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Maria Sahakyan,
Armenian State University of Economics, Armenia
Arzik Suvaryan,
Russian-Armenian University, Armenia
Malgorzata Borkowska-Niszczoła,
Białystok University of Technology, Poland
Elzbieta Szymanska,
Białystok University of Technology, Poland

THE FORMATION AND DEVELOPMENT OF TOURIST CLUSTERS: CASE OF POLAND AND ARMENIA

Abstract. *The purpose of this article is to analyse the theoretical and practical basis for tourism cluster formation considering the similarities and differences of Poland and Armenia. The hypothesis assumes that despite the differences between the two countries, the cluster model does not show significant differences. The information for this study was obtained through various secondary sources, particularly, official statistical reports, Government programs of Armenia and Poland. In order to fill the information gap in official statistics in Armenia, sector observations were organized through online and off-line interviews with state representatives of the tourism sphere governance. As a result, the collected information was used to show existing models in Poland and to create a proposed tourism cluster models in Armenia. In Poland, especially it's Eastern part formation and development of clusters in the tourism sphere has become very popular, which is evidenced by constantly emerging new structures. It is important to note that the leading role of tourist cluster development in Poland has non-governmental organizations. Besides, taking into account the clustering experience authors have found that the role of self-government authorities in cluster structures in Poland should be increased because they are responsible for their community development through partnership and cooperation within tourist clusters. The main peculiarity of the suggested cluster model concept for Armenia is that the authors consider the role of cluster's coordinating body, which should be collegial including either state bodies, or university and private sector representatives. Though there are different initial conditions and economic situations in these countries, the case study of tourism clusters of Poland and the analysis of clustering potential of Armenia has shown that some of the successful experience will become an example for both of these countries. Armenia can use the experience of cluster coordinating body development in Poland and, at the same time, share positive initiatives of transnational cluster formation, as this type of clusters was not very productive in Poland.*

Keywords: clustering, tourism, cluster structure, competitiveness, cooperation, sustainable development.

Introduction. Nowadays, when the globalization affects almost every area of human life when borders are opened and almost any tourist destination becomes accessible, the competition between countries offering tourist services becomes quite tough. Under the conditions of tough competition and tourist services demand growth successful tourist destinations need to develop effective models for the tourist markets. This will allow developing countries and new tourism destinations to occupy a niche in the world market of tourist services.

On one hand, developing countries try to success in tourism sphere to improve economic indicators. The development of tourism in regions contributes to the increase of GDP, employment, foreign currency inflows. Tourism allows improvement of the balance of payments and leads to the development of infrastructure. Also, tourism promotes social and economic integration and contributes to peace in the region. On the other hand, the cluster approach has become very popular not only in manufacturing but also in the tourism industry. Tourism cluster is considered as an effective tool for the development of a region and its competitiveness increase. Armenian official bodies have been trying to contribute to the

tourism sphere by prioritizing since the early 2000s, but still, there are a number of problems to solve, which needs overall study and analysis. Hence, the need for scientific research in this area is obvious.

Thus, the purpose of this article is to study theoretical and practical approaches to the formation of a tourism cluster, taking into account two different economies represented by different countries such as Armenia and Poland. The hypothesis assumes that despite the differences between the two countries, the cluster model does not show significant differences.

Literature Review. The initial idea of a "cluster" is ascribed to Marshall (1961), although Porter is defined as a founder of cluster theory because he made applicable for definite industries. According to M. Porter, the cluster is a geographically concentrated group of interrelated companies, specialized suppliers, service providers, companies in relevant industries, as well as organizations associated with their activities (i.e. universities, standardization agencies, trade associations) in certain areas which compete, but also cooperate (Porter, 1998). Boundaries of the cluster may differ from the boundaries of administrative regions, the country and even go beyond traditional industries (Lagos and Curtis, 2008). Some experts believe that the cluster is a brand created by the founder of this theory Porter, and even call it the "Porter brand" (Martin and Sunley, 2003).

Hence, in economics "cluster" is a group of companies forming links and alliances, but at the same time, these companies selectively compete in a certain respect and still cooperate in other spheres (Nordin, 2003). Clustering leads to significant positive results such as synergy effect, productivity growth, increase of the competitiveness and innovation boost. Cluster structures can be very diverse, in particular with regard to the economic potential of the participating companies (Holub-Iwan, 2012). Other factors that may differentiate them and affect the development level and effectiveness of the cluster are presented in Table 1.

Table 1. Characteristics differentiating clusters and determining their typology (classification)

Features of the clusters 1	Description 2
The degree of self-awareness of the cluster	acting – members are aware of operating within the cluster and able to exploit its potential as well as to achieve higher results than a simple sum of results of individual entities; latent – they exist, but the opportunities are not yet used and synergies achieved, they lack a shared vision, lack of knowledge transfer, entities do not perceive themselves as members of the cluster; potential – they could come into existence, but the key conditions are not yet met, e.g., an insufficient number of subjects and weak ties, lack of valuable resources
The duration of operation	"younger clusters" of 1-3 years, "the older clusters" four years and more
The size, number of members (potential power)	dense clusters – consisting of a large number of companies, some of which may be large; rare clusters – consisting of a small number of companies, more often from the MS sector; large clusters (over 61 entities); medium clusters (29 to 60 entities); small clusters (up to 28 members)
Territorial scope (the focus of the cluster)	the cluster is closely linked to the territory in which it operates, it is rooted regionally; depending on the location of interrelated entities forming the cluster; we distinguish the following clusters; local – within the municipality; supralocal – exceeding the municipality, including the poviat or neighbouring poviats; regional and supraregional – exceeding the area of the region, national, supranational (cross-border, international)
The structure of the cluster	clusters should bring together the following categories of participants: business entities (enterprises), supporting entities, educational and research and development institutions, the local authorities
The form of initiation of the business activity	as part of a grassroots initiative – through the private sector entities, without formal support from the public authorities; as a part of the top-down initiative – through the units outside the corporate sector, i.e., non-profit institutions, representatives of the science and R&D as well as public sector; the mixed initiative – under the agreement between entrepreneurs and representatives of institutions outside the business
Funding of the initiative at an early stage of the cluster development	private financing by the cluster members (membership fees) and with the public funds under clusters' development support programs

Continue Table 1

1	2
Involvement of the coordinator (broker of the cluster)	having a broker or without a broker; the broker is responsible for organizing and facilitating contacts between the cluster members, supports the development by providing access to resources, assistance in contacts with the environment, creates favourable conditions for the entities in the cluster
Organizational and legal form of activity	agreement consortium, association, foundation, company, cooperative, business organization, the agreement of members (partnership agreement)
Cluster's development phase or Cycle of life	nucleus stage – the idea of a cluster is shaped; stabilization – the revival of entrepreneurial activities; maturity – the cluster reaches a maximum development potential; transformation – Inhibition of cluster initiatives; decline – losses are reflected in the cluster / nucleus – the cooperation begins to be created; growth – develop and have room for further development; mature – stable educated forms for which further growth is hard to achieve; declining – reached their peak of development and begin to shrink
The cluster development model	Italian model – decentralized form without the network broker, no formal structure, relationships based on mutual trust; relationships between companies initiated by the owners; Danish model – centralized form in which a network broker is present, Dutch model – centralized form in which a network broker is present - usually a public institution, i.e., a research laboratory, university or public administration, strong cooperation with R&D units, the emphasis on innovation, active government policy; American model – co-operation of large companies hierarchically connected with many small enterprises; the model appropriate for transnational initiatives, no network broker exists and the impact of power is weak
The number of horizontally related sectors	narrow and wide (the number of areas of activity in the cluster)
The purpose of functioning	purposes are the result of needs and circumstances; they are usually diverse; the directions and dynamics of cluster development processes depend on the clearly defined objectives and their implementation
The effects of co-operation and the degree of activity	marketing activities, raising the competence of the members or preparation of joint market offers; the level of activity can be measured by the number of completed projects (or the number of joint products)
The ability to create jobs	clusters with growing, stable or declining employment
Competitive position	global, national, average, poor
Measurable benefits from the operation	determine the strength, the position of the cluster, its development abilities with regard to attracting further entities, mainly business (e.g., improving qualifications of the employees, attracting customers, increase in sales, implementation of innovation, cost reduction)
The importance of technology / The innovation capacity	clusters of high, medium, low technologies / highly or lowly innovative clusters

Sources: own study based on: (Grzoch, 2012; Holub-Iwan, 2012; Staszewska, 2009; Enright, 2001; Borkowska-Niszczoła, 2015).

Recently, more and more scientists use cluster concept for tourism sphere in order to promote competitiveness and innovation in this sphere (Nordin, 2003; Fundeanu, 2015). In the literature, a number of definitions of the tourism cluster concept, and the industrial cluster can be encountered. Some emphasize its components and the basic features, other consistency of purposes of the cluster members and the need for the companies to cooperate during networking. The tourism cluster can be defined, as in the words of Kachniewska (Kachniewska, 2013), as "an active network of tourism products manufacturers, supporting their entrepreneurs of other industries, tourism organizations, local authorities and the local governments, business environment institutions, educational and expert facilities (universities, R&D institutions), working together under a particular brand (brand of a tourist product), and at the same time competing with each other in terms of the quality, innovation, and uniqueness of the offered services". This definition refers to the first cluster definition formulated by Porter (2000). Tourism clusters are seen as geographic groupings of interconnected businesses, suppliers and service providers or companies operating in the tourism sector and institutions connected to them (e.g. universities or trade groups or

financial institutions), which compete and cooperate with each other at the same time (Skowronek, 2015). Beni, on the other hand, argues that "a tourism cluster is a defined group of tourist attractions occurring in the area, delivered by high-quality equipment and services, politically and sociologically consistent, where a marriage between the production chain and cultural aspects occurs, organized on the basis of professional management, and as a result, forming a unified and competitive network of organizations with a significant strategic advantage" (Beni, 2003). Summing up, a tourism cluster is a group of companies and institutions connected through a common product or several tourism products. In clusters, we can encounter a combined potential of the private sector, the R&D sector and the public sector. The cooperation of these three important parties is the driving force of the cluster (Staszewska, 2009).

Taking into account, that tourism industry in Armenia mainly consists of representatives of SMEs, which have limited financial, human and other resources, we analyse tourism clusters of countries and regions with same or approximately same peculiarities.

In Western Europe, tourist clusters are quite competitive. There are approximately 13 macro clusters (including 1000 or more firms) that are located in the capital cities London, Paris, Rome, Madrid, as well as in such destinations as Barcelona, Palma de Mallorca. 392 clusters in Europe include more than 100 enterprises, and 471 include 50-100 firms (Capone, 2016, p. 95).

The peculiarity of the tourism industry in Italy is that, as in some other Western European countries, small and medium businesses predominate, only 3% of organizations are considered large (1000 or more workers) (Babalola et al., 2011). At the same time, logistics ties and cooperation of local administrations and businesses are underdeveloped here. Thus, although Italy is one of the leaders of international tourism, however tourism clusters are only emerging.

The administration of the Zilina region on the North-West of Slovakia cooperating with the local university and other interested institutions in 2005 began work on the project "Innovative policy of Zilina", which is part of the Regional Innovation Strategy of the Zilina region. Part of this strategy is also the project "Clusters and partnership" (Szekely, 2010, pp.115-116).

Among the tourist clusters of Great Britain, the following are more interesting: the Healthy Lifestyle Tourism Cluster, the Scottish Tourist Cluster, the London Tourist Cluster and the Rural Tourism Cluster Project. The last one is part of the Welsh Village Plan development and is funded by the Welsh government and the European Agricultural Fund for Rural Development. To study the specifics of the coordination and financing of the tourism cluster in the UK, one can consider the Scottish experience where the tourist cluster is sponsored and managed by the following associations: the Scottish Tourism Alliance, the Visit Scotland, the Scottish Enterprise, the Association of Scottish Visitor Attractions, representing the private sector in particular ("Industrial revolutions: capturing the growth potential", p. 48).

Some tourist destinations use a different format of cooperation, which, is a combination of the private and public sectors for the realization of only one goal. This goal can be, for example, marketing or promotion of a tourist destination. To implement an effective marketing policy in the high-altitude resort of Saas-Fee-Switzerland, this is the method of cooperation. In the past, Saas-Fee was a fairly well-known and popular resort, but in recent years, the total number of overnight stays has decreased by 40%, which is the result of weak positioning of the tourist brand and outdated infrastructure (Stettler, 2016). To solve these problems, as well as to increase the competitiveness of the resort, local DMOs have developed the Marketing Engine program, which is unique in that its implementation and is not limited to the implementation of online marketing or digital marketing campaigns. This program also allows tracking every potential customer who is interested in a local tourist product, to reveal its demographic characteristics, interests, preferences, etc. Thus, a kind of database of all guests and potential clients is formed, which allows developing jointly with other databases (statistics of overnight stays, hotel occupancy, length of rest, etc.) a more effective strategy of promoting a local tourist product on the international and national market.

Thus, as most of the tourist destinations in Armenia have no DMOs, this experience can have a positive influence, if applied in Armenia.

Materials and Methods. The information for this study was obtained through various secondary sources, particularly, official statistical reports, Government programs of the Republic of Armenia and the Republic of Poland.

For the evaluation of opportunity for Armenian tourism cluster development authors used some official program drafts which are "Armenian Tourism Cluster Strategic Action Plan" proposed by Competitive Armenian Private Sector – CAPS and "Strategic Project of the Southern Corridor of Tourism of Armenia" developed by the National Competitiveness Foundation of Armenia. Besides, in order to fill the information gap in official statistics in Armenia, sector observations were organized through online and off-line interviews with state representatives of the tourism sphere governance.

To answer the problem question: what cluster structures are currently operating in Eastern Poland, and how their functioning is presented, the method of secondary sources analysis was used (desk research). The main sources of information included the cluster catalogues of various regions created by the Polish Agency for Enterprise Development (PARP) as a part of the 'Polish clusters and cluster policy' undertaking ("Portal innowacji. Klastry") websites of the identified cluster structures (or their coordinators), and a scientific publication on one of the clusters (Roman and Zawadka, 2010). When identifying clusters (apart from the cluster catalogues) additionally the Map of clusters in Poland – a database on local clusters, maintained by PARP ("Portal innowacji. Klastry"), and the publication containing a list of clusters (Grzoch, 2012) were used. The study was conducted during December 2014 - February 2015 period and repeated in 2017 in all of Polish Regions (Voivodships).

Results. Cluster cooperation in the field of tourism in Eastern Poland is very popular, which is evidenced by constantly emerging new structures. All regions exhibit activity in the creation of this type of relationships. It should be noted a very large impact of non-governmental organizations on the development of clusters. The interest in clusters as one of the basic tools of activating the development of regions means that in Eastern Poland the contemporary challenges and mechanisms of an economy based on innovative growth is well understood.

Currently, there are 40 tourism clusters in Poland (data from 2017). The figure (Fig.1.) shows the years in which Polish tourism clusters were formed and their number. The figure shows that the largest development of cluster initiatives in Poland took place in 2011-2013. In recent years, single structures have been created.

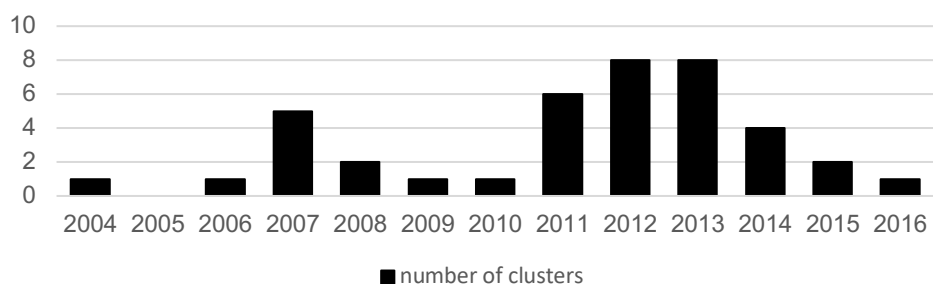


Figure 1. Years of initiating tourism clusters functioning in Poland and their number

Source: own elaboration based on Cluster catalogues prepared by the Polish Agency for Enterprise Development (PARP) for each region and the Map of clusters in Poland (Portal innowacji, Klastry)

A comparative analysis of the functioning of tourism clusters in the macro-region of Eastern Poland in the years 2014-2015 (Borkowska-Niszczota, 2015), covering 5 Voivodships – Podlasie, Warmian-Masurian, Podkarpackie, Lubelskie and Swietokrzyskie Voivodships was made. The results of the conducted research allowed for indicating the common as well as differentiating features of the identified clusters, their strengths and weaknesses of functioning, and determining threats. Based on the conducted studies 16 tourism clusters operating in the Eastern Poland Macro-region were identified. Tourism clusters are present in each of the five regions (as a rooting region). Many tourism clusters go with their range beyond the primary region of rooting.

One cluster has a transnational range, since in its structure, apart from representatives of the two regions of Eastern Poland, entities from Lithuanian and Belarus are included.

The most common organizational and legal form of tourism clusters is an association. 9 clusters function within this form. The remaining 7 operate on the basis of the members' agreement (partnership agreement), which is the freest form of cooperation between entities in the pursuit of a common goal.

Taking into consideration the current number of members these include mostly medium-sized (8 clusters) and large (6 clusters) structures. The constant change of the number of the clusters' members indicates that tourism clusters are continuously evolving.

In the structure of clusters, among all the entities, enterprises (micro, medium and small) are predominant. The conducted analysis of the collected data shows that economic structure is correct and complete only in 4 clusters. Basic groups that should be represented in the structures operate within their framework: companies, support institutions, entities of the science and R&D sector, and representatives of local authorities. In the subsequent four clusters, only the members of the research units are missing, whereas in 5 other – the authorities. The remaining 3 clusters create networks only of enterprises and support institutions.

Initiatives for the appointment of cluster structures were various. The largest number of clusters (10 structures) was established as part of a top-down initiative, whereas 8 of them were initiated by the representatives of the non-governmental sector, and 2 – of the science sector. Only 4 clusters were created from the bottom up, on the initiative of business representatives. Within the mixed initiative 2 structures were created.

Each of the tourism clusters has its own network broker (coordinator). In the case of 10 clusters (generated from a top-down initiative), the initiator is also the coordinator of the cluster. These were different entities (Local Action Group, Foundation, Associations, Local tourist organizations, the Chamber of Agriculture and Tourism, University or a Science Park). In the case of 2 clusters created on mixed initiatives, the function of the coordinator is executed by the newly created Association. In 4 clusters appointed bottom-up the role of the coordinator is played by another non-governmental organization (association), a newly formed association (in two cases), or a business representative who is a member of the cluster. Due to the fact that in the case of 4 tourism clusters participation of authorities, as well as R&D units, is clearly visible, they can be compared to the Dutch cluster model. The remaining 12 are similar to the clusters in the Danish model. Objectives and areas of operation of tourism clusters are very diverse. Most structures (12 clusters) set the expansion of the tourist offer on the basis of the available resources through the creation and promotion of new tourism products as the main objective (Borkowska-Niszczota, 2015).

The analysis of tourism clusters in Eastern Poland indicates that there is no uniform model of their functioning. There are similarities, but also significant differences. The only part of them corresponds with the classical model of cluster functioning.

The classical model of the tourism cluster should consist of the following elements:

– Business representatives – constituting the basis for the operation of a cluster, entities of the tourism sector and entities supporting the sector which provide tourism and complementary services

constituting the basis for the operation of the cluster (entities which provide hotel and catering services, travel agencies and other tour operators, tourist attractions and entities offering transport services). Their presence in a cluster ensures that they can develop correctly, improve and create new solutions in the scope of services for the tourist movement and that they meet the quality level of services offered by other entities in a given production chain by creating a uniform service standard. Therefore, it is important for these links in the chain to exchange information and implement joint projects aimed at tourism development or joint promotion (Szostak, 2016).

– Regional and local authorities – as the host of a given area they should create the best conditions for cooperation among the associated entities, stimulating contacts among them; there are many arguments for the direct involvement of public authorities in cluster initiatives, in particular, tourism related ones. The actions of territorial self-government units are of decisive importance for the creation of local and regional tourism products, combining the services of providers of the direct tourism economy and para-tourism services. It is on them that the structure and quality of offers in the area which they manage depends (Panasiuk, 2016). The participation of authorities ensures the stability of the system of linkages and it is often instrumental in inducing decisions to join a cluster. The large presence of territorial self-government units in a cluster is its strength and a key factor of its success (Staszewska, 2009).

– Research units – which carry out research on the tourism market and tourism products, identifying innovative solutions implemented by a cluster and engaged in building new models of cooperation within the cluster. The research done by scientific centres enables the identification of market niches and the creation of specialised tourism products suitable for them; R&D and training institutions are one of the most important elements of the cluster, perfecting, complementing and enriching its activities, allow strategic planning of enterprises at the local, regional and international levels (Drzewiecka, 2014).

– Business environment and supporting institutions – innovation centres (e.g. science and technology parks, innovation units, technology incubators), entrepreneurship centres (foundations and associations, chambers of commerce, employers' associations etc.) and non-bank financing institutions which meet entrepreneurs' needs in the scope of innovative entrepreneurship in all its dimensions, inspire entrepreneurs to cooperate and mobilise resources for promoting the idea of clustering and for implementing specific tangible tasks of clusters, such as new technologies or new products.

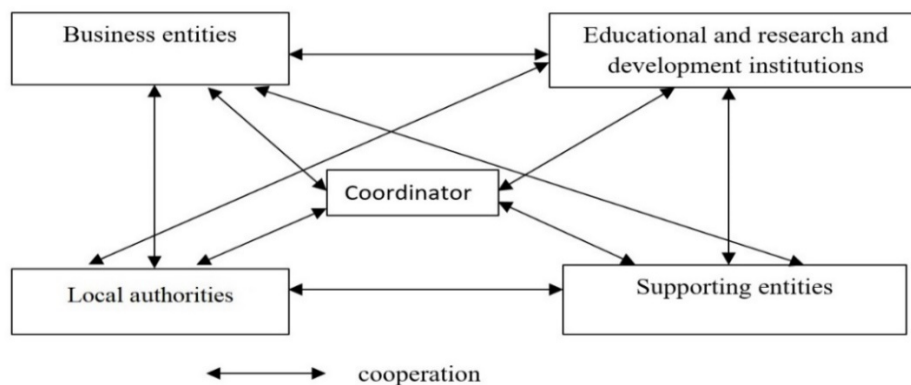


Figure 2. Classical model of tourism cluster

Source: own elaboration.

In addition to the abovementioned core entities which make up the classical cluster concept, the structure of a tourism cluster can include non-profit organizations. Their role only consists in promoting actions to develop tourism, to build a positive image of a region as one which is attractive in terms of tourism and to promote regional tourism products, in particular, the offers of the tourism cluster (Dyrda-Macialek, 2010).

Examples of the classical model of tourism cluster in Poland's territory include the Innovative Health and Tourism Cluster "Spas – Pearls of Eastern Poland" ("Uzdrowiska – Perły Polski Wschodniej"). It was established under the Agreement of 2009. The spa related cluster initiative has a wider than regional range. It was joined by entrepreneurs and local governments from 5 spa municipalities in Podkarpackie and Swietokrzyskie Voivodships, universities – the University of Information Technology and Management in Rzeszow (the coordinator) and the University of Management and Administration in Zamosc, as well as two units with an advisory character, supporting business projects, i.e. the Association for the Promotion of Entrepreneurship in Rzeszow and the Business Support Centre (Centrum Wspierania Biznesu Sp. z o.o.) in Rzeszow. In 2011, it already consisted of 35 entities from 3 Voivodships: Podkarpackie, Swietokrzyskie and Lubelskie. Since January 2012 the cluster coordinator has been the Association of the Innovative Health and Tourism Cluster "Spas – the Pearls of Eastern Poland" ("Uzdrowiska-Perły Polski Wschodniej"). The aims of the cluster include the development of spa-based medical treatment and tourism, coupled with ecotourism, active and cultural tourism (Kignet. Innowacje).

A relatively new cluster which was established at the end of 2013 is the Cluster of Swietokrzyskie Spas. Its agreement was signed by 25 institutions. The cluster members include entrepreneurs, research units, scientific institutions, business environment institutions, territorial self-government units, cultural institutions, foundations taking actions for the development and promotion of pro-health tourism. The cluster coordinator is the Swietokrzyskie Centrum Innowacji i Transferu Technologii Sp. z o.o. (Swietokrzyskie Centre for Innovation and Technology Transfer L.L.C – in Polish) (Swietokrzyskie Centrum Innowacji i Transferu Technologii, Aktualnosci. Zawiązanie Klastra Uzdrowiska Swietokrzyskie).

The opportunities and prospects for the growth of the tourism industry make most countries think about the development of clusters to overcome competition in the international market. At the same time, the tourism industry of Armenia includes a lot of small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs), and in order to achieve competitive advantages and to support national producers of tourism services, clustering is one of the best options.

The review and analysis of theoretical materials and practical experience of developed and developing countries we suggest to implement clustering mechanism in the tourism sphere. This will contribute to the improvement of quantitative and qualitative indicators assisting in marketing, branding, service quality improvement.

First steps of the tourism cluster development in Armenia were undertaken in 2007 by the CAPS (Competitive Armenian Private Sector) program funded by USAID (the US Agency for International Development). CAPS proposed the Armenian Tourism Cluster Strategic Action Plan which stated that Armenia's competitiveness in the sphere of tourism would be enhanced with the cluster-based approach. Armenian Tourism Cluster includes all interested "players" like tour operators, hotels, airlines, guides, restaurants and producers of souvenirs, labour, customers, government, professional associations, research institutions and academic sphere. The Tourism Cluster Strategic Action Plan had not been implemented because of the global economic crisis. The National Competitiveness Foundation of Armenia presented the "Strategic Project of the Southern Corridor of Tourism of Armenia" to the Government of the Republic of Armenia in 2011. This project also proposed clusters development around tourism destinations – Yeghegnadzor, Jermuk, Goris, Sisian and "Tatev cluster" around the monastery complex Tatev. This project had the same fortune as the previous one.

Taking into account the theoretical basis of tourist clusters and the international experience in this field authors have proposed the conceptual model of tourist cluster in Armenia. As Armenia's economy and territory is small, most of the tourist organizations are small or medium-sized and the financial resources are limited authors tend to believe that there should be one tourist cluster. Besides, the authors suggested the structure of the tourism cluster. According to the experience of leading, tourist destinations cluster is coordinated by a representative of the private sector. However, as the size and resources of domestic tourism industry organizations are very limited, authors consider the leading role of the collegial coordinating body. State Tourism Committee of Armenia is responsible for the development and promotion of Armenian tour product. As tourism cluster management is more effective if it is held by a collegial coordinating body, authors suggest involving all stakeholders in this body. Thus, the proposed tourism cluster model for Armenia is shown in Figure 3.

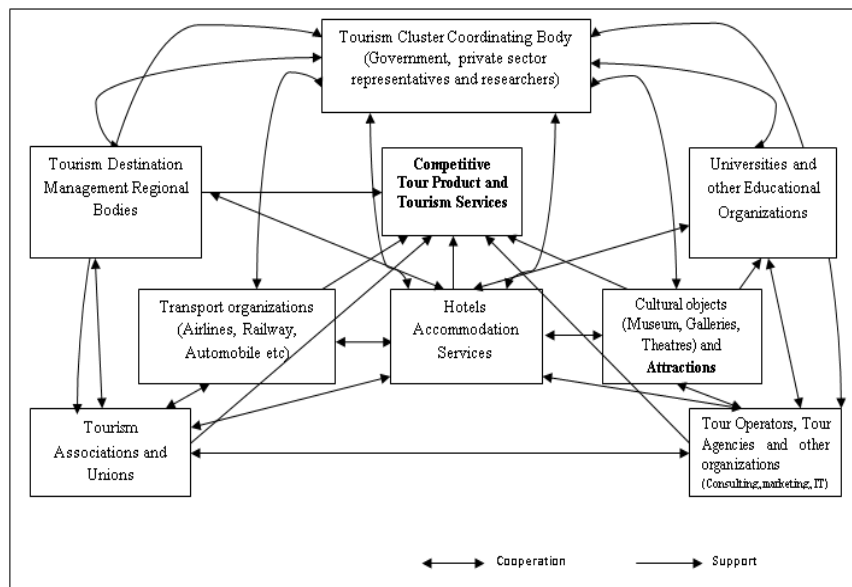


Figure 3. Tourism cluster: The proposed model for Armenia

Source: own elaboration.

The main peculiarity of the proposed cluster model is that the coordinating body is collegial and involves government representatives, private sector leading organizations' and associations' representatives and academics.

Besides, the tourism cluster involves:

- Tourism Destination Management Regional bodies;
- Tourism Associations and Unions;
- Hotels and other Accommodations;
- Tour Operators, Tour Agencies, Consulting, Marketing, IT organizations;
- Museums, Galleries, Theatres;
- Transport Organizations;
- Universities and Research Institutions.

All these organizations cooperate with each other and simultaneously support to coordinating body in order to create a competitive tour product and promote it on the international market of tourist services.

As indicated by the earlier analysis, in Poland there is no single model of the functioning of tourism clusters. Taking into account their structure, only some of them correspond with the classical cluster model. Both the cluster model concepts for Armenia and tourism clusters in Poland combine the potential of both the private, research and development and public sectors. Certainly, this will contribute to the socio-economic development, improve competitiveness and mobilize additional resources for the development of new products and services.

As a rule, Polish tourism clusters have a regional character, but they also include structures with a higher than regional range. A supranational cluster has also been initiated (with partners from Lithuania and Belarus), unfortunately, at present, it shows no activity. In the case of Armenia, there are two cluster concepts: one provides for the creation of one large national cluster or a cluster with a supranational range including the neighbouring countries. The other concept consists in the creation of several smaller clusters in the country, aimed at the development of specific forms of tourism activities (related to culture, agritourism, ecotourism). It should be noted that in Poland there are already clusters dedicated to a specific type of tourism (e.g. the Okopski Agritourism Cluster), spa tourism (the Cluster of Swietokrzyskie Spas, the Innovative Health and Tourism Cluster "Spas – the Pearls of Eastern Poland", the Cluster of Tourism and Regional Development "The Sun of the Region").

The activity of self-government authorities in cluster structures is important. As entities representing tourism destinations on the tourism market, territorial self-government units should play a basic role in the partnership and cooperation on the tourism market. The comprehensive cooperation of entities representing the supply on the tourism market, including self-government, provides the basis for the creation of tourism offers (Panasiuk, 2016). Unfortunately, the members of certain Polish clusters do not include self-government authorities (which often act as external partners). The cluster concepts for Armenia provide for the participation of these units.

It is also important to provide for an entity which will coordinate the actions of the cluster. The presence of coordinators contributes to the quicker emergence of benefits which are characteristic of clusters (e.g. due to the organization of contacts, communication and flow of information). The coordinators' role is to ensure specific benefits for the cluster members (e.g. access to information, training and advice) (Dzierzanowski et al., 2011). In the case of Poland, all the clusters have their coordinator. As a rule, the representatives of the nongovernmental sector play the role of a coordinator. They include Local Action Groups, Foundations, Associations, Local Tourist Organizations, Science and Technology Parks or Universities. The coordinating and governing body proposed for Armenia would consist of representatives of all the stakeholders (representatives of the government administration, the private sector, non-profit organizations, representatives of education and science). Both Polish and proposed clusters for Armenia are mainly focused on creating an innovative and competitive tourism product.

Conclusions. Although, much work and effort are applied to create tourism clusters in Armenia, still there is not a one. Through analysis of various tourism clusters in Poland showed that a unique model must be developed for each region or country, authors believe that the positive experience of Polish tourism clusters can become an example and a practical model for Armenia. The authors have elaborated tourism cluster conceptual model and proposed its main participants, as well as the peculiarities of the coordinating authority.

Cluster cooperation in the field of tourism in Eastern Poland is very popular, which is evidenced by constantly emerging new structures. It should be noted a very large impact of non-governmental organizations on the development of clusters. All structures are characterized by having a coordinator. The entities acting as coordinators are very varied. The clusters show great diversity when taking into account the territorial scope of the action. The clusters were created in different initiatives. Their organizational and legal form is an association or partnership agreement. The clusters have also shown significant differences in the ownership structure. The weaknesses of some of the clusters include the lack

of representatives of R&D and science entities in their structure. A threat to the continued functioning of many tourism clusters may be the rather forced top-down nature of the appointment of structures, and the lack of local government representatives within the structure.

The comparative analysis showed the similarities of selected Eastern Poland clusters and the concept for Armenia, namely: combining the potentials of all sectors, differentiated coverage, focusing on the development of specific tourism activities and forms of tourism, the presence of a coordinator, a tourism product as one of the main goals of functioning. The analysis also showed the differences between the cluster concepts for these two countries: the authority as a coordinating entity composed of representatives of all sectors in the case of Armenia, and representatives of the non-governmental sector or the research and development sector in the case of Poland.

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M. Саакян, Вірменський державний економічний університет (Вірменія);

A. Суварян, Російсько-вірменський університет (Вірменія);

M. Борковська-Нішчота, Білостокський технологічний університет (Польща);

E. Шиманська, Білостокський технологічний університет (Польща).

Формування та розвиток туристичних кластерів: приклад Польщі та Вірменії

Метою статті є аналіз теоретичних та практичних аспектів формування туристичних кластерів в Польщі та Вірменії, з урахуванням подібностей та відмінностей досліджуваних країн. Авторами висунуто гіпотезу про подібність туристичних кластерних моделей обох аналізованих країн, незважаючи на наявні економічні відмінності між ними. Інформаційну базу дослідження склали дані офіційних статистичних звітів, державних статистичних сайтів Вірменії та Польщі, результати опитування. При цьому опитування було проведено для респондентів Вірменії через онлайн та офлайн-інтерв'ю державних представників сфери туризму. У результаті проведеного

дослідження авторами систематизовано існуючі кластерні моделі у Польщі, на основі яких було розроблено моделі туристичних кластерів, що можуть бути впровадженні у вірменській практиці. У статті визначено, що туристичні кластери набули значної популярності в Польщі, особливо в її східній частині. При цьому провідну роль у розвитку польських туристичних кластерів відіграють неурядові організації. На основі проведеного аналізу досвіду кластеризації автори встановили, що роль органів самоврядування в кластерних структурах у Польщі повинна бути посилена шляхом зміцнення партнерства між громадськістю, органами державної влади та бізнес-сектором в рамках розвитку туристичних кластерів. За результатами дослідження було запропоновано кластерну модель для Вірменії, основною особливістю якої є наявність координаційного органу у кластері, який є колегіальним та включає державні органи влади, представників університету та приватного сектору. Автори зазначають, що отримані результати дослідження щодо формування туристичних кластерів в Польщі та аналіз потенціалу кластеризації у Вірменії є корисними для обох країн, хоча стартові умови та економічна ситуація аналізованих країн є різною. Так, Вірменія може адаптувати польський досвід розвитку координаційного органу у туристичному кластері. При цьому для Польщі необхідними є вивчення та адаптація вірменського досвіду щодо формування мотиваційних механізмів розвитку транснаціональних кластерів, оскільки функціонування даного кластеру у Польщі є неефективним.

Ключові слова: кластеризація, туризм, кластерна структура, конкурентоспроможність, співробітництво, сталий розвиток.

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