

Cluster as a form of Resort Development: Organizational and Managerial Structure



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Abstract: *The article considers the prospect of forming a tourism cluster by the example of the existing resort Belokurikha. This is due to the historical background and concentration of tourist facilities, as well as the experience of joint project implementation by the cluster members. The authors identify five functional complexes in the cluster structure and describe their characteristics. The article suggests a model of the tourist cluster management structure along with the stages of its formation in the region.*

Keywords: *tourist cluster, Belokurikha resort, institutional structure, management structure*

I. INTRODUCTION

Economic instability results in increasing problems of development of tourist centres, especially in peripheral mountain regions. To overcome this situation, it is necessary to ensure the development of the most effective models of tourism organization with the adaptation to the natural and socio-economic characteristics of the mountain region. Therefore, the efficient use of available tourist resources and the development of tourist centres on an innovative basis are of relevance in the Altai mountain region. The cluster model may be one of the effective territorial tourism development models.

Cluster formation on the basis of the existing resorts is of particular relevance in Russia. This process requires the determination of cluster members and the main directions of cooperation.

II. LITERATURE REVIEW

The tourism industry has common patterns of cluster formation and functioning, as well as the specifics of its

manifestation. Clusters play a decisive role in the formation of tourist centres, attracting tourists, and increasing competitiveness (Aleksandrova, 2007).

Clusters are formed based on tourist resources and the conditions for their development. Resorts with unique resources (e.g., mineral water) have an absolute advantage. Comparative advantages arise from better opportunities or production and marketing conditions of tourism products (cost, quality, advertising, availability, etc.) compared to other territories.

The concentration of tourist facilities is one of the important prerequisites for the formation of clusters. Concentration processes are related to more successful business operations in periods of economic crisis.

According to Gordon and Goodall (2000), there are three main reasons for the concentration of production in tourism: 1) comparative advantage arising from the territory's characteristics and the availability of its resources; 2) savings in the supply and use of key components of tourism infrastructure, especially transport communications and major entertainment venues; 3) economies of scale associated with the management of tourism business.

In mountain regions with limited development of transport infrastructure, roads have a significant impact on the concentration of enterprises and the formation of clusters. In the mountain regions of Russia, well-known projects in the field of tourist cluster formation are associated with the creation of special tourist-recreational economic zones. However, their success is questionable. Two of these projects are in the Altai region. They were created without pre-existing foundations of tourism relations and are characterized by different weak development of tourist business.

Big resorts with a history of development have better conditions for cluster formation (Goryushkina et al., 2019; Kuznetsova et al., 2019a,b). They have an opportunity to invest in marketing companies to develop the tourist image. Savings in the conditions of tourism concentration can influence the creation of a reserve of qualified labour resources and the network of service enterprises creating and selling the tourist product. Non-market relationships are also important in terms of dissemination of information about the product's reputation and environmental protection (Shaw, 2004). As noted by Nordin (2003), most of the tourism company development potential is beyond the influence and strength of this company. This indicates the need for coordination of activities of all the cluster members in the implementation of cluster initiatives.

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Successful formation of the tourist cluster is attributable to its socio-cultural environment, which is determined by the traditions and culture of the local population (Novelli, 2006; Sagdieva et al., 2019; Sharpley, 2009; Voronkova et al., 2019c). The economic environment includes the level of economic development and the living standard of its population, which have a huge impact on the cost and demand for goods and services, including tourism.

The economic conditions include the investment climate in the cluster, which can ensure the development of its basic elements. The quantity and quality of labour resources are also relevant in the cluster functioning (Barmuta et al., 2017; Shatunova et al., 2019; Kolmakov et al., 2019).

A tourism product can be formed more successfully within the framework of tourism clusters, which are a concentration of tourism resources, infrastructure, equipment, service providers and other supporting sectors, as well as administrative structures, which jointly create an attractive tourism image for the region (Bordas, 2001; Korchagina, 2010; Bozhkova et al., 2019). Tourism resources belong to different owners. Therefore, the use of these resources in the formation of a tourist product involves the cooperation of their owners (Friedrichs, 2006). This fact justifies the need for targeted and active actions to form the basis for effective interaction, which is one of the components of cluster initiatives (Korchagina, 2010).

Medium and small tourism companies play a key role in the provision of products and services. They form the basis of the global tourism industry and have a major impact on territorial development (Novelli, 2006; Paptsov et al., 2019). This determines a large number of participants in the region's tourism market, which are difficult to coordinate. Cluster formation allows for successful coordination.

The competitiveness of the tourist centre is achieved through the ability to constantly create innovations and improve the use of resources in the best and most sustainable way. Development of the business environment stimulates a continuous innovation and improvement of quality of tourism services, which increases the cluster competitiveness (Ninic, & Mitrovic, 2019; Korableva et al., 2019).

Tourism cluster development in the territory passes through several stages: from the initiative of the local public and business representatives to the formation of a management company, determining the territory's strategic development (developing a complex program for the tourist development in the region), implementing current management, monitoring and further development self-organization principles. The cluster is based on the principles of public-private partnership (Kruzhalin, 2009).

III. METHODS

When studying tourism in the region, one can successfully apply a systemic approach. Using a systemic approach at the micro level allows studying the activities of tourism companies in a competitive environment, their markets, relations with other institutions and consumers, while at the regional level – examining the tourism system of the region, as well as its relationships with other systems: political, economic, and social (Mironenko, & Bochvarova, 1986; Saenko et al., 2019).

According to Mazhar (2008), the development of the theory of territorial social systems is directly related to the general

systems theory and reflects the current image of territorial development.

Following the concept of Leiper (1979), tourism as a complex phenomenon is a system consisting of the following basic elements: geographical component, tourists, and the tourism industry.

In the early 1970s, a group of Russian scientists led by Preobrazhenskii (1975) developed the concept of a territorial recreational (tourist) system based on a systemic approach. The territorial tourist system is understood as a social system (with a tourist in its core), characterized by functional integrity and consisting of interconnected subsystems: groups of tourists, natural and cultural complexes, technical systems, service personnel, and a governing body. The objective function of the tourism system is to satisfy recreational needs (Preobrazhenskii et al., 1992).

According to Aleksandrova (2007), a territorial tourism system has close ties with the external environment. Elements of the natural, technical and social environment form the environment of the system. The tourism system acts as a core that can ensure the effective functioning of the system only when interacting with the surrounding environment.

Several scientists believe that the model of a tourist system introduced by Preobrazhenskii (1975) can meet all modern requirements, as it includes all the necessary elements, and there is no need to build new tourism development models. According to the authors, a tourism cluster can also be represented as a tourism system (Kashirskaya et al., 2019). A tourism cluster may be a territorial tourism system, but it will not always be a cluster (in the understanding of the Russian scientific school). A tourism cluster and a tourism system as forms of the tourism territorial organization have much in common. However, an analysis of the concepts of their formation revealed several differences (Grakhova et al., 2019). The development of tourism clusters helps to increase competitiveness, strengthen innovation, stimulate regional development, etc.

Clusters can be considered within a systemic approach. The main features of clusters include an unusually large number of participants, the presence of a synergistic effect, a higher level of productivity, functioning flexibility and dynamism (Kayumova et al., 2019; Kuznetsova et al., 2019), a high level of information exchange and innovation; the fact that competing companies cooperate for realizing the potential of the territory and its competitive advantages, etc.

Comparing territorial tourist systems and tourist clusters indicates differences in theoretical constructions and forms of tourism services production. However, a systemic approach can be successfully applied in analysing the cluster structure and identifying relationships.

IV. RESULTS

Tourism development in the Altai mountain region is associated with modernization of the state administration of territorial tourist systems from the perspective of a cluster approach. The authorities have developed tourism development programs at the regional and local levels, which plan to develop promising investment sites in the form of clusters (Dunets et al., 2019; Fedulova et al., 2019).

For a long time, the tourism sector of the Altai mountain region was not market-oriented. The low efficiency of most regional tourism and hotel companies does not yet allow the formation of a competitive tourism product. Therefore, to increase competitiveness in the national and international tourism markets, the idea of creating projects based on the large Belokurikha resort aimed at developing the tourism cluster seems promising.

It is known that several large organizations make up the "core of the cluster". This creates a geographically concentrated demand for certain services, a workforce of the relevant qualifications, along with food and additional services for tourists. The cluster core consists of large medical organizations (sanatoriums) of the Belokurikha resort: JSC "Belokurikha Resort" (comprised of the Belokurikha, Katun, and Siberia sanatoriums), the sanatorium "Rossiya", and the "Altai-West" sanatorium.

Associated and supporting enterprises (subcontractors) can meet high demand from the "cluster core" and save on sales and transportation costs. Regions with the increased tourism importance show a rapid development of companies operating in related sectors: construction, trade, recreation, sports, and culture. Typically, various forms of cooperation in the form of professional associations form in tourist regions. In such regions, as a rule, local authorities, scientific and educational institutions participate in the development of tourism (Kovalev, 2009).

The analysis of the Belokurikha resort revealed the interested participants in the cluster. Those include representatives of the tourist industry, the resort city administration, professional associations, educational institutions, members of the public and other organizations that are interested in developing their destination. While sanatorium organizations and representatives of the tourism industry are competitors, some of them cooperate in tourism services. However, all resort organizations need tourist information, new technologies, as well as personnel with certain skills and qualifications. This is one of the important conditions for the formation of cluster systems.

Considering the changes taking place over the past few years, one can note the absence of rapid growth in the number of health centres. According to the tourism department of the Altai Territory, in 2012 there were 13 hotels and 13 resorts, in 2018 — 23 hotels and 14 resorts. The quality of service is changing. Today, there are more comfortable rooms in the region. Moreover, there are guest houses based on private housing located near the resort (rural tourism). The number of tourists in the resort has increased (Figure 1).

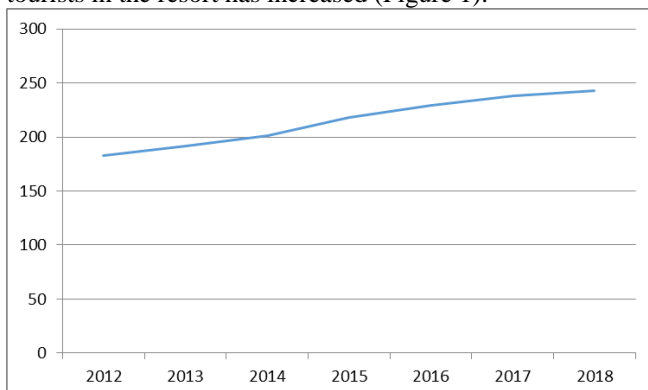


Figure 1. The number of tourists in the Belokurikha resort, 2012-2018, in thousand people

The resort area in Belokurikha is located in a narrow mountain valley. This region is characterized by a concentration of tourist facilities and a shortage of land for construction. Therefore, in the last 5-7 years, in the territories adjacent to the resort, new objects are most actively created that are focused on the needs of the resort visitors. Fixed investment has increased from 244 million rubles in 2012 to 432 million rubles in 2018. However, there are several problems in the development of the Belokurikha resort. One of them is a problem with personnel, providing both medical and tourism services. To this end, sanatoriums began actively cooperating with educational organizations.

Identification of the structural elements of organizations and their relationships is an important feature of the system analysis (Sessa, 1988). To determine the participants of the Belokurikha cluster, the authors developed its functional structure. It is a combination of an interconnected complex with a cluster core (Dunets, 2011).

The core of this cluster is a specialized tourist complex. It includes institutions related to the organization of sanatorium treatment and tourism, the provision of additional tourism services and facilities (travel agencies, medical centres, hotels, tourism and entertainment facilities, etc.). The centre of the cluster core is the consumer of the tourist product (resort visitor). It is tourists who determine the formation of services; if the services do not correspond to their desires, they choose other tourist centres. The main structural elements of the cluster are enterprises providing accommodation, catering, entertainment and tourist transport services.

Tourists' requirements lead to the need for constant interaction between manufacturers within the accumulation value chain. In addition to real tourists at the resort, there is a need to work with potential tourists in brands of marketing events.

The other main structural elements of the cluster are presented by four complexes (Figure 2):

- the systemically important complex is presented by the administration of the Belokurikha resort. Various governing authorities, including the tourism department, coordinate the work with sanatorium and tourism enterprises. To ensure successful cluster development, a system-forming complex can include personnel training, which is presented by the Altai Academy of Hospitality and the branch of the Altai State University. The administration has good relations with the Altai State Medical University;
- the production complex consists of enterprises providing the cluster with food, goods, equipment and construction materials. The resort has formed links for the purchase of food from agricultural enterprises located in the neighbouring territories. These are greenhouses for growing vegetables, farms for the supply of meat, etc. Constant modernization of the hotel fund requires construction work. Local sanatoriums are gradually moving to a higher service level, receiving 3 and 4 stars. The resort needs goods that are used in room service and medical assistance;
- the social service complex is represented by cultural (the resort's museum), sports, trade, and medical institutions; consumer services, etc.

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These facilities are essential to provide various services for tourists. Cultural objects allow creating the basis for the development of educational tourism in the resort of Belokurikha. The availability of financial institutions, telecom operators is a prerequisite for the cluster functioning; - the complex of natural resources is another important component of the resort. First, these are the sources of healing mineral waters located in the Belokurikha River valley in the very centre of the resort. If before the water poured out spontaneously, today it comes from boreholes to sanatoriums. The resort area, which is a protected area, is of particular importance. In 2017, the "Altai Foothills" nature park was created to preserve natural resources and develop tourism. The natural resources surrounding the resort create a unique microclimate; the well-preserved landscapes of the taiga and low-mountain zone allow developing a network of pathways and more complex routes for moderate exercise.

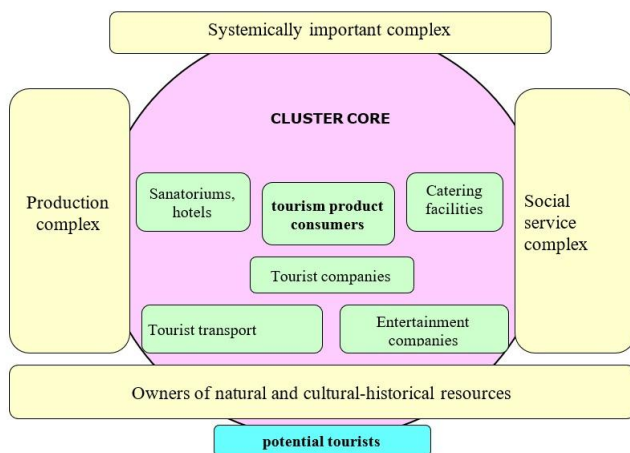


Figure 2. The functional structure model of the tourist cluster

Relationships within the cluster are built and developed based on partnership and competition. When serving tourists, enterprises from industries not directly related to tourism start orienting their products or services to the resort needs (Frolova et al., 2019a,b; Ghoshand Ghosal, S. (2019). The more efficiently the tourism-oriented economic sector functions, the clearer is the process of cluster formation. Joint projects of Belokurikha resort sanatoriums attract new customers. One example is the collaborative efforts of major health resorts on the development of short treatment programs. In Russia, long-term treatment programs in sanatoriums (up to 21 days) are traditional for sanatoriums. These programs are licensed and have no reason to provide treatment for other programs. However, today, most potential consumers do not have much time to relax in the resort. For this, the Belokurikha sanatoriums have joined their financial resources to attract scientists to develop and substantiate short treatment programs. Government authorities participated in the creation of the "Altai Research Institute of resort medicine and health tourism". This institute has become a unifying centre for sanatoriums to develop new treatment programs. A Special Authority (from among the participants in the cluster core) should be created to coordinate the cluster functioning. The cluster managerial structure provides for the formation of a business association from its members, which has its own governing body, coordinators of various areas and specialized teams (Bykanova et al., 2018; Kireev et al., 2019; Gabidullina et al., 2019; Voronkova et al., 2019a,b; Kenna

and Russell, 2018; Tarman et al., 2015; Goloshchapova, et al., 2018).

The concept of targeted cluster formation is based on the creation of regional business tourism associations. The cluster management structure model may include the presence of groups (teams) under the main directions of the resort's functioning (Figure 3).

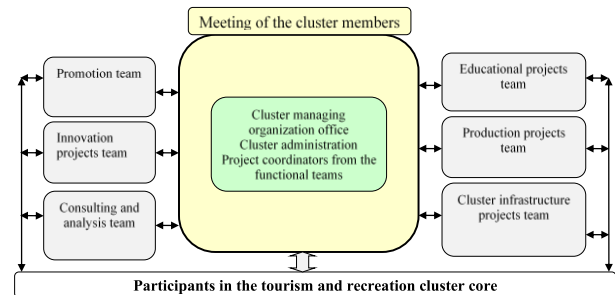


Figure 3. Model of the tourist cluster management structure

When creating a tourist cluster, it is necessary to consider strategies for its development and determine the main stages of establishing a cluster. The strategy model for the formation of a regional tourist-recreational cluster involves several successive stages: cluster analysis of tourist destinations; development of a mission and the key development objectives; resourcing; organizational and economic mechanism for implementing the strategy; predictive assessment of the tourism cluster effects (Sozieva, 2009; Akhmadeev et al., 2018; Akhmetshin et al., 2017).

Cluster formation is difficult; a simple increase in the number of tourism enterprises and facilities does not necessarily mean the beginning of a cluster formation. The authors identify seven stages in the formation of a tourist cluster:

1. Determining the institution in the regional administration responsible for the development of the tourism complex and the creation of a tourism development program with the identification of the main "growth points".
2. Identifying potential participants in the tourism cluster, inventory of the territory's resources and features of the tourism business association.
3. Motivating potential cluster members to start cooperation in the framework of network interaction. Creation of a coordinating council under the administration with the participation of other structures of government bodies, public, business representatives, specialized educational institutions.
4. Establishing a tourism cluster development strategy with the participation of potential cluster core participants.
5. Developing public-private cluster pilot projects and the formation of a management company for their implementation.
6. Creating cluster members teams by a management company with the support of functional administrations.
7. Providing conditions for effective cluster management and its self-regulation.

Creating a cluster is not the goal; it is only a mechanism that can be used to develop tourist centres. The most important objective of cluster development is associated with increasing the competitiveness of organizations of a certain territory in the national and world tourism markets.

The level of cluster development depends on the quality of the business environment and the activity of its participants' interaction.

V. DISCUSSION

The cluster model can be used in relation to the Russian resorts to consider the number of factors in a market economy. Furthermore, the formation of a cluster creates a positive image of the region, which contributes to the development of tourism and an increase in tourist flows. A cluster is not only a model of spatial development but also a specific brand and a political tool. It is a successful tourism policy that ensures the development of a tourism business.

Several theoretical and practical issues of developing a tourist cluster require further investigation. The study does not reveal the patterns and factors of their effective functioning (Movchan et al., 2019; Sycheva et al., 2019a,b; Demirhan and Yücel, 2016; Titova et al., 2019; Kagema, 2018; Pavlyshyn et al., 2019; Korkmaz and Avci, 2016).

The need to use a cluster approach for tourism development is due to the characteristics of tourism and the tourism product along with the advantages arising from the implementation of cluster projects (Plaskova et al., 2017; Prodanova, et al., 2019; Trofimova et al., 2019; Puryaev et al., 2019).

Tourist activity naturally combines segments of different industries producing a wide range of goods and services required for tourism. A tourism product is a combination of services provided by different manufacturers (suppliers). The implementation of tourism activities requires a combination of diverse sectors of the economy.

The major problems associated with the formation and development of tourism clusters include the following: lack of professional tourism personnel able to understand all the advantages and benefits of this form of cooperation; low susceptibility of executives to innovations; lack of strategic planning practice of tourism activities based on public-private partnerships; low quality of tourist infrastructure and poor transport accessibility of the regions; lack of knowledge and experience in technology for the formation and management of tourist and recreational clusters in administrations of regional and municipal levels; a long period of creating a tourism cluster (Kruzhalin, 2009).

An important task of introducing a cluster model is to change entrepreneurs' psychology, their understanding of honest, open and mutually beneficial cooperation of all participants in a cluster association for the common benefit (Pyatinkin, & Bykova, 2008; Vasilev and Tung, 2019). However, in Russia, the attempts to create a cluster encounter insurmountable psychological barriers, which determines a formal approach to clusters, due to the need for policies of regional authorities. The mechanism for interaction within the cluster is a very complex process; it is almost impossible to develop from scratch and launch only based on government initiatives (Mandal and Sanyal, 2019; Magsumov, 2019).

The process of implementing pilot cluster projects in Russia contributed to revealing a number of features inherent in business representatives: a low level of confidence in public authorities and representatives of educational institutions; lack of willingness to learn in the majority of business representatives; predominance of the "consumer" attitude in relation to innovation; lack of trust among company management to each other; low level of awareness of what is

happening in the region; business's reluctance to unite; shifting all responsibility for the implementation of cluster initiatives to authorities (Korchagina, 2009; Farooq et al., 2019).

Cooperation of the tourism cluster participants is intensifying in adverse economic conditions. The political situation in the cluster region is of great importance. The policy of the state and regional authorities in the field of tourism development (including the formation of clusters), its support, research, constant monitoring are the most important conditions for cluster formation.

VI. CONCLUSION

A cluster as a model for tourism organizing contributes to competitiveness, reinforces innovation, stimulates regional development, etc. A tourism cluster is a special kind of tourism system that can form in a market economy. It is one of the most effective models for organizing tourist space.

Considering the specificities of the Russian economy development, it is advisable to combine approaches to the territorial tourism organization based on ideas about the territorial tourist system and the tourism cluster.

The establishment of the Belokuriha cluster revealed the undoubted benefits to all the participants. However, there is currently no strategy and coordination in the cluster. Therefore, the authors suggest presenting all cluster members in the form of an institutional structure. Sanatoriums, hotels, and other organizations directly involved in tourism servicing will constitute the cluster core. The study identified major resorts, which determine the development strategy of the Belokurikha resort. The authors note the significant role of related and supporting organizations, as well as authorities, in the cluster development.

To transform the existing resort into a tourist cluster, it should start functioning as a business association. This involves the creation of a cluster coordinating authority and specialised teams for the main types of tourist activities.

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