

## **THEORETICAL BASIS OF CREATION AND DEVELOPMENT OF TOURIST CLUSTERS**

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### **ABSTRACT**

*Nowadays, the government pays special attention to the development of tourism, increasing the tourist attractiveness of the regions. Therefore, this article pays special attention to the creation and development of free tourist zones in our country. The basis of this research is to reveal the role of free tourist zones, in particular, tourist clusters in increasing the competitiveness of tourist areas and ensuring the socio-economic development of the regions. Scientific novelty of the research: Views on the nature and essence of clusters are generalized; A new definition of cluster policy has been provided, summarizing existing definitions; The nature of tourist clusters is revealed; Practical proposals on the establishment of tourist clusters were put forward.*

**KEYWORDS:** *Tourism, Tourist Cluster, Tourist Area, Tourist Area Competitiveness, Special Economic Zone.*

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### **INTRODUCTION**

The concept of cluster (in English cluster - assembly, link) can be interpreted as the sum or combination of several different elements that have certain properties and can be considered as an independent unit. For example, we can understand a class of closely related elements of a statistical set or a cluster of research results related to a single research topic. In the field of information technology, a cluster is a group of computers or data storage devices connected by high-speed communication channels, while in astronomy a cluster is a group of galaxies that interact with each other by gravitational forces that is in super position. Also in chemistry, a complex combination of several atoms or molecules is called a cluster, while in physics an interdependent group of elementary units is called a cluster, while in linguistics a group of closely related languages is called a cluster.

**METHODS AND MATERIALS**

Scientific abstraction, analysis and synthesis methods were used effectively during the research. In particular, in the study of the institutional activity of clusters, the research of scientists working in this area was studied and analyzed using the method of scientific abstraction.

In analyzing the conceptual approaches to defining the nature and essence of clusters, we have tried to reflect the views and conceptual approaches in this regard in the table below.

**TABLE 1 VIEWS ON THE NATURE AND ESSENCE OF CLUSTERS**

| <b>Conceptual approaches to defining the nature and essence of clusters</b>  | Authors              |
|--|----------------------|
| “Suppliers of complementary, individual companies and geographically interconnected higher education institutions, research institutes, infrastructure, specialized service providers, components and equipment that enhance the competitive advantages of the cluster as a whole group of companies”  | P.S.Rudneva [1]      |
| “Territorially limited form of economic activity within industries that are usually associated with specific scientific institutions (research institutes, universities, etc.); vertical production chains of mixed stages of the production process of narrow specialization networks that form the core of the cluster; a set of industries or sectors with a high degree of aggregation ” | T.V.Tsixan [2]       |
| "Commonality of economic entities of different industries that work together for a specific purpose, whose founders are interconnected and integrated into a single organizational structure"  | N.A. Larionova [3]   |
| "A set of companies and organizations that interact and are interconnected within the value-added system, united on the basis of cooperation and competition in order to maximize profits based on the local advantages of the region"   | E.G. Karpova [4]     |
| "A set of companies that provide geographically close educational centers, infrastructure and other specialized services aimed at meeting social needs"  | I.S.Miloslavskiy [5] |

**Source:** created by authors

The concept of cluster was first introduced to scientific and economic circulation by Michael Porter, a professor at Harvard Business School, and later explained the concept in more depth in several of his works. Classically, clusters are defined as groups of companies that are geographically and geographically close to each other, as well as specialized companies, service organizations, firms in related industries, and competing and collaborating organizations.

In terms of a systemic approach, a cluster is a set of business entities in different sectors in a single interconnected organizational structure that operate together for a specific purpose. M. Porter defines the competitiveness of a company mainly by the competitiveness of the economic environment, which in turn shows that the effective operation of the cluster depends on a healthy competitive struggle between the cluster participants [6].

M.Porter suggests looking at the competitiveness of a country or region not from the point of view of the competitiveness of individual organizations, but from the point of view of clusters of enterprises of different industries that allow efficient use of available internal resources. M. Porter has developed a "competition rectangle (rhombus)" consisting of four groups of advantages, which include:

- Factors - natural and human resources, scientific and information potential, capital, infrastructure, including welfare;
- Factors and conditions of domestic demand - quality of demand, compliance with changes in world market demand, growth in demand;
- Mixed and service industries (network clusters) - the field of origin of raw materials and semi-finished products, the field of origin of equipment, the field of use of raw materials, equipment and technology;
- Structure and strategy of firms, the existence of competition - methods of organizing the management of firms, goals and strategies, competition within the network.

In addition, there are two additional factors that significantly affect the efficiency of clusters, which should not be overlooked. The first of these factors is the state's supportive policy, and the second is random processes and events. The management of enterprises and organizations do not have the ability to control random processes and events.

The main conclusion to be drawn from Porter's views is that prospective competitive advantages are decided in domestic markets rather than outside. After studying the competitive potential of more than 100 industries in more than a dozen countries, M. Porter concludes that multinational companies with a high level of competitiveness tend to consolidate within a single country or even a single region of the country, rather than being randomly located in different countries. This is explained by the fact that once one or more firms become competitive in the global market, they begin to exert a positive impact on their suppliers, consumers and competitors in the immediate vicinity. In turn, the success of business entities around the company will greatly contribute to the further strengthening of the company's competitiveness in the future.

The end result is a cluster of interconnected firms and networks that enable each other to grow in competitiveness. For a regional economy, clusters serve as a growth point for the domestic market. Once a cluster emerges, as in a chain reaction, new clusters often emerge behind it, and in general, the international competitiveness of the country's economy as a whole and regionally increases.

## MAIN FINDINGS AND RESULTS

Usually, the development of economic activities outside the cluster is slow. Structural relationships in the cluster continue to evolve in exchange for competitive advantages:

- Manufacturers from other industries will accelerate development by providing resources to implement new strategies and encouraging research;
- Targeted exchange of information and rapid dissemination of news through the channels of suppliers or consumers in contact with various competitors;
- Often unpredictable relationships occur within a cluster, leading to qualitatively new opportunities and new directions in the competition;
- Human resources and ideas provide new opportunities and outcomes that enable the cluster to receive innovative rents.

Three types of clusters differ in terms of performance and specific structural aspects:

- Territorial structures, usually characterized by economic activity of closely related sectors of the economy, interconnected with research institutions or higher education institutions (ITI, HEIs);
- Sequential stages of production processes are vertical production chains that form the core of a cluster (e.g., "supplier-producer-seller-consumer") or networks formed around parent companies;
- Industries with high levels of aggregation (e.g., "chemical industry cluster") or a set of sectors of

the economy with higher levels of aggregation (e.g., “agro-industrial cluster”).

Beginning in the 1990s, clusters around the world began to play a key role in shaping regional development strategies for local competitive advantage of regional production systems as a geographical concentration of enterprises that allow them to operate in one place, earn high profits through cooperation and competition. This, in turn, requires a revision of the principles of industrial policy.

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In essence, clusters are seen as the object of a new type of economic and industrial policy, called cluster policy, whose main goal is to increase the competitiveness of countries and regions and strengthen the economic and financial stability of regions. Not to mention the importance of legal, political, social institutions and effective macroeconomic policy, it should be noted that the gross regional product is created directly at the micro level, and the role of micro-level businesses in improving the welfare of the region's population is very high. The effectiveness of cluster policy depends on the ability of enterprises to produce goods and services in high demand, as well as the effective use of efficient methods of organizing production, distribution and consumption.

Thus, cluster policy emerges as an important tool for development at the national or regional level, the efficiency of the business sector is directly related to the local business environment: companies with high productivity have qualified staff, are constantly aware of the processes around them, use, own improved infrastructure facilities and services, work with reliable suppliers and, arguably, work under high competitive pressure.

The cluster is usually distinguished by several key descriptive aspects. These include: the interconnectedness of the participants and their geographical location, the competition between the participants, the oversupply of small and medium-sized businesses. Researcher Obidov R. In the article "Features of the calculation of costs for storage, processing and sale of agricultural products in a cluster system" [7] cites the following factors of effective operation of clusters:

- Integration;
- Initiative;
- Interest;
- Innovations;
- Information.

Modern economic development and today's practice show that economic systems with a high level of internal competition can provide the highest level of efficiency.

Therefore, competition is a key element of the concept of clusters, which is what distinguishes the cluster from other forms of cooperation.

The interdependence of clusters and competition is manifested in several directions. Intra-cluster competition leads to further expansion of cluster activities and increased efficiency, encourages participants to constantly improve their activities, increase its efficiency and innovative research, geographical proximity of cluster members in turn leads to increased competition.

While the methods of state intervention in economic development have traditionally been based on

the imperfection of the market (lack of social and environmental goals, the risk of constant crises), today there is a need to reconsider the scale of state intervention in the economy. One of the promising directions is the reduction of state intervention in the economy, the cluster approach to the establishment of public-private partnerships in the system of economic relations.

In essence, cluster policy includes methods and tools to support industrial, regional, small business, attract domestic and foreign investment, and implement innovative, scientific and technological policies.

Cluster policy involves the implementation of a set of measures of a regulatory nature, aimed at establishing interactions between different participants in the cluster, overcoming barriers to the exchange of knowledge and experience. Local governments play an important role in the implementation of the clustering process. Public policy now plays an extremely important role in supporting emerging clusters or improving the performance of clusters that have been around for a long time.

In practice, there are five types of cluster policies:

1. Mediation policy aimed at further strengthening cooperative relations within the cluster and creating the necessary conditions for constructive dialogue between the participants.
2. The policy of stimulating demand - the formation of government orders, the development of interconnected and supportive sectors of the economy, increasing consumer preferences for products and services of regional producers.
3. Education policy, the main purpose of which is to train highly qualified and competent personnel in the region.
4. Policy to promote foreign relations aimed at the protection of intellectual property rights, the implementation of infrastructure and investment projects, the elimination of trade barriers.
5. Cluster policy aimed at creating favorable structural conditions in macroeconomic, institutional and similar areas.

Typically, complementary strategies are used in the formation and development of clusters:

- Strategies aimed at the effective use of new knowledge;
- Strategies aimed at creating new forms and systems of cooperation.

Over time, the activities of clusters will become one of the main factors in attracting external resources and large capital investments, as well as being the focus of public administration.

Systematic organization of the activities of competitors, consumers and suppliers will further increase the efficiency of production specialization and cooperation. In this situation, many small businesses will be able to start their own business and earn a profit through the establishment of clusters. The cluster form of organization of economic activity leads to the emergence of a specific form of innovation - gross innovative product, as the random accumulation of various scientific and technological innovations and developments in a cluster environment gives way to a systematic mechanism for disseminating new knowledge and technologies.

The establishment of strong links between the participants of the cluster will lead to the transformation of inventions, new developments and technologies into innovations, and innovations - into competitive advantages.

The main goal of the cluster is to find new opportunities to increase the production of high value-added products in the industry.

Today, experts highlight seven key descriptive aspects of clusters based on the choice of this or

that cluster strategy:

- Geographical: the organization of clusters according to the territorial designation, representing the structures from local clusters to global clusters;
- Horizontal: several networks or sectors can be part of a larger cluster (for example, a system of mega-clusters in the Dutch economy);
- Vertical: there are mixed stages of production in the cluster, it is important to know which of the participants in the cluster is the initiator of innovation and which is the final executor of innovation;
- Lateral: different sectors merge into clusters, which allows to save due to the scale effect, which in turn leads to the emergence of new combinations;
- Technological: generality of networks using the same technologies (for example, biotechnological clusters);
- Focus: a single center - a cluster of firms united around an enterprise, ITI or educational institution;
- Quality: in this case, it is not the level of cooperation between firms, but the level of cooperation.

**TABLE 2 COMPARATIVE DESCRIPTIONS OF INDUSTRIAL AND TOURIST CLUSTERS (DEVELOPED BY THE AUTHORS)**

| Descriptive aspects                  | Industrial clusters   | Tourist cluster  |
|--------------------------------------|---|--|
| Organizational and development goals | -economic;<br>-political;<br>-demographic;<br>-social   | -social;<br>-cultural;<br>-economic;<br>-educational;<br>-moral  |
| End users                            | Any solvent economic entities (government, households, enterprises)   | Individuals who make tourist trips outside the place of residence for various purposes   |
| The task of the state                | -the state is both a cluster participant and a consumer of its products;<br>- regulates the activities of state clusters on the basis of normative legal acts, current legislation and norms of international law | State policy in the field of tourism and hospitality on the basis of regulations governing the operation of clusters   |
| Placement principles                 | Geographical proximity is a key condition. Due to this, the issues of production and commercial nature of the organization of business processes are resolved   | The specific tourist and recreational potential of the region is taken into account  |
| Cluster product                      | Finished and semi-finished products of consumer and industrial importance   | Separate tourist services that have the potential to turn into a single regional tourism product:<br>-location;<br>-food;<br>-excursion services;<br>-organization of leisure;<br>-transport |

|   |   |  |
|---|---|--|
| Level of innovation                           | High. Particular emphasis is placed on innovations aimed at increasing the competitiveness of products        | Average. Innovations will be more focused on products that fully meet the needs of the consumer                          |
| Collaborate with research centers             | High. Active cooperation has been established with technoparks, technopolises, business incubators            | Low. Cooperation with universities and research institutions is insufficiently established                               |
| Level of development of social infrastructure | Low. Emphasis will be placed on infrastructure development only to increase the cluster's production capacity | High. Priority will be given to the development of important infrastructural elements of the region: transport, catering |
| Level of cooperation                          | Network structure, vertical and horizontal connections of different enterprises and organizations             | It is directly related to the tourism market entities and their functional directions                                    |
| Level of specialization                       | Interaction of basic network, service manufacturing and infrastructure enterprises                            | High level of specialization. This in turn complicates the implementation of a single cluster policy                     |

**Source:** created by author

Clusters do not always encourage the development of innovations, and in some cases, when innovation processes are curbed, protective behavior prevails.

“Cluster Initiatives” - projects and programs of active actors (entrepreneurs and specialists) that play an important role in the development and formation of clusters, actively stimulate the development of cluster strategy processes. The emergence of such initiatives, in turn, has led to the consistent introduction of concepts such as "cluster consulting" and "cluster management" in practice today.

The above aspects are in most cases related to the operation of industrial clusters. In this regard, we believe that there is some difference between the nature and essence of industrial clusters and tourist clusters (Table 2).

Russian economists T.P.Levchenko and M.K. Kulyan interprets the tourism cluster as "a form of organization of tourism on the basis of a set of interconnected tourism services and adjacent network enterprises through horizontal links" [8].

A number of researchers pay special attention to the specifics of the tourist and recreational potential of the region in the organization of tourist clusters, in their opinion, the tourist attractiveness of the region plays an important role in the organization and development of the tourist cluster.

In the system of world economic relations, FEZs are mainly a factor of rapid economic growth due to the acceleration of international trade, investment attraction, technology exchange, information exchange and deepening of integrated economic processes.

Two conceptual (territorial and functional) approaches are used in the formation of FEDs. In the first approach, all resident enterprises benefit from the benefits of economic activity, while in the second approach, resident enterprises can enjoy preferential treatment for certain types of business, regardless of the region in which they are located.

In addition to the fact that a lot of research has been conducted in our country on the practice of clustering, it has been legally strengthened. According to the Law of the Republic of Uzbekistan "On Special Economic Zones", a cluster is a set of special economic zones of one or more types.

According to the document, special economic zones will be established for the following purposes:

- Development of processing industries of the economy;
- To stimulate the development of high-tech sectors of the economy;
- Tourism development;
- Development of port and transport infrastructure;
- Creation of technologies and commercialization of their results;
- Production of new types of products [9].

## **CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS**

Analysis of approaches to the interpretation of the concept of tourist cluster, the views and opinions of economists in this regard, shows that there are a number of shortcomings in defining the concept of tourist cluster:

1. Although the main focus on defining the content and essence of tourism clusters is focused on the economic aspects of the organization of tourist clusters, almost no attention is paid to the social, cultural, moral and educational significance of tourism for society;
2. Insufficient attention is paid to the role and importance of the state in the market of tourist clusters and tourism services in general. Most researchers recognize the role of the state only in the development of the market of tourist services. But today, the global economic crisis caused by the coronavirus pandemic has proved that the tourism industry cannot function effectively without the full support of the state;
3. Given the current opportunities of scientific and technological development, the introduction of innovative technologies in the market of tourist services and the development of cluster structures have not been sufficiently studied;
4. When it comes to the nature of tourist clusters, most researchers are mostly limited to a specific area. In addition, the study of the nature of the tourist cluster is based on a narrow approach, which focuses only on tourism activities.

Taking into account the above-mentioned views and comments on tourism clusters, we consider it appropriate to define the concept of a tourist cluster as follows: is a complex of multifunctional characteristics of the market of tourist services and enterprises of related industries, as well as social institutions and institutions, the interaction of which is determined and regulated by the state on the basis of moral and spiritual values.

Based on the above author's approach to the tourist cluster, we propose to distinguish between general and specific functions specific to cluster structures.

Among the general functions of the tourist cluster we can include the following:

- Socio-economic. The development of cooperative relations between the subjects of the tourism cluster structure and the effect of the tourist multiplier will create opportunities for the sustainable development of the regional tourism services market and the rapid growth of regional gross domestic product. At the same time, the situation in the regional labor market will change for the better.
- Regional development. overcoming social and economic disparities within the country, ensuring the comprehensive development of territorial structures.

- Innovative. In the process of designing and providing tourism and related services, great attention is paid to the use of innovative products and technologies.
- Supervision. A high level of control is achieved by controlling the resource base of cluster structures, including tourist attractiveness, financial flows, human capital, etc., and creating an optimal system of accounting..
- It would be appropriate to include the following among the special functions of the tourist cluster:
  - Rehabilitation - recreation. Development of sanatorium-resort complexes and medical tourism programs, creation of favorable conditions for disease prevention and public health;
  - Cultural and educational. Ensuring that people enjoy cultural and historical monuments using modern forms and means of designing and organizing recreation and leisure activities.
  - Moral and educational. Tourism plays an important role in preserving the national cultural heritage and language, educating children and youth in the spirit of patriotism, improving the spiritual level of the population, strengthening the moral foundations of society.
  - Scientific and educational. This, in turn, involves the implementation of practical and fundamental research, cooperation with scientific and educational institutions, training of highly qualified specialists in the field of tourism.

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