

## TOURISM CLUSTERS AND THEIR ROLE IN SUSTAINABLE COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT

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**Abstract:** *The article examines the role of tourism clusters in the sustainable development of local communities in Ukraine. The features of the functioning of tourist clusters are studied, on the basis of which a general vision of their development is formulated on the basis of a general model of functioning, which includes successive stages of creation of tourist clusters. It is proved that the functioning of tourism clusters as a component of the tourism industry is increasingly dependent on the concept of sustainability, which is the ascendant of society's consciousness and directly affects the environment and cultural values, making sustainability a prerequisite for the long-term development of the tourism sector. The main criteria for assessing the sustainable development of tourism, which should be taken into account when developing a strategy for managing the development of any region of Ukraine with the definition of environmental safety policy, current norms and requirements adapted in accordance with European standards, are determined. It is taken into account that for the effective development of tourism clusters, cooperation between the public and private sectors, as well as the active participation of local communities, is necessary. It is noted that the main types of sustainable tourism that will be developed on the territory of communities will depend on the preserved natural complexes and the state of cultivated natural spaces.*

**Keywords:** *Tourism clusters, sustainable development, tourism industry, sustainable tourism, local communities, entrepreneurship, development strategies.*

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**Classification JEL:** L83, Z32, O10.

### 1. Introduction

The growing importance of tourism and the problems that arise in the course of its functioning require a rethinking of approaches and the search for new ways to develop it. This prompts numerous attempts to adapt the principles of the sustainable development concept to the specifics of the Ukrainian tourism industry, which has enormous potential and can make a constructive contribution to the sustainable development of all regions. With its considerable resource potential, Ukraine has the opportunity to develop the tourism sector of the economy on a sustainable basis with a focus on supporting and developing tourism clusters in communities. The popularization of these types of associations is caused by the war and the deepening crisis in the country's economy, without which it is impossible to promote the concept of sustainable development in the context of post-war community recovery. In the context of post-war recovery, the concept of sustainable development of Ukraine's tourism industry will require fundamental changes, including the restoration of tourism potential and infrastructure in communities, through the formation of a new labor market segment and a new system of state regulation of tourism activities, in accordance with the concept of sustainable growth in the period of post-war reconstruction.

## 2. Literature Review

A wide range of both domestic and foreign scholars are currently studying the peculiarities and implementation of sustainable tourism priorities in Ukraine. O. Roik explores the directions of sustainable tourism development in Ukraine in the context of post-war recovery, focusing on how the country can develop its tourism industry after difficult periods [1]. V. Poplavska scientific achievements are aimed at determining the role of sustainable tourism development, focusing on its impact on mass tourism and development, as well as ways to preserve natural and cultural resources [2]. The formation of tourism clusters contributes to the creation of regional tourism brands and strengthens well-known geographical concepts, differentiated positioning of clusters in the market to increase attractiveness, marketing, productivity and management of destinations [3]. Juan B. Duarte-Duarte et al. offers a methodology for identifying tourist routes in a particular region using clustering methods. This approach helps to speed up the decision-making process related to the design and creation of routes and maximizes the potential benefits of tourism [4]. However, despite significant achievements in the study of sustainable tourism, the problem of instability and post-war recovery of the tourism sector in the territorial communities of Ukraine on a sustainable basis remains relevant and requires further study and resolution.

## 3. Methodology

To solve the tasks set out in the article, a comprehensive method was used to determine the conditions for the functioning of tourism clusters and their role in the sustainable development of communities, which, on the one hand, allowed to determine the successive stages of the formation of tourism clusters, and on the other hand, to assess the criteria for sustainable development in the implementation of the concept of sustainable tourism, a systematic approach to take into account the most important indicators for assessing sustainable tourism development, taking into account national priorities and peculiarities of the country's development in the context of interaction with the environment, economy and society; a survey method to determine the percentage of interest of travelers in sustainable and responsible tourism using a conscious approach to travel; a formalization method to determine the main priorities for the development of tourism clusters in the regions of Ukraine in the post-war period in the form of generalized.

## 4. Results and Discussion

The development of the tourism industry in Ukraine should be viewed from the perspective of introducing innovative development approaches, and therefore it requires the formation of new conditions for economic relations. The cluster approach is considered to be one of the most effective areas of economic development of the tourism sector, which takes into account the study of regional economic policy strategies, including strategic community development, economic structuring and increasing the competitiveness of products and services. The development of clusters as a trend to increase the national and regional competitiveness of communities is one of the components of the modern innovation economy.

All over the world, clusters are a promising type of activity aimed at building national competitive advantages and increasing production efficiency through vertical and horizontal integration of both individual industries and enterprises. By interacting with each other, the members of a tourism cluster receive a comprehensive, internationally competitive tourism product that cannot be obtained from the functioning of each individual element of this system. In the process of cluster development, the effect of synergy is especially evident, allowing to obtain a total effect that is not equal to the sum of the effects of the isolated functioning of each element of this system. For the

development and functioning of the tourism sector on a regional scale, the cluster synergistic effect will be achieved faster due to the close interaction and cooperation of all cluster members [5].

The effectiveness of the tourism business may be associated with the implementation of the idea of the need to coordinate the activities of all enterprises involved in the creation of tourism products and services, establishing partnerships between these enterprises, combining technologically related enterprises, searching for related and supporting enterprises to improve infrastructure, and concluding cooperation agreements [6].

The activities of tourism clusters and their role in the sustainable development of communities should take into account new methods of increasing the attractiveness of tourism products for potential travelers, innovative approaches to improving the performance of tourism and other related businesses, and new ways of managing them.

The special conditions for the functioning of tourism clusters are characterized by the following features, which are designed to ensure them:

- improvement of tourism enterprises' activities through modernization of market infrastructure;
- use of new knowledge and intensification of innovative activities of tourism enterprises in the process of providing tourism services;
- improvement of opportunities for tourism enterprises to enter global markets;
- development of business structures by attracting additional investments;
- increasing the competitiveness of tourism enterprises by increasing their income;
- achieving the expected results of tourism enterprises by improving the quality of their management;
- efficient use of intellectual, technological, financial, labor, material and other types of resources of tourism enterprises;
- improving the quality and accessibility of tourism services for consumers;
- creation of new jobs in the tourism industry;
- concentration of business activities of business entities in the tourism industry as a means of increasing the efficiency of their business activities [7].

Based on the peculiarities of the functioning of tourism clusters, some researchers propose to form a general vision of their development based on a general model of functioning, which should include certain successive stages of tourism cluster formation.

- formation of an initiative group and its goals;
- implementation of marketing research on the needs of the tourism market;
- definition of tasks, goals and objectives of the tourism cluster functioning;
- structural identification of the tourism cluster;
- approval of the cluster's regulatory documents;
- registration of the tourism cluster with the state authorities.

The basis for the functioning of tourism clusters is the state policy aimed at coordinating and professionally managing the work of such types of associations in accordance with the need for its timely, appropriate and effective functioning. In particular, the state policy should ensure social development of the population of the respective territories and science, regulation of the political situation to create conditions for the functioning of clusters, the availability of a favorable economic situation (currency, monetary, customs, tax policy, etc.), as well as proper regulatory and legal support for the activities of clusters in the state [8].

The functioning of tourism clusters as part of the tourism industry is now increasingly dependent on the concept of sustainability, which is the growing awareness of the impact of tourism on the environment and cultural values that make sustainability a prerequisite for the long-term development of the tourism sector. Sustainable tourism, which takes into account environmental and

socio-cultural aspects, is key to the development of tourism in the future. It helps to preserve natural resources and support local communities, which is key to the long-term success of the industry [9].

To monitor the effectiveness of the implementation of the sustainable tourism concept, UNWTO [10] recommends assessing the following factors that have the greatest impact on it, namely seasonality, employment, economic contribution of tourism activities to local budgets, governance, level of satisfaction with the life of the local population, effective management of energy consumption, water resources, wastewater and solid waste. However, each country is a complex ecosystem with its own individual characteristics, which necessitates the development of indicators to assess sustainable tourism development based on national priorities.

The following criteria are used to assess sustainable development [11]:

- the level of actual employment of the population. The higher the level of social and economic well-being, the higher the employment rate;
- the Human Development Index (HDI) includes GDP per capita, educational level, and health status of the population. The HDI serves as an indicator of the social well-being of a society;
- environmental Performance Index (EPI), which includes 32 indicators in 11 categories. First of all, it is about the quality of air and drinking water, climate change and biodiversity.

The development of a strategy for managing the development of any region of Ukraine should be based on an environmental safety policy, the current norms and requirements of which should be adapted in accordance with European standards. In this regard, it is necessary to analyze the positive experience gained by the international community in the field of theoretical, methodological, and practical principles of rationalizing the use of natural and resource potential of tourism in the regions; to explore ways to optimize the functioning of the ecological and economic system to preserve the quality of the environment in communities [12].

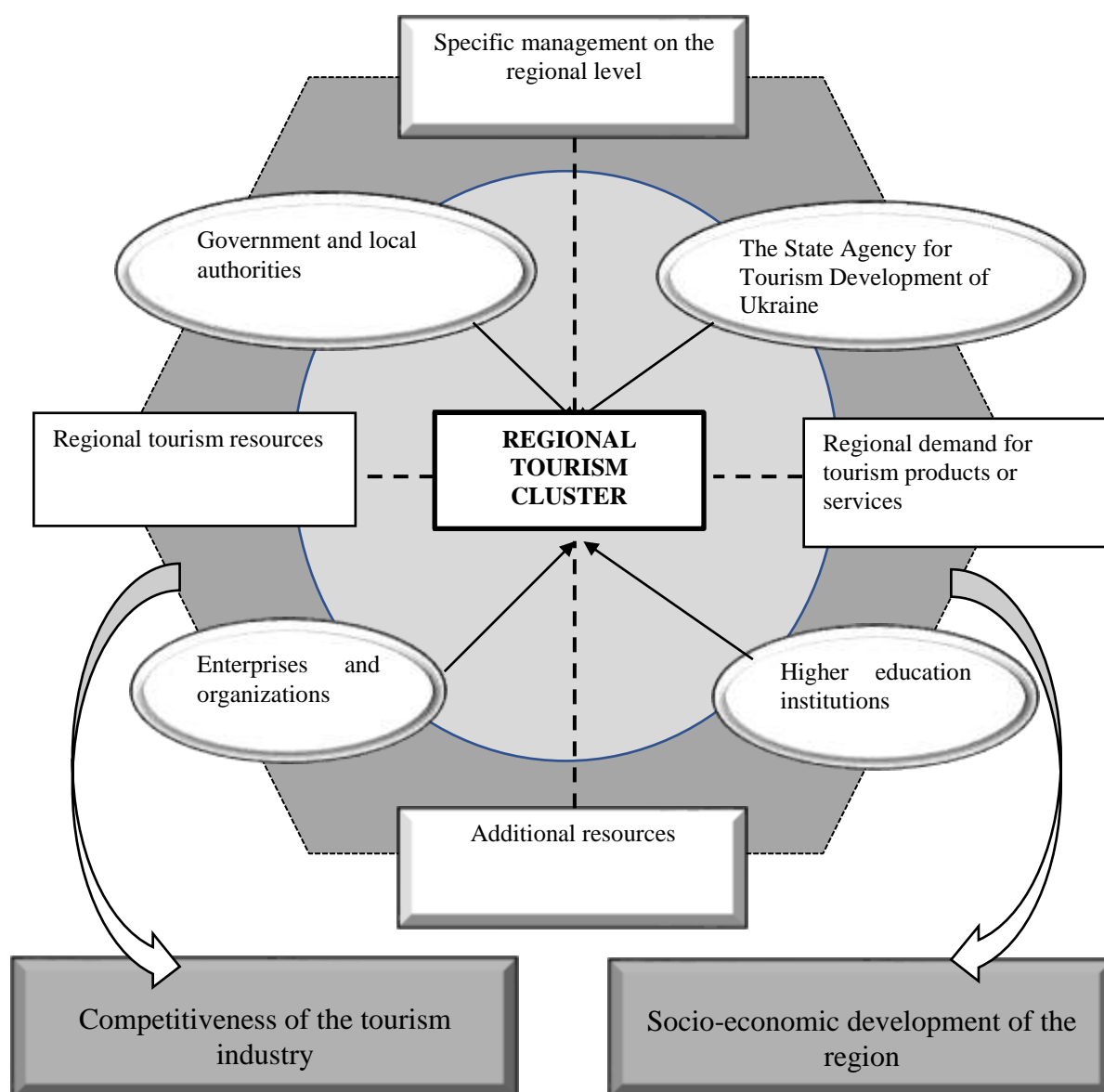
In 2023, Booking.com surveyed 33,228 respondents from 35 countries and territories. This study was the largest to date and showed that interest in sustainable tourism remains high among travelers around the world. Three quarters (74%) of travelers believe that we need to start taking a more conscious approach to traveling immediately to preserve the planet for future generations. Moreover, 74% of respondents would also like to see travel companies offer more responsible travel options (up from 66% in 2022) [13].

Nowadays, there are many different models of sustainable tourism development, but they do not fully reflect the factors and indicators that ensure the sustainability of tourism. Increasing the effectiveness of community development in Ukraine is possible through the creation and operation of regional tourism clusters, which will contribute to their regional development and improve their competitive advantages. The development and attractiveness of the community's tourism sector depend on its resource potential, in particular the specifics of the tourism service, which is manifested in the significant role of a person in the process of its provision (Figure 1).

When considering the regions of Ukraine in the post-war period, the model of sustainable tourism should emphasize the following points already at the stage of weak sustainability [14]:

- calculation of the optimal recreational load on different types of natural complexes;
- determination of the stage of degradation of natural complexes and development of measures to restore natural complexes;
- reclamation of waste dumps and renovation of industrial spaces to create cultivated recreational and tourist areas on them, taking into account innovative trends;
- use of environmental technologies in industry, agriculture, and construction;

- creation of an ecological and recreational framework, as well as a change in the ratio of industrial, rural and recreational (1:2:3) territories towards an increase in the share of the latter (1:2:5);
- restoring the population's health and increasing its life expectancy.



**Figure 1. Scheme of regional tourism cluster development in Ukraine**

*Source: developed by authors*

It is also necessary to determine what types of sustainable tourism should be developed in the territory of communities, depending on the preservation of natural complexes and the state of cultivated natural spaces.

## 5. Conclusions

The key role of tourism clusters in the sustainable development of communities is to stimulate entrepreneurial activity in the tourism sector, promote the creation of new jobs, increase



local incomes and revenues, and improve the quality of tourism products. The functioning of tourism clusters also contributes to the wider introduction of innovative and information and communication technologies, as well as to improving the skills and intellectual potential of tourism industry employees. Thus, the development of tourism clusters is an important factor for the economic and social development of communities.

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