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Article

Evaluation and Development Prospects of Safari Tourism Sites in Kashkadarya Region

Sunnatov Muxtor Ne'matovich[1], Ro'ziyev Bobir Akramovich[2]

1. Institute for Advanced Training and Statistical Research
2. Doctoral Candidate, Karshi State University

Abstract: This article presents a methodology for assessing the potential of safari tourism in regions with high attractiveness for this type of tourism. Using the example of Kashkadarya region (Uzbekistan), a study was conducted to identify key safari tourism sites: Hissar State Reserve, Kitab State Geological Reserve, Mubarak State Nature Reserve, and the Sechankul area. The selection of sites was based on data analysis from the regional tourism department and expert interviews with industry specialists. The authors applied the developed methodology to comprehensively evaluate the tourism potential of these areas, identifying their strengths, limitations, and development prospects. Based on the results, practical recommendations were formulated to improve infrastructure, enhance accessibility, and promote safari tourism in the region. The study contributes to the development of methods for assessing tourism resources and can serve as a basis for strategic planning in the field of ecological and adventure tourism.

Keywords: Safari Tourism, Ecotourism, Kashkadarya Region, Tourism Potential, Wildlife Conservation, Natural Landscapes, Sustainable Tourism, Environmental Protection, Tourism Evaluation Methodology, Hissar State Reserve, Kitob State Geological Reserve, Mubarak State Nature Reserve, Sechankul

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1. Introduction

The tourism sector holds a significant place in the global economy[1]. In particular, nature-based tourism types such as ecotourism and safari tourism offer opportunities for environmental conservation, boosting local economies, and promoting cultural exchange [2], [3], [4]. Safari tourism, which involves observing wildlife, exploring unique flora and fauna, and connecting closely with nature, provides an exceptional experience for travelers [5], [6]. This form of tourism is not only fascinating for tourists but also creates new income sources for local communities, raises ecological awareness, and promotes the sustainable management of natural resources [7].

Uzbekistan, with its unique natural landscapes, rich biodiversity, and ancient cultural heritage, has great potential for developing safari tourism [8]. Kashkadarya region, with its mountainous areas, desert landscapes, unique nature reserves, and historical landmarks, holds a special place in this regard. However, to develop safari tourism in the region, it is essential to thoroughly assess available resources, manage them effectively, and develop strategic plans for their promotion [9].

The aim of this article is to evaluate the potential for developing safari tourism in Kashkadarya region using a scientifically grounded methodology, identify existing

challenges and solutions, and provide practical recommendations for enhancing the tourism potential of the area[10]. The study seeks to answer the following questions:

1. Which objects in Kashkadarya region are the most promising for safari tourism?
2. What is the potential of these objects for the development of safari tourism?
3. What strategies and measures are effective in promoting safari tourism?

2. Materials and Methods

The following methods were used in the study: data collection, selection of safari tourism sites, and evaluation methodology. In the first stage, interviews were conducted with the Kashkadarya Regional Tourism Department, ecology and environmental protection departments, as well as local tourism operators. During the interviews, important information was gathered regarding the current state, opportunities, challenges, and prospects of safari tourism in the region [11].

In the second stage, the most promising sites for safari tourism were identified. For this purpose, the Hissar State Reserve, Kitob State Geological Reserve, Mubarak State Nature Reserve, and the Sechankul area were selected. These sites stand out for their unique natural landscapes, rich biodiversity, and tourism potential.

In the third stage, a scoring system based on the following factors was used to evaluate the potential for developing safari tourism: natural and wildlife factors (diversity of wildlife, conservation status, climatic conditions), infrastructure and services (transportation, accommodation, medical facilities), cultural and management factors (integration of local culture, legal framework, anti-poaching measures) [12], [13], [14]. (Table 1).

Using the evaluation table, the total scores for each site were calculated, and their potential for safari tourism was determined. (Table 2).

Table 1. Methodology for assessing the potential of safari tourism development.

I. I. Assessment of natural and wildlife factors			
Criteria	**Indicators**	**Assessment indicators**	**Score**
1. Diversity and abundance of wildlife	Number of animal species and their population density	Low (1-5 species), low density	1
		Moderate (6-15 species), moderate density	2
		High (16+ species), high density	3
2.Conservation status of wildlife areas	IUCN or national category strict protection areas	Not protected	1
		Partially protected (forestry)	2
		Fully protected (national park, reserve)	3
3.Accessibility for wildlife observation	Special structures, platforms, or trails	No infrastructure	1
		Limited infrastructure	2
		Extensive infrastructure	3
4.Climate suitability for safari	Dry/wet seasons, animal activity periods	Difficult conditions (constant rain/precipitation)	1
		Moderate conditions	2
		Ideal conditions (distinct seasons, animal migration)	3
5.Presence of dangerous wildlife	Predators (bear, wolf, leopard) and risk level	High risk (many predators, difficult observation)	1
		Moderate risk	2
		Minimal risk (safe observation)	3
6.Ecological sustainability	Area's resilience to tourism pressure	Low	1
		Moderate	2
		High	3

I. Ii. Assessment of infrastructure and services			
1.transport accessibility	Special transport (jeep, camel) or roads, gps navigation	None or limited	1
		Moderate (main roads)	2
		Extensive (special safari roads)	3
2.Accommodation infrastructure	Tents, camping sites, hotels, family guesthouses	No infrastructure	1
		Basic conditions (camping sites or guesthouses)	2
		Comfortable (luxury hotels, eco-camping)	3
3.Collaboration with local communities	Local community involvement in tourism activities	None	1
		Partial (support)	2
		Active (rangers, guides, cultural programs)	3
4.Medical assistance	Nearby medical facilities, dehydration prevention, veterinary services	None	1
		Limited	2
		Extensive	3
5.Suitability for photo safaris	Photo platforms, equipment rental, guides	Limited opportunities	1
		Moderate	2
		Extensive opportunities	3
II. Cultural and management factors			
1.Integration of local culture into safari	Traditions, ceremonies, stories	No integration	1
		Partial integration	2
		Full integration (interactive programs)	3
2.Qualification of safari guides	Guide certifications, language skills, experience	No guides	1
		Limited qualifications	2
		Highly qualified guides	3
3.Robustness of legal framework	Safari licenses, insurance, safety standards	No legal framework	1
		Partially available	2
		Fully developed	3
4.Anti-poaching measures	Anti-poaching measures and monitoring	No active measures	1
		Limited measures	2
		Effective system	3
5.Redistribution of tourism revenue	Share of revenue to local community	Less than 10%	1
		10-30%	2
		More than 30%	3

Overall scoring:

1. 16–20 points: Weak potential for safari tourism (significant shortcomings exist).
2. 20–32 points: Moderate potential (resources needed for development).
3. 33–48 points: High potential (suitable for quality safaris).

The "Methodology for assessing the potential of safari tourism development" is essential for systematically and scientifically evaluating tourism potential, efficiently allocating resources, and developing sustainable development strategies[15].

3. Results and Discussion

Based on the research findings, the safari tourism sites in Kashkadarya region were evaluated as follows:

Table 2. Assessment of safari tourism development opportunities in Qashqadaryo region.

Evaluation factors		Objects Name			
		Hisor state reserve	Kitob state geological reserve	Muborak state nature reserve	Sichankol
1. Assessment of natural and wildlife factors		**15**	**15**	**14**	**12**
1.1	Diversity and abundance of wildlife	3	3	2	1
1.2	Conservation status of wildlife areas	3	3	3	1
1.3	Accessibility for wildlife observation	1	1	1	1
1.4	Climate suitability for safari	3	3	3	3
1.5	Presence of dangerous wildlife	3	3	3	3
1.6	Ecological sustainability	2	2	2	3
2. Assessment of infrastructure and services		**9**	**8**	**6**	**5**
2.1	Transport accessibility	2	2	1	1
2.2	Accommodation infrastructure	2	2	1	1
2.3	Collaboration with local communities	2	2	1	1
2.4	Medical assistance	2	1	2	1
2.5	Suitability for photo safaris	1	1	1	1
3. Cultural and management factors		**9**	**9**	**9**	**6**
3.1	Integration of local culture into safari	2	2	2	1
3.2	Qualification of safari guides	1	1	1	1
3.3	Robustness of legal framework	2	2	2	1
3.4	Anti-poaching measures	3	3	3	2
3.5	Redistribution of tourism revenue	1	1	1	1
Total scores:		**33**	**32**	**29**	**23**

1. Hissar State Reserve (33 points): Evaluated as a high-potential area. The presence of unique species such as the snow leopard and the Tian Shan brown bear, along with a 2,000-hectare area designated for ecotourism, creates significant opportunities for developing safari tourism.
2. Kitob State Geological Reserve (32 points): Unique geological formations and 168 species of vertebrates are important resources for safari tourism. However, the lack of infrastructure limits its development.
3. Mubarak State Nature Reserve (29 points): An important habitat for the houbara bustard and other migratory birds. The large area of the reserve (264,469 hectares) offers great potential for safari tourism development.
4. Sechankul (23 points): Distinguished by its desert landscapes and unique wildlife. However, insufficient infrastructure and services hinder its development.

4. Conclusion

To develop safari tourism in the Kashkadarya region, the following measures should be implemented:

1. Modernize the transportation system by constructing and upgrading roads, especially those leading to key safari tourism sites.
2. Develop accommodation facilities, including eco-friendly lodges, camping sites, and guesthouses, to cater to tourists.
3. Establish medical aid points and emergency response systems to ensure the safety and well-being of visitors.
4. Actively involve local residents in tourism-related activities, such as guiding, handicraft production, and ecotourism projects.
5. Allocate a portion of tourism revenues to community development projects to ensure that the local population benefits economically.
6. Provide training programs to enhance the skills of local communities in hospitality, wildlife conservation, and cultural tourism.
7. Promote the region internationally as a unique destination for safari tourism, highlighting its natural beauty, wildlife, and cultural heritage.
8. Collaborate with international travel agencies, tour operators, and media platforms to increase visibility and attract tourists.
9. Organize events, such as wildlife festivals or photography competitions, to showcase the region's potential and attract enthusiasts.
10. Strengthen anti-poaching measures by increasing patrols, using modern monitoring technologies (e.g., drones), and imposing stricter penalties for violations.
11. Develop and enforce a legal framework for safari tourism, including licensing systems, safety standards, and environmental regulations.
12. Implement sustainable tourism practices to minimize the ecological impact and ensure the long-term preservation of natural resources.
13. Conduct regular ecological assessments to monitor the health of wildlife populations and their habitats.
14. Collaborate with research institutions to study the impact of tourism and develop strategies for sustainable development.
15. Use data-driven approaches to optimize tourism management and address emerging challenges.

This study offers a scientifically grounded approach to developing safari tourism and can serve as a valuable tool for enhancing the tourism potential of the Kashkadarya region. By implementing the proposed recommendations, the region can not only boost its economic growth but also contribute to environmental conservation and cultural preservation. Furthermore, the methodology developed in this research can be adapted and applied to other regions with similar potential, making it a universal framework for promoting safari tourism.

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