**Presentation title:** Planning a Slow Food Tourism Corridor in a Suburban Town in Arizona, USA

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**Abstract:** While the continued disruption and regulatory policies imposed by different countries have a direct impact on the travel and tourism industry, evidence shows that the industry can be reasonably resilient to pandemics and chaotic events. As the new normal continues, transformational thinking with a focus on sustainable and responsible development of alternative forms of tourism is taking roots. Interest in slow tourism is surging in pandemic times due to the growing demand for immersive experiences as consumers seek self-enrichment and a sense of place and belonging. Slow travel involves getting to know the local community. Authentic experience is the cornerstone of this type of travel and visitors are motivated to learn more about the local traditions, language, and food. Besides being slow paced, many scholars state this niche form of tourism promotes sustainable and ethical travel. Given its surging popularity, slow tourism in a suburban town, Gilbert, Arizona (United States), is scrutinized. A slow tourism model was developed using a predetermined set of indicators, centered on authenticity, social capital, and sustainable supply chain development. Another purpose was to suggest a slow tourism corridor to promote locally-grown produce and authentic heritage. Two research questions, specifically, have guided the purpose of this study: To what extent can the food experiences at a purposeful selection of restaurants and farms in Gilbert be labeled as slow tourism offerings? What is the potential for a slow food tourism corridor in Gilbert? A mixed methods approach is employed. Data was anchored in twelve restaurants, a farm, and a farmers market. These were identified by the Office of Economic Development in Gilbert as representing local or ethnic produce and heritage. Content analysis was conducted manually of the websites of selected food venues. ATLAS.ti Cloud was used to identify frequently occurring themes and for comparative purposes. This was followed by an online survey of the food venues using Qualtrics software. To some extent, participant observation was also employed. Data triangulation assisted in confirming robustness of collected information from multiple sources. Based on the study results, a plan for a slow food corridor was developed, suggesting a sustainable tourism trail with agricultural/local heritage touch points, that can serve as a conduit to enrich collaboration between various slow food stakeholders.

Biography: Saule Baimuratova, a dedicated Global Professional Practitioner in Sustainable Tourism and Community Development, currently serves as Tourism Development Manager at LLP "Shymbulak Mountain Resort Hotel" in Almaty, Kazakhstan. Holding a Master's degree from Arizona State University with distinction (Cumulative GPA: 3.94/4.0), her academic research focused on planning a Slow Food Tourism Corridor.

With a background as Marketing Project Manager at LLP "Shymbulak Mountain Resort Hotel," Saule has demonstrated strategic project oversight and expanded digital reach through influencer partnerships. Her commitment extends to volunteer work, providing support at Expo 2017, Universiada 2017, and the Directorate of the Asian Winter Games 2011.

Fluent in English, Kazakh, and Russian, Saule's advanced skills in market research, data entry, and analytical thinking, coupled with her academic and practical achievements, position her as a proficient and results-driven professional in sustainable tourism and community development.