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Urban Tourism: Swot Analysis of Turkestan in Terms of Tourism Potential¹

Kent Turizmi: Türkistan'in Turizm Potansiyeli Açısından Swot Analizi

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ABSTRACT

Tourism, which is a modern and global phenomenon, not only contributes positively to the country's economy, but also affects the general development level of societies. Because in places where tourism activities are active, it is a necessity to provide infrastructure and superstructure services completely. Urban areas, on the other hand, primarily serve as important international transfer gates within the framework of the development of the tourism industry. When the potential of communication, transportation, health, and accommodation facilities, which is a requirement of being a city, is combined with the active marketing and promotion of cultural heritage attractions in urban destinations; Cities can become a new touristic destination where the expectations of potential touristic demand are met. The main purpose of urban tourism, where distinctive geographical, cultural, and historical features are revealed, is to increase their international awareness and to gain a competitive advantage by having a strong image. In this context, it is important to emphasize the strengths of the city, to eliminate the weaknesses, to evaluate the opportunities it has and to be aware of the threats. In this study, first the subject of urban tourism will be examined, and a SWOT analysis will be made in the city of Turkestan, which is the first historical monument of Kazakhstan in the UNESCO World Heritage List, is the Tomb of Khoja Ahmed Yasawi. Then the suggestions will be made to increase the tourism potential of Turkestan.

Keywords: Development of Urban, Marketing and Promotion, SWOT Analysis, The Tomb of Khoja Ahmed Yasawi, Turkestan, Urban Tourism

Jel Classification: L83, M31, M37

ÖZET

Modern ve küresel bir olgu olan turizm, ülke ekonomisine olumlu yönde katkı sağlamanın yanı sıra, bir bütün olarak toplumların genel gelişmişlik düzeyini de etkilemektedir. Çünkü turizm faaliyetlerinin aktif olduğu yerlerde, altyapı ve üstyapı hizmetlerinin tam olarak sağlanması bir zorunluluktur. Kent olmanın bir gereği olan iletişim, ulaşım, sağlık, konaklama tesisleri potansiyeli, kentsel destinasyonlardaki kültürel miras niteliğindeki çekiciliklerin aktif bir şekilde pazarlaması ve tanıtımı ile birleşince; kentler, potansiyel turistik talebin beklentileri karşılandığı yeni bir turistik destinasyon haline gelebilirler. Ayırt edici coğrafi, kültürel, tarihi özelliklerin ortaya konulduğu kent turizminde ana amaç, uluslararası bilinirliklerini artırmak ve güçlü bir imaja sahip olarak rekabet üstünlüğü elde etmektir. Bu bağlamda kentin güçlü yönlerinin vurgulanması, zayıf yönlerinin ortadan kaldırılması, sahip olduğu fırsatların değerlendirilmesi ve tehditlerin farkına varılması önem arz etmektedir. Bu çalışmada, kent turizmi konusu incelenerek, Kazakistan'ın UNESCO Dünya Mirası Listesi'ne alınan ilk tarihi eseri olan Hoca Ahmed Yesevi Türbesinin bulunduğu, Türkistan şehrinde, SWOT analizi yapılacak ve turizm potansiyelinin artırılması için önerilerde bulunulacaktır.

Anahtar Kelimeler: Kent Gelişimi, Pazarlama ve Tanıtım, SWOT Analizi, Hoca Ahmed Yesevi Türbesi, Türkistan, Kent Turizmi

Jel Sınıflandırması: L83, M31, M37

1. INTRODUCTION

A tourism destination that can affect market competitiveness is a physical space where the inbound traveler can experience touristic products, services, activities, and experiences altogether. To market a destination, local government, tourism professionals and other stakeholders need to collaborate towards a vision and goal. A Destination Marketing Organization (DMO), which will be formed for this purpose, will be able to carry out many activities at a professional level from a single source, such as the implementation of tourism policies, strategic planning, promotion and marketing programs and the planning of congress office activities. A DMO can be a single public authority with a key role in initiating, coordinating, and directing activities, or it can be established in a public-private partnership model. The functions of DMOs may be performed at the national, regional, or local level according to current and potential needs. It is not mandatory to have a DMO in every tourism destination. However, there is great benefit in establishing a DMO for the development of urban tourism in a destination and the effective use of scarce resources (UNWTO, 2019). Thus, a value chain is created by carrying out the primary and support activities necessary for the performance of the tourism sector from a single source (Tekin, Burgess, & Güleş, 2000, p. 284).

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In cities, local government officials such as mayors, city council members, city planners, and other tourism stakeholders such as university officials, tourism business managers use SWOT analysis, one of the due diligence matrices, to evaluate the conditions of the city. Thus, they evaluate the external and internal environmental elements of the city as a whole. As a result of this research, the public and private sectors can develop projects that can provide social benefit by fulfilling their responsibilities, determining what needs to be done to increase social welfare and improve living standards. In addition, SWOT analysis allows each department in the public or private sector or the entire city to develop strategic plans for efficient organization. Thus, it will be possible to attract entrepreneurs to the region, to increase the level of social welfare and to ensure the sustainability of economic development (Ülgen & Mirze, 2004, p. 160).

In the study, it is aimed to emphasize the strengths and weaknesses of Turkestan, which is one of the important cities of Kazakhstan, within the framework of urban tourism, and to determine the opportunities it has and the threats it faces. By evaluating the urban tourism plans in Turkestan, a SWOT analysis will be made in terms of the tourism potential of Turkestan, and various suggestions will be made in terms of contributing to the tourism sector and the development of the city. Turkistan, which has entered an emerging trend in terms of both modernization and urbanization, especially with the influence of Akhmet Yassawi University, the developing economy of Kazakhstan, has a great meaning and importance about the development of urban tourism in the Central Asia.

1.1. Urban Tourism

Urban tourism has made a leap in countries with developed economies since the rise of mass tourism, with the effect of rising economic welfare due to technological development and globalization (Bahar & Kozak, 2006) . Growth in urban tourism is driven by spatial, social, economic, and technological macro factors. Worldwide urbanization processes, migration to big cities, differentiation of lifestyle, disposable income and leisure time have increased. This new order allows people to visit and explore other cities. When this opportunity was supported by the decreasing travel costs provided by new investments in airline transportation and accommodation businesses, tourism activities diversified and expanded its sphere of influence. (Dunne, Flanagan, & Buckley, 2010) Information Technologies and Internet support city tourism marketing and promotion with online reservation systems, websites, social media. As a result of these developments, cities are no longer perceived as merely points of entry, boarding or transit during a journey, but as attractions and destinations.

The economic, technological, social, and spatial positive or negative effects of urban tourism affect the direction of urban trends. The development of urban tourism is the presence of tourists, the support or bias of the public, private sector, and local people for touristic activities; and is driven by global tourist trends. As a result of this direct interactive dependency, regional, national, and global benefits emerge (Temiz, Sağlık, Sağlık, Kelkit, & Bayrak, 2019).

However, massive urban tourism activities affect the living standards of the local people both positively and negatively. For example, if the historical texture in the city centers cannot be adequately preserved as in Istanbul, or if it is preserved at the maximum level as in Rome, the interactive trend will differ.

2. LITERATURE REVIEW

The increase in the popularity of city tourism and its high market share have led researchers to conduct scientific studies on city tourism. International and national studies in the field of city tourism have examined economic development, urban management and city marketing (Ashworth & Page, 2011), (Postma, Papp, & Koens, 2018), (Jansen-Verbeke, 1986). Also, studies: planning for cultural tourism in cities (Russo & Borg, 2002), environmental factors and economic effects of urban tourism (Law, 1992) and international were focused on the effects of global events on cities.

The lack of research on tourism-oriented contributions in studies on the urban economy is a hindrance to the sustainable development of cities (Bahar & Kozak, 2006) Some researchers have emphasized the importance of tourism and city branding as an integral part of strategic spatial planning approaches and urban management (Temiz, Sağlık, Sağlık, Kelkit, & Bayrak, 2019), (İçellioğlu, 2014). Conceptual studies containing predictions and suggestions for the future of urban tourism have taken their place in the scientific literature (Giritlioğlu & Avcıkurt).

The number of research on urban tourism in Turkestan is quite limited. In the studies, methods and strategies that can contribute to the development of Turkistan tourism have been tried to be determined. In addition, the factors that hinder the development of tourism and the solutions are emphasized.

In their study, Kuralbayev et al. (2017) investigated the tourism perception of the local people living in Turkestan and what needs to be done for the development of urban tourism. According to the results of the 940 surveys they applied to the university staff; It has been determined that local people see tourism as an activity that provides economic development and tourist as a source of income. Participants emphasized that the existing facilities in Turkestan should be improved, and the service quality should be increased. The study is important in terms of being the first study conducted in Turkestan.

In their research, Kim et al. (2021) identified the mistakes made in the translation of public signs in the city of Turkestan and determined the effect on tourists. As a result of the research, it was aimed to reduce translation errors and contribute to the development of tourism in terms of signs.

Abdrasilova and Danibekova (2021) examined the touristic values of Turkestan and the modern Turkestan architecture of the city in terms of socio-economic, image, architectural and spatial transformation. In the study, suggestions were made about the necessary changes for the development of urban tourism.

3. METHODOLOGY

3.1. Research Goal

The aim of the study is to emphasize the strengths and weaknesses of Turkestan, which has cultural and historical tourist attractions, within the framework of urban tourism, to determine the opportunities it has and the threats it faces. Values and resources within the scope of urban tourism in Turkestan will be examined and a swot analysis will be made in terms of Turkestan's tourism potential. Turkestan, which is in a rising trend in terms of both modernization and urbanization, especially with the influence of Akhmet Yassawi University's student exchange programs and other scientific studies, has cultural and historical resources that can contribute to the development of tourism in Central Asia. In this context, various suggestions will be made to tourism stakeholders that can contribute to the development of the city. The study is meaningful and important because it contributes to scientific research and the sector for the development of urban tourism in the future.

3.2. Material And Method

The city of Turkestan, which has a distinctive tourism potential with its historical and cultural characteristics, was chosen to research urban tourism. In the study carried out to better evaluate the tourism potential of the city; A literature review was conducted on the city, urbanization, and urban tourism, and the sources were evaluated as secondary data. The information obtained from the institutions regarding the natural, cultural, and historical values of the city also constitutes the other sources of the study.

Considering the concepts identified in the literature review, the cultural and historical attractions that will affect the international recognition of the city of Turkestan have been examined. The SWOT analysis technique, which is based on the determination of Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities and Threats, was used as a method in the study. The purpose of the SWOT analysis is to maximize strengths and opportunities; weaknesses and it is the development of strategies and tactics that will eliminate or minimize the impact of threats (Temiz, Sağlık, Sağlık, Kelkit, & Bayrak, 2019). The strengths and weaknesses of the city, the opportunities of the city and the factors that will affect the urban development as a threat were determined by SWOT analysis with the help of secondary data sources in the study. By evaluating these determined factors, suggestions have been developed for the touristic development of Turkestan.

4. INFORMATION ABOUT TURKESTAN

Turkestan is known as the city where Khoja Ahmed Yasawi lived and his tomb is located, which was founded in the 4th century and was the first historical monument of Kazakhstan to be included in the UNESCO World Heritage List. The tomb, built by Emir Timur in the 14th century, is one of the most magnificent structures in the city. The tomb was restored by Turkey in 1993. The city is home to Ahmed Yasawi Kazakh-Turkish University opened in 1992 and International University of Tourism and Hotel Management opened in 2019.

With the decree signed on June 19, 2018, the name of the Southern Kazakhstan province was changed to Turkestan province and the administrative center of the province was moved from the city of Shymkent to the city of Turkestan. With the change made; The cities of, Arys, Jetisay, Kentau, Lenger, Saryagash, Sayram, Shardara were connected to the Turkestan province (Kara, 2018).

The Turkestan region is predominantly an agricultural region. 12.5% of the agricultural products produced in the country are produced in the region. 100% of the cotton grown throughout the country, 72.5% of the grapes and 60% of the fruits and vegetables are grown in this region. In addition, in the Turkestan region, 80% of the

greenhouses in the country are located. The tourism industry is another priority sector in the regional economy. The city of Turkestan, which has turned into a regional center, is also located on the "Western Europe - Western China" international highway and is on the railway route connecting Kazakhstan with Russia, Kyrgyzstan, Uzbekistan, and other Central Asian countries. There are also more than 1000 historical, cultural, and archaeological sites and 4 specially protected natural areas in the region (Turkestan, 2022)

For these reasons, local and foreign tourists and investors attach great importance to the region. In the last three years, the number of tourists has increased by 25%. To increase the interest of potential investors, a comprehensive plan on the social-economic development of the Turkestan region until 2024 has been prepared (Kazakistan Cumhuriyeti Resmi Sitesi, 2021).

Another point that should be underlined is that a special economic zone called "Turkistan" with a total area of 1,338 hectares was created in Turkistan by the decision of the President of the Republic in 2018(Figure 1). The said special economic zone was established to accelerate the development of the city of Turkestan, to increase the tourism potential of the city and to further develop its competitive tourism infrastructure. In the special economic zone "Turkestan", sanatorium medical centers and health complexes, administrative complexes, schools, hospitals, museums, educational institutions, sports complexes, etc. is being built. According to the Additional Regulation on the "Turkestan" special economic zone, more than 21 billion tenges will be invested in the region in 2019, and this figure will reach 40 billion tenge by 2023. Today, the number of small and medium-sized enterprises in the region has reached 130,804. With this figure, the region ranks second in the country (Kazakistan Cumhuriyeti Resmi Sitesi, 2021).

Figure 1: Turkestan Province



Kaynak: (Kara, 2018)

Tourism Demand of Turkestan as below (Kazakistan Cumhuriyeti Resmi Sitesi, 2021):

- ✓ 102 512 domestic tourists
- ✓ 1235 foreign tourists

According to the results of 2020, the number of tourists visiting the region is 103 747. It has been shown that the number of these tourists decreased by 40.5% from the number of tourists in 2019 (174 404 people).

Student mobility is an alternative option for the development of urban tourism. New businesses to be opened to meet the accommodation, food and beverage, leisure time and similar needs of the young people who come for educational purposes will increase the commercial activity in Turkestan and contribute to the economy with new employment opportunities and income increase. Therefore, it will also enable the evaluation of the urban tourism potential in Turkistan. For this purpose, it was announced by the President of Kazakhstan Kassym-Jomart Tokayev that "Yasawi scholarship" from Khoja Ahmed Yasawi University will be allocated to young people coming to Turkestan from sister countries. In addition, it has been proposed to establish the "Great Turkish People's Education Fund" to coordinate academic mobility, internship, and professional development ties between universities (Satubaldina, 2021).

The promotion of the importance given to historical artifacts in Turkestan through social and visual media contributes greatly to the development of urban tourism. For example, TURKSOY organization organized an international conference on "Turkestan, the Spiritual Capital of the Turkic World" with the support of the International Turkic Academy and Khoja Ahmed Yasawi University in Turkestan. TURKSOY Secretary General Dusen Kaseinov stated that the International Turkic Academy, which is in uninterrupted cooperation with TURKSOY, is one of the institutions that carry out extremely important studies in terms of history, literature, language, and archives. Also, within the scope of the event, the new edition of the first translation of the Qur'an, which was translated into old Turkish during the Karakhanid period (tenth century), was introduced. This original

publication, published by the International Turkic Academy, is the edition of the oldest and most complete translation of the Qur'an in Turkish that has survived, and the original of this manuscript is preserved in the Istanbul Museum of Turkish and Islamic Arts (International Organization of Turkic Culture, 2022).

To increase the accommodation capacity, the opening of chain accommodation establishments such as Rixos Turkestan, Karavansaray Kaganat Hotel, Karavansaray Kaganat Kun Hotel, Hampton by Hilton Turkistan, Khanaka in Turkestan has positively affected the touristic image of the city. However, this development in touristic infrastructure facilities cannot contribute to local tourist accommodation. Because domestic tourists coming by road prefer lower priced facilities due to the low average income level of the country. Due to the distance of low-priced accommodation establishments from the center, time constraints and financial difficulties, most of the domestic tourists have to prefer daily tours in their Turkistan travels (Zhaylybayev, 2021).

The applications of augmented reality technology (İnan, 2022), defined by the "AR - sign", are effectively used for the promotion of Turkestan. Visitors to the city can watch live interesting facts about the touristic places of the city with the "AR Turkestan" application. This application is made to watch historical events and medieval life in four languages (Kazakh, Russian, Turkish, English) in the touristic center with 15 special AR-marks. In other words, a dhikr ceremony can be watched in an underground mosque in the ancient city of Kultobe or Khoja Ahmed Yassavi can be seen making pottery (Akimat of Turkestan Region, 2022).

Although Turkestan is a suitable city for the development of tourism in terms of the presence of cultural and historical touristic values, it cannot get a sufficient share from the world tourism market because of fact that it is a border neighbor of strong competitors such as Uzbekistan (Avci & Norbaev, 2021).

5. RESULTS

Developing the tourism potential of a particular city requires both the analysis of strengths and weaknesses arising from internal factors, and the analysis of threats and opportunities created by external environmental conditions (Durgun, 2007). Planning using SWOT analysis is only as effective as the information contained in the report. By recording the specific details of each subject in the analysis, you can create detailed, applicable plans by making use of statistical data. However, as a result of the SWOT analysis, the matrix in which opportunities, threats, strengths and weaknesses are indicated should not be seen as an "absolute" list where all strengths and weaknesses are recorded. Because such a list causes complexity and distracts from the purpose of the analysis (Ülgen & Mirze, 2004, p. 160). For this reason, in the list we made, the advantages and weaknesses that are suitable for the nature of environmental opportunities and threats and that will increase the market share are listed.

The following points are examined in the SWOT Analysis to be applied for an urban (Beest, 2018):

✓ Strengths

To identify strengths, your city's internal processes, capabilities and possibilities should be examined. These include human resources, physical resources, finance, and programs. The city's strengths can be identified by listing the location, size, parks, and recreational opportunities of the city. Conducting detailed scientific research to determine the visitor profile of the touristic centers in this list will help in determining which types of tourists prefer Turkistan. In addition, in line with the feedback received from the visitors, the studies to be carried out to improve the services will ensure that the benefit is maximized by developing distinctive strengths in the urban sense.

✓ Weaknesses

All cities have aspects that need to be developed compared to their counterparts. Finding a city's strengths does not mean that it is immune from sources of weakness. The external outputs from the City's Stakeholders are the key point to identify the problem areas in the city. Identified weaknesses must be eliminated. Otherwise, the development of urban tourism will not be possible. Fighting with rival cities in the field of urban tourism will only be possible with effective marketing and promotion. For this reason, we can ensure optimal use of resources by making use of destination marketing organizations (DMO).

✓ Opportunities

Opportunities are uncontrollable macro environmental factors that offer potential alternatives to your city. Possibilities include trends, economy, environment, and legislation. Trends, features, or statistics are reviewed to identify possibilities to improve economic and social stability in your city. In order for a city to evaluate its tourism potential and increase its market share, it must manage its assets and capabilities with a professional planning. Otherwise, opportunities are lost without being used.

✓ Threats

Cities do not face direct competition like businesses do. Instead, the threats come from competition for funding, changes in citizenship, and restrictive legislation. Making the necessary corrections in laws and regulations in order to take a place in the constantly and rapidly changing global competition is a prerequisite for success in the field of urban tourism.

The SWOT Analysis made in terms of the tourism potential of the Turkestan city of Kazakhstan in the study is given in Table 1 below.

Table 1: The SWOT Analysis of Turkestan

Strengths	Weaknesses
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ Having an international airport ✓ Faith and cultural tourism potential ✓ Hospitality of local people ✓ Presence of unknown cultural assets ✓ Declaring the Capital of Culture ✓ Declaring the spiritual capital of the Turkic World ✓ The Khoja Ahmed Yasawi Tomb ✓ Close to Uzbekistan in terms of Faith Tourism ✓ Use of augmented reality technology applications (AR Turkestan application) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ The city's lack of marketing and advertising ✓ Low number of foreign tourists ✓ Lack of touristic packages ✓ Seasonal and monthly demand fluctuation ✓ Lack of railway transportation infrastructure ✓ The lack of awareness of the natural wealth of the city ✓ Low-paid accommodation facilities located far from the city center
Opportunities	Threatens
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ Being close to the city of Shymkent ✓ Recognition as urban tourism ✓ Cooperation projects are carried out in education and academic fields ✓ International cultural and artistic collaborations ✓ Increase in accommodation capacity 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ Alteration and insufficient protection of cultural assets ✓ Destruction in archaeological sites ✓ Strong rival countries such as Uzbekistan in terms of tourism activities have similar historical and cultural values. ✓ Seeing Turkestan as a transit area for one-day accommodation by the international tourism market

6. GENERAL DISCUSSION

SWOT analysis was carried out to determine the tourism potential of the city of Turkestan and to determine its recognition in the international arena. In this context, the city's historical and cultural resource values were examined, and their administrative works were evaluated. The geographical location of the city, its cultural and historical attractions, the existence of values accepted as UNESCO world heritage, the fact that it has internationally accepted titles reveal the advantages of the city. The diversity of alternative tourism contributes to the city's economy.

To increase the visitor demand of the city of Turkestan, the superstructure and infrastructure facilities supported by a strong city image as well as its values should be developed for domestic and foreign tourists of all income levels. To strengthen the image in international markets, there should be a balance between the level of satisfaction and prices of the services offered.

If the regular land and railway transportation networks in transportation services are supported by maintenance and repair works and the number of trips is increased, a step will be recorded in terms of accessibility. Turkistan welcomes some touristic travelers with an overnight stay for transit only. If the preferences and habits of the tourists are determined by conducting scientific research on the travel behavior of the tourists, the length of stay can be extended. Other alternative suggestions are itemized as follows:

✓ *Commitment of the Decision Makers*

Government officials and politicians should encourage tourist businesses to invest in specific types of tourism. In this context, the economic and social benefits of urban tourism should be emphasized; the standards of tourism targets and legal regulations should be harmonized; Investment incentives should be prepared for tourism facilities.

✓ *Coordinating and Sustainability*

For the coordination and continuity of touristic services, special tourism business units should be established at the regional and national level, especially through public-private partnerships.

✓ *Networking*

The transfer of all kinds of information within the scope of urban tourism in Turkestan should be done through professional networks. Guaranteed tourism service categories and price lists offered in Turkestan should be made accessible and standardized from anywhere in the world.

✓ *Strategic Planning and Tactics*

1. Step: The touristic needs and travel expectations of different countries and market groups should be determined.
2. Step: An inventory should be created by analyzing the current situation in terms of infrastructure, services, and facilities.
3. Step: To improve the current situation, a continuous feedback mechanism should be established to determine the priorities of the current and potential market to make six-month and one-year long-term planning.
4. Step: Effective marketing and advertising programs should be prepared by taking into account the touristic attractions of Turkestan.

✓ *Staff Qualifications*

Continuous in-service training should be given to tourism employees about urban tourism with the cooperation of the public-private sector. Thus, the quality of services will be guaranteed, and the satisfaction level of the market will be increased.

✓ *Optimization of Touristic Resources*

As much resources as possible should be allocated for the strategic development of tourism in Turkestan. In the created service chain, importance should be given to the balance of duty, authority, and responsibility.

✓ *Communication and Marketing*

Specific tourism information should be added to general tourism promotion and marketing programs. Necessary improvements should be made by considering the positive or negative feedback obtained from the current market while creating marketing strategies.

ETHICAL STATEMENT

The study named " Urban Tourism: Swot Analysis of Turkestan in Terms of Tourism Potential" has been prepared in accordance with scientific rules, ethics, and citation rules; no falsification has been made on the collected data and this study has not been sent to any other academic publication medium for evaluation. Since this study is based on document analysis, there is no obligation for an ethics committee decision.

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