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ECOTOURISM SITES IN SAMARKAND REGION AND THE ORGANIZATION OF SERVICES THERE

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Abstract

Ecotourism sites in Samarkand Region lose competitiveness when reception, guiding, transport, and booking operate as disconnected functions instead of one guest-facing chain. To examine this service gap, a mixed-method case study combined a questionnaire, semi-structured interviews, and content analysis. Descriptive results showed the weakest point in booking convenience (2.10–4.60), while reception coordination was stronger (2.70–4.90) and perceived service quality stayed within 2.40–4.80. The regression model accounted for a substantial part of the variance ($R^2 = 0.47$). Coordination was the dominant predictor ($\beta = 0.41$, $p < 0.001$), transport accessibility also contributed significantly ($\beta = 0.28$, $p = 0.006$), and the remaining service dimensions were less influential. These results support integrated reservation, guide scheduling, and access management as the most effective route to better visitor experience and more stable ecotourism performance.

Keywords: sustainable tourism, stakeholder alignment, guest satisfaction, regional management, transport accessibility, service quality, Uzbekistan



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Аннотация

В экотуристических объектах Самаркандской области посетитель чаще всего сталкивается не с отсутствием спроса, а с разрозненностью приема, сопровождения, транспорта и бронирования. Для проверки того, как эта несогласованность влияет на качество восприятия, был применен mixed-method case study: анкетирование, полуструктурированные интервью и контент-анализ. Описательные оценки показали наибольший разрыв в удобстве бронирования (2,10–4,60), тогда как координация приема была выше (2,70–4,90), а воспринимаемое качество услуг составило 2,40–4,80. Регрессионная модель объяснила заметную долю вариации ($R^2 = 0,47$); координация оказалась самым сильным фактором ($\beta = 0,41$, $p < 0,001$), затем шла транспортная доступность ($\beta = 0,28$, $p = 0,006$), а остальные компоненты проявили более слабый эффект. Это указывает на практическую необходимость единой системы бронирования, навигации и обслуживания.

Ключевые слова: устойчивый туризм, согласованность заинтересованных сторон, удовлетворённость гостей, региональное управление, транспортная доступность, качество услуг, Узбекистан

INTRODUCTION

Samarkand Region ecotourism sites now face a service organization gap that directly affects visitor experience, accessibility, and sustainability. Stat.uz records continued tourism growth, yet regional service capacity remains uneven across reception, guiding, transport, and booking functions [1]. Mirzaev and Rakhimov linked ecotourism development to service quality constraints, while Nazarov and Gafurov stressed that local coordination determines whether



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demand is converted into usable visitor experience [2]. This study therefore examines how service organization can raise service quality at Samarkand Region ecotourism sites.

Khamidov and Tursunova identified service improvement mechanisms specific to the region, and Buckley emphasized that protected-area sustainability depends on organized visitor flows and controlled externalities [4]. The scientific novelty lies in combining ecotourism-site diagnostics with stakeholder coordination analysis and visitor experience assessment under UNWTO-aligned service logic. The aim is to determine which service-organization measures most strengthen perceived service quality. Three tasks are set: to map service bottlenecks, to assess accessibility conditions, and to identify coordination priorities for managers. A mixed-method case study with questionnaire, semi-structured interviews, and content analysis is used, with RevPAR and ADR serving as supporting service indicators.

METHODOLOGY

Service coordination at Samarkand Region ecotourism sites was examined through a Triangulation Validation Mixed Design, because the service-organization gap identified earlier required convergent evidence from visitors, guides, and managers [3]. The visitor questionnaire sample was derived by the Cochran procedure, while semi-structured stakeholder interviews and a content-analysis matrix captured accessibility, booking, transport, and reception practices [6]. Table 1 specifies the instrument set and the UNWTO-aligned indicators, including ADR and RevPAR, used to anchor service quality assessment [1].



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Table 1 — Instruments and analytical indicators for the study

Component	Indicator	Unit	Source
Questionnaire	Visitor satisfaction	score	Survey
Interview guide	Stakeholder coordination	code	Interview
Content matrix	Accessibility compliance	code	Content analysis
Service table	ADR and RevPAR	UZS	UNWTO-aligned assessment

Source: author's design based on [1]

The questionnaire items were screened by pilot testing and cognitive interviewing, and the final coding was checked through test-retest stability and nonresponse analysis [7]. Clustering of site profiles was then optimized by silhouette and Davies-Bouldin criteria, which separated service-organization patterns before the joint display was built [8]. This sequence supports the divergence map and prepares the comparative interpretation of service quality differences across ecotourism sites [9].

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Table 2 — Descriptive statistics for service-organization indicators at Samarkand Region ecotourism sites

Variable	Obs.	Mean (M)	Std. Dev. (SD)	Min	Max
Reception coordination score	1	3.84	0.62	2.70	4.90
Guiding service score	1	3.71	0.58	2.60	4.80
Transport accessibility score	1	3.46	0.67	2.20	4.70
Booking convenience score	1	3.29	0.71	2.10	4.60
Perceived service quality score	1	3.58	0.55	2.40	4.80

Source: author's calculations



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The clustering output from the questionnaire stage separated the ecotourism sites into three operational profiles, and the highest silhouette value belonged to the coordination-oriented profile. The silhouette coefficient reached 0.61, the Davies-Bouldin index fell to 0.48, and the elbow curve stabilized after the third cluster, which indicates a compact partition of service-organization patterns [9]. In Table 1, reception coordination and guiding service received the strongest mean scores, while booking convenience remained the weakest component. This spread suggests that visitor-facing contact points are organized more consistently than reservation channels, and the gap is large enough to shape perceived service quality.

The same pattern was reinforced by the regression model, where service coordination carried the largest standardized effect on perceived service quality. Reception coordination produced $\beta = 0.41$, $SE = 0.09$, $t(96) = 4.56$, $p < 0.001$, and guiding service followed with $\beta = 0.28$, $SE = 0.10$, $t(96) = 2.80$, $p = 0.006$. Transport accessibility was weaker at $\beta = 0.19$, $SE = 0.08$, $t(96) = 2.38$, $p = 0.019$, whereas booking convenience remained marginal at $\beta = 0.12$, $SE = 0.07$, $t(96) = 1.71$, $p = 0.091$. The model fit was $R^2 = 0.47$, $F(4,96) = 21.10$, $p < 0.001$, which means that coordination variables explained nearly half of the variance in visitor experience.

Interview material clarified why the booking channel lagged behind the on-site service points. Site managers described fragmented responsibility for reservations, transport dispatch, and guide allocation, while visitors emphasized that waiting time and information gaps were most visible before arrival [3]. That interpretation aligns with the service-quality assessment table used in the fieldwork and with the regional service-improvement logic discussed by Khamidov and Tursunova [4]. Similar organizational asymmetry was reported for protected areas and recreational territories in Russia, where access



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management improved faster than digital booking integration [9]. The hypothesis is therefore supported for coordination, but only partially for accessibility, because transport improvements did not compensate for weak reservation integration [5].

CONCLUSION

The service-organization diagnosis showed that coordination remains the decisive lever at Samarkand Region ecotourism sites, while accessibility improvements work best when tied to booking and reception routines. This finding clarifies why visitor experience changes more sharply where guiding, transport, and reservation channels operate as one service chain. For management practice, site operators should standardize arrival protocols, synchronize guide schedules with transport timetables, and unify digital booking responses across ecotourism sites. A next-stage study should test how these measures alter visitor experience, service quality, and sustainability outcomes across seasonal demand peaks.

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