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The Urgency and Necessity of Developing Effective Management Strategies for Tourism Clusters in Uzbekistan

Azimjon Avazkhonovich Pulotov*¹

1. Doctoral Student of The Academy of Public Administration, Under The President of The Republic of Uzbekistan, 100066, Tashkent, Islam Karimov Street, 45

* Correspondence: azimjonpulot@gmail.com

Abstract: The article provides a scientifically grounded analysis of the current state of tourism clusters in Uzbekistan, the main challenges in their management, and contemporary strategies for effective governance. Drawing on international best practices in tourism cluster management, it explores approaches to introducing professional cluster management, new forms of public-private partnerships in the sector, digital transformation, human capital development, and the principles of sustainable tourism. Practical proposals and recommendations are developed for creating effective management strategies for tourism clusters in Uzbekistan.

Keywords: Tourism Cluster, Uzbek Tourism, Effective Governance, Public-Private Partnership, Sustainable Tourism, Cluster Strategy, Tourism Infrastructure, Ecotourism

1. Introduction

The role of tourism as a driver sector in the system of global economic relations is increasing year by year. According to the World Tourism Organization (UNWTO), tourism, as a new strategic sector, is increasingly playing a significant role in creating new jobs and shaping the gross domestic product of countries. In modern competitive conditions, countries are striving to actively promote tourism products and introduce mechanisms that create added value, which is also taking the tourism sector to a new level. Among such mechanisms, tourism clusters and their effective management strategies occupy a special place.

In Uzbekistan, the tourism sector is emerging as an important factor in developing the national economy, creating new jobs, improving the country's international image, and ensuring the socio-economic development of regions. As a result of large-scale reforms implemented in the country since 2017 to develop tourism, the institutional base of the sector has been renewed, investment attractiveness has increased, and tourism infrastructure has expanded. At the same time, there is a growing need for effective management of tourism clusters to increase the competitiveness of tourism, improve the quality of services and diversify the tourism product. Tourism clusters, as drivers of regional development, allow combining economic resources and introducing innovative approaches.

Currently, the application of the tourism cluster model in world practice is increasingly widespread. In European countries, digital technologies and cluster management mechanisms are being integrated based on the concept of "Smart Tourism

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Destinations" [1]. Tourism clusters in Japan and South Korea are being created with close ties to local industry, culture, and innovation [2]. In Turkey and Malaysia, the practice of managing tourist zones with cluster-based long-term strategies is gaining momentum [3].

Cluster-based management of the tourism sector, along with helping to attract investments, increases the possibility of cooperation in tourism services. A system of solving problems in the tourism sector is emerging. The geography of providing tourism services is expanding.

Literature review on the topic. The Strategy "Uzbekistan - 2030", approved by the Decree of the President of the Republic of Uzbekistan No. PF-37 dated February 21, 2024, sets out the task of determining the procedure for organizing tourism clusters and their legal status in the direction of ensuring the well-being of the population through sustainable economic growth. Based on this task, the Resolution of the Cabinet of Ministers of the Republic of Uzbekistan No. 915 dated December 30, 2024 "On measures to organize the activities of tourism clusters" approved the "REGULATION on the procedure for organizing tourism clusters and granting them the status of tourism clusters". According to this Regulation, a tourist cluster is a set of legal entities, as well as individual entrepreneurs, providing complex tourist services and other additional services necessary to satisfy the needs of tourists and excursionists [4].

The main principles of the tourism cluster model in international practice are cooperation, service chains and territorial connectivity, and adherence to these principles serves as an important factor in the industrial development of tourism in Uzbekistan, strengthening economic ties between regions, standardizing the quality of services and increasing investment attractiveness. The organizational and managerial reforms implemented in this area in recent years create a solid practical basis for the formation of tourism clusters in Uzbekistan not only as organizational, but also as strategic management objects.

A. Tokhtamyshov, a researcher at the Silk Road International University of Tourism and Cultural Heritage, in his article "The Essence, Content and Principles of Innovative Development of the Tourism Sector Based on the Cluster Approach", analyzed the main stages of tourism cluster formation and analyzed the mechanisms for developing and implementing tourism cluster policies in the regions [5].

The tourism cluster as a cooperative economic system is a dynamic synergistic effect, providing the opportunity to achieve a multiplier effect. The synergy of relations achieved within the framework of a tourism cluster allows for the integration of the total results of all its elements into a greater effect than the sum of their partial results, allowing for the achievement of various socio-economic effects from its activities. Russian economist Mardakhaev Maxim Benyaminovich in his normative article "Necessary conditions for the formation of tourism clusters as a form of tourism economy development" studied the directions associated with the increased attention to the development of tourism, in particular domestic tourism, in Russia under sanctions. Despite the positive trends in tourism flows and state financing, he analyzed the impact of underdeveloped infrastructure and unreliable information on the flow of tourists. He also considers tourism clusters as an effective tool in solving these problems [6].

Russian researchers A. Okolelov, M. Akimov, R. Chmir analyzed the activities of the Scientific and Educational Center for the Development of Rural and Ecological Tourism of the Michurinsky State Agrarian University (GAU). The main directions of the center are activities in such areas as the development of rural tourism, the introduction of ecological tourism concepts and the integration of local tourist opportunities. Also, the effects of scientific-educational cooperation, research, training of qualified personnel and involvement of the local community in tourism aimed at the formation and development of the tourist-recreational cluster "Michurinsky" were analyzed [7].

The issue of developing tourism based on a cluster approach is also relevant in Uzbekistan. In our country, tourism clusters in the areas of ecological, ethno- and agrotourism are legally established, with a procedure for their organization and status. The experience of scientific and educational cooperation, personnel training and attracting local communities to tourism implemented at the Michurinsky Center can be used to effectively manage tourism clusters in Uzbekistan, integrate services and have a positive impact on the local economy.

The Resolution of the President of the Republic of Uzbekistan No. PP-21 dated January 12, 2024 "On measures for the accelerated development of ecotourism in the Republic of Uzbekistan" contains a targeted list of promising tourism cluster projects in the field of ecotourism. Taking into account the high ecotourism potential of Turkmenistan, located in the mountainous regions of Zomincha and Turkestan. Considering the territory of the Jizzakh region, we can say that the development of Zomin-Bakhmal ecotourism clusters in these districts can become one of the main principles of the economic and social development of the region [8].

In her research, the Bulgarian scientist Natalia Silicheva studies the methodology of formation of tourist clusters and analyzes the issues of seeing them as a form of special regional organization of tourism product production in the market economy. From this point of view, the cluster is considered as a system that can create a special innovation environment that helps to increase the competitiveness and development of the region. Prospects for the next steps in the EU cluster policy will also be considered; the results of the methodological analysis show that increasing the efficiency of the economic clustering process in European countries depends on the implementation of a number of important aspects [9].

Developing effective tourism cluster management strategies is a necessary mechanism for integrating regional tourism, effectively organizing the tourism service chain, and developing the local economy. According to scientists and practitioners, clusters, viewed as economic and innovative systems, allow them to increase competitiveness, attract investors, and more actively involve local communities in tourism activities.

2. Methodology

In the process of this research, scientific research methods such as systematic analysis, institutional analysis, content analysis, functional analysis, comparative analysis, analysis and synthesis were used. Theoretical-analytical and practical-empirical data on the topic were analyzed.

To form the scientific basis of the research, economic literature, scientific articles on international tourism and clustering, government reports, and strategies developed by international organizations were used. Through these sources, information was collected on international experience in managing tourism clusters, effective management mechanisms, and their effectiveness.

The theoretical significance of the research results is that the proposals and recommendations put forward in the article can be used in teaching such subjects as "Tourism Cluster Management", "Strategic Management", "Tourism Economics and Management", "Regional Economy", "Strategic Decision Making".

3. Results and Discussion

In recent years, tourism has been identified as a priority direction in state policy in Uzbekistan, and large-scale reforms are being implemented to develop the sector. Important steps are being taken to improve the tourism infrastructure, increase the flow of foreign tourists, and create new tourist zones and clusters. However, such tasks as the effective use of existing potential, the establishment of complex cooperation between

regions, the expansion of the range of innovative services, and the creation of a competitive brand in the world market have not yet been fully resolved. From this point of view, the need to develop effective management strategies for tourism clusters and their implementation in practice is becoming increasingly urgent. Because the cluster approach serves to increase economic and social efficiency, ensure regional development, and sustainably develop the tourism industry. The relevance of this issue is also justified by the desire to make the tourism sector of Uzbekistan an important factor in economic diversification.

According to the National Statistics Committee, in January-August 2025, the volume of travel agencies, tour operator services, booking and other related services amounted to 2.2 trillion soums. This figure increased by 44% compared to the same period last year.

TOP-5 regions in terms of services provided by travel agencies:

- Tashkent city - 1.7 trillion soums
- Samarkand region - 305 billion soums
- Khorezm region - 73.1 billion soums
- Tashkent region - 52.2 billion soums
- Bukhara region - 31.9 billion soums

The volume of these regions accounted for 97.1% of the total volume of these services [10].

Despite the large amounts of funds allocated for the development of tourism clusters, there is no single platform in Uzbekistan that reflects the number of tourism clusters, their status, structure, financing volume, and performance indicators.

Table 1. Basic conditions for the formation of tourist clusters [11].

Conditions for creating tourist clusters	Complex tourist product
	Weak development of tourist infrastructure
	State policy
	Synergy and quantity effect
	Low level of competitiveness of small and medium-sized businesses in the tourism sector
	Consolidation of business and government efforts
Conditions for creating tourist clusters	Acceleration of diffusion of innovations
	Inequality in the development of tourist destinations
	Growth and shortage of natural recreation resources
	Full use of the tourist potential of the region
	Cost minimization
	Dynamics of consumer behavior and preferences
	Effective communication and collaboration

Currently, there is no consensus on exactly how many factors and conditions affect the formation of clusters and their impact on the result - that is, on increasing the competitiveness and tourist attractiveness of the region. Due to the structural complexity of the cluster, as well as the possibility of various organizational and legal business forms, it is necessary to distinguish between internal and external factors and their influencing conditions. At the same time, a process of determining the level of correlation between factors and results is also required.

Discussion of the results of the study. Currently, the use of the tourism cluster model in world practice is increasingly widespread. In developed countries, the management of

tourism based on cross-sectoral integration, strengthening regional marketing and branding policies, and uniting various participants of the local economy under one direction have become a priority. For example, in Europe, digital technologies and cluster management mechanisms are being integrated based on the concept of "Smart Tourism Destinations". In Europe, the concept of "Smart Tourism Destinations" is integrating digital technologies (e.g. IoT, AI, big data and APIs) and cluster management mechanisms (stakeholder partnerships, public-private partnerships and centralization of DMOs) [12].

In Japan and South Korea, tourism clusters are formed in close connection with local industry, culture and innovation. In Turkey, Malaysia and the UAE, tourism is considered one of the main drivers of regional development and the national economy, and large tourist zones based on clusters are managed not on a temporary basis, but on a long-term strategy [13], [14], [15].

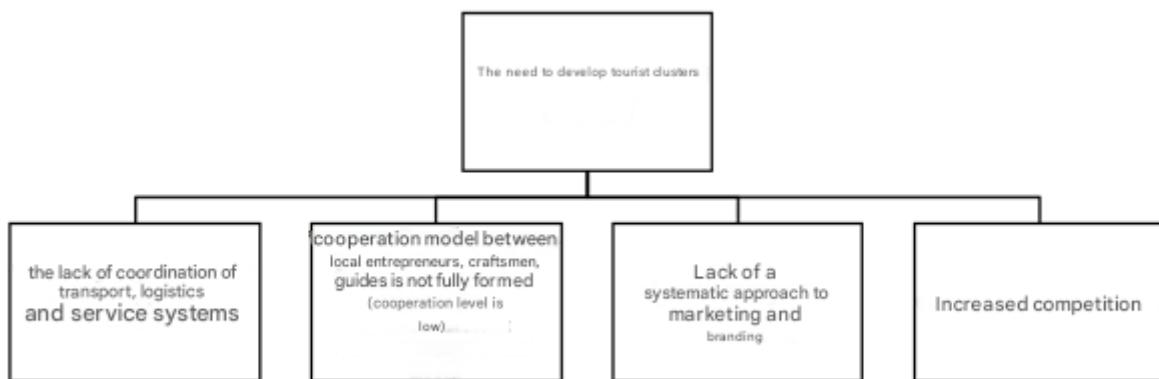


Figure 1. The following factors are necessary for the development of tourist clusters.

Some researchers point out that there are a number of limits and problems in increasing the efficiency of tourism clusters. First, effective cooperation between local authorities, entrepreneurs and tourism organizations is necessary for the development and implementation of the cluster strategy, which is not always possible. Second, because economic and social conditions, infrastructure and cultural characteristics differ in different regions, applying the same strategy based on world experience may not be effective. Therefore, scientific polemics emphasize that cluster management strategies should be tailored to local conditions and that clear criteria and monitoring systems are important for evaluating their effectiveness.

As can be seen from these trends, tourism clusters are emerging not only as an economic effect, but also as an institution that provides an advantage in global competition. World practice shows that the more correctly the structure of clusters is formed, the more stable tourist areas develop.

4. Conclusion

The need to form tourist clusters arises from the fact that the symbiosis of various stakeholders (memorial museums, hotels, restaurants, tour operators, travel agencies, insurance companies, etc.), operating on the principles of competition and cooperation, with a single goal - to create a single value chain for a high-quality complex tourist product and achieve long-term development of the tourism industry, allows overcoming barriers and negative trends, minimizing risks and seasonal restrictions. This ensures a high-quality tourist product, despite the diversity of the product and differences in the timing of its purchase and consumption. At the same time, the formation and development of tourist clusters faces a number of problems. For example: there is no single legal framework, there is no single organizational form (a cluster can be in the form of an association, fund, business organization, etc.), there is no organizational hierarchy, there

is no uniform understanding of the mechanisms for managing a tourism cluster, the mutual benefits from cooperation are not fully understood or not understood at all, the functional and strategic priorities of the cluster are unclear, there is no complete information about the activities and mechanisms of the cluster, the importance of cooperation in creating a complex high-quality tourism product is unclear, competition prevails over cooperation, the need to form a single information and standard database, etc.

Also, factors that complicate the formation and development of clusters include a single management system, a single information platform, data reliability, etc. It can be said that the formation and development of the tourism cluster institution in Uzbekistan is currently at an early stage.

When studying a tourist cluster, it is important to understand the factors and basic conditions that influence its formation and development, as well as to recognize the complex and multi-component nature of the tourist cluster. The development of the tourism sector is determined by the following components: tourist product, tourist destination, tourist potential and tourist cluster. The process of forming a tourist cluster should be compatible with the strategic goals of the region and the state.

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