



DEVELOPMENT OF ECOTOURISM MICRO NICHE MARKETS IN UZBEKISTAN AND REAL POSITION ACCORDING BUTLER'S PRODUCT LIFE CYCLE.

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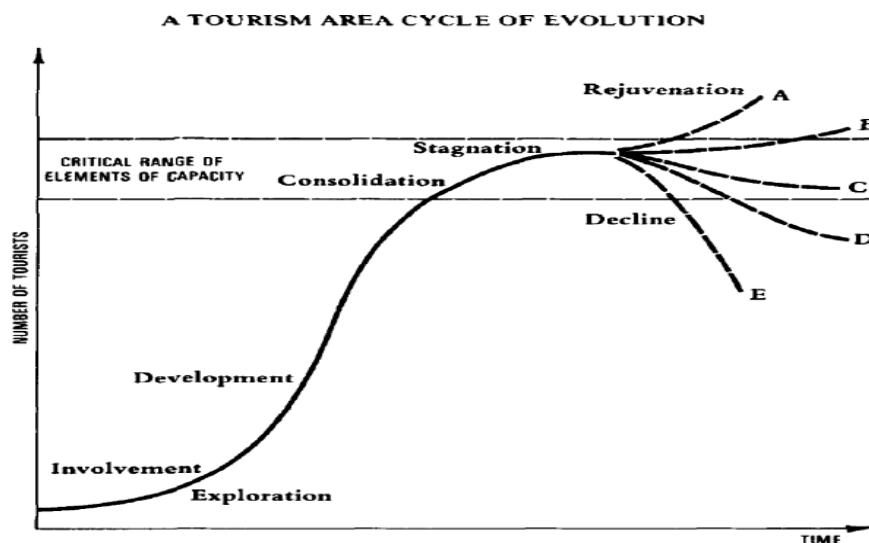
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Article history:	Abstract:
<p>Received: 14th January 2024 Accepted: 1st March 2024</p>	<p>This study focuses on exploring the development of ecotourism niche markets in Uzbekistan, a country known for its rich cultural heritage and diverse landscapes. The concept of ecotourism involves promoting responsible travel to natural areas that conserve the environment and improve the well-being of local people. By analyzing the current state of ecotourism in Uzbekistan through the lens of Butler's Product Life Cycle, researchers aim to determine the stage at which the country's ecotourism industry lies. Butler's model suggests that tourism destinations go through stages of exploration, involvement, development, consolidation, stagnation, and then either rejuvenation or decline. Applying this framework to Uzbekistan's ecotourism niche markets can provide valuable insights into the growth trajectory of this sector within the country. Understanding the stage of development can help policymakers, businesses, and other stakeholders make informed decisions to further nurture and sustain ecotourism initiatives in Uzbekistan. Overall, this study serves to shed light on the potential of ecotourism in Uzbekistan, positioning it within the context of Butler's Product Life Cycle and offering recommendations for sustainable growth and development in this niche market.</p>

Keywords: Ecotourism, Niche markets, Development, Butler's Product Life Cycle.

STAGE OF THE PRODUCT LIFECYCLE

Figure 1. *Richard Butler's Tourism Area Life Cycle Model (Butler, 1980, p.7)*



Butler's Product Life Cycle (1980), sometimes known as Butler's Tourism Area Life Cycle (TALC), is a model for

examining the evolution of a tourism area. According with the concept, a tourism region goes through six



distinct stages: discovery, involvement, development, consolidation, stagnation, decline, and rejuvenation.

Tourism growth, like many other aspects of life, is not a steady process, according to Butler. It is always confronted with change. For a number of causes, such as increased tourism numbers, changes in taste, marketing and the media, and foreign factors such as natural catastrophes or terrorism, the list of changes may vary. (Julia Guerra, TIES Membership Representative, 2015).

The TALC was built on the premise that "resorts are basically products, in the sense that they are generally built and adjusted to satisfy the needs of certain markets (holidaymakers) in the same manner that other goods and services are produced" (Butler, 2011, p.4). As a result, the author assumed that resorts would follow a path of growth similar to that of most other products. The mentioned pattern is based on the Product Life Cycle (PLC) model (Annex A), in which a product's sales history follows an S-shaped asymptotic curve over time.

Similarly, the development of a tourism region follows the same curve as the PLC model, as illustrated in Figure 1 (where sales have been swapped by the number of tourists). In addition to the amount of visitors, the author identifies a series of factors, such as spatial and economic characteristics, that allow for the differentiation of the various stages. These characteristics and attributes are mostly based on pioneering tourism researchers such as Christaller (1963), Cohen (1972), Plog (1974), and Doxey (1974) from the 1970s literature (Butler, 2011).

The TALC stages described as follows according to Butler (1980):

The exploration stage: this first stage is marked by a few daring visitors who are drawn to the place by its natural or cultural attractions. There are no specialized tourist facilities, and travelers are likely to have a lot of interactions with locals. The tourists' social and economic influence is rather minor at this time.

The involvement stage: when the number of visitors grows and becomes more predictable, local citizens begin to provide tourist amenities. As this stage proceeds, some advertising to attract potential visitors can be expected, as well as the definition of a basic first market region for visitors. It is reasonable to assume some amount of coordination in tourist travel preparations, as well as the initial demands placed on governments and public organizations to supply or enhance transportation and other visitor services.

The development stage: represents a well-defined tourist market region with a significant growth in the number of tourists, which may outnumber the local

population. External companies begin to provide increasingly sophisticated tourism amenities and attractions while local engagement and control over hotel services gradually decreases. At this point, changes in the tourist destination's physical look will be obvious, which is likely to annoy the native population.

The consolidation stage: At this point, tourism has become inextricably linked to the local economy. Although the rate of rise in visitor numbers has slowed, the overall number of visitors now exceeds the local population. There are franchisees and major tourism businesses represented. Local inhabitants' criticism and dissatisfaction with tourism activities should be expected at this point, particularly among those who are not engaged in the tourism business.

The stagnation stage: the destination's carrying capacity has been reached or surpassed, resulting in severe environmental, social, and economic consequences. The destination's image is well-known, however it is out of date. It will be seen that there is a high dependency on return visits, and that maintaining the amount of visitation would need considerable work. Natural and cultural attractions are likely to be replaced by imported artificial attractions, and the resort's image will become disconnected from its geographical setting. New tourist development will emerge on the outside of the original tourism region, and property ownership will likely change often.

The declined stage: this stage is marked by a significant drop in visitor numbers as the destination struggles to compete with emerging attractions. Touristic facilities will be converted to non-tourist related constructions on a regular basis. If the place has a significant infrastructure and is easily accessible to a large number of people, it may attract weekend and day trippers. Local inhabitants are expected to get more active in tourism at this time by purchasing more cheap tourist amenities.

or the rejuvenation stage: a location might skip the decline stage and go straight to the rejuvenation time frame. This might be accomplished by establishing artificial attractions such as casinos, or by repurposing previously underutilized natural resources to invent a new tourist market.

Butler began responding to critics of his model two decades after its publication. In his book "The Tourism Area Life Cycle Vol. 1," published in 2006, the author gathered most of the works of other researchers who used his original model between 1980 and 2002 in order to reference the model's weaknesses and strengths (Szromek, 2019). Butler cites scholars such as Haywood (1986), Choy (1992), and Agarwal (1994) who have offered proposals to improve the TALC model's

applicability. "Can the Tourist Area Life Cycle be Made Operational?" by Haywood (1986), one of the most quoted opponents of the TALC model, "has certainly done the most to make the [...] model an operational research idea," according to Butler (2006a) (Butler, 2006a p.39). Haywood (1986) suggested six points that are essential to the model's utility:

1. Unit of analysis
2. Relevant market
3. Pattern and stages of TALC
4. Identification of the area's shape in a life cycle
5. Determination of the unit of measurement
6. Determination of the relevant time unit

As previously stated, Haywood (1986) was not the only

researcher to criticize Butler's (1980) model, and other authors such as Agarwal (1994, 1997, 2002), Baum (1998), Russell and Faulkner (2004), Mclennan et al. (2012), Ma and Hassink (2014), and Sanz-Ibáez and Clavé (2014) have contributed to modifying and trying to extend the model. According to Agarwal (1994), an extra stage, the re-orientation stage (Figure 2), should be included to depict the restructuring efforts performed prior to the decline stage (Butler, 2011). She claims that a complete fall is improbable since stakeholders would make significant efforts to preserve tourist activity; these efforts, she believes, will be consistent and gradual, necessitating the addition of the re-orientation stage (Sanz-Ibáez, 2017).

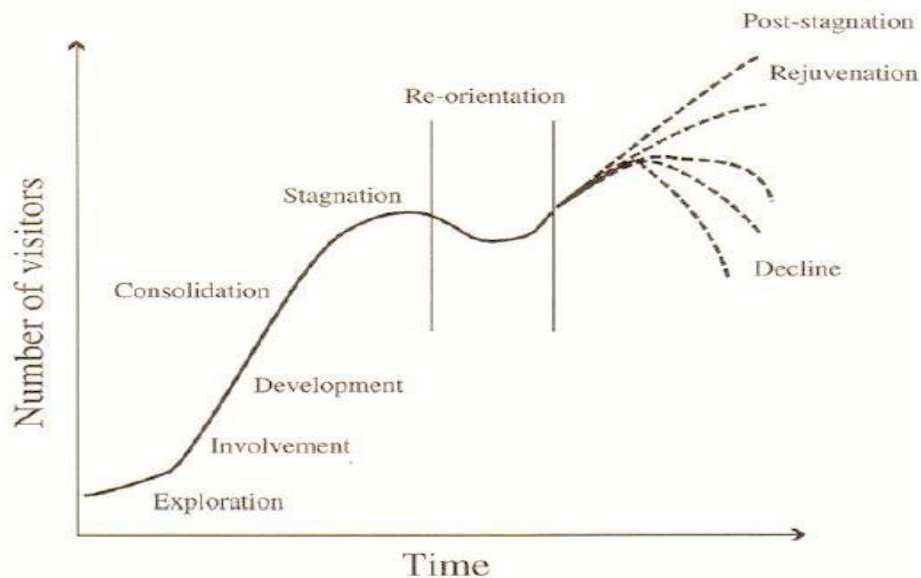


Figure 2: Modification of the Tourist Area Life Cycle Model by Agarwal (Butler, 2011, p.12)

However, the TALC model (Solomon (2015), Kruczek et al. (2018), Heuwinkel & Venter (2018), Ly (2018)) is still commonly employed. It has shown to be a beneficial tool for interpreting the stage of evolution of previously established destinations, as well as providing a useful conceptual framework for decision-making (Piuchan, 2018). According to Page (2007), the model serves as a

beginning point for analyzing a destination. Furthermore, according to Berry (2000, p.80), the TALC model is the most important "diagnostic aid" and should be the first "point of contact" for any serious examination of a specific tourism location. He also points out that the majority of TALC model applicants see a high correlation between the model and real life.

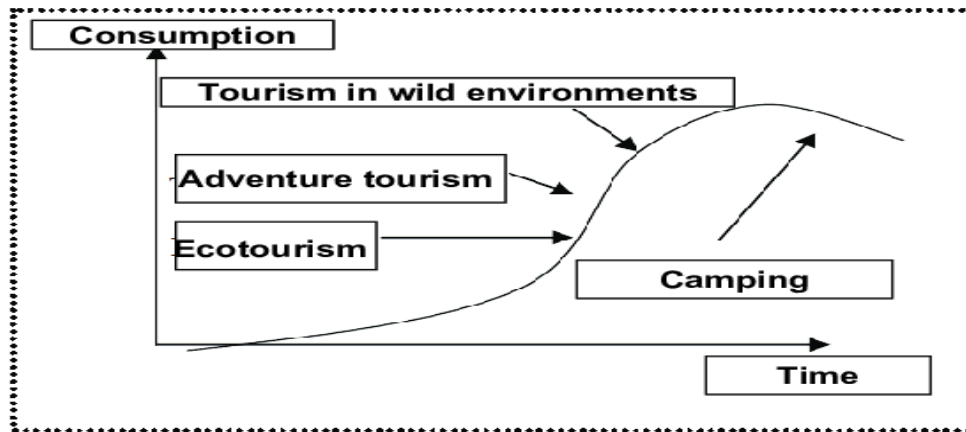


Figure 3. Lifecycle of ecotourism product compared to other specialist products of nature tourism Source (Eagles et al., 2002).

According to the Wojciech Szeligiewicz (2020), the Tourism Area Life Cycle (TALC) model, developed by Richard Butler, gives a specific perspective on the qualitative changes in the number of visitors N in a given area over time, as well as the environmental, social, and economic processes that are occurring at the same time. Up to the point of stagnation, N changes follow an S-shaped curve. The TALC model took this path, assuming that the tourist population develops according to a logistic model developed from ecology at this point. The goal of this study was to recall the attributes of the logistic model, as well as the ecological assumptions that underpin it, as well as some of the implications of adding the logistic model into the TALC model. Other TALC characteristics have also been attempted to be linked to ecology. The graph on the right side of the TALC model's logistic equation as a function of N , with the phases of tourist area evolution marked, reminds us that the most appealing area is the original area, i.e. when N is small, because it is characterized by the highest per capita growth of the tourist population. According to this graph, as N rises, attractiveness decreases linearly, notwithstanding expenditures made in accordance with the TALC model scenario, i.e. they do not reverse the trend. The same diagram may be used to demonstrate some basic ecotourism and mass tourist variations. The density-dependent self-regulation, the Allee effect, the idea of environmental capacity, and the r and K methods were also discussed as population regulation concerns. It was also noted that the skills obtained in the field of ecological population modeling may be useful in modeling tourist populations.

In 2002 Eagles noted that tourism is becoming the world's largest industry, with protected areas accounting for a growing percentage of it. Tourist pressures must be managed so that visitors may

appreciate protected places without destroying what they came to see (Eagles et al., 2002). According to his research, some of the Ecotourism Niches have undergone changes recent years. The TALC model in figure 3 displays the stages of development of Ecotourism, to be exact, Camping is currently being on the Stagnation level, while the Tourism in wild environment and Adventure tourism remains Development stage and Ecotourism find itself on the Involvement stage. Further sub-section will discuss the development of Ecotourism Micro Niches in several countries as well as the main aspects and principles of Ecotourism.

DEVELOPMENT OF MICRO NICHE MARKETS.

Ecotourism is a burgeoning niche business within the wider tourist industry, having the potential to be a critical instrument for long-term development. Ecotourism is a legitimate industry that attempts to capitalize on market trends, with yearly sales in the billions of dollars. Ecotourism is defined by its sustainable development results: protecting natural regions, educating tourists about sustainability, and helping local people. It often functions substantially differently from other segments of the tourism business. Ecotourists are particularly interested in wilderness settings and unspoiled locations, according to market data. Ecotourism has a particular role to play in teaching tourists about the significance of a healthy environment and biological variety, according to the fifth meeting of the Conference of the Parties to the Convention on Biological Diversity. Ecotourism's development, however, requires effective planning and management, otherwise the biological variety on which it relies may be threatened.

Ecotourism is a type of nature-based tourism that has been defined in the marketplace since 1990, but it has



also been established and explored as a tool for sustainable development by NGOs, development specialists, and academics. On the one hand, the term ecotourism refers to a concept based on a set of principles, while on the other, it refers to a specific market sector. In 1991, the International Ecotourism Society (TIES) (formerly The Ecotourism Society (TES)) published one of the first definitions: "is environmentally responsible travel and visitation to relatively undisturbed natural areas, in order to enjoy and appreciate nature (and any accompanying cultural features - both past and present) that promotes conservation, has low negative visitor impact, and provides for beneficially active socio-economic involvement of local populations."

Ecotourism is a tiny but quickly developing sector that operates in a specialized market with market forces and laws in place. In the marketplace, ecotourism is largely promoted as a substitute for nature tourism. Some governments, businesses, and travel destinations have social and environmental regulations and initiatives in place, while others do not. As a result, there is widespread misunderstanding regarding the definition of the phrase ecotourism as it is used in the marketplace. Later in this chapter, there is a discussion

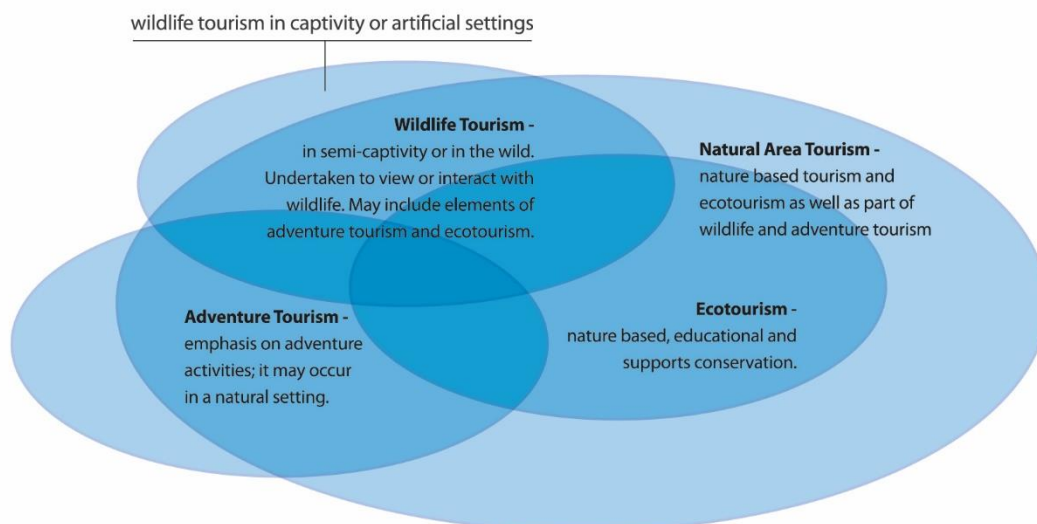
of rules and accreditation systems linked to sustainability criterias for the ecotourism business.

Figure 4 depicts how ecotourism fits into the broader tourism sector. Adventure tourism and ecotourism are both classified as subcategories of nature tourism, with ecotourism having a greater link to rural and cultural tourism than adventure tourism. The primary motive for ecotourism is the observation and enjoyment of natural characteristics and related cultural values, whereas the primary motivation for adventure tourism is physical activity and demanding conditions in natural settings.

Ecotourism has long been a vital source of funding for natural regions in need of protection, with a history steeped in the conservation movement. Ecotourism began as an unproven concept that many believed would help save natural resources across the world. The economic advantages of wildlife tourism greatly outweighed the economic benefits of hunting, which was prohibited in Kenya in 1977, according to research conducted in Kenya in the 1970s (Thresher 1981). Rain forests and coral reefs were the focus of countless research by scientists interested in biological variety, as well as a slew of nature cinema documentaries, in the early 1980s.

TOURISM

Mass Tourism - large numbers of people seeking replication of their own culture in institutionalised settings.



Alternative Tourism - forms of tourism generally characterised by small scale sustainable activities.

Figure 4. Links between Adventure Tourism and Ecotourism.

This enthusiasm aided the establishment of a number of small enterprises in the area that specialize in escorting scientists and filmmakers into isolated areas. As these tiny companies grew in popularity in countries

like Costa Rica and Ecuador, a more formal sector arose to suit the demands of small tourism groups made up mostly of birdwatchers and naturalists. Pioneer entrepreneurs offered specific field tours and research



for adult tourists, students, and volunteers in various parts of the world.

With the increased interest in outdoor travel and the environment, fueled by superb new outdoor equipment for camping and hiking, as well as events like Earth Day, international nature-based enterprises began to prosper in the 1980s. These firms realized that by sponsoring local conservation groups in the areas they visited or generating funding for local causes, they might take the initiative to protect the environment. They realized quickly that training and recruiting locals to operate their enterprises was the most effective method to manage their operations and a great way to provide considerable benefits to the community. Early participants in this movement were tour operators selling excursions to the Galapagos Islands, Costa Rica, Kenya, and Nepal. Some of these businesses claim that they have been following ecotourism principles for 20 to 30 years.

In the 1980s, wildlife field researchers produced several advancements in the study of wildlife species, including whales, turtles, mountain gorillas, orangutans, macaws, and harpy eagles. A number of specialist excursions have been designed to bring tourists to these field settings for the first time to observe these species. Travelers paid a fee to support conservation and research projects on many of these trips, which were originally held in fairly primitive field stations.

Scientific achievements in domains such as tropical ecology, ethnobotany, whale and primate ecology, and the archeology of ancient civilizations have prompted tourists to meet the researchers and contribute to their work. Tourists may now participate in intense field seminars with scientists while also helping to fund the research through workshops and other educational initiatives.

Astute entrepreneurs and architects began to create specialized low-impact lodges that let visitors to remain in relative comfort while witnessing spectacular wildlife just outside their door. On every continent, ecolodges specialized in new ways that had a low impact on the natural environment were established, many of which were powered by alternative energy, developed in harmony with the local environment, and used local materials and indigenous designs.

Locals became shareholders and owners of ecolodges or nature inns, or organized community-based ecotours in their communities. Ecotourism programs sponsored by local communities have sprung up all over the world, allowing visitors to learn about diverse cultures, as well as the social and cultural threats that local people confront and their awareness of local ecosystem. Local communities can benefit from these initiatives in terms

of health care, education, and the preservation of local customs.

In rural areas with abundant natural resources, such as those found in Europe, ecotourism may be a viable alternative to falling agriculture earnings, providing visitors with a natural and rural experience while partially reversing economic decline.

ECOTOURISM IN SAMARKAND; MICRO NICHES.

Natural parks in Uzbekistan are protected natural areas designed for the protection and utilization of natural objects and complexes of outstanding ecological, cultural, and aesthetic value for natural, recreational, scientific, and cultural objectives. Large-scale operations to restore and proliferate distinctive flora and fauna are carried out on a daily basis in Uzbekistan's protected natural lands. These areas also serve as a natural basis for a large range of research and observation activities.

1. One of the most popular ecotour in Samarkand is a **Yurt stay in Nurata mountain**. This tour can be done between the main Silk Road cities of Samarkand and Bukhara so you will explore off the beaten treks of Uzbekistan while traveling from one city to the other rather than just traveling long distances. Sayyod Yurt Camp is a good starting point for short and medium length hikes. It is also a great place to unwind if you have seen too many mosques and madrassas in the Silk Road cities. (<https://www.viator.com/tours/Samarkand/Yurt-stay-and-hiking-in-the-Nurata-Mountains/d27664-90312P11?mcid=56757>)
2. **Exotic tour and camel riding** are the second ecotour Samarkand offers to its visitors. Those who like nomadic lifestyle, love freedom and want to experience wildlife- are more than welcome to this Nomadic tour.
3. **Nurata home stay observe and live in Uzbek rural life**. This two-day journey to the Nurata Mountains gives you the opportunity to stay with a mountain farmer family in a secluded Nurata Mountain community and learn about their daily lives, traditions, and customs. During brief hikes around the hamlet, you will also learn about the mountains, their flora and wildlife, and some local sights. We stop in Nurata, an old city notable for the remnants of Alexander the Great's citadel, a local Suzani craft, and the Chashma Mosque, on our journey to Bukhara.



(<https://www.viator.com/tours/Samarkand/Nur-atau-home-stay-observe-and-experience-the-Uzbek-rural-life/d27664-153457P3?mcid=56757>)

UZBEKISTAN'S PROTECTED AREAS LIST

1. The Hissar Mountain-Juniper Reserve is a protected area. This natural reserve in Uzbekistan is located on the western side of the Hissar Range. With various gorges, karst caverns, brooks, waterfalls, and little glaciers, the region is typical mountainous.
2. The Zaamin mountain-juniper reserve is located to the northwest of the Turkestan range. The area is a distinct mountain range that runs from east to west and covers the ridge's mid-mountain and high-mountain ranges.
3. The Zarafshan state valley-tugai reserve is located in the Zaravshan River's flood plain. The conservation and maintenance of the exquisite Zaravshan pheasant is the goal of its creation. The Bukhara deer is also one of the creatures mentioned in the Red Book.
4. The geological reserve of Kitab. The Hissar Range's south-western spurs are home to this Uzbek natural reserve. The protected region is distinct from the rest of the country's environmental zones because of its distinctive geological characteristics.
5. On the right bank of the Amu Darya River lies the Kyzylkum tugai-desert reserve. The reserve's woodland portions are entirely made up of natural plantings.
6. Nurata Mountain Nut Reserve is a protected area for mountain nuts. It is situated on the Nurata Mountains' slopes. The Uzbek natural reserve runs through eleven major and tiny streams that do not dry out during the summer, sending their clean and crystalline waters to the Aidar solonchak.
7. Surkhan Nature Reserve is found in the Surkhandarya area of India. The continental climate is characterized by strong scorching winds and little humidity.
8. Chatkal Mountain Forest Reserve is a protected area in the Himalayas. The Chatkal range region is home to Uzbekistan's natural park. This is an extremely gorgeous, difficult area with steep cliffs, screes, and stunning mountain peaks soaring to above 4600 meters.
9. On the area of Beruni and Kegeliysk districts, the Badai-Tugai plain reserve is located in the lower reaches of the Amu Darya.
10. Karakul is a wildlife refuge. The Uzbek wildlife preserve was formed with the goal of safeguarding saxaul and shrub vegetation in the Amu-Bukhara and Amu-Karakul canals with an array of loose sands, protecting irrigation systems from sand, and recovering the floristic and faunal complex unique to the southern Kyzylkum. The reserve's territory is a wide sandy plain with a hot, dry continental climate.
11. Vardanzi is a natural monument. Uzbekistan's natural monument lies near Bukhara and not far from Shafirkan city, in the heart of a flowering oasis surrounded by endless cotton fields and vineyards. The goal of the monument is to safeguard the ruins of the once-thriving city of Vardanzi, which are now buried in sand, as well as to plant saxaul.
12. "Jeyran" is an eco-centre. A farm for growing endangered animals is located not far from Bukhara and Kagan town. Ecocentre "Jeyran" is the name of the farm. In the middle of the 1970s, the Ecocentre "Jeyran" was created, along with other gazelle breeding facilities.

Uzbekistan has associated with the major international nature conservation treaties, notably the Convention on Biological Diversity, to fulfill responsibilities in which protected areas play a significant role.

The Peopletravel Company offers the following adventure excursions and hiking vacations in Uzbekistan's national parks and reserves

CONCLUSION.

Ecotourism is a one-of-a-kind venture that has influenced conservation efforts in a variety of ways. The concept of combining conservation with ecotourism intends to benefit all stakeholders; however, as previously said, tangible values, regulatory systems, economic strategies, and biological impacts evaluation must be formed and maintained in order for this to be effective. Ecotourism is a novel way to long-term, economic conservation, and it is hoped that with further research and development, ecotourism can become more successful. Ecotourism is a technique for bringing conservation, communities, and environmentally friendly travel together. As a result, ecotourism practitioners and participants should conform to the following ecotourism principles:

- i. Minimize impact on environment.
- ii. Build environmental and cultural awareness and respect.
- iii. Provide positive experiences for both visitors and hosts.



- iv. Provide direct financial benefits for conservation.
- v. Provide financial benefits and empowerment for local people.
- vi. Provide healthy political, environmental and social climate for the host country.

And finally, I would like to note that Uzbekistan has every chance to develop ecotourism on its territory. Because the diversity and beauty of this country is striking in its magnificence. Using the experience of developed countries in the field of tourism, our state must raise not only ecotourism, but also other areas of tourism to the Consolidation Stage of Butler Life cycle.

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