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FORMING TOURISM CLUSTERS IN BUKHARA REGION

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ABSTRACT: Demand for tourism services are growing as a result of global population growth, an increase in middle-class consumers in countries and having more leisure time. This, in turn, has led to increased competition based on the growing demand for tourist services. In order to find a place in the market in a highly competitive environment and improve the services offered, tourism entities are forming tourism clusters by themselves or uniting with other entities.

Keywords: tourism clusters, tourism services, cluster competitiveness, cluster participants, regional development, innovation

Introduction

In the early 1990s, Harvard University professor of economics, M. Porter, in his book *International Competition: Competitive Advantages of Countries*, describes the cluster as “a group of geographically interconnected companies and related organizations that work together and complement each other in a particular field. The geographical size of a cluster can expand from one city to another or even to a number of neighboring states. A cluster can be thought of as a system of interconnected firms and organizations that together form a value system”.

In our opinion, the cluster is a combination of several enterprises and organizations belonging to the same industry in a particular region, creating innovations and new enterprises (jobs), contributing to the socio-economic development of the region and increasing its competitiveness, also ensures the stability of the tourist image.

It is well known that the competitiveness of a state depends on the competitiveness of its constituent regions / provinces. In turn, the competitiveness of a region depends on the competitiveness of local enterprises / organizations.

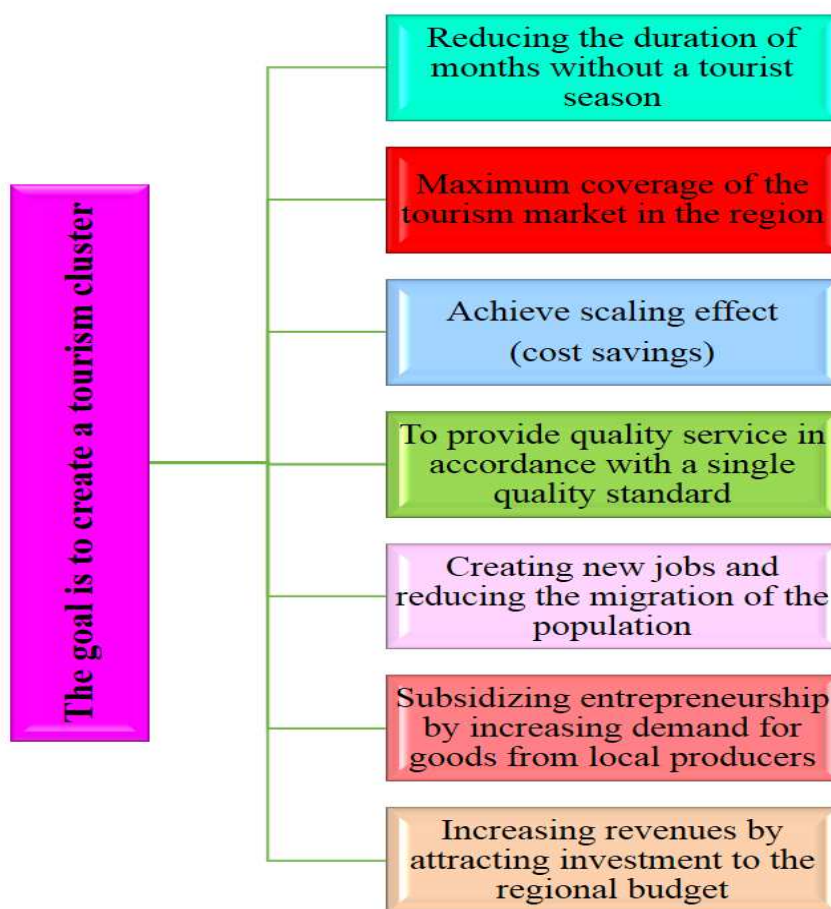
World experience shows that the economic development and competitiveness of the region, where the cluster-based enterprises are located, is much higher than in other regions.

Previously, cluster-based development was mostly used in industry, but now it is becoming popular in tourism management as well. Based on the above definition of the cluster, it can be said that: *tourism cluster* – is a joint cooperation of hotels, leisure and other tourism facilities, transport and catering services, tour operators and travel agencies, insurance and financial institutions, universities and state tourism management organizations in order to develop tourism in a particular area.

For this reason, Ferreira and Estevao (2009) state that tourism cluster is a geographic concentration of companies and institutions interconnected in tourism activities. Tourism clusters are premised on creating a bundle of complementary attributes that serve to satisfy customer needs, creating more and more opportunities for firms that choose to co-locate with each other. Hence, the proposition, that tourism-based cluster formations might add to multiplier and externality effects and serve to accelerate the opportunities for new forms of economics wealth by creating a demand for host of complementary activities which in turn generate their own effects (Michael, 2006).

The main difference of the tourism cluster from other clusters (manufacturing, agro-industry, pharmaceutical) is to increase the flow of tourists by organizing innovative tourist products in a particular area. The tourist route and corresponding tourist flow connect the objects to each other, turning them from competitors into interactive elements of the system. Due to the influx of tourists, a cluster is formed, the main objectives of which are as follows (Table-1).

Table-1. The goals from creating a tourism cluster



Materials and methods

In the study, the issues of forming tourism clusters in Bukhara region were covered on the basis of comparative, statistical analysis and systematic methods. Also was reviewed international experience of tourism cluster forming.

According to Deputy Prime Minister, Minister of Tourism and Sport Aziz Abduhakimov: “As a result of the global crisis caused by the coronavirus pandemic, tourism in our country has become one of the most severely affected areas. In 2020, a total of 1 million 504 thousand tourists visited our country. Tourism services worth \$261 million were provided. In 2021, all tasks will be carried out not on the basis of general figures, but on the basis detailed plans and detailed calculations on the route, and more attention will be paid to pilgrimage tourism. In 2021, it is planned to welcome 1.7 million foreign and 7,5 million local tourists to Uzbekistan. In return, export of tourism services will reach \$370 million. It should be noted that the largest source in this regard is, first of all, pilgrimage tourism. There are 784 Islamic shrines, 19 Christian and 8 Buddhist cultural heritage sites in the country. Taking advantage of this opportunity, it is expected to attract 700,000 visitors this year and raise export of services to \$130 million”.

Uzbekistan with its rich cultural and spiritual heritage, memorial and fine arts, historical monuments and Muhammad Ibn Ismail al-Bukhari, Muhammad Musa al-Kharezmi, Abu Nasr al-Farabi, Ahmad al-Fergani, Abu Ali Ibn Sina, Abu Rayhan al-Beruni, Ahmad Yassavi, Abu Isa al-Termizi, Mirzo Ulugbek, Bahauddin Nakhshband, Amir Temur, Alisher Navoi and many other world-famous and great ancestors like Babur have been attracting scientists and tourists from all over the world.

In order to develop pilgrimage tourism in our country, it's necessary to create a competitive national tourism product under the brand “Ziyarah tourism” and bring it to the world market of tourism services. According to the results of the analysis, the issues of bringing the national pilgrimage tourism brand to the world tourism markets have not been sufficiently studied. As a result, it is required to intensify the promotion of Uzbekistan's rich cultural and spiritual heritage, memory and fine arts, historical monuments in international tourism markets through the creation of the brand “Ziyarah tourism” and the development of its basic principles.

Results

On December 9, 2020, a video conference meeting was help chaired by the President Sh. Mirziyoyev. In this meeting was discussed the work being done in the field of tourism and sport, also for the coming years set tasks for the development of pilgrimage tourism. In order to implement these tasks, on February 9, 2021, the Presidential Decree “On measures to further develop domestic and pilgrimage tourism in the Republic of Uzbekistan” was adopted.

During his visitto Samarkand regionon April 15-16, 2021, President Shavkat Mirziyoev got acquainted with the activities of the Imam Bukhari memorial complex, tourist centers, gastronomic streets and tourist neighborhoods in region. In 2019, President advised to expand Imam Bukhari memorial complex. New plan of the complex will include a large mosque, four symmetrical minarets, high porches and an alley at the entrance. There are also plans to build 7 hotels, 3 parking lots and a bus station, a supermarket, handicraft stand, restaurants, washrooms to provide modern conveniences for a large number of visitors.

It is known that in 2019, at the initiative of the President, The Imam Bukhari International Research Center and The School of Hadith Science were established here, and this new complex will be transformed into a large facility in proportion to them. In particular, all necessary conditions will be created for local and foreign visitors.

At the same time, it was agreed to implement the following:

1. Establishment of a representative office of the Ministry of Tourism and Sports in Riyadh, Saudi Arabia, with a clear indication of funding sources, in order to actively attract foreign tourists to the shrines in Samarkand and Bukhara regions under the program “Umrah +”;
2. Organize a series of advocacy events in Indonesia, Malaysia, India, Pakistan, The Russian Federation, Turkey and the CIS to promote the potential of pilgrimage tourism in Samarkand region and the possibility of organizing pilgrimages through Samarkand under the “Umrah +” program, also providing additional benefits for tour companies, transport and logistics companies and airlines that organize tours under the “Umrah +” program;
3. Wi-Fi and QR codes, audio guides, modern turnstiles for electronic registration of access of tourists and the population will be installed to the objects of tangible cultural heritage with tourism potential.

As in Samarkand, in Bukhara region also creating all the amenities for tourists and improving the pilgrimage sites. In particular, Bukhara, Cairo (Egypt) and Bamako (Mali) were declared The Capital of Islamic Culture in 2020 and a number of international online conferences were held.

The capitals of Islamic culture purposes to strengthen the relation ties between peoples, initiate a creative dialogue between them, encourage the intellectual communication between the citizens of the Islamic nations, capitalize on the rich heritage significance spurring tolerance and coexistence and offer a factual image of the ancient Islamic civilization.

It should be noted that the Decree of the President of Uzbekistan “On measures to further develop domestic and pilgrimage tourism in the Republic of Uzbekistan” and the Resolution of Cabinet of Ministers “On additional measures to develop domestic and pilgrimage tourism” was adopted. In the framework of the implementation of these documents, on April 2021 meetings were held with the tourism development departments of Tatarstan and Chechnya. During the meetings a number of issues were discussed, such as the prospects of cooperation in the field of pilgrimage and gastronomic tourism, training and retraining of personnel, intensification of cooperation between the two NGOs, strengthening propaganda, as well as organizing regular charter flights from Tatarstan and Chechnya to Uzbekistan.

Discussion

As discussed above, tourism cluster is an integration of various tourist entities in a particular area.

Bukhara is a sacred land. From time immemorial, at the crossroads of various trade routes, cultures and civilizations, the charm and splendor of this ancient corner always attracts people from all over the world.

Today, in addition to our compatriots, pilgrims from India, Malaysia, Indonesia, Turkey, Saudi Arabia, Iran and Central Asia visit the sacred complexes in Bukhara. They are pleased that in this blessed place, which in Middle Ages was called “Qubbat ul-Islam” – “The dome of Islam”, religious educational institutions are still active and great attention is paid to the development of Muslim morals and culture.

So that, I would like to offer “**Islam and Holy Bukhara**” Tourism Cluster in Bukhara region (Table-2). Cluster consists of 16 carefully chosen participants, among which 9 holy places, 2 government bodies, tour agency, hotels and catering services. Government bodies can advertise holy places abroad, attract pilgrims, organize for them all the comfortable conditions. Tour agency, hotels and restaurants make pilgrims happy and memorable stay in the country.

Statistics of the recent years show that the demand for the pilgrimage services, get to know teachings of our holy Islamic scholars, be familiar with Uzbek culture and traditions are very high. So that, tours can be organized all year around.

Establishment and operation of such a tourism cluster will improve a prestige of the Bukhara region in Islam world, create new jobs (souvenir shops, taxis, guides, book shops), increase investment and tax revenues to regional budget.

Table-2 “Islam and Holy Bukhara” Tourism Cluster

| № | Name of cluster participant | Information about the participant |
|----------|---|---|
| 1. | Imam al-Bukhari memorial complex | Was born in Bukhara and an author of “Sahih al-Bukhari”, which includes 4000 reliable hadiths, it’s the second most important source in Islamic teaching after the Qur’an. Complex located in Samarkand region. |
| 2. | Abdulholik Gijduvoni | Born in 1103 in Gijduvan Fortress of Bukhara region, he was a great mystic scholar, who made an important contribution to the development of the Naqshbandi sect, a saint, and is known throughout the world as Khodja Jahon (Lord of the World). |
| 3. | Xoja Orif Ar-Revgariy (Mohitobon) | Born in 1166 in Revgar village of Shafirkan district of Bukhara region, author of “Orifnoma” book which is very popular in Islam world. |
| 4. | Xoja Mahmud Anjir Fagnaviy | He was born in the village of Anjir Fagni, Vobkent district, Bukhara region. He was a disciple of Ar-Revgari and continued his work. |
| 5. | Xoja Ali Rometaniy | He was born in the village of Kurgan, Romitan district, Bukhara region. His “Risolai Azizon” book is famous. |
| 6. | Muhammad Boboyi Samosiy | The blessed tomb of this blessed person is in the village of Simos in Romitan district of Bukhara region. |
| 7. | Sayyid Mir Kulol | He was born in the village of Sukhor near Bukhara in 1287. He was mentor of Bahouddin Nakshbandi. |
| 8. | Hazrat Bahouddin Nakshband | He was born in 1318 in the village of Qasri Hinduvan near the city of Bukhara. His Nakshbandiya was of teaching is very famous among Islam scholars. |
| 9. | Chor Bakr historical memorial complex | The Chor Bakr shrine is located 6 km west of Bukhara, and the ancient name of the area is Sumitan. Thanks to the four great saints, Abu Bakr Sa’d Yamani, Abu Bakr Homid, Abu Bakr Muhammad ibn Fazl, Abu Bakr Tarkhan, this area was named after these 4 (Chor) Bakrs. |
| 10. | Territorial departments of the Ministry of Tourism and Sports of the Republic of Uzbekistan | Will coordinate “Ziyarah tourism” on national and regional levels. |
| 11. | Regional offices of the Muslim Board of Uzbekistan | Together with World famous Islam scholars will organize “Ziyarah tourism” theory& practice, teachings and other details. |
| 12. | Tour agency (transportation, guide and other services) | Will assist pilgrimage tourists with all the necessary services during their visit in the country. |
| 13. | Hotels in Tashkent, Samarkand and Bukhara cities | Provide all kinds of hotel services. |
| 14. | Central Asian Plov Center & Efendi restaurant (Halal) | Tripadvisor recommended restaurant in Tashkent with halal food, national design, reasonable prices and excellent service. |

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|-----|---------------------------|-------|--|
| 15. | “Staraya Arba” restaurant | Halal | Tripadvisor recommended restaurant in Samarkand with halal food, national design, reasonable prices and excellent service. |
| 16. | Chinar restaurant (Halal) | | Tripadvisor recommended restaurant in Bukhara with halal food, national design, reasonable prices and excellent service. |

Conclusion

In recent years, many shrines in the country have been renovated, where scientific centers, museums, gardens, praying halls and shopping places have been established. The establishment of such a tourism cluster will take Uzbekistan to a new level of pilgrimage tourism and enlarge the flow of tourists. This, in turn, lays the foundation for attracting foreign investment in tourism, making it one of the most competitive sectors in the country's economy as a result of the introduction of new innovative ideas and the widespread use of equipment and technology.

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