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DEVELOPMENT OF TOURISM THROUGH TOURIST CLUSTERS AS A PRIORITY OF STATE POLICY

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The article presents information on the global situation and development trends in the tourism sector, which in recent years has been considered a priority area of economic development in Uzbekistan, and also examines the development of tourism through clusters.

In the article, the author analyzed the works of scientists regarding the emergence and development of the term "tourism cluster". Also, the regulatory and economic aspects of tourism clusters in Uzbekistan are disclosed, and the structure of the tourism cluster is developed. At the same time, tourism clusters that can be developed in the regions of Uzbekistan were identified, as well as problems that need to be solved in this regard, and proposals for them were developed.

KEY WORDS: ***Tourism, World Tourism Organization (WTO), Tourism Clusters, Structure Of The Tourism Cluster.***

INTRODUCTION

Today, one of the fastest growing sectors in the world economy is tourism. According to the World Tourism Organization (WTO), international tourism in 2024 recorded a pre-pandemic result of 99 percent. In particular, in 2024, the number of foreign tourists worldwide increased by 11% compared to 2023, and 140 million tourists stayed overnight in another country.[1]

In this regard, it can be observed that the number of foreign tourists visiting Uzbekistan has also increased significantly. According to open data from the Uzbek Tourism Committee, the number of foreign tourists visiting Uzbekistan in 2019 was 6.748 million, while in 2023 this figure will be 6.626 million.[2] people, more than 10 million tourists in 2024. [3]From the general trend, it can be concluded that the number of tourists visiting Uzbekistan increased by 49% **in 2024 compared to 2019 and by 51% compared to 2023. In addition, the "Uzbekistan-2030" strategy also plans to "increase the number of foreign tourists by 15 million** and the number of tourists arriving for **pilgrimage tourism by 3 million "** by 2030 .[4]

Based on the above trend, it is clear that the private sector, along with the state, needs to implement a number of changes and innovations in this direction. This means that "another important factor in the development of the sector is government (state) support [5]. "

Accordingly, in order to regulate the development of representatives of this industry, the state should unite representatives of the industry (tour companies, hotels, catering establishments, and interpreters) for a common goal or encourage representatives of the same type of industry located in the same region to join associations or unions.

In modern science, such concepts are conventionally called "clusters," and when applied to the field we are studying, they are called "tourism clusters" (tourist clusters).

MAIN PART

The term cluster was first introduced into economics by Michael Porter, one of the leading figures in management science, in his book " *The Competitive Advantage of Nations".*

According to Porter's theory, a cluster is "an association or association of manufacturing, service, and other related industries located in the same geographical area. They both compete and cooperate with each other. Through this, as representatives of one industry in a particular country or region develop, they increase their competitiveness with other regions [6].

[1]*World Tourism Organization (2025), World Tourism Barometer, volume 23, issue 1, January 2025, UN Tourism, Madrid, DOI: https://doi.org/10.18111/wtobarometereng*

[2] *https://uzbektourism.uz/research/statistics*

[3] *https://president.uz/uz/lists/view/8049*

[4] *Uzbekistan Republic The President's Strategy " Uzbekistan - 2030" dated September 11 , 2023 Decree No. PF-158*

[5] *Yalçınkaya , T., Güzel , T. (2019). A general overview of tourism clusters. Journal of Tourism Theory and Research, 5(1), 27-39*

[6]*Porter ME (1990). The Competitive Advantage of Nations, Macmillan, London. https://correctphilippines.org/wp-content/uploads/2020/06/Competitive-Advantage-of-Nations.pdf*

Organizations in the tourism sector were studied as a system at the end of the last century by Robert Christie Mill and Alastair Morrison [7](**in their book "The Tourism System"),** they studied these organizations not as clusters, but as cooperative organizations. The term tourism cluster was first proposed in science in the early 2000s by J. Jackson and P. Murphy.[8] In 2005, Kindl da Cunha and João Carlos da Cunha proposed a systematic model to assess the impact of tourism on local development [9]in their article "Proposal of a Systematic Model for Measuring the Impact of Tourism on Local Development - Competitiveness and Sustainability of Tourism Clusters". This model is based on the concept and typology of clusters and includes the assessment of competitiveness and sustainability in economic, social, cultural, environmental and political dimensions.

According to their definition, a tourism cluster is a collection of companies and institutions that are associated with a specific tourism product or group of products. These clusters are geographically concentrated in one place and represent a concentration of interconnected companies and institutions. This approach is important in developing strategies aimed at increasing competitiveness and sustainability in the tourism sector.

The model proposed by da Cunha and da Cunha provides a systematic approach to assess the impact of tourism clusters on the local economy, society and environment. This helps to define strategic directions in the formulation of tourism policy and the development of private sector strategies. Since the first decade of the 21st century, the term tourist cluster has been researched by scientists in various fields of economy. In particular Magdalena Kachevskaya [10], Ferrere and Estevao (2009) [11]S.Lade. (2010) studied the field of tourism and clusters. Fayez Solo and Cooper have stated that their work will further expand tourism clusters in the future and integrate with representatives of the education sector.

B. A. Eryomin, A. Yu. Alexandrova, Oksana V. Kolosova, A. Yu. Alexandrova E. V. Bogdanov and S. Yu. Scholars such as the Goldbergs have studied CIS tourism clusters. It should be noted that although there are not many studies on tourism clusters and their management in Uzbekistan, it is worth recognizing the research of some scientists in this regard. In particular, N. Hasanov [12]analyzed the tourist and recreational potential of the Jizzakh, Kashkadarya, and Surkhandarya regions of Uzbekistan in his research. Based on these analyses, it can be said that the development of tourist clusters in the above regions will also yield very good results.

D. Norkulova [13]studied the organizational and economic mechanisms of the development of social tourism services in Uzbekistan. A. Norchaev [14]paid more attention to the infrastructure part of tourism in his research. Z. Usmanova [15]analyzed the features and trends of the development of tourist and recreational services in Uzbekistan and presented tourism as the main driving force of the economy. Because one new job created in the tourism sector creates the basis for five new jobs created in other sectors. [16]

O. Khaitov also conducted scientific research in this area, and in his interpretation, "A tourism innovation cluster is an association of private and state enterprises, as well as state authorities and management bodies and local government bodies, in order to create a final highly competitive tourism product (service) based on innovative developments." [17]
In general, the word "cluster" and related concepts are widely used in international circles and in sciences (especially economics). However, the definition of this word and its lexical meaning in the Uzbek language are almost not covered in the literature. In particular.

The 2-volume "Russian-Uzbek Dictionary" published in 1983 did not provide an explanation of this word. The 5-volume " [18]Explanatory Dictionary of [19]the Uzbek Language" published in 2006 also does not provide this word and its related concepts.

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[7]Robert Christie Mill and Alastair M. Morrison " The Tourism System: An Introductory " (Prentice Hall, Englewood Cliffs, NJ 07637, 1992, 506 pages

[8] Julie Jackson and Peter Murphy " Tourism destinations as clusters: Analytical experiences from the New World " Tourism and Hospitality Research Vol. 4, No. 1 (July 2002) , pp. 36-52 (17 pages) https://www.jstor.org/stable/23743736

[9] Sieglinde Kindle da Cunha , João Carlos da Cunha " Tourism Cluster Competitiveness and Sustainability: Proposal for a Systemic Model to Measure the Impact of Tourism on Local Development " BAR, v. 2, n. 2, art. 4, p. 47-62, July / Dec. 2005

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[17]Khaitov Okhunjon Nomoz o'gly "Improving the organizational and economic mechanism for increasing innovative activity in the field of regional tourism" abstract, - 2024, page 14

[18]Russian-Uzbek dictionary. – T.: "Uzbek Soviet Encyclopedia" editorial office, 1983. Volume 1 – 680 pages, Volume 2 – 672 pages.

[19]Explanatory dictionary of the Uzbek language. 5 volumes. – T.: "National Encyclopedia of Uzbekistan", 2006. Volume 1 –

This somewhat complicates the use of this international term in the Uzbek language.[20]
Accordingly, we also researched the use of the term at the international and national levels.
The World Tourism Organization defines the term "tourism cluster" as follows: "A tourist destination is an area, with or without defined administrative boundaries, where visitors can spend their time (stay overnight).

It is important to note that the cluster (co-location) of products and services, as well as activities and experiences in the tourism value chain and the basic unit of analysis of tourism is important. The region brings together various stakeholders and can be further developed (forming larger regions and connecting together). It is also intangible with its image and identity, which can affect its competitiveness in the market.

By definition, the tourism sector is a cluster of production units in various sectors that provide consumer goods and services demanded by visitors. Such sectors are called tourism industries because attracting visitors forms the main part of the supply they generate, and without visitors their production would cease to exist to a significant extent .[21]

In short, the most important factors for success in tourism clusters are effective communication and collaboration.[22]
Although this area has been little studied in Uzbekistan, the term tourism clusters previously existed in some places in our legislation.

In particular, Article 19 of the Law of the Republic of Uzbekistan No. ZURQ-549 "On Tourism" of July 18, 2019 is called " Tourism Cluster" and according to it, **"** A tourism cluster is a set of independent organizations and individual entrepreneurs that provide comprehensive tourist services and other additional services necessary to meet the needs of tourists and excursionists.

Tourist clusters form, promote and implement tourist products in order to provide complex tourist services, increase the competitiveness and quality of tourist activities.

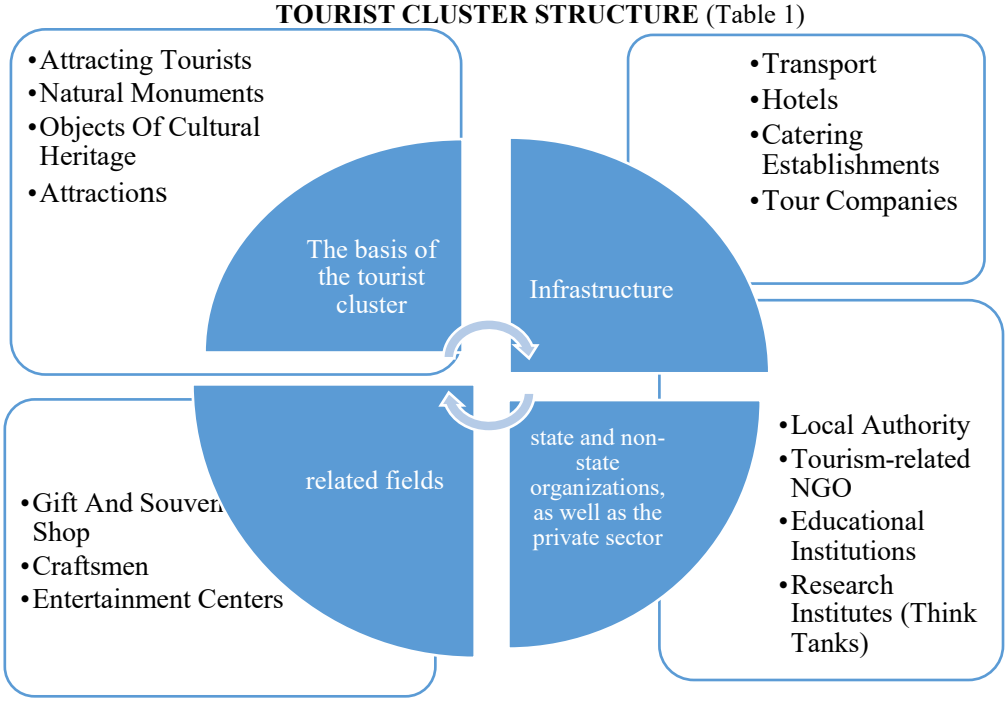
30 new industrial parks will be created in the republic by attracting private investment." large the planned establishment [23]of tourism clusters and, as mentioned above, there was a need to adopt a separate regulatory document on tourism clusters against the background of the development of the tourism sector. We mentioned this in our speeches and scientific articles., was adopted by Resolution No. 915 of the Cabinet of Ministers of the Republic of Uzbekistan dated December 30, 2024, "On Measures to Organize the Activities of Tourism Clusters."

According to this resolution, "a tourism cluster is a set of legal entities, as well as individual entrepreneurs, that provide complex tourism services and other additional services necessary to meet the needs of tourists and excursionists;" [24]and this resolution establishes the requirements for organizing tourism clusters and obtaining the status of a tourism cluster.

To summarize the above, a tourism cluster is a system of networks and enterprises formed to develop the tourism sector in a certain region, which includes hotels, transport, restaurants, cultural monuments, recreation areas and other service sectors. During our research, we developed a structure of a tourism cluster that is common to all, based on the results of studying tourism clusters in different countries. (Table 1)[25]

680 pages, volume 2 – 672 pages, volume 3 – 688 pages, volume 4 – 608 pages, volume 5 – 592 pages.
[20]Pardaev M.K. – Professor of Sam ISI, Doctor of Philosophy. Pardaev O.M. – Sam ISI - Dean of the Faculty of "Banking and Financial Services", Doctor of Philosophy. "Theoretical issues of the concept of a cluster and the specific features of its use in the tourism sector" "Current problems of the development of tourist clusters" / June 5, 2021. Materials of the International Online Scientific and Practical Conference. Samarkand, Sam ISI, 2021. – 11 pages.
[21]https://www.unwto.org/glossary-tourism-terms
[22]Yalçınkaya, T., Güzel, T. (2019). A general overview of tourism clusters. Journal of Tourism Theory and Research, 5(1), 27-39.
23The Strategy "Uzbekistan - 2030" of the President of the Republic of Uzbekistan dated September 11, 2023 Decree No. PF-158 https://lex.uz/ru/docs/-6600413
[24] 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" https://lex.uz/docs/7303189
[25]Author development

TOURIST CLUSTER STRUCTURE (Table 1)



In the development of the tourism industry through a cluster, any region and space will have several advantages.
In particular, economic-social, cultural, ecological, infrastructural developments occur in this.

Since this article is more focused on the general aspects of tourism clusters, we will discuss the advantages in more detail in our other studies.

Accordingly, we have described the tourism clusters that can be developed based on the current conditions and opportunities in the regions of Uzbekistan. In doing so, we have divided the regions into regions. It can be said that we have focused on those regions with similar climates and territories and similar cultures, which have more comparative advantages. The positive side of this is that the development of such clusters can be used as a model for other regions with similar climates and territories.

In general, special attention is paid to innovations for the organization of tourist clusters in the regions of the republic. This scientific, material, informational, material , financial , unused and internal key resource elements such as intellectual includes .[26] In the region tourist clusters shaping for tourism resource cluster innovative potential assessment demand will be done.

CONCLUSION

According to data and forecasts from industry experts, international tourism is expected to continue to grow steadily in 2025. According to reports from the World Tourism Organization (WTO), the number of foreign tourists in 2025 is expected to increase by at least 3-5% compared to 2024. This means that the number of foreign tourists in 2025 will reach 145-150 million.[27]

Tourism is a diverse industry with many facets. A well-functioning cluster brings together industry representatives to drive regional development and sustainability.

In addition, clustering of tourism organizations serves as an important factor for their development at the international and macro level, despite the fact that the organizations compete with each other [28].

Clustering of tourism organizations in Uzbekistan will allow expanding, preserving and further developing not only natural and cultural monuments, but also modern recreation and health resorts. This will lead to the development of various types of tourism in each region and the acceleration of large-scale reforms by the state to improve infrastructure, attract investments and create favorable conditions for tourists, and in our opinion, state bodies should implement the first reforms in this regard.

Accordingly, the following are proposed for the development of tourism clusters in Uzbekistan .

1. Currently, the "Department for Diversification of Tourism Services and Infrastructure Development" of the regional tourism departments should be renamed "Department for Diversification of Tourism Services and Development of Tourism Clusters and Infrastructure" and the responsibilities of the specialist responsible for this should be changed to include issues related to the development of tourism clusters as the main tasks.

[26]*Khudaiberganov Dilshod Tukhtabaevich, Aminova Maqsuda Saminovna – "Opportunities for organizing tourist clusters" - "Current problems of developing tourist clusters" / June 5, 2021. Materials of the International Online Scientific and Practical Conference. Samarkand, SamISI,*

[27]*https://www.unwto.org/un-tourism-world-tourism-barometer-data*

[28] *Yalçınkaya, T., Güzel, T. (2019). A general overview of tourism clusters. Journal of Tourism Theory and Research, 5(1), 27-39.*

2. Opening of State Unitary Enterprises for the Development of "Tourism Clusters and Tourism Infrastructure" in Samarkand, Bukhara, and Tashkent regions.

Currently, representatives of construction and other sectors are responsible for the development of tourism infrastructure, but in most cases this task is assigned to them, so the issue of tourism infrastructure development falls into the background. Therefore, the opening of a separate organization for the development of touristic cluster and tourism infrastructure (as well as the opening of departments for ensuring safe tourism of the internal affairs bodies) ensures the rapid development of the tourism and cluster sector.

3. In educational institutions that provide education in the field of tourism, it is necessary to open a direction in tourism management (or change the specialization in tourism to tourism management) and train (including retraining) management specialists for clusters. The reason is that currently, specialists in the field of tourism are trained separately (tour operator, hotelier, restaurateur). In our opinion, for the effective management of tourism clusters, specialists with knowledge of most areas of tourism and qualifications in other necessary knowledge (foreign language, economics, politics) are required. Accordingly, if a direction in tourism management is established, it will be possible to solve the above problem.

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