Abstract: Kazakhstan and Uzbekistan are two leading countries of Central Asia, mutually beneficially cooperating in the field of cross-border tourism. In this study, the tourism potential of the border areas was determined on the basis of tourism infrastructure and settlement density data. The geographic coverage of the study included nine regions located within the limits of the Kazakhstan–Uzbekistan border. We proposed the application of a rating assessment of the estimated tourism resource potential of Kazakhstan–Uzbekistan border regions, which provides the basis for comparative analysis of tourism development and promising opportunities for the large territory. The method allows one to achieve an understanding of the availability and volume of tourist and recreational resources in order to assess the tourism potential in the Kazakhstan–Uzbekistan border area in the framework of sustainable development. The study results generally allow the availability level of border region tourism resources to be determined and areas with more favorable and attractive conditions for cross-border tourism development to be identified.

Keywords: cross-border tourism; sustainable development; border areas of Kazakhstan and Uzbekistan; border areas; tourist and recreational potential; tourist infrastructure; centers of tourist activity

1. Introduction

Cross-border cooperation in the field of tourism is an important factor for regional development. In many ways it depends on the properties and functions of borders, which can be used to determine the level of "closedness" or "openness" of border areas in the contact zone of countries. Accordingly, depending on the functions and level of their implementation, the border can act as a "barrier", "filter", or "bridge" [1,2].

Relations between Uzbekistan and Kazakhstan have had a complex character since Soviet times. In many ways, the legacy of the common Soviet past has been a difficulty in the issue of legitimizing the common border. During the period of Soviet power, the borders between the republics changed several times. For example, in 1924, as a result of the delimitation policy, Karakalpakstan became part of the Kazakh ASSR, and then in 1936, by a decision of Moscow, it became part of the Uzbek ASSR. In the post-Soviet period, as a result of a long and intense negotiation process, Kazakhstan and Uzbekistan managed to resolve disputes on the issues of delimitation and demarcation of the state border, and acute issues were resolved on the basis of compromise [3,4].

Diplomatic relations between independent Kazakhstan and Uzbekistan were established on 23 November 1992. The bilateral contractual and legal framework currently
includes more than 100 joint documents in various fields of activity. The fundamental document was the Treaty of Eternal Friendship between the Republic of Uzbekistan and Republic of Kazakhstan, signed on 30 October 1998. [5,6] Uzbekistan, which needs to import a number of goods (for example, oil and wheat flour), is also ready to expand trade relations with Kazakhstan. This also takes into account the importance of the Kazakh market for the sale of Uzbek goods (for example, vegetables, fruits, cars, and textiles). In addition, Uzbekistan shows great interest in cooperation with Kazakhstan in labor migration issues (at least 500 thousand Uzbek guest workers work in Kazakhstan, and the volume of their annual remittances to their homeland is estimated at 200–400 million dollars) [7–9].

Geographical proximity and the presence of common social–economic problems (trade cooperation, ecological situation in the Aral Sea region, issues of the use of water-saving technologies, migration problems, cooperation in the field of land reclamation, national security) initially pushed Kazakhstan and Uzbekistan to a strategic partnership. At the same time, the differences in approaches to solving a number of global problems facing the two countries, as well as hidden or overt rivalry between the leaders, periodically aggravated relations between the countries in questions, making them competitors [10].

In our opinion, at different stages of Kazakhstan–Uzbekistan interactions, the borders performed all the functions presented above, but to varying degrees, since they depended on the implementation of state policy in this area. Their analysis allows for the current assessment of the level of openness of borders at different stages of the development of cross-border cooperation between Kazakhstan and Uzbekistan, including in the field of tourism. Cross-border tourism has a special place in interregional cooperation between Kazakhstan and Uzbekistan. The study of the interaction in this area is very relevant due to the fact that it was tourism that laid the foundation for all cross-border exchanges in the contact zone of Kazakhstan and Uzbekistan. It should be noted that for the 30 years of liberalization of foreign economic activity in Kazakhstan in the region of the Kazakhstan–Uzbekistan border, tourist exchange did not stop; in some years there were periods of ups and downs, as well as structural shifts associated with changes in the functions of borders and institutional environments.

In border areas, tourists should have a strong enough motivation to overcome the difficulties of crossing the border; for them, the territory on the other side of the state border should have a positive image and a highlight promoted by local authorities with the help of special marketing policy, usually including various festivals, ceremonies, and international events [11,12]. Typical forms of cross-border tourism are trips to the neighboring country for shopping and services, including medical services; for leisure activities; and for attending special events. At the moment, the content of research on tourism development problems in the border regions is reduced to several aspects [13,14]:

- The specificity of tourism development in the border area due to the functions of borders, the influence of the border factor, and institutional barriers to the tourism condition in the region;
- Integration in the field and development of tourism due to the cross-border price gradient (shopping tours, recreational tourism, etc.);
- Attractiveness of the borders themselves and border regions for local and international tourists;
- Tourism potential and development of tourism in the border area. At the same time, the main attention is paid to resorts, tourist attractions, the study of differentiation in the development of tourism infrastructure, etc.

Kazakhstan and Uzbekistan have a relatively favorable geographical position in the center of the Eurasian continent, thousands of kilometers away from the seas and oceans, which determines their unique tourist particularities. The countries are characterized by the harsh severely continental climate. The attractiveness of Kazakhstan and Uzbekistan for tourists is determined by their natural and cultural exclusivity. The main principle of tourism development in the border areas of Kazakhstan and Uzbekistan is to combine the
environmental and recreational functions of the most attractive territories for the tourists. Cross-border tourism implies interdependent and coordinated recreational development of the territories dedicated to certain cross-border corridors (border control points). In accordance with their location, status, and pass-through capacity, tourism, border trade centers, and infrastructure are formed. In this study, the tourism potential of the border areas was determined on the basis of data of tourism infrastructure and density of settlements.

Cross-border cooperation is understood as coordinated actions of authorities at different levels, legal entities and individuals, and non-governmental organizations of neighboring countries, undertaken in order to achieve sustainable development of border areas, improve the welfare of the population living there, develop international cooperation, and strengthen good-neighborliness [15].

Uzbekistan and Kazakhstan have a common state border with a length of 2203 km, which includes Mangystau, Aktobe, Kyzylorda, the Turkestan regions of Kazakhstan, the Republic of Karakalpakstan, Navoi, Jizzakh, Syrdarya, and the Tashkent regions of Uzbekistan (Figure 1).

Near the border of Kazakhstan and Uzbekistan, rural settlements prevail over cities (Figure 2). Two thirds of the territory of Kazakhstan are characterized by the distribution of desert and semi-desert zonal landscapes, where grazing has been developed. In the desert regions, traditionally nomadic animal husbandry was accompanied by the formation of rare temporary seasonal settlements with scattered buildings. Therefore, the border areas of Aktobe and Kyzylorda regions are not inhabited by people, and there are no border control points.

The region unites the Tashkent region and Tashkent city. Most of the population is concentrated within the floodplain terraces of Chirchik, Akhangaran, and Syrdarya rivers, which connect in the east and northeast the system of high mountain ranges of the Western Tien Shan. Such geodemographic indicators of the region such as population density, level of urbanization, and average population of urban settlements are significantly directly affected by the factor of location within its boundaries of the capital and the largest city of the republic—Tashkent. The Mirzacho’l geodemographic district covers the territories of Syrdarya and Jizzakh regions. Within this area of regional importance are the newly developed territories of Mirzacho’l (Hungry Steppe), covering the entire Syrdarya region, and 6 out of 12 rural districts of the Jizzakh region. It is important to note the close social ties between the inhabitants of the newly developed districts of Mirzacho’l and the old developed foothill–mountain districts of Jizzakh region, which have been formed since the time of the organized population migration during the large-scale development of the “Hungry Steppe” in the 1950s–1970s [16]. This geodemographic district is distinguished by the smallest population (6.6% of the country’s population) and the lowest demographic load to the arable land (less than three people per hectare). In the newly developed areas are typical high population density of villages with their sparse placement and specific, geometrically “correct” morphology of their network, tied to the irrigation infrastructure of the territory. The Kungrad–Muynak geodemographic region unites the territories of the two largest rural regions of Karakalpakstan–Kungrad and Muinak. The region is distinguished by the smallest number and density of population, as well as the lowest density of villages among the districts of the region, which is associated with unfavorable natural-reclamative and geo-ecological conditions of this territory, located at the epicenter of the Aral Sea ecological crisis [17].

A high population density of the Kazakhstan–Uzbekistan border area is observed in Turkestan, Syrdarya, Tashkent, and Jizzakh regions. Therefore, demographic movement prevails in these regions [18].

By exploring opportunities for sustainable development of border areas, we relied on the concept that the main focus is on maintaining the ability to self-heal, as well as the dynamic adaptation of territorial systems to changes. Since the key elements of the territorial structure of the border area are cities in the system of interconnections between
the two countries, let us dwell on their integration potential as one of the conditions for the sustainable development of the region.

Checkpoints across the borders of Kazakhstan and Uzbekistan.

| No. | Checkpoints | Status | Working Regime |
|-----|-------------|--------|----------------|
| 1   | Tazhen      | Daut–Ata | International | Round-the-clock |
| 2   | Zhibek Zholy| Gisht–Kuprik | International | Round-the-clock |
| 3   | B. Konysbaeva| Yallama | International | Round-the-clock |
| 4   | Kaplanbek   | Zangiota | International | Round-the-clock |
| 5   | Kazygurt    | Tashkent | International | Round-the-clock |
| 6   | Atameken    | Gulistan | International | Round-the-clock |
| 7   | Tseleni     | Ak altyn | Interstate | Daylight hours |
| 8   | Syrdar’ya   | Malik   | Interstate | Daylight hours |

| No. | Checkpoints | Status | Working Regime |
|-----|-------------|--------|----------------|
| 9   | Oazis       | Karakalpakiya | International | Round-the-clock |
| 10  | Sary–Agash  | Keles  | International | Round-the-clock |
| 11  | Maktaraal   | Sirdar’ya | International | Round-the-clock |

Figure 1. Border territories of Kazakhstan and Uzbekistan and border control points.
Figure 2. Population density of the Kazakhstan–Uzbekistan border area.

The purpose of this study is to assess the tourism potential in the Kazakhstan–Uzbekistan border area in the conceptual framework of sustainable development. The assessment of the tourism potential of the territory is based on the elements of natural and cultural resources.

2. Materials and Methods

The article uses the method of comparative analysis to study the sustainable development of the border areas of Kazakhstan and Uzbekistan. The territories under consideration have a number of significant differences both in demographic potential and in duration, intensity, and significance of border ties for the development in recent decades. Advertising materials, and cartographic methods aimed at tourists from Kazakhstan and Uzbekistan were used as additional sources for identifying changes in the service sector [19].

For tourism development, the distance of the territorial penetration of the tourist flow relative to the border zone is of great importance. For Kazakhstan, this is more than 130 km. For Uzbekistan, the zone of penetration of Kazakh tourists is much larger and is more than 200 km. This zone includes the most significant tourist sites of the Kazakhstan part—Arystan Bab Mausoleum, Sairam–Ugam National Park, Domalak Ana Mausoleum, etc.

It should be noted that the majority of Kazakhstan citizens travel for the goals of tourism and recreation farther than 150 km from the border to their destination, which indicates good tourist penetration into the country. Therefore, in this study, we covered the border zones within a radius of 2.5 h distance.
To study the tourism potential and impact of cross-border tourism to the social–economic development of the selected areas, the following statistical indicators were used: the presence of tourism infrastructure in each of the border regions and its demand characteristics (number and location of tourist facilities; number of recreation places; attractions).

The key point of the study is to conduct a rating assessment of the tourism resources potential of the Kazakhstan–Uzbekistan border regions and identify types according to the conditions for tourism development. Potential assessment is considered through the aspect of activity planning, where the criterion is the attractiveness of a particular territory for the potential tourism subjects. In the process of assessing the component-by-component and integral potential, various prerequisites for the development of tourism are first determined, that is, the availability of natural resources, objects of historical and cultural heritage, transport security, and accessibility. In accordance with this, the complex potential of the territory consists of four unequal blocks: natural, historical and cultural, transport potential, and a complex of environmental factors that limit the development of tourism due to natural and climatic conditions.

Integral potential is estimated with the introduction of influencing coefficients for each block. The formula for the integral tourism potential of the border areas is as follows:

$$IP = k_1 \cdot NP + k_2 \cdot HCP + k_3 \cdot TP - k_4 \cdot CLF$$

where IP is the integral potential; $k_1$–$k_4$ are non-negative influencing coefficients of the integral potential components ($k_1$—1; $k_2$—0.75; $k_3$—0.5; $k_4$—0.25); NP is natural potential; HCP is historical and cultural potential; TP is transport potential; and CLF is the complex of limiting factors of the natural environment [20,21].

The border regions of Uzbekistan and Kazakhstan from west to east extend from flat desert ecosystems to the high mountains of Tien Shan. At the same time, here one can find not only ecotourism objects (kinds of desert landscapes, rivers, lakes, mountain gorges, agricultural landscapes, etc.), but also archaeological and architectural objects. Despite the huge tourism potential of the border areas, the level of their involvement in tourism activities is low, and they also have insufficient tourism infrastructure.

By the assessment of the border areas’ natural potential, we used the following indicators (listed in order of their importance from maximum to minimum): number of rivers (coefficient 1); number of specially protected natural areas (0.99); number of water bodies (reservoir, lake) (0.91); forest cover (0.93); average value of the aesthetic appeal of the relief and landscapes (0.91); and biological yield of fruits (0.79). Turkestan, Jizzakh, and Tashkent regions were found to have the largest natural potential (Table 1).

The conducted research allowed us to determine three types of border regions. The first includes regions with high potential (Turkestan, Jizzakh, Tashkent); the second type includes regions with medium natural conditions (Syrdarya, Mangystau); and the third type includes regions with low potential (Republic of Karakalpakstan, Aktobe region, Kyzylorda region, Navoi region). In almost all border regions, the aesthetic appeal of the relief and landscapes is high [22].

The water potential of Kazakhstan and Uzbekistan is formed at the expense of such transboundary rivers as Amudarya and Syrdarya. Rivers downstream lose a lot of water for irrigation. In addition to transboundary rivers, the large lakes and reservoirs play an important role in the system of regional water resources. The most significant lakes are Aidar–Arnasai Lake, which has a volume of more than 20 km$^3$, and Sarykamysh Lake, with a volume of about 100 km$^3$.

When assessing the historical and cultural potential, indicators were used that characterize the presence of objects of interest: archeological monuments (coefficient 1); museums (0.95); architectural monuments (0.94); and monuments of monumental art (0.89). The greatest historical and cultural potential was noted in all border regions (Table 2).
Table 1. Natural potential of border areas of Kazakhstan and Uzbekistan.

| Border regions Kazakhstan and Uzbekistan | Natural Potential |
|------------------------------------------|-------------------|
|                                          | Number of Rivers  |
|                                          | Number of Specially Protected Natural Areas |
|                                          | Number of Water Bodies |
|                                          | Forest Cover |
|                                          | Average Value of the Aesthetic Appeal of the Relief and Landscapes |
|                                          | Biological Yield of Fruits |
|                                          | Result |
| Aktobe oblast                           | 0      | 0.93 | 0 | 0.90 | 0 | 1.83 |
| Mangystau oblast                        | 0      | 0.99 | 0 | 0   | 0.90 | 0 | 1.89 |
| Kyzylorda oblast                        | 0      | 0.93 | 0 | 0.90 | 0 | 1.83 |
| Turkestan oblast                        | 1      | 0.99 | 0.93 | 0.91 | 0.90 | 0.79 | 5.52 |
| Republic of Karakalpakstan              | 0      | 0    | 0.93 | 0   | 0.90 | 0 | 1.83 |
| Navoi oblast                            | 0      | 0    | 0    | 0   | 0.90 | 0 | 0.9  |
| Jizzakh oblast                          | 1      | 0.99 | 0.93 | 0.91 | 0.90 | 0.79 | 5.52 |
| Tashkent oblast                         | 1      | 0.99 | 0.93 | 0.91 | 0.90 | 0.79 | 5.52 |
| Syrdarya oblast                         | 1      | 0    | 0.93 | 0   | 0.90 | 0.79 | 3.62 |

In Kyzylorda region, one can find such architectural monuments as Shirik–Rabat, Baraktam, Bestamkala, Kumkala; in the Turkestan region, they include Aktobe, Sairam, Sutkent, Baiyrkum, Zhuantobe, etc. [23]. The Aktobe region in terms of historical and cultural heritage is poorly studied. Being an ancient land, the Mangystau region is mentioned in historical documents as early as the 9th–10th centuries, and in the 18th century, Mangystau was recognized as a transit gate between the two continents. The great spaces of Mangystau hold many architectural and archaeological monuments. They are of invaluable importance for scientists, historians, archaeologists, and for every cultured person. The architectural monuments of Mangystau are divided into two groups: memorial structures, and tombstones and religious buildings such as mosques [24]. In the Tashkent region there are monuments of the Pskemsaï basin, monuments of Chirchik River, etc. [25]; in the Jizzakh region, there are archaeological finds in Jizzakh oasis, Syrdarya region, Sardoba, Urinboïugiz, Iskandararik, etc. [26], and in the Navoi region there are finds in Sarmysai; in the Republic of Karakalpakstan, there are archaeological monuments near the city of Moinak.

Assessment of the transport potential is based on indicators characterizing the level of accessibility of different territories: density of roads (coefficient 1); density of passenger railways (0.87); and transport accessibility from the center of the region (0.70). The highest values in this evaluation category are in Turkestan, Tashkent, Jizzakh, and Syrdarya regions, and the medium values are in the Mangystau region and in the Republic of Karakalpakstan. In other regions, due to the low settlement of the population, there are no roads (Table 3).

To assess the complex of limiting factors (CLF), the natural and climatic indicators were used. These include: abnormal heat (factor 1); environmental impact of the Aral Sea (0.95); coefficient of total anthropogenic load (0.90); and aridization (0.85). Based on
the results of assessment of the complex of limiting factors, it can be concluded that in all border regions there is abnormal heat, including such regions as Kyzylorda, Aktobe, the Republic of Karakalpakstan, and Navoi region, which are affected by the ecological condition of the Aral Sea; anthropogenic pressure and aridization are observed in almost all regions (Table 4).

### Table 2. Historical and cultural potential of the border regions of Kazakhstan and Uzbekistan.

| Border Regions Kazakhstan and Uzbekistan | Archeological Monuments | Museums | Architectural Monuments | Monuments of Monumental art | Result |
|------------------------------------------|-------------------------|---------|-------------------------|-----------------------------|--------|
| Aktobe oblast                            | 0                       | 0       | 0                       | 0                           | 0      |
| Mangystau oblast                         | 1                       | 0.95    | 0.94                    | 0.89                        | 3.78   |
| Kyzylorda oblast                         | 1                       | 0       | 0                       | 0                           | 1      |
| Turkestan oblast                         | 1                       | 0.95    | 0.94                    | 0.89                        | 3.78   |
| Republic of Karakalpakstan               | 1                       | 0       | 0                       | 0                           | 1      |
| Navoi oblast                             | 1                       | 0       | 0                       | 0                           | 1      |
| Jizzakh oblast                           | 1                       | 0.95    | 0.94                    | 0.89                        | 3.78   |
| Tashkent oblast                          | 1                       | 0.95    | 0.94                    | 0.89                        | 3.78   |
| Syrdarya oblast                          | 1                       | 0.95    | 0.94                    | 0.89                        | 3.78   |

### Table 3. Transport potential of the border regions of Kazakhstan and Uzbekistan.

| Border regions Kazakhstan and Uzbekistan | Density of Roads | Density of Passenger Railways | Transport Accessibility from the Center of the Region | Result |
|------------------------------------------|------------------|-------------------------------|-----------------------------------------------------|--------|
| Aktobe oblast                            | 0                | 0                             | 0                                                   | 0      |
| Mangystau oblast                         | 1                | 0.87                          | 0                                                   | 1.87   |
| Kyzylorda oblast                         | 0                | 0                             | 0                                                   | 0      |
| Turkestan oblast                         | 1                | 0.87                          | 0.70                                                | 2.57   |
| Republic of Karakalpakstan               | 1                | 0.87                          | 0.70                                                | 2.57   |
| Navoi oblast                             | 0                | 0                             | 0                                                   | 0      |
| Jizzakh oblast                           | 1                | 0.87                          | 0.70                                                | 2.57   |
| Tashkent oblast                          | 1                | 0.87                          | 0.70                                                | 2.57   |
| Syrdarya oblast                          | 1                | 0.87                          | 0.70                                                | 2.57   |

The imbalance between natural resources and human economic activity was most clearly expressed due to the crisis of the Aral Sea, the volume of which decreased from 1083 km$^3$ in 1960 to 52.1 km$^3$ in 2014, i.e., by 95.2% [27]. The scale of the Aral Sea crisis means not only disappearance of a water body that is very important from an economic point of view but also an irreversible deterioration of the climate, even in the remote territories. A significant role in the mitigation of the consequences of the catastrophic reduction of the Aral Sea is played by Kazakhstan and Uzbekistan, as well as international projects. However, the efforts of the central Asian countries and representatives of the international community are aimed primarily at supporting the population of coastal areas, and not at eliminating the main causes of the environmental catastrophe (reducing the
rivers flow). In general, the situation with the Aral Sea is in many ways indicative. It demonstrates the failure of hopes for a quick solution to acute regional problems at the expense of external resources and involves the concentration of additional efforts in the search for internal reserves, in particular, the ways to modernize the irrigation system of agricultural land, turn to water-saving technologies, and increase attention to ground water reservoirs.

Table 4. Complex of limiting factors of the border regions of Kazakhstan and Uzbekistan.

| Border Regions Kazakhstan and Uzbekistan | Abnormal Heat | Environmental Impact of the Aral Sea | Coefficient of Total Anthropogenic Load | Aridization | Result |
|----------------------------------------|--------------|-------------------------------------|----------------------------------------|-------------|--------|
| Aktobe oblast                           | 1            | 0.95                                | 0                                      | 0.85        | 2.8    |
| Mangystau oblast                        | 1            | 0.95                                | 0.90                                   | 0.85        | 3.7    |
| Kyzylorda oblast                        | 1            | 0.95                                | 0                                      | 0.85        | 2.8    |
| Turkestan oblast                        | 1            | 0                                   | 0.90                                   | 0           | 1.9    |
| Republic of Karakalpakstan              | 1            | 0.95                                | 0.90                                   | 0.85        | 3.7    |
| Navoi oblast                            | 1            | 0.95                                | 0                                      | 0.85        | 2.8    |
| Jizzakh oblast                          | 1            | 0                                   | 0.90                                   | 0.85        | 2.75   |
| Tashkent oblast                         | 1            | 0                                   | 0.90                                   | 0           | 1.9    |
| Syrdarya oblast                         | 1            | 0                                   | 0.90                                   | 0.85        | 2.75   |

The main flow of tourists from Kazakhstan to Uzbekistan is associated with visits to cultural, historical, and health-improving areas and resorts, and from Uzbekistan to Kazakhstan is associated with the organization of various tours.

3. Results

A decisive role in the development of tourism in the region is played by the location of the South-Western Tien Shan, the Syrdarya River with tributaries, mineral waters, the favorable climatic conditions that determine diversity and seasonality of tourism, and the developed infrastructure (cities, transport network, etc.). The role of the spatial structure of tourism in the transboundary region at the pioneering stage of its formation was performed by significant linear objects, natural (large river valleys) and engineering (transport and communication nets). The role of the cores is played by areal natural (lakes and lake systems with coasts, forests) and natural–anthropogenic (forest parks, health-improving areas, etc.) objects; cities with existing tourist infrastructure (accommodation facilities, catering establishments, entertainment centers, museums, etc.) located on the main transport routes of interregional and international importance; and local objects of natural and historical–cultural heritage (Figure 3).

Kazakhstan, having significant natural and recreational resources, world cultural and historical heritage sites, and unique natural diversity, has the potential to develop new tourism products. The low performance of the tourism industry of Kazakhstan in international rankings leads to the conclusion that the efforts made by the state are currently not enough for a significant breakthrough in the field of tourism [28].

In the framework of interstate cooperation of the Republic of Kazakhstan in the field of tourism, priority areas should be:

- Development of cross-border routes with neighboring regions of Uzbekistan;
• Use of the common history and culture of Kazakhstan and Uzbekistan to organize tours to the places of important historical events and activities of prominent historical figures of these peoples;
• Promotion of tourism opportunities in the regions during international festivals;
• Development and implementation of joint projects aimed at strengthening the environmental potential.

Uzbekistan has huge tourism potential. Along with the presence of a large number of unique natural objects, the republic is also rich in cultural and historical tourist and recreational resources. Currently, the total number of objects of material cultural heritage in the Republic of Uzbekistan is 8208, including 4748 archeological monuments, 2250 architectural monuments, 678 monuments of monumental art, and 532 attractions [29].

The available tourist resources of the border regions of Uzbekistan and Kazakhstan are distributed among themselves in different ways. This is due primarily to their natural conditions, in particular the structure of the earth’s surface, the hydrographic net, and the peculiarities of population settlement and historical and cultural development.

The border regions of Uzbekistan and Kazakhstan are expressed not only by their eco-tourism, but also by cultural and historical tourism potential. These areas account for 23.5% of the total material and cultural heritage of Uzbekistan, of which 28.3% are archaeological, 9.8% are architectural, 40.5% are monumental and artistic, and 15.8% are attractions [30].

The availability of resources that enable the development of international tourism in these areas in the mountainous part of the transboundary territory is determined by analyzing and evaluating the landscape and climatic conditions of the region, characteristics of offers and demand for available tourism products on the both sides of the border, the social–
economic situation in the region, natural and historical-cultural heritage, economic and social ties in the region, and problems and prospects for its sustainable development [31].

Among the border regions of Uzbekistan and Kazakhstan, in terms of the number of tourist objects of material and cultural heritage (1747 units), the Tashkent region stands out significantly. Its tourist potential together with the capital, the city of Tashkent, is 1051 units [32].

The Republic of Karakalpakstan and Navoi region occupy most of the flat deserts, so tourism in these regions is less developed compared to others. This is due to the underdevelopment of the tourist infrastructure in Karakalpakstan and the Navoi region, while Jizzakh and especially Tashkent regions are distinguished by the unique mountainous terrain, much cultural, historical, tourist, and recreational potential, and by the relatively developed tourist infrastructure.

Not all regions on the Kazakh border have high potential for tourism. Despite the fact that four regions of Kazakhstan have a common border, only the Turkestan region has a high potential in the field of tourism.

Based on the results of the integrated tourism potential of the border areas, the regions shown in Figure 4 were identified.

![Figure 4. Tourism potential of the border regions of Kazakhstan and Uzbekistan.](image)

Factors of development and factors in suppressing the growth of international tourism in the Kazakhstan–Uzbekistan border area are presented in Table 5.

One of the leading factors in the development of international tourism in border areas is “price discrimination”, in which different prices for the same product are indicated in different places. A number of goods are cheaper to buy in the Republic of Uzbekistan than in Kazakhstan (this also depends on the currency exchange rate). Trade at the borders significantly contributes to the development of tourism in these regions, and this already has a significant impact on the development of local infrastructure.

Tourism is able to influence the economy of the country in which it develops, namely, its economic, social, and humanitarian bases. Like other economic sectors, tourism consumes resources and creates waste, generating environmental, cultural, and social costs and benefits. There are number of negative consequences of tourism development. The following main negative environmental, economic, and social-cultural impacts can be singled out: environmental pollution; deterioration of the aesthetics of landscapes; problems of waste and household waste disposal; damage to historical and natural monuments; large anthropogenic load on the territory; cultural degradation of the territory; over-commercialization;
aggravation of complex of social–economic problems; outflow of currency from the country; and the need to strengthen security measures. Considering all the problems arising from the rapid development of the tourism industry that tourists, local residents, and management structures at different levels have to face, it is obvious that there is a need for a comprehensive solution to the current situation based on the concept of sustainable development.

In order for tourism to become a factor of the social–economic development of the region, tourism must develop in accordance with the principles of sustainable development [33–35].

Table 5. Factors of development of international tourism in the Kazakhstan–Uzbekistan border area.

| Country       | Development Resources                                                                 | Factors in Suppressing Growth                                                                 |
|---------------|--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| Kazakhstan    | Availability of significant territorial resources with contrasting natural conditions for Uzbekistan citizens | Insufficient state support in the development of tourism and infrastructure in the regions       |
|               | The greatest degree of attractiveness of landscapes of the foothills, low mountains, and middle mountains and high mountains of the Southwestern Tien Shan for the development of medical, health-improving, and mountain-sports tourism | Imperfect legal framework for efficient nature management                                      |
|               | Original national cuisine based on environmentally friendly natural food products    | Lack of qualified personnel and poor quality of smart tourism services                         |
| Uzbekistan    | The presence of diverse cultural–historical and natural–recreational resources, contrasting with Kazakhstan citizens | Seasonality and ordinary quality of services to visitors in accommodation places              |
|               | The presence of mineral waters, therapeutic mud, and forests, which serve as the basis for spa recreation and medical treatment | Insufficient level of use of opportunities for comfortable recreation of foreign tourists in nature, non-compliance of provided services to the international standards |
|               | Progressive level of service development in the tourism industry                    | Problems with transboundary water resources. Ecosystem degradation, and land, water, and air pollution from industrial and other sources |
|               | Favorable food prices for Kazakhstan citizens                                      | Poor material base resources for the tourism industry, insufficient level of digitalization of tourism services |

Recognition of the principles of sustainable development in tourism means the following (Figure 5):

1. According to the principle of social sustainability: sustainable development of tourism means taking care of the local population and maintaining stable social and cultural environments in the destination place. It is necessary to increase the attractiveness of employment in the tourism sector by improving working conditions and providing opportunities for training and advanced training; tourist services should be available to all citizens, including low-paid and socially vulnerable groups in the population. Social tourism helps to reduce the seasonality of demand and supports sustainable year-round employment. Through the development and construction of accommodation facilities, catering facilities, and entertainment and transport infrastructure,
wherever possible, it is necessary to take into account the characteristics and needs of people with disabilities.

2. In accordance with the principle of environmental sustainability, the following are required: the introduction of resource-saving technologies; the greening of the economic activities of tourism industry enterprises; the creation of conditions for the redistribution of tourists flows in recreational areas, taking into account the permissible recreational loads and stability of natural complexes to anthropogenic impacts; the organization of environmental education systems and upbringing of the general population in order to improve the culture of nature management; preserving and restoring unique natural complexes.

3. In accordance with the principle of economic efficiency, the following are required: the development of sustainable tourism means an increase in the efficiency of the use of tourist resources through the introduction of innovative resource-saving technologies and materials; management of tourist flows in order to reduce existing seasonality, expand the tourist season, and distribute tourist flows more efficiently, both in time and space, which is undoubtedly beneficial not only from the environmental, but also from economic point of view; development and use of various activities for the modernization and digitalization of tourist smart services. The development of a certification system for enterprises applying sustainable development approaches provides additional competitive advantages in the market.

The sustainability of tourism implies the need, at a minimum, to preserve in the process of using the amount of capital at the entrance and at the exit. Sustainability is achieved when a part of the benefits received from tourism goes to the protection of natural and cultural resources and to the elimination of negative impacts of the production process to the environment and resource quality. Otherwise, exhaustion or degradation of the resource is inevitable, which will call into question the viability of the industry. Here, the environment and resources are understood in their broad interpretation and include not only natural, but also anthropogenic components. Negative impacts in the process of activity can be reduced with the help of technology and organization but cannot be completely eliminated (for example, household waste, physical activity), so part of the profit should go to neutralize it. The rest of the benefits should go to maintaining the functioning of the economic system in the traditional sense—the profit of entrepreneurs, wages, investments, etc.

Today, the creation of free tourist corridors and zones of cross-border cooperation is a promising direction for the development of tourism in the border areas.

The formation of tourist and recreational corridors and zones creates an opportunity for the effective use of the border tourism resources potential, and the development of modern tourism infrastructure, including transport services, communications, trade, public catering, and accommodation facilities. Finally, this will have a great impact on improving the employment of the population and raising its standard of living. The formation of such tourist zones in the border areas will create the basis for the further development of interstate economic and cultural relations, as well as the strengthening of interethnic ties.

In recent years, as a result of the close attention of the leaders of Kazakhstan and Uzbekistan to the development of tourism as a strategic sector of the economy, the tourist and recreational potential of the regions has been studied, and as a result the infrastructure support has been strengthened. However, despite this, the level of use of the tourist potential of the border areas is low.

At present, it is necessary to create free tourist corridors and cross-border cooperation zones. It is necessary to pay attention to the development of historical, cultural, health-improving, equestrian, and extreme and exotic tourism in the border areas.

After evaluating three important aspects of the development of cross-border tourism (development and placement of cross-border tourism infrastructure; movement of people; attractiveness of border regions for tourism), we saw small differences between the Kazakhstan–Uzbekistan cross-border regions.
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In recent years, as a result of the close attention of the leaders of Kazakhstan and Uzbekistan to the development of tourism as a strategic sector of the economy, the tourist and recreational potential of the regions has been studied, and as a result the Kazakhstan–Uzbekistan cross-border region has greater potential for the development of tourism only in the Turkestan region, which is expressed in:

- Relatively high density of roads in the border area, including in rural areas, and the presence of several border crossing corridors along the entire line of the state border, which allows us to consider road transport as the main means of transportation for cross-border tourism;
- Sufficient density of accommodation for tourists and attractions in the territory of the zone, which are usually visited by residents of the neighboring border region;
- Presence of attractions located near to the state border.

The Kazakhstan–Uzbekistan border area has a significant advantage in that it is a visa-free regime. In the Aktobe, Kyzylorda, and Mangystau regions, it is not possible to implement the active development of cross-border tourism. This is due to a number of reasons:

- Strong asymmetry in the development of transport infrastructure and the lack of motor transport between neighboring regions, which makes it unacceptable to form a sustainable flow and movement of a person for personal purposes (including tourism);
- Low traffic capacity of the border control point, which limits the large flow of tourists;
- Long distance between the major cities of Kazakhstan and Uzbekistan, which complicates the organization of weekend tours;
- Low density of tourist attractions and accommodation in rural areas, including those located close to the state border.

4. Discussion and Conclusions

Our study contributes to the problem of cross-border tourism development. Although the motives of cross-border movement are endemic for each border area, cross-border
tourism can positively affect the sustainable development of border areas. We studied the experience of developing cross-border tourism in the border areas of Kazakhstan and Uzbekistan. In both republics, the border areas have similar problems, but there are local specificities that affect the tourist flows in the borderlands: traditional ways of life and ways of using the space, including the predominant settlement structure of the population; the geography of border traffic; and the location of agricultural objects.

Our study showed a significant asymmetry in the implementation of the tourism potential of Kazakhstan–Uzbekistan border areas.

The existing imbalance is due to two factors: the social–economic heterogeneity of the areas in the cross-border regions, and differences in reasons for the local population to undertake cross-border movement. In the Kazakhstan–Uzbekistan direction, the vector of movement, first of all, is set by the migration strategies of the Kazakhs, who make up the largest ethnic group of the minority of the Tashkent region of Uzbekistan and have reasons to do so, primarily of a historical and cultural nature (maintaining family ties, co-preservation of national culture and traditions, visiting important religious places). Interestingly, for the cases studied, the visa-free factor did not have the expected decisive influence on the development of cross-border rural tourism compared, for example, with the density of tourist attractions in rural areas and economic incentives.

The political value of the results of this study lies in confirming the hypothesis about the important role of cross-border tourism as a tool for the sustainable development of urban–rural systems. It was revealed that the large cities are important points of attraction for tourists from the border regions of the neighboring country, and the rural settlements located at the intersection of cross-border tourist flows can receive positive external effects from their location.

At the same time, we have identified problems that act as obstacles to the realization of the cross-border tourism potential of rural areas. Firstly, these areas have poor transport accessibility with low density and quality of roads, underdevelopment of road infrastructure, small number and capacity of border control points, low provision of the population with cars, and poorly developed transport links between settlements in border regions. Secondly, there is a low density of tourist attractions and accommodation facilities in rural areas located near to the border. Thirdly, there is insufficient interest of the population in this type of tourism, including that associated with low economic attractiveness compared to other tourist destinations.

The limitations of the study are related to the lack of data about the direct dynamics of visiting rural settlements as part of cross-border mobility, about places of collective accommodation of tourists in rural areas, and poor customs statistics on the border of Kazakhstan and Uzbekistan.

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