



AMBIENT APPRAISAL

Cluster Approach to the Organization of Gastronomic Tourism and its Environmental Impacts: a Case of Primorsky Krai

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Abstract

Tourism usually places pressure on natural resources through over-consumption, often in areas where resources are already limited. Tourism places tremendous stress on local land use and more pressure on endangered species. Developing tourism clusters proved to be an effective investment direction that enforces links between several related industries with the ultimate goal of improving the economic condition of the region. The cluster approach allows tourism enterprises to join efforts and to make more efficient use of the region's resources, as well as to promote the tourism product on both internal and international markets. The applicability of this approach in terms of gastronomic tourism in Primorsky Krai needs to be researched. The scientific novelty of the work lies in the elaboration of the systematic approach to the development of gastronomic clusters at the regional level. The practical significance of the study is determined by the fact that the proposed model can identify the tourism cluster in Primorsky Krai and can be used as a guideline in the strategic development of tourism and ecosystem preservation and in the region.

Introduction:

Gastronomic tourism was one of the most dynamically expanding segments of tourism around the world. Since the second half of the 2000s (COVID Pandemic period), up to 1/3 of the tourist's expenses were spent on food and drinks (UNWTO Global Report on Food Tourism, 2019). Gastronomy is no longer a mere function of the tourist's staying in the destination along with accommodation and transportation — it's been turning into the very core of the whole tourist experience, into a tool of familiarization with the history and culture of the destination. But the ongoing challenges in the tourism industry related to travel bans, border closures, events cancellations, quarantine requirements raise the questions of possible strategic shifts in the pursuit of sustainable tourism growth. In this context, the need to maintain and develop tourism clusters is getting noted in many documents on the strategic development of the tourism sector on different levels (COVID - 19 related travel restrictions global review for tourism, 2021; UNWTO briefing note, 2020; Tourism action plan, 2019-2021).

This articulates the purpose of the study - namely to form a

model of a tourist cluster for the development of gastronomic tourism in Primorsky Krai.

Thus, the following study addresses the following research issues:

- Can gastronomic tourism be a unifying factor for the development of tourism and hospitality at the regional level?
- Does Primorsky Krai share the required resources to become a distinctive gastronomic cluster?
- How should the exact framework of such a cluster be shaped for the best development of tourism and hospitality at the regional level?

Methodology:

The subject of defining the term "gastronomic tourism" is rather recent. Long (1998) was the first researcher to recognize the process of learning culture through local food while food-centred tourism as a modern popular trend became widely recognized only when Wolf (2001; <https://worldfoodtravel.org/what-is-food-tourism>) introduced the definition of gastronomic tourism as a process of "finding and enjoying a unique, unforgettable experience in food and drinks, both on the other side of the

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Earth and on the next street". It stands out that in this initial narrative travel is considered as a movement not only in terms of countries but also within the local city or region, including, for example, a visit to a grocery store or restaurant. The same logic applies to the modern definition proposed by The World Food Travel Association, which states that "in addition to travelling across the country or the world to eat or drink, we can also be food travellers in our regions, cities, and neighbourhoods. If you rarely leave your neighbourhood and travel across town to a new neighbourhood to go to a special grocery store or to eat out, you're a "food traveller" in your backyard" (What is food tourism).

In our understanding, this leads the authors away from the basic concepts of tourism as such, where the factor of trip duration is considered essential (as we read in the "Glossary of tourism terms" by UNWTO: "A visitor (domestic, inbound or outbound) is classified as a tourist (or overnight visitor) if his/her trip includes an overnight stay, or as a same-day visitor (or excursionist) otherwise" (Glossary of tourism terms).

Also among the researchers, there is some inconsistency in terms of differentiating the concepts of "food tourism", "gastronomic tourism", "culinary tourism" and such. For example, while the Committee on Tourism and Competitiveness of UNWTO focuses on the term gastronomy tourism stating that it's "a type of tourism activity which is characterized by the visitor's experience linked with food and related products and activities while travelling" (Gastronomy and Wine Tourism), it interchanges it with the term "food tourism" – both in the content of its reports as well as in the very title of its annual UNWTO World Forum section (1st UNWTO World Forum on Food Tourism; 5th UNWTO World Forum on Gastronomy Tourism).

The aforementioned World Food Travel Association notes in this regard: "We say "food tourism", but drinking beverages is an implied and associated activity. It is also cumbersome to say "food and drink tourism". ... Previously the World Food Travel Association had used the phrase "culinary tourism" to describe our industry. We stopped using that phrase in 2012 because our research indicated that it gave a misleading impression. While "culinary" technically can be used for anything relating to food and drink and initially seems to make good sense, the perception among the majority of English-speakers we interviewed is that the word "culinary" is elitist" (What is food tourism).

Morozov (2019) agrees "culinary tourism" to be a narrower concept, but in meaning of any tasting related to the educational process, while "gastronomic tourism" is a broader one (in a meaning of any travel where a tourist learns culture through food, regardless of whether it is local products and dishes or not). Though from our point of view,

this approach contradicts the other idea of gastronomic tourism – the study of the uniqueness of local dishes, traditions of its consumption.

It should also be noted that due to the relative youth of gastronomic tourism as a distinctive field of study, research in this area is called "superficial" by some authors (Efanova & Polyakova, (2019). However, in our opinion, the lack of a clearly formulated conceptual framework provides additional motivation for the study of this issue.

As for theoretical aspects of cluster policy, one of the most common interpretations of "cluster" a "group of geographically neighbouring, interconnected companies and related organizations operating in a certain area, characterized by common activities and complementary to each other" (Tao *et al.*, 2021). Universal features of a cluster in a simplified form can be narrowed down to its actors, geographic concentration, competitive advantages, market presence, the effectiveness of cooperation (Fig.-1).

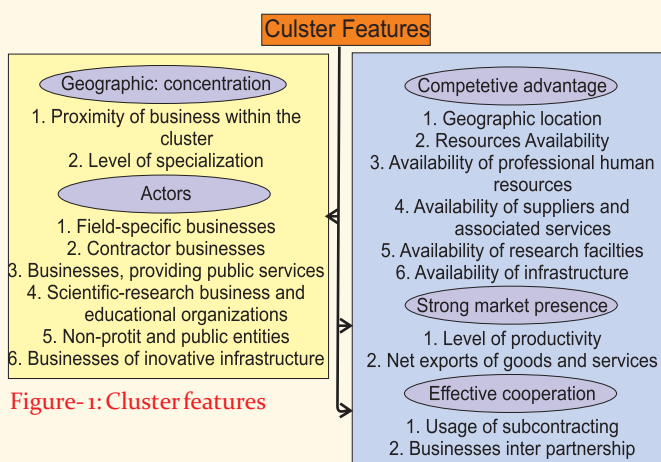


Figure- 1: Cluster features

In the context of methodology of differentiating usual geographical concentration from a cluster and determining the boundaries of a cluster, certain theories can be suggested (Table-1).

General issues of designing economic clusters were described in the works by Belussi & Caldari (2009), Dahmen (1988), Krugman (1991), Huber (2011), Manning, (2008), Eisingerich & Boehm (2007), Masyuk *et al.* (2019). Their findings suggest that an economic cluster can be formed either in a natural way as a result of the historical development of any type of activity in a certain territory, or in a guided way - as a result of certain efforts to create such a cluster.

In particular, on the basis of this concept, the directed and liberal models of economic clusters can be distinguished. Within the framework of the directed model, an active state (federal or regional) policy of cluster development plays a vital role. The liberal model considers a cluster to be a market formation, in which the role of the federal or regional authorities is limited to removing barriers to the natural market developments (Public-

Table- 1: Advantages and disadvantages of different approaches to determining clusters

Advantages	Disadvantages
Criteria: Per capita production/localization/specialization ratio Availability of the necessary data; ease of calculation; possibility of use in combination with other approaches.	Indicates the concentration/specialization of the analyzed industry in the region, and not the presence of a cluster formation; it is necessary to supplement the quality analysis; there is no clarity with the choice of the threshold value
Criteria: Input-output analysis Allows to formally measure the relationships between industries, which, in turn, allows to identify the presence of a cluster.	Lack/unavailability of operational information about the interaction of potential participants of the cluster; does not take into account financial flows, flows of information exchange, as well as the exchange of knowledge and human resources; the main focus is on material flows, and this may not be as relevant for the tertiary sector.
Criteria: Shift-share analysis Allows to track the growth of the share of the regional industry in the level of employment, distinguishing the effect of economic growth from the local effect associated with a local competitive advantage.	The difficulty of defining the time frames
Criteria: Expert analysis Detailed information, individual approach	The subjectivity of the assessment; lack of systematic information collection; lack of generalized data.
Criteria: Focus group survey Relatively low costs; small time costs.	The problem of the respondents' non-appearance at the specified time and place; the need to apply the additional incentives, including participation fees.
Criteria: Delphi method Applicable in almost any situation that requires forecasting, including if there is not enough information to make a decision; anonymity and independence of expert opinions; focus on strategic planning; comprehensive coverage of the problem	The subjectivity of experts' opinions; labour intensity; high time costs spent on multi-level expertise and complete exclusion of direct collision of expert opinions.

Private Sector Cooperation, 2000) It is worth noting that neither model is associated with particular with establishing special economic zones, nor does it imply the mandatory presence of public-private partnerships, though some authors are calling for such policy (Ho, 2006).

The applicability of these findings in terms of developing tourism clusters is tested in the works of Fedorova *et al.* (2020), Peiró-Signes *et al.*, (2015), Christie *et al.* (2013), and are also utilized in the text of "OECD Tourism Trends and Policies 2020" research paper (OECD Tourism Trends and Policies, 2020), as well as in the UNWTO Research paper "Using Cluster-Based Economic Strategy to Minimize Tourism Leakages" (UNWTO Research paper, 2003). In general, based upon the findings of these works

the models of cluster formation and management can be structured by their distinctive features (Table-2).

But despite the possibility of identifying some common patterns, the process of the development of tourist clusters in each particular case is unique and requires individual consideration.

Table- 2: Cluster models with Model and Essential features

North American

Promotion of innovative clusters, grant support, the establishment of authorities for cluster development. The participation of small businesses is mandatory.

Western European

The leading role is given to educational and scientific institutions. The main form of support is the financing of research work and the establishment of the infrastructure for innovative development

Scandinavian

The state acts as the customer. The main form of support is the financing of research and technological cooperation

Indian

Cluster financing in the form of foreign investment

Chinese

The state and the regions act as initiators. Clusters are formed around the largest industrial and high-tech enterprises. Focus on integration of innovations

Japanese

Focus on large businesses introduced to the long-term contractual relationships with small businesses

Results and Discussion:

Federal cross-regional data suggests that Primorsky Krai has 871 catering public catering enterprises with an average staff number of 10.4 people (Number of public catering facilities). Nation-wide, it places Primorsky Krai in 31st place with the total share of 0.99% of total public catering enterprises. It should be noted that in 2011 the total share was 1.01% which placed Primorsky Krai in 26th place. It indicates the robustness of the development process in this area with a slight hint to the required changes for further progress.

Also currently, Primorsky Krai is in 27th place on the Federal level in terms of the total area of public catering enterprises (The area of the customer service hall in public catering facilities), as well as in terms of public catering turnover (Public catering turnover).

Meanwhile, on the regional level, public catering services account for almost 10% of the total amount of services (Dynamics of the volume of paid services to the population; Public catering turnover), considering that the average value on the federal level is only 1.8% (Volume of paid services to the population; Retail trade turnover), qualifying this as the basis for cluster recognition in terms of specialization ratio.

It is also worth mentioning, that in addition to the universal features inherent in all types of cuisines, Far

Eastern cuisine possesses a unique characteristic that depends on the national composition of the indigenous population of the Far East, which can be taken into account for developing Far Eastern cuisine brand. For example, the cuisine of the Eskimos, Chukchi and Koryaks, Evenks and Evens, the cuisine of the Nanai, Taz, Ulich, Oroch, Udege, Orok, Nivkh, Ainu and Itelmen, whose main products include meat of wild animals (deer, moose, walrus, whales), vegetable food, berries, fish in dried, smoked, pickled form, seaweed and shellfish.

Another main object of the gastronomic tourist cluster is places of accommodation. Data suggests, that Primorsky Krai accommodates 2% of nation-wide tourists, which places it in 9th place overall (Number of persons placed in collective accommodation facilities). It is in the 10th place with the same share in terms of the area of the room fund (The area of the number fund of collective accommodation facilities). Accommodation services account for 3,6% in Primorsky Krai while the country's average is 2,41%, which also indicates relative maturity of the sector in terms of cluster development (Structure of paid services to the population by type; Paid services to the population in the field of tourism), (Volume of paid services to the population). In the meantime, some mismatch in terms of the share of accommodation services and the share of catering services and reveals the potential capacity for the latter. It is obvious that the city of Vladivostok is the most visited tourist agglomeration. On average, tourists come to Primorsky Krai for 4 days. Also, most of the tourists visiting for vacation purposes chose hotels (7.4%), hostels (5%), recreation centres (14%), camping and staying with relatives (1.7% each). One particular area of cluster development in the case of Primorsky Krai may be the agricultural enterprises, among which the following are particularly worth noting.

Given the existence of these projects, practical proposals for the development of gastronomic tourism in rural areas in the Primorsky Krai can be implemented on the territory of apiaries, cheese factories, village complexes and houses, which will allow developing rural tourism in addition to gastronomic tourism.

Another important feature of the cluster is the presence of research and educational institutions on the territory. Training programs in the field of tourism and hospitality are implemented in all regions in 368 institutions that train qualified staff in the field of tourism and hospitality. In Primorsky Krai specifically, specialists in this field are trained at the Vladivostok State University of Economics and Service and at the Far Eastern Federal University.

The main body of interaction of all structures is the "Agency for Tourism of Primorsky Krai", which contributes to the identification of priority areas for the development of tourism in the territory of the region, develops and

implements joint strategic planning programs, organizes events, and interacts with non-profit organizations operating in the field of tourism, as well as provides other tourism-related assistance.

In addition, the interaction of enterprises of the tourism industry is also carried out by:

- 1) Open Joint-Stock Company «Primorsky Krai development corporation»
- 2) Autonomous non-profit organization "Tourist Information Center of Primorsky Krai»;
- 3) The Union "Primorsky Chamber of Commerce and Industry"
- 4) Primorsky Regional Tourism Union;
- 5) Various regional federations and associations in the field of tourism.

Combined efforts resulted in the nationwide recognition of regional tourist projects, such as Tourist cluster "Primorye", Land of the Leopard National Park, Recreation park Emerald Valley. It should be noted that certain public catering enterprises in Vladivostok are quite well-known at the national and global levels. Here you can note Zuma restaurant, which in 2020 took the 14th place in the all-Russian rating of "Where to eat", also here you can note the bar "Chinoaru" (found by the same team as the famous Eastern Europe bar El Copitas Bar), which shortly after the opening occupied the 39th place in the international rating of the best bars in the world: "The World's 50 Best Bars 2018".

Altogether according to the previously identified cluster features (Fig.-1) and the analysis of the industry in the region, the following data can be presented in relation to the fact of the development of a cluster on the territory of Primorsky Krai.

Classification of the above data on the composition of the cluster on the territory of Primorsky Krai in terms of its identification, boundaries, structure and other characteristics, the geographical framework can be presented as follows (Table-3).

To establish Vladivostok as a gastronomic centre, communication between enterprises should be supported by a single body – the cluster development committee, acting on the principle of public-private partnership, which will provide information support, simplified maintenance of the register of enterprises and their annual monitoring, joint events, participation in international events, the formation of a tourist product and its promotion.

As a result, the geographical framework of the proposed gastronomic regional cluster is shown in (Fig.-2). The model with the core of public catering enterprises is based on the interaction of various companies, which are served by organizations connected by transport communications. The organizational and economic structure also includes educational institutions, accommodation facilities, entertainment and recreation enterprises, as auxiliary organizations for the creation of

tourist gastronomic programs.

Table-8: Cluster framework with factors and Justification

Cluster Type	Regional
Borders	The gastronomic cluster does not go beyond the Primorsky Territory
Frame type	Star-shaped with the explicit centre in Vladivostok
Cluster Core	Public catering companies
Cluster Basis	Agricultural and food industry enterprises
Service organ.	Transport services, municipal organizations, banking services, service centres
Additional organ.	Educational institutions, accommodation facilities, recreation and entertainment enterprises
Linking organ.	Agency for Tourism of Primorsky Krai, Autonomous non-profit organization "Tourist Information Center of Primorsky Krai"; Primorsky Regional Tourism Union, Open Joint-Stock Company «Primorsky Krai development corporation», The Union "Primorsky Chamber of Commerce and Industry"

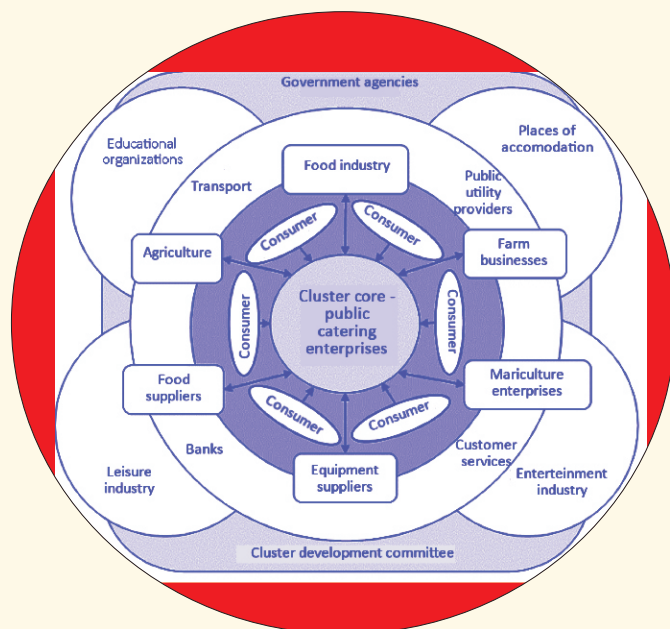


Figure- 2: Cluster framework

It is worth mentioning, that in addition to the universal features inherent in all types of cuisines, Far Eastern cuisine possesses unique characteristics that depend on the national composition of the indigenous population of the Far East, which can be taken into account for developing Far Eastern cuisine brand. In terms of accommodation facilities. We found, that Primorsky Krai accommodates 2% of nation-wide tourists, which places it in 9th place overall. Also, accommodation services account for 3,6% in Primorsky Krai while the country's average is

2,41%, which also indicates relative maturity of the sector in terms of cluster development. One particular area of cluster development in the case of Primorsky Krai may be the agricultural enterprises - development of gastronomic tourism in rural areas in the Primorsky Krai can be implemented on the territory of apiaries, cheese factories (Ermolaev *et al.*, 2019), village complexes and houses, which will allow developing rural tourism in addition to gastronomic tourism. Another important feature of the cluster is the presence of research and educational institutions - in Primorsky Krai specialists in the tourism field are trained at the Vladivostok State University of Economics and Service and at the Far Eastern Federal University.

Linking of efforts is mainly attributed to the "Agency for Tourism of Primorsky Krai", as well as to Open Joint-Stock Company «Primorsky Krai development corporation», Autonomous non-profit organization "Tourist Information Center of Primorsky Krai", The Union "Primorsky Chamber of Commerce and Industry", Primorsky Regional Tourism Union, Various other regional federations and associations in the field of tourism. Combined efforts resulted in the nationwide recognition of regional tourist projects, such as Tourist cluster "Primorye", Land of the Leopard National Park, Recreation park Emerald Valley. Public catering enterprises in Vladivostok are quite well-known at the national and global levels as well.

As a result it is proved that gastronomic tourism can act as a unifying factor in Primorsky Krai with the formation of a gastronomic product including the contribution of many enterprises in various sectors such as food, accommodation, provision of household services, transport, production, etc.

The cluster approach makes it possible to establish interaction between all relevant enterprises, support services, small businesses and the state. Moreover, the cluster policy provides a positive effect in the form of an increase in the percentage of the employed population, respectively, reducing unemployment, increasing deductions from the city and regional budgets, promoting local products, increasing the competitiveness of the region and improving its image as a tourist destination.

The analysis made it possible to construct a geographical framework and to develop a model of the gastronomic cluster, which can be used as methodological recommendations in the development of targeted programs for the development of tourism and hospitality at the regional level.

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RELEVANT LINKS:

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- <https://www.e-unwto.org/doi/pdf/10.18111/9789284421893>
- Tourism action plan 2019 - 2021, <https://assets.gov.ie/19701/030f419fbc6749f384940be70fef8eab.pdf>
- <https://www.unwto.org/glossary-tourism-terms>
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