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Determinants of the Development of Gastrotourism in the North Kazakhstan Region

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Abstract. In the context of current trends in the development of the service sector in the world and Kazakhstan, the article examines the potential for the development of the region's service sector through the diversification of gastronomic offerings. The object of the study is the North Kazakhstan region, a typical agricultural region of Kazakhstan with a maximum share of agriculture in the country (45 %) and a minimum share of a tourist product (0.8 %), the subject of the study is its gastronomic potential. The need to develop the non-manufacturing sector is explained by the fact that the region has become the country's anti-leader in terms of income, population decline, falling standards and quality of life in rural areas. Meanwhile, a powerful agricultural base combined with a multinational population and a rich cultural and historical heritage have formed a significant potential for an important component of the tertiary sector of the economy – gastronomic tourism. The study uses desk research methods (including a group of methods: historical and genetic ones, methods of content analysis, statistical analysis and observations), and the cartographic method. The key factors of gastronomic tourism development in the North Kazakhstan region have been identified: the agricultural specialization of the region, the preservation of ethnic culinary heritage, the formation of event activity and measures of state support for tourism. The authors have developed specific proposals for the development of gastronomic tourism and created a map of its promising centers.

Keywords: authentic gastronomy; gastrotourism, immersive experience, multicultural society, national cuisine, North Kazakhstan region

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Детерминанты развития гастротуризма Северо-Казахстанской области

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Аннотация. В контексте современных тенденций развития сферы услуг в мире и Казахстане в статье рассматривается потенциал развития сектора услуг региона за счет диверсификации гастрономических предложений. Объектом исследования выступает Северо-Казахстанская область – типичный аграрный регион Казахстана с максимальной в стране долей в ВРП сельского хозяйства (45 %) и минимальной – туристского продукта (0,8 %), предметом исследования является его гастротуристический потенциал. Необходимость развития непроизводственной сферы обусловлена тем, что область стала антилидером в стране по уровню доходов населения, сокращению численности населения, падению стандартов и качества жизни в сельских районах. Между тем, мощная сельскохозяйственная база в сочетании с многонациональным населением и богатым культурно-историческим наследием сформировали значительный потенциал важной составляющей третичного сектора экономики – гастрономического туризма. В исследовании использованы методы кабинетного исследования (включающие группу методов: историко-генетический, контент-анализа, статистического анализа и наблюдений), картографический. Определены ключевые факторы развития гастрономического туризма Северо-Казахстанской области: аграрная специализация региона, сохранение этнического кулинарного наследия, формирование событийной активности и меры государственной поддержки туризма. Разработаны конкретные предложения по развитию гастрономического туризма, создана карта его перспективных центров.

Ключевые слова: аутентичная гастрономия, гастротуризм; иммерсивный опыт, мультикультурное общество, национальная кухня, Северо-Казахстанская область

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Introduction

In 2024, the global gross domestic product (GDP) amounted to USD 111.3 trillion, of which USD 11.1 trillion (10 %) was accounted for by the contribution of the travel and tourism sector [World Bank, 2025]. The spatial structure of tourism is heterogeneous, because tourist destinations generally show clustering and regional concentration. This clustering is affected by the natural environment, transportation, socio-economic development, as well as historical and cultural factors. The emergence of large regional differences in the spatial course of tourism developments is also reflected in the distribution of tourism revenues. Tourism revenues do not show a balanced distribution around the world. The reasons for such imbalance include geographical conditions [Aktaş, 2016], macroeconomic factors, taxation policies [Forsyth, Dwyer, 2002], and security. Tourism product diversification is very important to color the sector in areas where tourism supply is weak for a balanced distribution of tourism revenues. One type of tourism product is not enough to attract tourists from within and outside the country continuously. It is necessary to transform the existing tourism resources in a destination into a touristic attractive product. The main purpose of new tourism destinations and product supply is to constantly create excitement as a tourist attraction. New tourism products can attract many new tourists to a destination [Benur, Bramwell, 2015].

The aim of this study is to determine ways to improve tourism attractiveness through gastronomic touristic product diversification in regions that are disadvantaged in terms of geographical location. This study has three main goals. The first goal is to analyze the geographical structure of the area. Along with natural resources, it plays an important and critical role in the formation of tourism. Geographical features and resources create numerous opportunities for tourism development and new potential. The opportunities and challenges of producing new destinations and products are often shaped by geography. Geography is also crucial for determining the gastronomy of a place. Geographical conditions directly affect the culinary culture and ingredients used in a region. While geographical conditions affect the ingredients and recipes used, local products and geographical indications also contribute to the

development of gastronomic tourism [Yayla, Aktaş, 2021]. Therefore, the culinary culture of a region is a reflection of its geographical and cultural characteristics. The second goal is to determine the local culinary products and conditions, as local cuisine is a key element of gastronomic tourism, which occupies a prominent place in the global travel and tourism sector (1.17 trillion dollars, 2024) [World Travel & Tourism Council, 2025].

Gastronomic tourism (gastrotourism) has become one of the dynamically developing sectors of the global tourism market, having huge potential and all objective prerequisites for its development in Kazakhstan.

The North Kazakhstan Region (NKR) has been chosen as the study area. The comparative analysis of tourism development in Kazakhstan and its share in the gross regional product (GRP) demonstrates the spatial heterogeneity of the territory with predictable dominance of megacities, with Almaty and Astana accounting for 52 % of the republican tourist product. The NKR is one of the most disadvantaged parts of the country in terms of tourism.

Among the key factors in the development of gastronomic tourism in Kazakhstan are the interesting traditions of the Kazakh people, the sophistication of Kazakh dishes, their original and intricate presentation [Aktymbaeva, Trifonova, 2021]. Some authors express concern about the widespread of European and Asian cuisine restaurants and fast-food outlets in Kazakhstan, citing the loss of culinary culture and the assimilation of Kazakh cuisine, which is an important part of the national heritage [Sandybayev, 2019]. At the same time, other researchers, on the contrary, are pleased to note that Kazakh chefs are increasingly borrowing modern technologies and flavors for their dishes, combining traditions and innovations, which makes dishes more popular among tourists [Tagmanov, Ulema, 2024]. Ready to satisfy any culinary needs, chefs make vegan food, replacing meat ingredients with tofu or tempeh. The analysis of the situation demonstrates that Kazakh cuisine is an important factor in ensuring the satisfaction of tourists in spite of the purpose of the travelling [Tagmanov, Ulema, 2023].

This article confirms the hypothesis that the main factors that differentiate the formation and current status of the gastronomic tourism potential of the NKR are the multicultural environment and natural and agricultural resources. The additional value of the study lies in the possibility of studying them in other old developed regions of Kazakhstan, focusing on the important role of the synergy of these factors.

Material and Methods

Since the study aims to develop a general result based on the data obtained, we have adopted an inductive approach. The strategy of the research is based on document analysis, comparative geographical and geoinformation analysis, using a systemic approach, as well as geographical monitoring, forecasting, mathematical and statistical analysis, and SWOT analysis. While document analysis and SWOT analysis used in determining the geographical conditions and the characteristics of the local cuisine are qualitative methods, geographical analyses are quantitative methods.

Data and Research Methods

Geographical and geoinformation analyses were based on data from geography information systems (GIS). The content analysis process was carried out in four stages: data collection, theme identification, data analysis, and interpretation of the results.

The socio-economic indicators characterizing the development of the NKR were taken from the websites of the Departments of Agriculture and Land Relations, Passenger transport and Highways of the Akimat of the NKR, as well as the Bureau of National Statistics [Bureau of National Statistics ..., 2025; Department of Agriculture ..., 2025; Department of Passenger ..., 2025].

The most preferred tool for analyzing the potential of gastronomic tourism is SWOT analysis, a universal method of strategic planning used to assess phenomena and factors influencing the course of a particular process.

Study Area

NKR is located in the far north of Kazakhstan within the forest-steppe and steppe natural zones, at the junction of the West Siberian plain and the Kazakh low hills, which caused the heterogeneous nature of the relief. The region with its centre, Petropavlovsk, covers an area of 98 thousand km². In the north, the region borders on the Kurgan, the Tyumen and the Omsk regions of the Russian Federation, while in the south it shares the border with the Kostanay, the Akmola, and the Pavlodar regions of Kazakhstan.

As of October 01, 2025, the population of NKR amounted to 515.4 thousand people, including 258.2 thousand people (50.1 %) – urban and 257.2 thousand people (49.9 %) – rural inhabitants, decreasing by 6 thousand people since the beginning of the year [Bureau of National Statistics..., 2025]. The population of NKR, due to the previously mentioned historical processes, has a variegated ethnic structure (table 1).

Table 1
Таблица 1

Ethnic composition of the population in the NKR
(compiled by the authors according to [Bureau of National Statistics ..., 2025])
Этнический состав населения СКО
(составлено авторами по данным [Бюро национальной статистики ..., 2025])

ethnos	%
Russians	44.35
Kazakhs	37.81
Ukrainians	5.39
Germans	4.13
Tatars	2.20
Poles	2.03
Belorusians	1.24
Azerbaijanis	0.34
Armenians	0.23
Tajiks	0.18
Other	2.10
Total	100

The territory of the region is characterized by heterogeneity of both ethnic composition and population density (varying by 7.5 times in districts) with a predictable maximum in the suburban Kyzylzhar district [Bureau of National Statistics ..., 2025].

NKR is a typical agricultural region and the oldest rain-fed farming area in Kazakhstan. In the light of the post-Soviet change in socio-economic formation and large-scale institutional transformations, almost 6,400 agro-formations arose instead of the state farm-collective farm system (297 farms in 1991), where the vast majority (over 4,500) were small peasant homesteads and farms. The small-scale and low-budget nature of these farms has provoked bankruptcy and a reduction in their number by 20 % to the present moment.

Agriculture of NKR, primarily crop production, underwent a significant transformation during the post-Soviet period: digitalization of agriculture allowed to increase the yield of main crops, diversification of the structure of crops contributed to the emergence of fundamentally new directions – the production of buckwheat, soybeans, lentils, crown flax oil and rapeseed oil. The intensification of dairy cattle breeding has brought the region to the leaders in Kazakhstan in terms of its productivity: At dairy farms in the NKR, yields from each cow amount to 6 – 8 tons of milk per year [Department of Agriculture ..., 2025].

Motor transport is the most significant in the NKR in terms of cargo and passenger turnover. The regional sections of the international highways Almaty – Yekaterinburg and Chelyabinsk – Novosibirsk are extremely important for the foreign economic and social relations of

Kazakhstan with the Russian Federation. The low density of highways in Kazakhstan is one of the main constraining factors of the country's development. At the same time, due to the intensive agricultural development of the territory, especially in the virgin period, and the increasing complexity of the network of rural settlements, the NKR's road network is the densest in the country [Bureau of National Statistics ..., 2025].

Results and Discussion

An analysis of the global experience in the development of gastronomic tourism allows us to identify a number of key factors that determine the effectiveness and sustainability of the development of this area of the service sector. They are shown in Figure 1.



Fig. 1. Key factors in the development of gastronomic tourism
Рис. 1. Ключевые факторы развития гастрономического туризма

Based on the analysis of current conditions and available resources, as well as the factors presented above, it is possible to identify priority areas and make specific recommendations aimed at the formation of a competitive and sustainable regional gastronomic tourism product.

In the conditions of the NKR, which has a rich food base and ethnocultural diversity, the following forms of development of gastronomic tourism products are becoming relevant: culinary workshops, tasting tours, home restaurants, gastronomic villages and festivals. For example, master classes on cooking traditional Kazakh and Russian dishes (*beshbarmak*, *baursaks*, sour-dough bread) can become an element of an immersive gastronomic experience.

Another promising area is the organization of tasting tours and so-called immersive experiences: visits to cheese factories, apiaries, honey and dairy farms with the opportunity to participate in the process, tastings and master classes. Such practices contribute to the formation of emotionally rich memories and a deep connection with the cultural context of the region.

The development of home gastronomy, including the formation of small restaurants and guesthouses with national cuisine, makes it possible to expand the gastronomic infrastructure in rural areas. It also creates jobs and increases the involvement of local residents in tourism. Holding gastronomic festivals ("Bread Festival", "Honey Festival", "Milk Day") can enhance the event calendar of the region and attract tourists in certain seasons.

From the point of view of strategic planning, comprehensive work is important in the following areas: economy and investment, government support, infrastructure, legal regulation, branding, human resources, and digitalization. In the economic plane, the key direction is the launch of projects in the format of public-private partnerships (agricultural estates, gastronomic routes, farmer festivals), which can ensure an influx of investment and employment growth. In terms of state support, it has been proposed to develop a separate regional program for the development of gastronomic tourism.

Equally important is the development of a simplified legal framework, in particular, for the operation of home restaurants, farms hosting tourists, and manufacturers of craft products. The legalization of such initiatives and support at the local level will create a favorable institutional environment for the sustainable development of the sector.

Branding plays a key role in positioning the region. We propose the creation of a gastronomic brand "Taste of North Kazakhstan Region", which will include local products, recipes, as well as event formats and interactive forms of presentation of regional cuisine. The brand will increase the recognition of the region and integrate it into national and international tourism chains.

The personnel issue needs to be addressed through the creation of educational programs, courses and trainings on gastronomic tourism. This will create a professional environment capable of providing a high level of service and offers for tourists. Special attention should be paid to digitalization. The creation of a single online platform for gastronomic tourism in the North Kazakhstan region with information about routes, restaurants, farms, events and the possibility of online booking will increase the availability of travel products and simplify travel planning.

Traditional Kazakh cuisine and its modern transformation.

The gastronomic offerings of the Kazakh national cuisine differ significantly by categories of service recipients (external and internal tourists), since they include, first of all, authentic meat dishes (*beshparmak*, *shuzhuk*, *kazy*) and dairy products (*kumys*, *shubat*, *ayran*, *kurt*) that are little familiar to Western tourists.

1. *Kumys* is a drink made from fermented mare's milk, which has a thousand-year history among the Turkic peoples and has become popular among the Kazakhs due to the simplicity of manufacture and transportation in nomadic conditions. Through a unique fermentation process, the product has a high therapeutic and nutritional value and contains a large amount of protein, vitamins, and trace elements. Depending on the method of preparation, the time of year and the type of feed, more than ten types of *kumys* are distinguished [Kymyz, 2025], even more varieties are caused by geographical differences in production traditions.

2. *Beshparmak* is a traditional Kazakh dish (boiled horsemeat with dough and onions), perceived as a structuring part of the identity of the Kazakh nation. The cooking technology varies by region: in the west of Kazakhstan, in the absence of horsemeat, fish is put, in the north, potatoes are sometimes added for satiety. Recently, lemons or kiwifruits have come to be used in the dish, the acid contained in them making horsemeat softer and juicier.

3. Any festive feast among the Kazakhs begins with *baursaks* (pieces of unleavened or sour dough made from ordinary wheat flour, fried in vegetable oil, whereas earlier it used to be cooked with fermented flour, on melted mutton fat. Moreover, depending on the region, *baursaks* differ both in their ingredient composition (sunflower oil is used in the north, while cotton oil is popular in the south), and in size and shape (round, diamond-shaped, elongated ones).

4. Various spices (mainly garlic and bay leaf) are added to *shuzhuk* and *kazy* horse sausages to enhance the taste, and *kazy* has a cooking technology that varies by region: in the southern regions it consists of horse ribs simply covered with intestines, in the north, it is a gut filled with horse meat and fat with spices.

5. *Kurt* is Kazakh dish made of salted dried cottage cheese – small balls, usually 1.5–2 cm in diameter. Its form and ingredient composition are not interesting for foreign tourists, however, after a gastronomic and aesthetic upgrade (adding natural dyes, fenugreek shoots, sesame seeds, as well as giving the product bizarre and fabulous shapes of animal figures or parts of their body – for example, a horse's head), its popularity and attractiveness can increase significantly.

6. The most common sweet of the Kazakh national cuisine is *zhent* – fried millet groats with the addition of dried crushed cottage cheese, ghee, sugar or honey. However, the recipe of this dish, like any other, has changed over time and due to circumstances. During the Second World War and the post-war years, due to the lack of sugar, the following recipe was widespread

in the south of Kazakhstan: the pulp of Aport apples was mixed with millet or corn grain and pounded until the apple juice soaked the crushed grain [Zhent, 2025]. Given the special organoleptic properties of this apple variety due to the uniqueness of the Kazakhstan terroir, this could have an additional effect on the popularization of both products abroad. Recently, the composition has been experimented with, adding nuts and dried fruits to the invariant, covering with milk chocolate and packaging in designer boxes decorated with elements of national flavor (for example, decorated with the most common zoomorphic ornament) in industrial production: for sale to the public, but, most importantly, for offering to foreign tourists.

Restaurant gastronomic tourism

The influence of restaurants on the development of gastronomic tourism has been studied extremely poorly. However, available studies indicate the significant role of restaurants as generators and accumulators of advanced culinary knowledge. High-quality food has gone beyond restaurants and moved, if not into the mass market, then at least into the affordable segment. Important competencies of modern restaurants are respect for the national culinary heritage combined with the use of local products and traditional recipes. During the post-Soviet period, a representative network of restaurants and cafes of the national cuisine of the ethnic groups of Kazakhstan was formed in the region's center, Petropavlovsk (table 2):

Table 2
Таблица 2

National restaurants and cafes in Petropavlovsk
Национальные рестораны и кафе г. Петропавловска

Cuisine	Name	Authentic dishes	Distinctive Features
Georgian	Gamarjoba	Khachapuri, khinkali, satsivi, shashlik, churchkhela	Authentic interior, waiters wearing national clothes
	Tbilisi	Khachapuri, khinkali, lobio, kebabs, Georgian wines	Live music, family and friendly meetings
	Khochupuri	Khachapuri of various types, khinkali, traditional Georgian dishes	Specialization in khachapuri
Ukrainian	Shinok–Khutorok	Borsch, deruny, vareniki, dumplings	Stylized decoration of the hall, waiters wearing national clothes
Uzbek	Chaihana Bakshish	Pilaf, lagman, mantis, samsa, shurpa, oriental sweets	Oriental interior, theme nights
	Topchan	Pilaf, shashlik, lagman, mantis	Regional Uzbek cuisine
	Barberry	Oriental dishes, pilaf, shashlik, mantis	Stylized decoration of the hall, waiters wearing national clothes
Italian	Pitstoli	Pizza, pasta, risotto, tiramisu	Modern interior, family audience
	Roman Holiday	Pizza, pasta, lasagna, gelato, bruschetta	National style
Armenian	Urartu	Shashlik, dolma, lavash, lamb dishes, armenian sweets	Traditional presentation, national style
Turkish	Ozhak Kebap	Kebab, meze, grilled dishes	Oriental interior, live Turkish music
Kazakh	Khan-Auyly	Beshbarmak, kazy, kuyrdak, boursaks, horse meat and lamb dishes	National style, traditions of the feast
German	Berlin	Sausages, schnitzel, strudels, baumkuchen, seltz	Stylized decoration of the hall, waiters wearing national clothes

However, the most important location on the map of gastronomic tourism in Petropavlovsk is represented by two restaurants: "Semenov" and "Meat Jagger": the first specializes in cheeses from its own cheese factory, and the second one has become a brand of meat cuisine – here you can taste dishes made of various meat types and representing many national cuisines. The emerging gastronomic brands of restaurants attract not only local residents, but also guests of the region, forming the operant behavior of both categories of gastronomy consumers.

In Kazakhstan, the lack of certified food suppliers for restaurant chains of both local and global brands is considered a very serious risk factor. An example is the case of McDonald's, when the company was forced to withdraw from the Kazakh market in 2023, as the supplies of semi-finished meat and dairy products from Russian were halted [Why McDonald's ..., 2025]. The technological regime of milk and meat production (primarily beef) using Western technologies, as well as the volume of products produced, allow us to speak optimistically about the possible transformation of the NKR into a key producer of certified livestock products in order to saturate local and metropolitan restaurants, taking into account the virtually unlimited potential of the latter.

Another limiting factor in the full-fledged development of the Kazakhstan association of hotels and restaurants is the lack of mechanisms for differentiating the quality of service and culinary art of domestic restaurants on the model of Michelin stars [For the first time ..., 2025]. The introduction of such practices, followed by the release of the Kazakh equivalent of the Michelin Red Guide, will create a competitive environment in order to activate entrepreneurial initiatives and search for innovative solutions to create authentic dishes and drinks. These measures will make it possible to form a regional gastro-tourist destination that meets the needs and preferences of tourists of various age categories and, accordingly, taste preferences.

Territorial organization of gastronomic tourism in the North Kazakhstan region

Gastronomic tourism is rightfully considered a creative sub-sector of the service economy, stimulating various innovations, both in the ways of cooking new dishes and improving already known ones. Culinary innovations in gastronomic tourism should be put on a permanent basis [UNWTO, 2017]. The most well-known form of gastronomic events contributing to this are all kinds of food and drink festivals. As gastronomic tourism develops, more and more events are offered to promote a particular product, forming a different experience of participation – from tasting and consumption to cooking.

Festive (event-based) gastrotourism in the territory of NKR is presented only in the form of the nascent Kumysfest festival, where its participants are limited only to tasting basic Kazakh national dishes. At the same time, many festive (usually agricultural) events are held in the region – agricultural fairs taking place all year round in regional and district centers, as well as "Field Day", "Livestock Breeder's Day", which help achieve the main goal and simultaneously popularize the national dishes of the ethnic groups inhabiting the region.

The next stage is the construction of a territorial system of gastrotourism. For visualization, we have compiled a cartography of promising centers represented by objects of event, ethnic and ecological tourism, reflecting both the cultural heritage and the gastronomic uniqueness of the region (fig. 2).

Based on the analysis of the potential of the NKR territory, it is advisable to identify two zones where gastronomic tourism has good development prospects:

1. The Northern zone covers facilities capable of meeting the gastronomic needs of residents and guests of the region's center, Petropavlovsk.
2. The Southern zone includes a number of facilities focused on the formation of gastronomic offers for recipients of the country's capital, Astana, as well as nearby regional centers – the cities of Kostanay and Kokshetau, taking into account optimal transport accessibility.

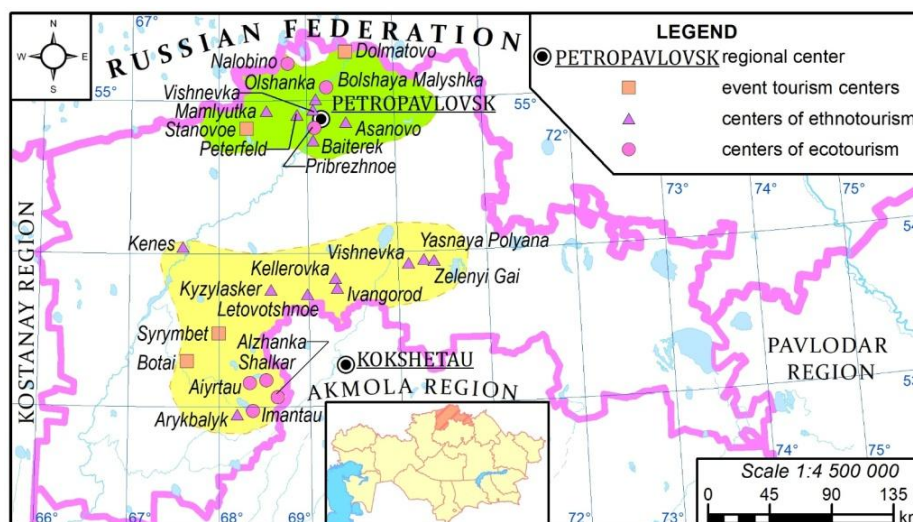


Fig. 2. Promising centers of gastronomic tourism in the North Kazakhstan region

Рис. 2. Перспективные центры гастрономического туризма Северо-Казахстанской области

To achieve the purpose of the study, we have identified the strengths and weaknesses, threats and opportunities of the NKR in terms of gastronomic tourism, based on previous analyses (table 3).

Table 3
Таблица 3

SWOT-analysis of the gastronomic tourism development in the NKR
SWOT-анализ развития гастрономического туризма в СКО

Strengths (S)	Weaknesses (W)
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Expanded reproduction of food resources of both plant and animal origin; - The most multiethnic population structure in Kazakhstan; - Advantageous economic and geographical position of the region relative to that of the country's capital and major cities of Russia; - Heterogeneous landscape structure of the territory of the region, providing aesthetic appeal to external tourists; - The absence of dependence of gastrotourism on seasonality – the possibility of year-round organization of combined tours. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Underdeveloped transport network in peripheral areas; - The narrow domestic market of the region; - Lack of targeting of regional gastrotourism and promotion on the Internet in the domestic and foreign markets; - The lack of a state program to support entrepreneurial initiatives of gastrotourism in the regions; - Acute shortage of qualified managers, especially the younger generation who speak foreign languages; - The predominance of low-budget farms that are unable to form a rural service economy.
Opportunities (O)	Threats (T)
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - The multiplicative effect of the development of related industries; - Extensive raw material base for the development of organic farming (both rain-fed and irrigated); - The rapidly growing popularity of gastrotourism amid the recovery of domestic and foreign tourism from the effects of COVID-19; - High marginality of the product 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Unavailability of the proposed product for the average Kazakh consumer; - Risk of non-repayment for investors financing rural food projects

Modern trends in the formation of society, especially of a multicultural one with a nature-centered worldview have led to an ever-increasing interest of the urban population toward visiting rural areas. The purpose of such visits is to combine outdoor recreation and tasting of local environ-

mentally friendly products, usually dairy and meat (fish) ones, in the ideal case, cooked by the recreants themselves. This significantly expands the opportunities for the development of rural tourism as an important sector of the service economy in such an agricultural region as NKR.

Gastrotourism is closely intertwined with rural tourism (agro-tourism), complementing each other, diversifying the rural economy and creating a higher-margin product. For example, during a visit to mare farms as part of a gastronomic tour [Saparov et al., 2024], is advisable to organize not just a tasting of *kumys*, but to include participation in animal care and milking of mares, watching walking, horseback riding and sledding, etc. In order to popularize such places, the creation of sites of these farms will help to monitor the birth and growth of foals, their grazing and development online.

During the post-Soviet period, Kazakhstan has developed a steady public demand for the study of the cultural heritage of the Kazakh people, including such important component of intangible culture as gastronomy. Its preservation contributes not only to strengthening the genetic code of the nation, but also has an important socio-communicative significance: gathering at the *dastarkhan* (a special table for eating) family members make important decisions, and guests are greeted there with obligatory treats with *baursaks* and *beshparmak* – archetypes of Kazakh hospitality.

Modern Kazakh cuisine, as well as ethnical minorities' gastronomy, is trying to strike a balance between traditions and innovations. Particular importance for the gastrotourism of Kazakhstan in general and the region in particular is food pairing both within any national cuisine and the search for ideas to harmonize dishes and drinks of various ethnic groups, which will become a driver for the development of not only the gastronomic, but also the entire tourism business as a whole. However, it is advisable to activate food pairing from cuisines that are close in genesis, where dishes and drinks have many similarities, for example, Asian (Kazakh, Uzbek, Tatar), Slavic (Russian, Ukrainian, Belarusian, Polish), Transcaucasian (Armenian, Georgian), etc. Many dishes of national cuisines of the NKR ethnic groups are similar to each other and represent only variations of ingredients: *senkach* and *baumkuhen*, *kuyrdak* and *kыздырма*, *meat jelly* and *zelts*, *mead* and *krupnik*, etc.

Considering authenticity as an important and unique feature in the formation of future gastro-tourist products of Kazakhstan, contributing to the creation of unique tourist experiences [Tiberghien, 2018], local products with geographical indication occupy a special place. The geographical indication protects the culture, traditions and customs, tourist assets and cultural heritage of the region and supports its sustainability. A geographical indication emphasizes the natural or cultural and historical uniqueness of the place of cultivation or manufacturing, increasing the product cost and at the same time advertising it.

For the NKR, such areas with a unique (protected) geographical indication (name) can serve as floodplain meadows of the Ishim River and natural pastures of the Ualikhanov district for environmentally friendly dairy and beef cattle products, respectively. In addition, wild plants (mushrooms, berries, herbs) growing in birch-aspen forests of the forest-steppe zone can play an important role in creating an authentic gastronomic product of the region with a protected geographical indication. Today, they are only used by the local population, but certain types of mushrooms (rollrim milkcap and white mushroom) have recently been included in the menu as delicacies in restaurants and cafes in Petropavlovsk and district centers. Some local kinds of tea (sage, thyme, cypress, lime blossom tea) and drinks (strawberry, drupe, rosehip) based on local natural herbs, fruit or berries can also become products with geographical indication. Thyme added to tea is widely used in folk medicine, having pronounced preventive properties.

The development of gastronomic tourism and the formation of a full-fledged entrepreneurial ecosystem should be accompanied by the creation of an industry association, following the example of the EU and neighboring states. It will allow coordinating the work and sharing the experience of regional participants in the food business, providing assistance in targeting and promoting gastronomic routes, developing strategies and brands of gastronomic destinations, training managers, restaurateurs and producers of authentic dishes and drinks.

Conclusion

Currently, the entrepreneurial ecosystem of gastrotourism in NKR is at an early stage of development. It is due to the initiatives of local businessmen that it has been introduced in the region's center and become represented in restaurants of national cuisine. At the same time, the rural areas, especially those remote from the regional center, have not been covered by any gastronomic projects due to the lack of necessary transport, social infrastructure, and skilled personnel. The study shows that the region has a huge potential for the development of gastronomic tourism due to its multicultural society and diversity, relying on significant natural and agricultural resources.

Gastrotourism is traditionally based on the synergy of a multicultural environment and new experiences through the cuisine of various ethnic groups, contributing to the strengthening of the role of tourism and food in the branding of the nation. Acquaintance with it can be carried out both through eating authentic dishes in restaurants or cafes (catering services), and gaining culinary experience through a personalized approach to participating in the preparation of the dishes (for example, fish), while studying the recipe of local cuisine. Gastrotourism does not depend on the time of year and almost does not depend on weather conditions. On the contrary, it allows tourists to appreciate and enjoy seasonal dishes of various national cuisines and to be inspired by their diversity.

The gastro-cultural identity of the NKR is expressed in the synergy of dishes of ethnic groups inhabiting the region, borrowing certain ingredients or recipes from each other to improve authentic dishes or drinks, creating new forms adapted to the needs of internal and external consumers. However, at the moment, the national cuisine of the ethnic groups of the region is available only in the restaurants of the regional center, in district centers, as a rule, restaurants offer only Kazakh or Russian national dishes.

Historically, the territorial differences in the cooking of the Kazakh dishes and drinks discussed above create objective prerequisites for the differentiation of the territory in order to develop regional gastronomic tourism and enrich the own experience of domestic recreants. For foreign guests, combined gastronomic offers are advisable, combining products of both local origin and cosmopolitan dishes that have conquered the entire planet in the menu. At the same time, it is important to remember that national dishes, for better popularization, should be promoted in a form adapted to modern realities, without losing sight of the aesthetic component.

The most important factor in the development of gastrotourism in the region is the presence of numerous peasant and farm farms that are potential suppliers of agricultural products, and here gastronomic tourism is closely intertwined with nascent agrotourism (rural tourism), which makes it possible to classify this integration-symbiotic formation as agro-gastronomical tourism. Another important area is ethno-gastronomical tourism, based on a multicultural society, and poorly represented so far in the restaurant segment.

One of the most important competitive advantages of the region's gastronomy can be organic dishes and drinks, the production of which is based on nascent organic farming. Thus, lentil dishes have all the prerequisites to become the hallmark of the organic gastronomy of the NKR, since they are widely known and popular in many cuisines of the world, including German and Polish. The potential of organic cattle and horse breeding products is much more significant since they primarily cover the domestic consumer. In the future, the premium organic products offered by the food industry will trigger the food industry from a trivial industrial product to an authentic, ecologically balanced, high-margin product. The inclusion of dishes with organic products on the menu has a positive effect on their choice.

To popularize local dishes and drinks, it is advisable to organize gastronomic festivals and contests in the region, organize a creativity area, release branded products for gastro-tourists with the symbols of iconic events and popularized products (T-shirts, baseball caps, souvenirs). Inviting people to participate in the jury of famous Kazakhstani and European restaurateurs will

help promote crystallized gastronomic products first to the republican and then to the international restaurant market. This will greatly facilitate the establishment of contacts for the training of qualified personnel abroad, inspired by the experience of the best European and Asian restaurants. However, to promote a regional gastronomic product, it is necessary to combine the efforts of all players in the gastronomic market.

The formation of a gastro-tourist destination through the synergy of natural, agricultural, and creative assets will contribute to the formation of a tourist food landscape, the preservation of traditions, original culture, and ethnocultural heritage of national villages, the expansion of gastronomic preferences of the population and guests of the region. Due to this, the outflow of young people from the countryside will decrease, diversifying the service economy and forming a positive image of agricultural regions, ensuring their sustainable development.

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