

Assessing Safari Jeep Service Quality and its Influence on Tourist Satisfaction: Evidence from Minneriya National Park in Sri Lanka

K.G.S.S. Sisara^{1,*} and D.D.P. Sanjeewa²

*Department of Tourism and Hospitality Management, Faculty of Management Studies,
Rajarata University of Sri Lanka, Mihintale, Sri Lanka^{1,2}*

*Corresponding author: sisarasewwandi2000@gmail.com

Abstract

Wildlife tourism is a major part of global tourism, allowing visitors to experience wildlife in natural habitats. In Sri Lanka, Minneriya National Park, famous for its elephant gatherings, diverse fauna, and scenic beauty, attracts local and foreign tourists, with safari jeeps serving as the main mode of transport within the park. However, many previous studies have highlighted the challenges faced by top parks in achieving comprehensive service quality engagement, resulting in sparse evaluations of overall service quality. This study investigates the impact of safari jeep service quality on tourist satisfaction at Minneriya National Park, with the aim of identifying how this relationship can be enhanced to improve the overall visitor experience. Guided by the SERVQUAL model, this explanatory research examined five service quality dimensions: tangibility, reliability, responsiveness, assurance, and empathy of safari jeep service at Minneriya National Park. Quantitative research design was employed, using a structured questionnaire administered to a sample of 200 local and foreign tourists through on-site surveys. Data analysis was conducted using SPSS software, applying correlation and regression analyses. The findings revealed a positive correlation between the five service quality dimensions and tourist satisfaction. Regression analysis indicated that reliability, responsiveness, assurance, and empathy had a positive and significant impact on satisfaction, while tangibility demonstrated a negative but statistically insignificant effect. The results highlight that factors such as dependable service delivery, prompt responsiveness to tourist needs, professional assurance, and empathetic engagement significantly contribute to enhancing the tourist experience in wildlife tourism contexts. Conversely, the tangibility aspect, including the appearance of vehicles, comfort, guide appearance, overall physical environment, and related facilities, did not emerge as a decisive factor in determining satisfaction. These insights have practical implications in prioritising resource allocation and training initiatives to improve service dimensions with the strongest influence on satisfaction.

Keywords: national park, safari jeep service, service quality, tourist satisfaction, wildlife tourism