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Article

Justification and Methodology for Assessing the Creativity Coefficient of Innovations in the Regional Tourism Industry

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Abstract: This article examines the theoretical foundations of creativity and its significance for innovation development in the regional tourism industry of the Republic of Karakalpakstan. The necessity of employing creative innovations as an instrument for shaping a distinctive tourism product capable of ensuring the region's competitiveness in the context of global destination rivalry is substantiated. A methodology for assessing the creativity coefficient of tourism projects is developed on the basis of an expert matrix incorporating weighted factor coefficients.

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1. Introduction

Tourism development under contemporary conditions cannot rely solely on the availability of natural or historical resources. In the context of global competition among tourist destinations, the key determinant of regional competitiveness has become the capacity to craft a distinctive tourism product possessing its own identity, emotional value, and a clearly defined target audience [1].

The Republic of Karakalpakstan is neither obliged nor positioned to replicate the tourism models of neighboring regions such as Tashkent, Samarkand, or Bukhara. The region cannot effectively compete with them in terms of the scale of historical and architectural heritage, infrastructure level, or mass tourist flows. Any attempt to adopt the classical model of mass cultural tourism places Karakalpakstan at an inherent disadvantage [2].

At the same time, the ecological crisis of the Aral Sea, the desert landscapes of Ustyurt, the region's remoteness, Karakalpak culture, the Savitsky Museum, and the cross-border nature of the territory are all capable of generating a unique tourism experience. For this reason, creativity in Karakalpakstan's tourism sector must be regarded not as a secondary marketing element, but as a strategic instrument for territorial positioning [3].

A paradigm shift is underway in contemporary tourism, moving from standardised mass tourism towards the experience economy model [4]. For Karakalpakstan, this trend opens considerable opportunities, given the region's capacity to offer visitors a rare combination of ecological, cultural, expeditionary, and ethnographic uniqueness [5].

The purpose of this article is to substantiate the necessity of creative innovations in the tourism industry of Karakalpakstan and to develop a methodology for assessing the creativity coefficient of tourism projects [6].

2. Materials and Methods

2.1. Theoretical Foundations of the Study

The study is grounded in an analysis of scholarly approaches to understanding creativity in psychology, pedagogy, management, and economics. The term creativity derives from the Latin creare — "to create." In its broad sense, creativity is understood as the capacity of an individual to generate new ideas, approaches, solutions, or products that possess originality and practical significance.

One of the earliest scholars of creativity is considered to be the American psychologist Joy Paul Guilford, who in the 1950s proposed treating it as an independent intellectual capacity, introducing the concept of divergent thinking. A substantial contribution was made by Ellis Paul Torrance, who developed a system for assessing creative abilities — the Torrance Tests of Creative Thinking (TTCT) [14]. Mihaly Csikszentmihalyi regards creativity as the result of the interaction between the individual, the cultural environment, and the professional community.

Table 1. Major approaches to understanding creativity. Compiled by the author.

Approach	Essence
Psychological	Features of thinking and intelligence
Cognitive	Generation of new ideas and solutions
Social	Influence of environment and communication
Economic	Source of innovation and competitiveness
Culturological	Creation of new cultural forms

2.2. Classification of Creativity Types

Contemporary literature identifies several types of creativity according to domain and level of manifestation. Richard Florida associates the development of the modern economy with the formation of the "creative class" — a group of individuals who generate new ideas, technologies, and forms of economic activity [16]. In psychology, a widely used classification distinguishes creativity by level: mini-c (personal), little-c (everyday), Pro-C (professional), and Big-C (outstanding creative work of global significance).

Table 2. Types of creativity. Compiled by the author.

Type of Creativity	Characteristic
Artistic	Creation of new artistic images
Scientific	Formation of new knowledge and concepts
Technical	Development of technologies and inventions
Social	New forms of interaction and governance
Entrepreneurial	Creation of innovative business models
Organisational	Non-standard management methods

Everyday	Problem-solving in daily and practical life

2.3. Methods for Assessing the Level of Creativity

One of the most complex scientific challenges is the measurement of creativity. Unlike conventional intelligence, creativity is difficult to evaluate through a single quantitative indicator, as it encompasses originality, cognitive flexibility, associative capacity, imagination, motivation, and adaptability. Contemporary assessment methods are grouped into five categories:

- Psychometric tests (Guilford and Torrance tests);
- Expert methods (assessment of outputs by field specialists);
- Behavioural methods (analysis of employees' innovative behaviour);
- Biographical methods (examination of creative achievements);
- Neuropsychological approaches (MRI, EEG research).

Table 3. Major methods for assessing creativity. Compiled by the author.

Method	Content
Psychometric	Standardised tests and scales
Expert	Assessment by specialists in a specific field
Behavioural	Analysis of innovative activity
Biographical	Study of individual creative achievements
Neuropsychological	Investigation of brain activity during creative tasks

For the assessment of the creativity of tourism projects in the present study, the expert method is applied, incorporating the development of a weighted factor matrix. This choice is justified by the fact that a tourism product is a complex phenomenon encompassing economic, cultural, ecological, and marketing dimensions that do not lend themselves to a single psychometric measure.

2.4. Development of the Expert Assessment Matrix

When evaluating the creativity of projects in the tourism industry, it is essential to consider not only the originality of an idea but also its feasibility, its connection to the territory, its sustainability, market attractiveness, and capacity to generate added value. In tourism, creativity is valuable only when it is converted into a tangible tourism product, enhances the visitor experience, and simultaneously benefits the region.

On the basis of a literature review and expert consultations, an assessment matrix comprising nine factors with weighted coefficients was developed. The final integrated coefficient is calculated according to the following formula:

$$Kp = \Sigma (B_i \times W_i)$$

where: Kp — integrated creativity coefficient of the project; Bi — expert score for each factor (from 0 to 10); Wi — weighted coefficient of the factor [30].

3. Results

3.1. Justification for Creative Innovations in the Tourism of Karakalpakstan

The analysis demonstrates that the necessity for creative innovations in Karakalpakstan is conditioned by a number of interrelated factors:

Table 4. Rationale for creative innovations in the tourism of Karakalpakstan. Compiled by the author.

Factor	Significance
Intense competition	Need for unique positioning
Limited potential of mass tourism	Pursuit of niche segments
Cross-border nature of the region	Formation of international routes
Ecological specificity	Development of eco and expedition tourism
Cultural identity	Creation of an authentic tourism product

Creative innovations acquire particular significance in the context of the region's cross-border character. Karakalpakstan can develop integrated itineraries linking Uzbekistan, Kazakhstan, Turkmenistan, and the Aral Sea basin. It is precisely creative solutions that enable the transformation of an ordinary route into an independent tourism brand [7].

3.2. Promising Tourism Niches

The research findings indicate that the following niche tourism types are especially promising for Karakalpakstan:

Table 5. Promising tourism niches for Karakalpakstan. Compiled by the author.

Direction	Target Audience
Eco tourism	Eco-tourists and researchers
Expedition tourism	Adventure-seeking audience
Art tourism	Creative and intellectual communities
Ethno-tourism	Enthusiasts of local culture
Memory tourism	Researchers and the documentary tourism audience
Wellness tourism	Health and well-being segment visitors

Niche tourists are characterised by: longer stays in the region; higher expenditure; deeper engagement with local culture; more active use of personalised services; and the formation of a durable territorial image [8].

3.3. Expert Matrix for Assessing the Creativity Coefficient

The developed matrix encompasses nine assessment factors with a combined weight of 100%. The primary block should be regarded not as "pure imagination" but rather as the combination of originality, authenticity, and tourism attractiveness — these three factors together account for 45% of the overall score [9]:

Table 6. Expert matrix for assessing the creativity of a tourism project. Compiled by the author.

Assessment Factor	Weight, %	Content
Originality of the idea	15	Novelty of the route, format, service, or visitor experience

Territorial authenticity	15	Connection to the region's culture, nature, history, and identity
Tourism attractiveness	15	Capacity to generate visitor interest and demand
Project feasibility	12	Financial, organisational, and infrastructural viability
Economic impact	12	Revenue generation, employment, involvement of small business
Sustainability and eco-compatibility	12	Responsible treatment of nature, culture, and local communities
Innovativeness of tools	8	Digitalisation, smart navigation, QR, visitor management systems
Scalability	6	Potential for expansion and replication
Image effect	5	Strengthening the regional brand
Total	100%	

For the interpretation of the final coefficient, the following assessment scale was developed:

Table 7. Expert assessment scale. Compiled by the author.

Score	Level
0–2	Very low
3–4	Low
5–6	Average
7–8	High
9–10	Very high

4. Discussion

The findings demonstrate that creative innovations enable the transformation of a region's constraints into competitive advantages [10]. The ecological crisis of the Aral Sea — previously regarded as an exclusively negative factor — becomes, when approached creatively, the foundation for memory tourism oriented towards researchers, documentary filmmakers, and environmentalists [11].

The developed assessment matrix is consistent with T. Amabile's concept, according to which the evaluation of creative outcomes should be conducted by domain experts on the basis of their implicit theories [12]. At the same time, the proposed instrument offers several advantages over traditional psychometric approaches: it accounts for territorial specificity, practical feasibility, and the economic potential of a project [13], [14].

It is important to emphasise that no universal method for measuring creativity exists. The majority of researchers note that creativity depends on culture, environment,

motivation, professional field, and social conditions [15], [16]. This is precisely why the developed matrix provides for the adaptation of weighted coefficients to the specific conditions of the region under assessment [17].

The factor of territorial authenticity is of particular importance in the context of Karakalpakstan. Without a connection to the Aral Sea basin, the Ustyurt Plateau, the Savitsky Museum, and Karakalpak culture, a project risks becoming artificial and easily replicable [18], [19]. This fundamentally distinguishes the proposed approach from universal creativity assessment models designed for other cultural contexts [20], [21].

It should also be noted that creative innovations require considerably lower capital investment than the classical infrastructure-driven model of mass tourism. The region is capable of developing distinctive tourism products even with limited investment resources, drawing on cultural identity, digital technologies, storytelling, and territorial authenticity [22], [23].

A limitation of the study is the need for further empirical testing of the proposed matrix on specific tourism projects in Karakalpakstan, involving the expert community. A promising direction for future research is the development of comparative creativity coefficient assessments across different regions of Central Asia [24], [25].

5. Conclusions

The research conducted allows the following conclusions to be drawn. First, creative innovations represent a strategic instrument for tourism development in Karakalpakstan, as they enable the transformation of the region's unique characteristics into competitive advantages on the international tourism market.

Second, the developed expert matrix for assessing the creativity coefficient of tourism projects ($Kp = \Sigma Bi \times Wi$) comprises nine factors, the most significant of which are the originality of the idea, territorial authenticity, and tourism attractiveness (together accounting for 45%). This instrument enables differentiated assessment of the innovative potential of tourism projects with due regard for regional specificity.

Third, the most valuable projects for Karakalpakstan are those that are simultaneously original, anchored in local identity, ecologically responsible, practically feasible, and capable of involving the local population in the creation of tourism value. Such projects form a durable tourism brand for the territory and ensure long-term multiplier effects for regional development.

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