевые слова:** сельский туризм, гостевые дома, Алматинская область, агротуризм, обслуживание, индустрия туризма.

**Introduction.** Opening and developing guesthouses play an important role in promoting rural tourism in the Almaty region, as they allow tourists to immerse themselves in local culture and traditions. The provision of high-quality services and the use of local products by guesthouses not only enhance the tourist appeal of the region but also contribute to the economic development of rural areas by providing an additional source of income for local residents. Guesthouses are one of the types of small businesses in tourism. Rural tourism is currently gaining popularity, and therefore there is a high demand from tourists for private accommodation facilities, such as guesthouses. The region's natural features (deserts, forests, water reservoirs, mountain areas) and locations with historical and cultural heritage attract tourists to villages and rivers [1]. The concept of a "guesthouse" is a relatively new term in modern tourism studies, having been widely used since the 20th century. Accommodation facilities within the agro-industrial complex are gaining popularity within the framework of providing complex tourism services.

In Kazakhstan's Tourism Development Program for 2019-2025, agrotourism is identified as one of the priority areas. To develop agrotourism, several measures are planned, including support for small and medium-sized businesses, the development of methodological tools, consulting new entrepreneurs in the hospitality industry, and promoting this tourism product [2].

**Research aim.** The objective of the study is to determine the role of guesthouses in the development of rural tourism in the Almaty region and to assess their current state.

**Research goals:**

– to determine the significance of rural tourism, including guesthouses, by revealing its importance;

– to study international experience in the development of agrotourism;

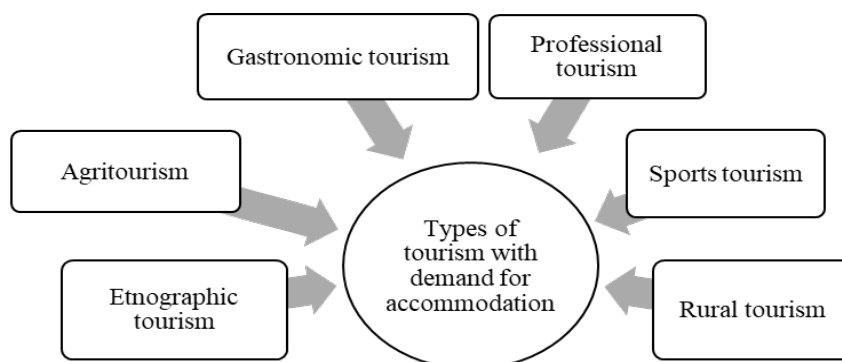
– to explore and analyze the attractiveness of guesthouses in the Almaty region.

**Methods and organization of the research.**

Domestic and foreign literature and experience, requirements of regulatory legal documents, literature sources, and internet resources, questionnaires, SWOT analysis, classification, and coordination.

The information base for the research includes statistical data and reporting materials from the Bureau of National Statistics of the Republic of Kazakhstan, the Department of Statistics of the Almaty region, and specialized publications on tourism.

**Results.** Guesthouses serve as accommodation facilities for tourists and are typically located in rural settlements. Compared to hotels, they offer fewer services, but provide the opportunity to live in an environment closer to home life. The main advantage of guesthouses is their location in rural areas rich in natural resources and with preserved unique characteristics. The direct involvement of local residents in service provision increases the social significance of this business. At a time when rural populations are increasingly migrating to cities, guesthouses can serve as one of the key tools for preserving cultural heritage and ensuring the sustainable development of rural areas. Moreover, the development of guesthouses helps to maintain year-round demand from urban residents and tourists. Of course, starting any type of business initially involves certain risks and challenges. Guesthouses are recognized as the predominant type of accommodation for the following types of tourism (Figure 1).



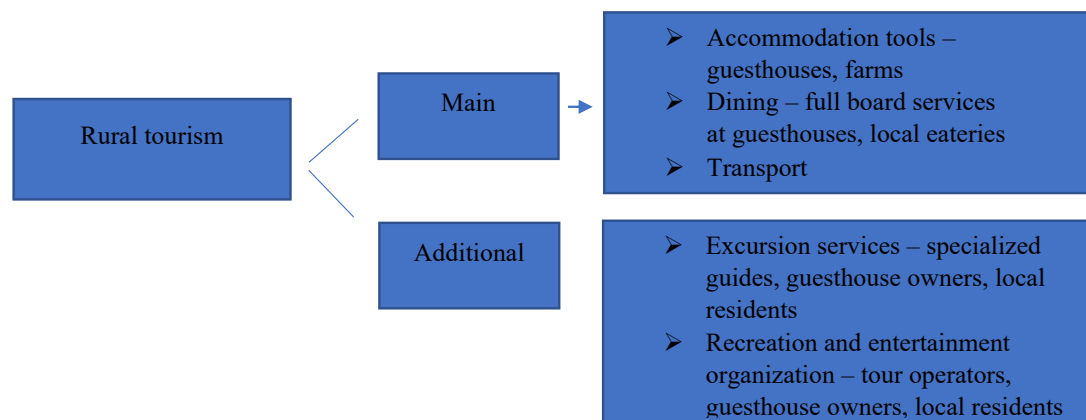
Note: Compiled by the authors.

Figure 1 – Predominant Accommodation Tools by Types of Tourism

Figure 1 shows the types of tourism where accommodation is the primary tool. The main segment of these tourism types consists of foreign tourists, as they show significant interest in experiencing unique and authentic agricultural activities. Despite existing state programs aimed at developing rural tourism in Kazakhstan, its development is hindered by several barriers, including insufficient funding, lack of specific marketing strategies, and limited infrastructure in rural areas. The high prices of urban hotels force people to look for alternative options for recreation, including staying in rural areas. In this context, the

development of rural tourism is a promising direction for diversifying regional economies, preserving cultural heritage, and improving the living standards of rural residents. To successfully realize the potential of rural tourism, it is necessary to develop comprehensive state support measures, including financial incentives for local entrepreneurs, modern infrastructure development, and active promotion of tourist products in both domestic and international markets.

Figure 2 illustrates the services offered in rural tourism and the role of guesthouses among them.



Note: Compiled by the authors.

Figure 2 – Mechanism for Organizing Accommodation through Rural Tourism

Figure 2 demonstrates that organizing accommodation in rural areas presents significant potential in the tourism service sector. The primary services of guesthouses include accommodation and dining. Guesthouses should have dedicated functional areas for sleeping, relaxing, dining, and meeting sanitary needs. Additionally, guesthouses must be equipped with furniture and items that reflect the characteristics of rural life. They offer tourists private accommodation options and play a crucial role in the tourism service complex.

– Urban residents often lack sufficient information about where and how local eco-friendly products are grown. Visiting various farms allows them to gain new insights, closely connect with nature, and experience the genuine hospitality of farmers. This interest in agritourism among city dwellers is related to:




– Rural life experience. Urban residents can visit a farm and stay for several days. Farmers offer opportunities to help with animal husbandry, haymaking, harvesting, milking cows, and other agricultural tasks, allowing visitors to escape the hustle and bustle of city life and enjoy the tranquility of rural living.

– Farms provide workshops and training programs to teach tourists important skills such as plant cultivation, dairy production, and honey harvesting.

– Farms are situated in picturesque natural settings, amidst green meadows, where tourists can relax and unwind from the noisy city life through walking and enjoying the serene environment.

Successful and effective examples of agritourism worldwide are numerous (Table 1).

Table 1 – Overview of Successful Agritourism Worldwide

<p>«<b>Podere San Lorenzo</b>» Farm (Italy) – Located in Tuscany, this farm offers guests an authentic rural experience. Visitors can participate in olive and grape harvesting, learn to prepare traditional Tuscan dishes, and enjoy the beautiful nature and local culture.</p>	
<p><b>Fazenda Catucaba (Brazil)</b> – Located in San Paulo state, this farm allows guests to experience Brazilian rural life. Visitors can participate in coffee harvesting, cheese-making, horseback riding, and other agricultural activities.</p>	
<p><b>Frog's Leap Winery (USA)</b> – Located in Napa Valley, California, this winery offers guests tours of the vineyards and winery, wine tastings, and dinners prepared with local products.</p>	
<p><b>Farmhouse Inn (New Zealand)</b> – Located on Waiheke Island, this property offers high-comfort accommodations with views of the farm's pastures and hills. Guests can enjoy walking tours, farm excursions, and participate in agricultural activities.</p>	
<p><b>Countryside Farm (Japan)</b> – Situated on the slopes of the Hida Mountains, this farm provides guests with a glimpse into the unique lifestyle of Japanese farms, opportunities to taste traditional Japanese dishes, participate in traditional tea ceremonies, and explore local attractions.</p>	

Note: Compiled by the authors.

Table 1 presents global experiences in agritourism. Many guesthouses offer unique services based on their location. For instance, vineyards conduct workshops on wine-

making corresponding to the grapes they grow.

Such successful examples also exist in Kazakhstan (Table 2).

Table 2 – Examples of Accommodations in Kazakhstan

<p>«<b>Slava Stolyar’s Cheese-Making House</b>» – A family farm located in Esik, Enbekshi Kazakh District, Almaty Region. The program includes exploring the history of cheese-making, tasting cheeses and beverages, enjoying dishes prepared in a wood-fired oven, relaxing in fresh air, walking around the Saka burial mounds, and resting by the river. It can accommodate up to 20 people per day, with a participation fee of 24,000 Tenge per person [5].</p>	
<p><b>Arba Wine</b> – Located at the foothills of the Zungar Alatau, this vineyard always welcomes tourists. The wine tour includes showing the entire process from grape harvesting to bottling, wine tasting in the cellar, dinner under the open sky with stunning vineyard views, and a special photo area. The tour starts with a group of 30 people, with a participation fee of 25,000 Tenge [5].</p> <p><b>GreenEco Greenhouse Complex</b> – Located in Panfilov Village, Talgar District, Almaty Region, this facility allows tourists to explore the production capacity of the greenhouse complex. Agronomists introduce visitors to the plant growth stages, share interesting and useful information, and demonstrate new plant cultivation technologies. The tour starts with a group of 10 people, with an entry fee of 3,500 Tenge [6].</p>	 
<p>«<b>Little garden</b>» <b>Flower Farm</b> – Located in Kyzylkairat Village, Talgar District, Almaty Region, this flower farm offers visitors the opportunity to stroll through a garden with various flower species, receive advice from florists, and taste floral teas. There is no specific tour program, and the farm is always open to visitors. The tour starts with a group of 5 people, with an entry fee of 3,500 Tenge.</p>	
<p><b>Pavel Kononov’s «Pure Honey» Mountain Apiary</b> – Located at the foothills of the Alatau, this apiary starts with a gathering in an apple orchard. The farm includes: tea with honey, a lunch prepared on an open fire, demonstrations of honey harvesting methods, teaching how to differentiate honey varieties, and methods for recognizing pure honey versus mixed honey. The tour starts with a group of 10 people, and entry is free if honey products worth more than 10,000 Tenge are purchased.</p>	

Note: Compiled by the authors.

Table 2 illustrates that Kazakhstan boasts numerous successful guesthouses. These vary in the services and themes they offer. Each guesthouse has its unique theme, within which workshops and activities are organized. The Almaty region stands out for its prominent location and stunning landscapes. The breathtaking views not only enhance the appeal for residents but

also attract interest from international tourists. Consequently, the demand for accommodation is increasing. The number of accommodations is rising annually, offering services not only to tourists but also to all residents. To substantiate this trend and the growing demand over time, we will analyze the potential of the Almaty region based on three main indicators (Table 3).

Table 3 – Analysis of Accommodation Sector Potential in Almaty Region

	2021	2022	2023
Number of Accommodation Units (units)	555	319	253
Volume of Services Provided by Accommodation (thousand Tenge)	4 654 172,88	3 971 951,98	4 980 054,32
Number of Visitors Served by Accommodation (people)	342 523	350 835	352 020

Note: compiled by the authors [7].

Table 3 indicates that the number of accommodation units has decreased annually. For instance, in 2021, there were 555 units, but this number fell by 57% to 319 units in 2022. By 2023, the number of accommodation units had further decreased to only 253. These changes reflect the difficulties faced by guesthouses in reopening after temporarily closing during the pandemic, resulting in a reduction in the number of accommodations.

Additionally, the volume of services provided by accommodations was 4,654,173 thousand Tenge in 2021. This figure decreased by 15% in 2022 but saw a sharp increase in 2023. The closure of guesthouses has led to a reduction in the number of available units,

which suggests an increased demand for the services of the remaining guesthouses.

In 2021, the number of visitors served by accommodation units was 342,523. This number increased to 350,835 in 2022. This demonstrates a growing number of visitors each year and highlights the insufficiency of accommodation units. It clearly indicates a high and steadily increasing demand, while the supply remains low.

**Discussion of the research.** Table 4 will present the SWOT matrix for the accommodation business in Almaty Region, categorizing the advantages, disadvantages, potential for development, and possible risks associated with the industry.

Table 4 – SWOT Matrix for the Accommodation Business in Almaty Region

SWOT Analysis	Strengths: Natural beauty Cultural heritage Hospitality of local residents - Support from government programs	Weaknesses: Underdeveloped infrastructure Limited range of services - Underdeveloped marketing sector
SWOT Analysis Opportunities: Development of the tourism sector Introduction of new innovations Growth of rural tourism	SO Strategy:  Organize various tours and excursions that capture the attention of incoming guests.	WO Strategy:  Develop a marketing strategy aimed at enhancing the offerings of guesthouses.
Threats: Increasing competition Economic instability - Natural disasters	ST Strategy:  Develop safety measures for tourists in the event of natural disasters.	WT Strategy:  Implement loyalty programs for regular guests.

Note: Compiled by the authors.

According to Table 4, a SWOT analysis of accommodations in Almaty Region was conducted. While there is significant potential for establishing guesthouses in the region, effective operation requires addressing various threats and weaknesses in advance.

**Conclusion.**Based on the research, the following conclusions have been made:

1. Guesthouses are a key component of the rural tourism infrastructure in the Almaty region. They not only attract tourists to rural areas but also play a significant role in local economic development by creating new jobs and contributing to the growth of related industries.

2. The main challenges for guesthouse owners include a lack of funding, limited marketing resources, underdeveloped infrastructure, and rising maintenance

costs. These factors hinder the development of guesthouses and limit their contribution to the growth of rural tourism.

3. To enhance the competitiveness of guesthouses, it is necessary to implement modern management technologies, improve service quality, and develop unique tourism offers that consider the needs and expectations of contemporary tourists.

4. For the development of guesthouses in the Almaty region, it is crucial to actively attract investments, improve infrastructure, refine marketing strategies, and promote the region's tourism brand. These measures will increase the number of tourists, improve the economic situation in rural areas, and positively impact the region's sustainable development.

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