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SHAPING THE INTERNATIONAL TOURISM IMAGE OF KARAKALPAKSTAN THROUGH THEATRE ART: OPPORTUNITIES AND STRATEGIC APPROACHES

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Abstract

This article examines the role, potential, and development prospects of theatre art in shaping the international tourism image of the Republic of Karakalpakstan. The primary objective of the study is to identify opportunities for integrating national theatre art with cultural tourism, regional branding, and international cultural communication. The research employs methods including the analysis of scholarly literature on cultural tourism and regional image, document analysis, and a preliminary examination of the repertoire of the Berdakh Karakalpak State Academic Musical Theatre. Based on the analysis, the article proposes a conceptual approach aimed at integrating theatre performances with tourist routes, international festivals, digital promotion, and cultural exchange programmes. The practical significance of the article lies in developing recommendations for promoting Karakalpakstan’s cultural identity on the international stage and advancing theatre-based tourism products.

Keywords

theatre art, Karakalpakstan, cultural tourism, international tourism image, regional branding, Karakalpak national culture, cultural heritage, tourism marketing, international cultural cooperation.

Theatre art has the potential to express a people’s historical memory, language, customs, aesthetic perspectives, and social experiences through artistic forms.

Cultural tourism encompasses tourism activities aimed at exploring tangible and intangible cultural heritage, participating in cultural events, and becoming acquainted with local ways of life. In this regard, theatrical performances can serve as a means of enriching the tourist experience, broadening visitors' knowledge of local culture, and highlighting the distinctive identity of a destination.

The Republic of Karakalpakstan is distinguished by its rich historical and cultural heritage, the traditions of the Karakalpak people, its folklore, musical arts, and professional theatre school. Integrating the region's cultural potential with international tourism can help present Karakalpakstan not merely as a geographical area or a collection of historical sites, but as a destination offering a distinctive cultural experience.

The research problem lies in the need to establish systematic links between the artistic potential of theatre and the international tourism promotion of the region. Key tasks in this area include incorporating theatrical performances into tourism programmes, presenting them in a format accessible to international audiences, and promoting them through digital channels.

The aim of this article is to identify the potential of theatre art in shaping the international tourism image of Karakalpakstan and to develop scientific and practical recommendations for integrating theatre into the region's tourism system.

Local scholarly research devoted to Karakalpak theatre art also provides an important theoretical foundation for this topic. Studies examining the influence of Karakalpak folk epics on acting and the formation of national theatre highlight the relationship between folkloric traditions, national values, and stage interpretation. Furthermore, scholarly works focusing on the historical development of Karakalpak theatre make it possible to examine theatre as an institution closely associated with the region's cultural development.Mavjud nazariy yondashuvlardan kelib chiqib, ushbu maqolada teatr san'ati, turistik imij va hududiy brending o'rtasidagi bog'liqlik alohida tadqiqot yo'nalishi sifatida taklif etiladi. However, specific empirical studies are needed to assess the actual impact of theatres in Karakalpakstan on the perceptions of international tourists.

The study is conceptual and analytical in nature. It employs methods including the examination of scholarly literature on cultural tourism, regional branding, and national theatre art, as well as the analysis of publicly available information on theatrical repertoires.

First, an analysis of scholarly literature is conducted to identify the theoretical foundations linking theatre art with cultural tourism and regional image.

Second, repertoire and performance schedule information published on the official website of the Berdakh Karakalpak State Academic Musical Theatre is used as preliminary material for documentary analysis. The titles of performances are presented as examples of productions listed in the theatre's publicly available repertoire. No conclusions are drawn about their plots, historical content, or popularity among foreign tourists unless such claims are substantiated by reliable sources. Third, based on the findings of the theoretical analysis, a conceptual model is developed to link theatre art with tourism promotion.

An important limitation of the study is that, at this stage, it does not claim that surveys have been conducted among foreign tourists or that statistical results demonstrating the impact of theatrical performances on tourist flows have been obtained. Therefore, the practical proposals presented in the article should be interpreted as research-based approaches that require verification through further empirical studies.

The international tourism image of a region is shaped by tourists' perceptions, cultural experiences, and sources of information about the destination. Theatre art provides additional opportunities to highlight a region's distinctive identity within this process. A theatrical performance can offer audiences an opportunity to become acquainted with the local language, music, stage aesthetics, and forms of artistic expression.

In the case of Karakalpakstan, an important aspect of developing theatre art as a tourism resource is its potential to complement existing cultural tourism products. For example, combining visits to museums, historical and cultural sites, and other attractions in Nukus with theatrical performances could create a more meaningful cultural programme for tourists. This approach can strengthen the connection between theatre

and tourism while preserving the artistic purpose of theatrical performances. At the same time, transforming theatre into a tourism product should not be limited to increasing the number of performances. The artistic quality of productions, respect for local culture, comfortable conditions for audiences, and accurate interpretation of cultural content must remain the top priorities.

The Berdakh Karakalpak State Academic Musical Theatre is an important cultural institution that represents Karakalpakstan's professional performing arts. A number of theatrical productions are listed on the theatre's official performance schedule page.

National themes within the theatre's repertoire, local dramaturgy, and the distinctive characteristics of stage art are of particular importance in shaping the international tourism image of Karakalpakstan. Theatrical performances can be studied not only as artistic productions but also as means of communication that convey the region's cultural values, worldview, and artistic traditions.

In this regard, the production "Qanlı toy", staged at the Berdakh Karakalpak State Academic Musical Theatre, deserves particular attention. According to the theatre's official information, the production was staged in September 2025 by director Kemal Bashar. The announcement of the premiere highlights the creative work of the Turkish director and his collaboration with the theatre company \[8\]. This experience provides an important example for examining the opportunities that international creative cooperation offers for the development of national theatre. Two aspects should be distinguished when analysing the production "Qanlı toy" from the perspective of international tourism. The first is the creative potential of Karakalpak theatre, which has developed within the national cultural environment. The second is the intercultural creative dialogue that emerges through collaboration between a foreign director and a local theatre company. Such cooperation may create opportunities to introduce theatre art to international audiences. However, separate statistical and empirical data are required to draw conclusions about the production's popularity among foreign tourists or its impact on tourist flows.

From the perspective of expressing national identity, the production Súymegenge súykenbe is also an important subject of study. In its official announcement, the theatre

presents this work as a musical comedy written by playwright S. Xojaniyozov. The production was staged by N. Ansatbaev, People's Artist of Uzbekistan and professor. According to the official information, the work explores themes related to love, misunderstanding, forgiveness, and human sincerity.

An examination of this production's cultural tourism potential may focus on the artistic characteristics of Karakalpak dramaturgy, musical theatre traditions, stage speech, and performance techniques. If the stage interpretation incorporates national music, costumes, customs, or other local cultural elements, these may be analysed as important means of introducing Karakalpak culture to foreign audiences. To describe such elements accurately in the article, it is necessary to rely on a recording of the performance, its programme, or information provided by theatre specialists. Works such as "Aygúl-Abat", "Ǵarip-Ashıq", "Ráwshan", "Alpamıs", and "Qırıq qız", which form part of the historical repertoire of Karakalpak theatre, can also serve as important sources for studying national dramaturgy, oral folk traditions, and musical theatre practices. The origins, plots, connections with folklore, and stage interpretations of each work should be examined individually. In particular, productions based on folk epics and national legends can help analyse opportunities for communicating Karakalpakstan's cultural identity to international audiences, provided that their interpretation is supported by relevant historical and literary sources.

Thus, the productions Qanlı toy and "Súymegenge súykenbe", along with other examples from the Karakalpak theatrical repertoire, can provide a basis for studying the role of national performing arts in shaping the region's tourism image. These productions can be integrated with international festivals, multilingual subtitles, educational programmes on theatre history, and tourist routes. In doing so, the introduction of national culture to international audiences should be guided by the principle of preserving its artistic integrity and original meaning.

In contemporary tourism, digital information influences tourists' destination choices and travel planning. Therefore, the use of official websites, social media, video materials, and multilingual information resources is essential for the international promotion of theatre art.

The digital communication of theatres in Karakalpakstan aimed at international audiences can be developed in the following areas: Preparing brief descriptions of theatrical productions in Uzbek, Karakalpak, and English, as well as in other languages where necessary;

Regularly updating repertoire and ticketing information;

Producing short videos about the rehearsal process, actors, and the history of the theatre;

Establishing cooperation with cultural tourism operators and regional tourism organisations;

Integrating information about international festivals and cultural events into a unified promotional strategy.

In this context, digital materials should not serve merely as advertising tools but should also provide reliable information about Karakalpak culture. The involvement of local specialists in translation and cultural interpretation can help preserve national identity and cultural authenticity.

This article proposes a conceptual approach based on linking theatre art with tourist routes, international festivals, multilingual digital promotion, and cultural cooperation. This approach demonstrates the potential for developing theatre as an important component of regional branding.

The main limitation of the study is that it does not present empirical data demonstrating the actual impact of theatrical performances on international tourist flows. In future research, the proposed model could be tested through surveys and interviews with foreign tourists, theatre professionals, and tourism specialists, an in-depth analysis of repertoire content, and the monitoring of tourism indicators.

Overall, the systematic and research-based integration of theatre art into Karakalpakstan’s tourism development strategy represents a promising approach to introducing national culture to international audiences, diversifying cultural tourism products, and shaping the region’s distinctive tourism image.

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