

## Orta Asya'daki Uluslararası Otel Şirketlerinin Büyüme Stratejileri

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## Expansion Strategies of International Hotel Companies in Central Asia

### ÖZ

Son yıllarda uluslararası turizm, sektörün büyümesi ve bölge ülkelerinin turizme verdiği stratejik önem doğrultusunda Orta Asya ülkelerinin ekonomilerinde giderek daha önemli bir rol oynamaya başlamıştır. Bölgedeki ülkeler, çeşitli pazarlama yöntemleri ve tanıtım faaliyetleri aracılığıyla küresel turizmin dikkatini çekmektedir. Buna paralel olarak, yerel yönetimler tarafından yapılan altyapı yatırımları da turist sayısındaki artışa ve turizm gelirlerinin yükselmesine katkı sağlamaktadır. Bu gelişmeler, bölgede faaliyet gösteren uluslararası otel zincirlerinin yatırım ve genişleme stratejilerini de etkilemektedir. Bu çalışma, uluslararası otel şirketlerinin Orta Asya'daki genişleme stratejilerini incelemektedir ve nitel araştırma yöntemi olarak vaka analizi kullanılmıştır. Araştırma bulguları, bu küresel şirketlerin bölgede çeşitli stratejik genişleme yaklaşımları benimseyerek otel sayılarını artırdıklarını ortaya koymaktadır.

**Anahtar Kelimeler:** Orta Asya, Uluslararası Oteller, Büyüme Stratejileri.

### ABSTRACT

The active contribution of international tourism to the economies of Central Asian countries has gradually increased in recent years with the growth of the sector and the importance that states attach to tourism. States in the region seem to be attracting the attention of global tourism through marketing methods and promotional activities. Recent infrastructure investments done by local governments also help to increase tourist numbers and tourism revenues. This, therefore, affects the investment and expansion strategies of international hotel companies operating in the region. This study focuses on the expansion strategies of international companies in Central Asia. The case study method was used to analyze the expansion strategies of these global companies operating in the region. *Research findings reveal that international hotel companies increase the number of their hotels in the region by maintaining various expansion strategies.*

**Keywords:** Central Asia, International Hotels, Expansion Strategies.

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## Introduction

In recent years, tourism has become one of the largest and fastest-growing industries in the world, and the sector is undergoing rapid change ([Cetron et al., 2008](#)). Tourism development is considered by almost all countries in the world as an important part of their economic growth ([Çilginoğlu, 2018](#); [Sheresheva et al., 2018](#)). Like the tourism industry, the hotel sector has also grown rapidly in recent decades ([Barcala et al., 2022](#)). However, there are relatively few studies that have attempted to apply conceptual models to one of the most important branches of the tourism industry; the international hotel sector ([Johnson & Vanetti, 2005](#)).

The rapidly developing and increasing process of international tourism and globalization is intensifying competition among hotel companies and accelerating the race for a share of the growing international market. Due to this situation, hotels have to find new ways to compete with each other, which leads companies to look for new tourism destinations ([Quer et al., 2007](#)). Through expansion, hotel firms gain competitive strength and erect more effective barriers to protect their customers from global competitors ([Lam et al., 2015](#)). As a result, internationalization is widespread throughout the industry ([Song & Lee, 2020](#)). The ability of global hotel companies to obtain external resources at low cost in investment zones, as well as the incentives and legal opportunities provided, have also had a positive impact on the investment and expansion of hotel chains.

The global tourism industry is expanding rapidly, and hotel companies are responding by implementing expansion and competitive strategies in various forms that suit their own financial systems and plans. Multinational companies are establishing new hotels for reasons such as increasing competition in their own markets, reaching capacity saturation, and a willingness to leverage the economic structures of the countries in which they invest.

The hotel sector as a service industry, where it is possible to separate capital investment from management skills, is a clear example of how internationalisation can be shaped without involvement by foreign direct investment ([Rodríguez, 2002](#)). International hotel enterprises are also advantageous in supplying labour force and qualified personnel from the human resources pool due to their effective competition and the strength of their individual financial structures when they invest in other regional markets. In addition, the opportunities and incentives offered by countries to be invested in international growth play an important role. Hotel businesses appear to use various forms of growth to become globally active, continue to grow, and gain a competitive advantage ([Türksoy et al., 2013](#)).

Since the early 1980s, the interest of major players in the international hotel sector has shifted from the mature markets of the U.S. and Western Europe to the rapidly developing countries of Southeast Asia, particularly China and the East Asia, especially China, and to the former Eastern bloc countries ([Wu et al., 1998](#)).

Providing the different types of tourism that have developed in the Central Asian region in recent years, the countries of the region are trying to improve their tourism through factors such as marketing and highlighting their cultural and natural beauties. The advances in transportation services and the facilitation of visa processing, etc. for tourists, combined with the emergence of various tourism insights, have created new opportunities for the countries of the region in terms of tourism. The number of tourists coming to the countries of the region for business reasons has also increased significantly due to the economic activities in the region.

Depending on the tourism potential of the countries in the Central Asian region, international hotel companies are applying their expansion strategies in different ways. International hotel chains seem to use some methods in particular, such as management strategy and franchising throughout the region.

Within the scope of the research, strategies affecting the numerical distribution of international hotel companies by region, as well as the investment and expansion of these companies in the countries of Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Uzbekistan, Turkmenistan, and Tajikistan were explored.

## Literature Review

### Expansion Strategies of International Hotel Firms

The expansion of hospitality firms has been a consistent trend in recent decades and even in times of economic recession, diversifying exposures in different geographic locations can be an attractive option under certain conditions ([García-Almeida & Yu, 2015](#)). There are many variations and peculiarities in the growth process of hospitality chains. There is no one strategy that seems to prevail in the hospitality industry and companies in the industry look for growth opportunities in very different ways (organic growth, acquisitions, franchising, etc.) ([Alexander & Lockwood, 1996](#)).

The growth, spread, and structure of multinational hotel companies can be explained by the eclectic theory of international production. According to this theory, a firm will expand abroad if it holds a competitive or ownership advantage and can leverage resources in other countries that align with its interests ([Dunning & McQueen, 1982](#)).

Expansion decisions are shaped by global economic trends and capital markets. Hospitality firms must also assess local environmental factors in host countries (Altinay & Altinay, 2003). To remain competitive in a dynamic global market, multinational companies should adopt flexible international strategies (Altinay, 2007). [Chen and Dimou \(2005\)](#) emphasize that the decision between hierarchical and market-based expansion depends on the level of proprietary knowledge and service complexity. Higher-end hotels demand more specialized expertise and management skills.

Main international entry methods in the hotel industry include ownership, joint ventures, management contracts, and franchising (Simyar & Argheyd, 1987). Joint ventures may bring benefits but involve significant risk and are less common in hospitality. Management contracts allow knowledge transfer and control, but property owners often influence operations (Gannon & Johnson, 1997). Franchising, preferred for its lower risk and fast expansion, is especially popular among service firms ([Altinay, 2007](#)). While both franchising and management contracts share similarities, they differ in control levels and knowledge transfer ([Barcala et al., 2022](#); [Chen & Dimou, 2005](#)).

Given the capital-intensive nature of the hotel sector, franchising helps reduce risk and financial burden. Franchisees usually cover initial costs and pay fees in exchange for brand recognition, scale economies, and managerial support ([Alon et al., 2012](#)).

Franchising is seen as ideal for transition economies like Russia, where entrepreneurial experience is limited. It offers a clear operational model and enables entrepreneurs to attract loyal customers using a well-known brand ([Sheresheva et al., 2018](#)).

### Tourism in Central Asia

Due to their geography, Central Asian countries have an important position in terms of their natural beauties, deep-rooted historical and cultural values and tourism potential ([Sönmez & Oktay, 2021](#)). As a result, these countries have started to be new routes of interest in tourism and discovered by international tourists since their independence ([Oktay, 2021](#)).

The region's natural environments, hospitable people, and history cultural richness are an extremely attractive source of tourism attraction comes out. Consequently, many international organizations including WTO (World Tourism Organization) strive for the development of tourism in the region. Especially, Silk Road Tourism mostly affects Central Asian Countries ([Atasoy, 2012](#)). Central Asian countries with their natural beauties, historical and cultural diversity has the potential to take a significant share of the world tourism pie. However despite all these advantages, the desired level in tourism revenues has not been reached yet ([Chavush et al., 2012](#)).

Central Asia holds tremendous opportunities for global travel and tourism. Benefiting from improved security and safety for tourists, and greater economic cooperation, given the right momentum this region could see

exponential growth in tourism ([Koh & Kwok, 2017](#)). Overall there is significant tourism potential in all of these countries. But there also appears to be some shortage in the awareness and introduction of tourism areas around the world. Although the developments in the field of tourism in Central Asian countries have similarities, the tourism potential of each country and its efforts to develop tourism cause different performance results.

Central Asian countries want to benefit from the benefits of the tourism sector. They have implemented different strategies to increase tourism revenues. In order to fully benefit from the economic and social effects of tourism, regional countries can adopt an integration strategy in the long term. With the implementation of these applications, tourists visiting the region will have the chance to see several countries at once, and this method can significantly increase the number of tourists coming to the region. In addition, thanks to this strategy, the people of the region will be able to travel more comfortably, get to know each other's cultures more closely, more comfortable and safe travel opportunities will be created for tourists, and the touristic attraction of the region can be increased with stronger promotional budgets ([Oktay, 2011](#)). It is inevitable that the implementation and implementation of this method will also provide an important factor for accommodation businesses. As tourists stay and spend more time in the region, this will directly affect the occupancy rates of these businesses. Therefore, it is expected that it will lead to the growth of businesses in the region and new investments.

It is a country rich in natural and cultural resources of all countries in the Central Asian region. However, among these countries, Kazakhstan seems to have more potential to develop the diversity of tourism than others. Especially the Silk Road route has a great ability to attract tourists from other regions ([Abishov & Ünlüönen, 2016](#)). With the significant increase in the number of tourists in the country in recent years, there has been a significant increase in the signs of accommodation. The main reasons for the increase in the number of chain hotels are the rapid growth of business/trade tourism in major cities and the high concentration of international tourists visiting the country. Kyrgyzstan, another important country in Central Asia, has been at the top of the development agenda due to its wealth of natural resources, its experience in health and leisure tourism during the Soviet period, and the lack of viable alternatives. In the post-colonial period, tourism activities have focused mainly on the country's mountains and lakes. More recently, attempts to develop a cultural tourism product reflect the revival of Kyrgyz nationalism and Turkic culture throughout Central Asia ([Thompson, 2004](#)).

The contribution of historical cities in the region to tourism is an important factor. Uzbekistan is considered an important country in this regard. There are many Central Asian cities located on the main trade routes on the Silk Road in the country. Samarkand, Bukhara and Khiva have been the most important tourist destinations for visitors as part of cultural tourism since the country's independence. Since the country is located on the Great Silk Road, the World Tourism Organization established the Silk Road Office in Samarkand in 2004 ([Juliboyogli, 2019](#)). In addition to being a Silk Road Tourism destination, Uzbekistan also has different tourism products to be developed. During the years of independence, the Uzbekistan government recognized the country's unique cultural heritage. It has done a great job for its development. The necessary conditions for traditional arts have been created and historical monuments have been restored. Thanks to these measures, the tourism potential and tourism infrastructure in the country are increasing every year ([Tursunova et al., 2017](#)). With the full inclusion of these important historical cities in the country into the tourism potential, a significant increase in the number of accommodation and other tourism establishments is expected.

In Central Asia, Tajikistan and Turkmenistan may be considered to be behind in tourism compared to other countries, but with the recent promotions, they are trying to increase the number of visitors to the country, especially with the emergence of tourism areas. Among all tourism areas, the fastest growing type of tourism in these countries is ecological tourism. Especially in Tajikistan, it attracts the attention of many tourists from all over the world with activities such as mountain sports and climbing. The country is making significant progress in the tourism sector, especially in nature tourism, water resources and spa tourism ([Yorov et al., 2019](#)). Turkmenistan, on the other hand, is a country with great tourism potential with its geographical structure and natural beauties. In recent years, tourism has grown rapidly with various activities in the country that wants to get a share from tourism. Turkmenistan is a country with great tourism potential due to its geographical structure and natural beauties. In recent years, tourism has grown rapidly with various activities in the country that wants to get a share from tourism. Turkmenistan has included tourism in its economic, political and cultural development

strategy. In this context, quality accommodation facilities, high-star hotels and conference centers have been built. The largest and most modern airport in Central Asia has been established in Ashgabat. It is anticipated that these tourism destinations in the country will contribute to the number of tourists and tourism revenues if they actively participate in tourism and promotional activities ([Kantarci, 2007](#)).

With tourism activities in the Central Asian Region, the number of domestic and foreign investments has increased and global hotel companies have started their brand hotels in the capitals of Central Asian countries and large-scale businesses. Factors such as the high room prices of quality hotels and the low input prices such as food, energy and prices have increased the profitability of city hotels and this has led foreign investors to invest in new ones in the region ([Oktay, 2021](#)). With all these pieces, there are all the tourist pieces coming to the Central Asian regions. After the pandemic, it was seen that the tourist regime in particular increased in all regions. However, attention should be paid to the tourist standards of the prominent countries. The types of tourism statistics, how much they improve tourism investments and the treatment plans are directed are seen.

**Table 1.** *Central Asia Countries Visitor Numbers*

| Countries    | 2023  | 2024   |
|--------------|-------|--------|
| Kazakhstan   | 9.2 M | 15.3 M |
| Kyrgyzstan   | 7,3 M | 8.6 M  |
| Uzbekistan   | 6,1 M | 8 M    |
| Tajikistan   | 1.2 M | 1,8 M  |
| Turkmenistan | 80 B  | 100 B  |

**Kaynak:** [World Tourism Organization \(UNWTO\)](#)

When the statistical data obtained is examined, it is seen that the number of visitors to Central Asian countries in recent years has increased. In the light of the data seen, it is seen that especially Kazakhstan has increased the number of tourists significantly. It is known that Kyrgyzstan and Uzbekistan follow Kazakhstan in this regard and want to increase tourism revenues and the number of visitors. It can be inferred that countries such as Kyrgyzstan and Uzbekistan are implementing policies to increase the number of tourists coming to their countries. The current investments of international brand hotel companies, increasing the number of businesses and new accommodation business investments vary according to the number of visitors coming to the countries.

### Methodology

The study used the case model and a multiple-state design as a method. Case models are used to describe a particular phenomenon in detail. It is also referred to as a "case study." The subjects to be studied may be people, diseases, problems, applications, etc. Given that the phenomenon is important, data collection techniques such as document review and observation can be used to uncover the variables that make up the situation, determine the interactions between variables, or compare different states. This approach is often used in clinical and policy studies. Case models, unlike general scanning models, examine a more limited sample and a more narrowly defined phenomenon in detail ([Simşek, 2012](#)).

The subject of the study is the international hotel companies in the Central Asian region and the growth strategies of these companies. The hotel chains in Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Turkmenistan, Uzbekistan and Tajikistan examined in the research are the sample of the research.

The data and information used for the study were obtained from the official websites of international hotel companies in the above-mentioned countries in the Central Asian region. In accordance with the data obtained during the research, numerical data analysis on the countries and cities, the number of hotels and the growth strategies of international hotel groups operating in the Central Asia region are presented in the tables.

## Findings

### International Hotels in the Central Asian Countries

The number of international hotels and the cities where these hotels are located in the countries are shown in Table 1. The total number of international hotels in the Central Asian region is 51. The number of international hotels in Kazakhstan attracts attention with 38 hotels. Although the number of international hotels is much lower in Kyrgyzstan (4), Uzbekistan (6) and Tajikistan (3), it can be observed that the hotels continue their activities.

International hotel chains in Kazakhstan especially continue their activities mainly in the capital Astana, and in Almaty. The number of international hotel companies is also gradually increasing in the Aktobe and Aktau regions, which are among the country's developed cities.

In Kyrgyzstan, the international hotel groups are located in the capital, Bishkek. It is expected that the development of the country's tourism potential will provide opportunities for other cities to make international hotel investments. Therefore, the fact that four major international hotel companies are investing in Kyrgyzstan is considered important for tourism potential.

In Uzbekistan, international hotels are also located in the capital city Tashkent and one in Bukhara. Although there are no international hotel groups in cities Samarkand and Khiva, there are significant hotel investments in those cities. In Tajikistan, there are 3 international hotel groups operating in Dushanbe, the country's capital. As other cities in the country are focusing on their tourism potential and activities, it is expected that major hotel groups will invest in some other planned regions.

The results of the survey show that there are no international hotels in Turkmenistan yet. In the capital Ashgabat and in the Avaza region, there are mainly local accommodation establishments. It is noteworthy that there are no international hotel companies in the country compared to other Central Asian countries. However, it is believed that hotel chains that have high brand value around the world will be able to compete will take place in the country with various growth strategies in the coming years.



**Table 2. International Hotels in Central Asia**

|                       | Order | International Hotel Chain                               | Number of<br>Hotels | Hotel Locations                                  |
|-----------------------|-------|---|---------------------|--|
|                       |       |   |                     |  |
| KAZAKHSTAN            | 1     | Accor Group (Rixos, Swisshotel, Mercure, Ibis, Novotel) | 12                  | Astana, Almaty, Aktobe, Aktau, Shymkent, Borovoe |
|                       | 2     | Marriott International                                  | 8                   | Astana, Almaty, Aktobe, Aktau                    |
|                       | 3     | Inter Continental IHG                                   | 5                   | Almaty, Aktau                                    |
|                       | 4     | Hilton Corporation                                      | 5                   | Astana, Almaty, Türkistan                        |
|                       | 5     | Wyndham Hotels  | 3                   | Astana, Almaty, Shymkent                         |
|                       | 6     | Best Western Hotels                                     | 2                   | Astana, Almaty                                   |
|                       | 7     | Choice Hotels   | 1                   | Astana   |
|                       | 8     | Hyatt Hotels  | 1                   | Almaty   |
| Total                 |       |   | 38                  | 7 Cities   |
| KYRGYZSTAN            | Order | International Hotel Chain                               | Number of<br>Hotels | Hotel Locations                                  |
|                       | 1     | Accor Group   | 1                   | Bishkek  |
|                       | 2     | Marriott International                                  | 1                   | Bishkek  |
|                       | 3     | Wyndham Hotels  | 1                   | Bishkek  |
|                       | 4     | Hyatt Hotels  | 1                   | Bishkek  |
| Total                 |       |   | 4                   | 1 City   |
| UZBEKISTAN            | Order | International Hotel Chain                               | Number of<br>Hotels | Hotel Locations                                  |
|                       | 1     | Hilton Corporation                                      | 2                   | Tashkent   |
|                       | 2     | Wyndham Hotels  | 2                   | Tashkent, Bukhara                                |
|                       | 3     | Marriott International                                  | 1                   | Tashkent   |
|                       | 4     | Hyatt Hotels  | 1                   | Tashkent   |
| Total                 |       |   | 6                   | 1 City   |
| TAJIKISTAN            | Order | International Hotel Chain                               | Number of<br>Hotels | Hotel Locations                                  |
|                       | 1     | Hilton Corporation                                      | 1                   | Dushanbe   |
|                       | 2     | Wyndham Hotels  | 1                   | Dushanbe   |
|                       | 3     | Hyatt Hotels  | 1                   | Dushanbe   |
| Total                 |       |   | 3                   | 1 City   |
| <b>GRAND TOTAL</b>    |       |   | <b>51 HOTELS</b>    | <b>10 CITIES</b>                                 |
| <b>8 HOTEL GROUPS</b> |       |   |                     |  |

### Expansion Strategies of International Hotels in the Region

The countries where international hotel groups are located in the Central Asia Region and which growth strategy methods they follow are shown in Table 2. Looking at the expansion of hotel groups in the countries, it can be seen that expansion strategies such as strategic partnerships, management agreements and franchise agreements are preferred. There are also hotel groups that are pursuing a licensing strategy. In addition, international hotel chains plan their growth strategies in countries in advance and align them with the situation of the countries in terms of tourism.

**Table 3.** *Expansion Strategies of International Hotel Groups*

| Order | International Hotel Groups | Growth Strategies   | Countries                                      |
|-------|----------------------------|---|--|
| 1     | Accor Group                | Strategic Partnership, Management Agreements, Franchise Agreement | Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan                         |
| 2     | Hilton Corporation         | Management Agreements, Franchise Agreement                        | Kazakhstan, Uzbekistan, Tajikistan             |
| 3     | Marriott International     | Strategic Partnership, Management Agreements, Franchise Agreement | Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Uzbekistan             |
| 4     | Inter Continental          | Management Agreements, Franchise Agreements,                      | Kazakhstan                                     |
| 5     | Wyndham Hotels             | Strategic Partnership, Management Agreements, Franchise Agreement | Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Uzbekistan, Tajikistan |
| 6     | Hyatt Hotels               | Management Agreements, Franchise Agreement, Licensing             | Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Uzbekistan, Tajikistan |
| 7     | Best Western               | Licensing   | Kazakhstan                                     |
| 8     | Choice Hotels              | Franchise Agreement   | Kazakhstan                                     |

It is worth noting that Accor Group pursues many growth strategies, such as strategic partnerships in Kazakhstan and Kyrgyzstan. In addition, the investments of Hilton and Marriott hotel groups in various cities and their growth in this area are worth noting. Indeed, the expansion strategies of major hotel groups such as IHG, Wyndham, Hyatt, Choice, and Best Western are significant. When the growth paths of these international hotels are examined, it is seen that strategies such as Management Contracts, Franchising, and Strategic partnerships are concentrated.

### Conclusion and Discussions

International hotel companies employ various expansion strategies to enter new markets and improve performance. Ownership-based strategies lead to higher operational performance but lower economic efficiency due to high capital investment, while non-ownership approaches like management contracts and franchising offer better economic efficiency and flexibility ([Mulet-Forteza et al., 2024](#)). International hotel companies have significantly impacted economic development in Post Soviet Countries since 1989, influencing areas such as investment, employment, and knowledge transfer ([Niewiadomski, 2023](#)). Thus the hotel and tourism industry in Central Asia is evolving as a multifaceted business sector, with international economic and cultural ties playing a crucial role ([Quliyeva Hüseynov & Həsənova, 2024](#)).

According to the research, Kazakhstan is the country where international hotel companies operate most intensively among Central Asian countries. In fact, the investments of international hotel chains in this country are significant compared to other countries studied. Looking at the number of hotel chains and their growth in Kazakhstan, we can see that the world's major international hotel companies have made investments and the number of new hotel companies is constantly increasing. The numerical surplus and various brands of hotel groups in Kazakhstan are considerable. The largest hotel chains in the world have facilities, especially in the cities of Almaty and Astana, the capital of Kazakhstan. These investments of international hotel companies in the country improve the quality in competition and the number of tourists and the number of star hotels are constantly increasing.



The international hotel industry in Kyrgyzstan is mainly represented in the capital Bishkek. For example, international hotel chains such as Accor, Marriott, Wyndham and Hyatt have facilities in the capital, Bishkek. The presence of international hotel companies in the country promotes the quality of accommodation services in tourism and has a positive impact on other hotel companies. It is observed that the number of establishments is increasing rapidly as the country's tourism potential has been brought to the forefront in recent years. Some international hotel companies are also investing, especially through strategies such as franchises and management contracts, and it is expected that they will continue their growth strategies and determine their investments in the future.

It is worth noting that international hotels in Uzbekistan are located in Tashkent, the capital of the country, and accommodation services are created in this city. Hilton and Wyndham hotel groups have two facilities in the country, Marriott and Hyatt groups have one facility each, which is considered important for accommodation sector. New hotel investments are expected to be made in cities such as Samarkand, Bukhara and Khiva, which have been pioneers in terms of tourism in recent years. Furthermore, in addition to traditional star hotels, there are many accommodations suitable for nature tourism, as well as numerous national hostels and boutique hotels. International hotel companies are expected to make their new investments and growth in tourism areas, especially outside the capital.

Accommodation facilities in Tajikistan are mainly located in the capital Dushanbe. The presence of facilities of international hotel groups such as Hilton, Wyndham and Hyatt in the country also draws attention to the fact that these hotel groups use growth strategies such as management contracts and franchising. In this regard, the fact that there are incentives for tourism investment in recent years continues to attract international hotel companies to the country. In addition to international companies, many local lodging companies are also operating in the country. Given the incentives and the increasing importance of tourism, lodging companies are planning to invest in the country. New hotel establishments are to be built especially in the regions of the country designated for resort tourism.

Even though the well-known international hotel companies have not yet invested in Turkmenistan, it is likely that they may establish hotels in the country in the coming years. In particular, the high tourism potential in the Avaza region has attracted international hotels to the area. With the proclamation of the Avaza Free Tourism Zone, companies are planning to grow in this region. In fact, many international hotel groups are expected to operate in the region.

Looking at the growth strategies of international hotel companies in Central Asian countries, it is found that franchising methods, management contracts and strategic partnerships are widely used. It is also noted that there are hotel groups that prefer licensing. While these global hotel companies determine these strategies, the structure of the countries in which they will invest and their profitability preferences are of great importance. It can be seen that the tourism structure and the number of tourists in the Central Asian region also influence these preferences. Again, it is assumed that new hotel investments in the region where the research was conducted will be similar to these growth strategies.

The literature review and the statistical data obtained show that the Central Asian Turkish States have an important tourism potential, especially with their natural structure, cultural and historical beauties, but due to the existing problems and obstacles, they cannot reach the desired levels in the tourism sector.

In Central Asian States, it is seen that Kazakhstan is at an advanced level compared to other countries in terms of tourism. It is also seen that Tajikistan and Turkmenistan are behind in terms of tourism. Again, according to the obtained data, the income obtained from tourism in this region, where the number of tourists coming to the country is insufficient, is also lower than the income obtained from tourism. When the development of tourism in Central Asian Turkish States and the biggest problems affecting the investments of international hotel enterprises in this context are examined, it can be said that the inadequacy of tourism promotion, the ongoing protectionist policies of the countries in the region and the legal regulations faced by tourists who want to come to the country, as well as the continuing transportation problems such as air transportation etc. These factors, which also affect the investments of international hotel enterprises, are primarily thought to negatively affect the number of tourists,

the inadequacy of tourism promotion and advertising activities and the low income they will obtain from the accommodation sector. According to the research, it is seen that the country with the least specified problems is Kazakhstan, with the data such as the existence of international hotels and the number of tourists.

The following suggestions can be made for the development of the tourism sector in the Central Asian Turkish States and the increase of investments by international hotel companies.

- Advertisement and promotion activities aimed at tourists according to the country's tourism potential and existing tourism destinations
- Solving transportation problems, especially increasing air and road transportation opportunities to regions where tourism is intense
- Providing conveniences for the tourism sector and tourists coming to the country by developing the legal regulations of the countries
- Facilitating investments by international chain hotels by giving certain incentives to businesses in the field of accommodation
- Encouraging and guiding tourists to the country through tour operators affiliated with international hotel companies

Expansion strategies involve separate decisions on ownership and management, which depend on the company's strengths and local market resources. Companies must evaluate whether local partners can maintain their service standards and competitive advantages when deciding on management control and equity investment. By carefully assessing these factors, hotel companies can develop effective strategies for international expansion and growth ([Dev et al., 2007](#)).

This study examined the growth and investments of international hotel companies in these regions in Central Asian countries. The current tourism potentials of the region were examined on a country basis and the reasons for existing hotel companies and new investments were examined. The study, which showed that there is a direct relationship between the perspective of international hotel companies on tourism in countries and the number of tourists, also showed which business groups exist in countries and new business opportunities. It would be more appropriate for future studies to be conducted on a country basis rather than a region in order to examine all components of tourism. Considering the investments of accommodation companies and the share they receive from tourism, it is thought that it would be more accurate to make inferences according to the tourism potentials of countries in this context.

**Etik Kurul Onayı:** 5237 sayılı Türk Ceza Kanunu Madde 90, Yükseköğretim Kurulu Başkanlığı TR Dizin Etik Kurul Kriterleri ve Türkiye'nin taraf olduğu anlaşmalar gereğince insandananket, mülakat, odak grup çalışması, deney vb. yollarla veri toplanmasını içeren çalışmalarda Etik Kurul Onay Belgesi alınması zorunludur. 2020 yılı öncesinden tamamlanmış çalışmalardan Etik Kurul Onay Belgesi istenmemektedir.

**Etik Onayı:** Bu çalışmanın tüm aşamalarında etik kurallara riayet edildiğini yazar(lar) beyan eder. Aksi bir durumun Journal of Tourism Research'in hiçbir sorumluluğu olmayıp, tüm sorumluluk yazarlara aittir.

**Yazar Katkıları:** Fikir -KO,TE; Tasarım-KO,TE; Denetleme -KO,AA,AM; Veri Toplama ve/veya İşleme-KO,TE; Analiz ve/veya Yorumlama-KO,TE; Literatür Tarama-Kaynaklar-KO,AA,AM)

**Hakem Değerlendirmesi:** Dış bağımsız.

**Çıkar Çatışması:** Yazarlar, çıkar çatışması olmadığını beyan etmiştir.

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**Ethics Committee Approval:** In accordance with Article 90 of the Turkish Penal Code No. 5237, TR Index Ethics Committee Criteria of the Council of Higher Education and the agreements to which Turkey is a party, it is mandatory to obtain an Ethics Committee Approval Certificate for studies involving data collection from humans through surveys, interviews, focus group studies, experiments, etc. For studies completed before 2020, an Ethics Committee Approval Document is not required.

**Ethics Approval:** The author(s) confirm that ethical principles have been adhered to throughout the course of this study. In the event that this is not the case, the responsibility lies with the authors and not with the Journal of Silk Road Tourism Research.

**Author Contributions:** Concept -KO,TE; Design-KO,TE; Supervision-KO,AA,AM; Data Collection and/or Processing-KO,TE; Analysis and/or Interpretation-KO,TE; Literature Search-Resources-KO,AA,AM

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