



Article

## Possibilities for Developing Public Catering on a Regional Cluster Basis

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**Abstract:** The standard of living of the population of our republic, the quality indicators of their living, their well This article explores the potential for developing the public catering sector through the implementation of a regional cluster approach. Clustering in the catering industry offers a model for enhancing competitiveness, innovation, and service quality by bringing together interconnected enterprises, suppliers, and support institutions within a specific geographical area. The study outlines the economic, social, and infrastructural benefits of cluster-based development, including increased employment opportunities, improved local supply chains, and the promotion of regional culinary identity. Key success factors such as public-private partnerships, investment in human capital, and regulatory support are also discussed. Using case studies and comparative analysis, the article demonstrates how regional clustering can lead to sustainable growth and modernization of the public catering industry. The findings suggest that a strategic focus on cluster development can create synergies that improve operational efficiency, encourage innovation, and contribute to the broader goals of regional development and tourism growth.-being depend on services, more precisely, on the quality and weight of food services. The article analyzes the possibilities of developing catering services based on a regional cluster.

**Keywords:** Food Services, Region, Cluster, Service Sector, Retail Population, Income, Efficiency, Cost, Entrepreneurship, Employment

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### 1. Introduction

The gap between the rapid growth of the world's population and the limited growth potential of food production is the main reason why the issue of solving the food program is becoming more acute from year to year, as a result of which ecological degradation of the environment continues, the unpredictable consequences of climate change, frequent droughts and shortages of water resources, including the depletion of groundwater for irrigation, insufficient investments in irrigation, land reclamation and restoration of land fertility are extremely important problems that require solution. The standard of living of the population of our republic, its quality of life, and their well-being depend precisely on services, and more precisely on the quality and volume of food services. Analysis of literature on the topic. The economic nature of the activities of service entities in catering enterprises and the problems of increasing their efficiency, effectiveness According to the scientific approach of foreign economist Ye.S. Kusenko, "enterprises that are part of a cluster actively stimulate innovative activity. However, due to its ambiguity, it is very difficult to agree with the above point of view. Firstly, when using the expression "forms

of organization of production”, all forms within the cluster (specialization, combination and cooperation) should coexist inseparably and take into account the innovative nature of cluster initiatives. Secondly, defining the forms of integration of innovative and production activities should indicate the advantages of such integration, as well as the conditions that determine the fact of achieving these advantages. Thirdly, it follows from the definition that the choice of the form of organization of production within the cluster is subordinate to innovative activity, and clustering is based on catalytic production as a function of the innovative sphere, not dominant (ruling), but subordinate”. According to V.A. Vasilyev, “economic clusters are an organizational form of combining the efforts of all stakeholders aimed at quickly achieving competitive advantages in the conditions of increasing globalization of the economy”. One can only partially agree with this point of view. Thus, the author ignores the driving forces of competitiveness, the innovative resource for the existence and development of a cluster in any service sector, and the role of state and regional authorities not only as investment donors, but also as controlling and regulatory structures. In addition, the model of “the strong take the small” gives reason to believe that the author is talking about achieving a monopolistic model of the regional market, where the dominant position should ultimately be occupied by the most active tourist cluster associated with a smaller territorial production. In world practice, the most effectively used integration model in regional economics is the cluster model. According to CIS scientists T.V. Sakhno and N.N. Volkova, “one of the main differences between a cluster and general models of production-cooperation and other interaction is the principle of territorial localization” . However, it should be noted that the geographical scope of a cluster is wide, it can extend to a specific city or region, the country, and even to some neighboring countries, and the territorial level is one of the variants of the cluster model. However, an analysis of scientific literature shows that the possibilities of developing catering services on the basis of regional clusters have not been fully explored, given our national characteristics[1].

## 2. Materials and Methods

In the research process related to the topic of the possibilities of developing catering services on the basis of regional clusters, methods of statistical and economic analysis such as comparison, grouping, as well as methods and techniques such as induction and deduction, analysis and synthesis, monographic, systematic approach, scientific abstraction, and logical approach were used . To thoroughly examine the possibilities for developing public catering on a regional cluster basis, this study employs a multi-method qualitative research design with supportive analytical tools. The research methodology is structured to capture the complexity and multidimensionality of cluster formation in the public catering sector, drawing from regional economic analysis, stakeholder engagement, and comparative case studies. The primary objective is to construct a practical and context-specific model of clustering that enhances the competitiveness, innovation capacity, and sustainability of public catering enterprises at the regional level. The methodological foundation of this study is rooted in cluster theory, originally conceptualized by Michael E. Porter. The research adopts a regional development perspective, positioning clusters as geographically proximate groups of interconnected firms, suppliers, service providers, and associated institutions in a particular field. This framework is particularly applicable to public catering, a sector where regional characteristics such as local gastronomy, tourism flows, labor supply, and infrastructure significantly influence performance outcomes. In parallel, the study integrates elements of the Triple Helix model, which emphasizes the collaboration between universities, industry, and government as essential for innovation and sustainable regional development. This integration allows the research to assess not only the economic dynamics of clustering but also its institutional and knowledge-based dimensions in the public catering context. This research acknowledges several limitations. First, the qualitative nature of the study limits the generalizability of findings, although the comparative analysis enhances their applicability. Second, access to

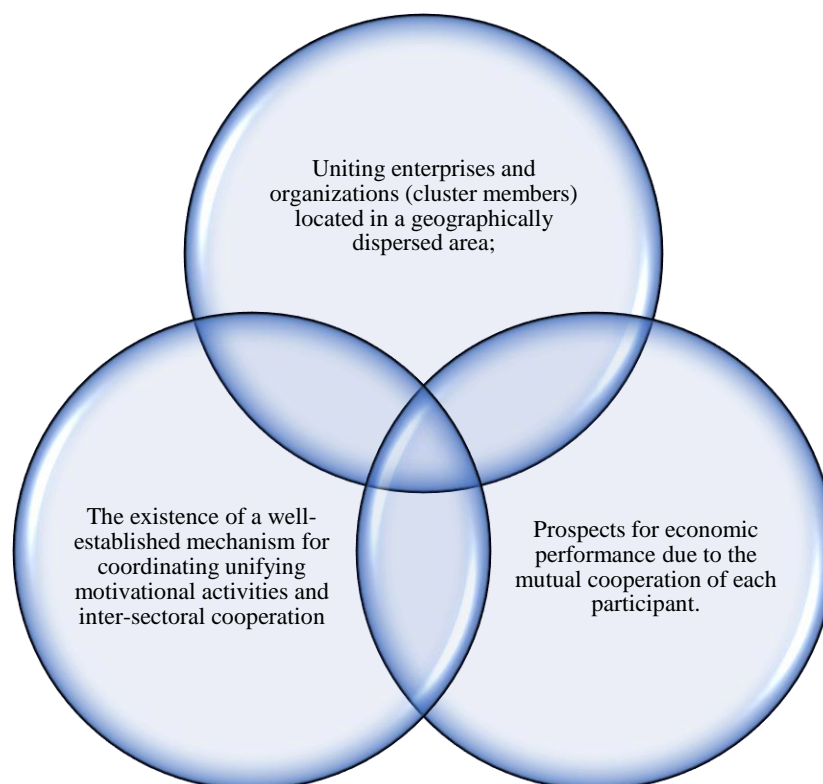
some stakeholders – particularly private investors – was limited, affecting the breadth of financial analysis. Lastly, the reliance on expert perception introduces potential bias, which was mitigated through triangulation with secondary data sources. In terms of ethics, all participants were informed about the purpose of the research, and their consent was obtained. Anonymity was preserved, and data were stored securely in compliance with institutional research ethics guidelines[2].

### 3. Results and Discussion

In the context of economic modernization, the development of regional clusters is an important factor and condition for increasing the competitiveness of the national economy and ensuring the intensity of the activities of economic entities. In economics and management, in particular, in the service sector, the term "cluster" is a widely used concept, and its essence has changed very quickly and unpredictably in recent decades. Clusters, in particular, in the service sector, have become a tool that allows us to increase the competitiveness of our country's economy as a whole, as well as a unique organizational and economic mechanism for the development of the sector. However, at present, certain difficulties are arising in the process of implementing the cluster approach in the service sector, which, in turn, creates the need to solve problems related to increasing the effectiveness of the implementation of the cluster policy implemented in this area. In this process, it is necessary to comprehensively clarify the essence and content of cluster development in economic sciences, economic sectors and industries. Therefore, a correct understanding of methodological approaches to the application of cluster theory in various sectors and industries of the economy allows us to identify directions for achieving clustering efficiency and high production and service results. In the service sector, the concepts of "cluster policy", "service cluster" are currently widely used in modern scientific literature on the service sector. In our country and the CIS countries, the clustering policy in the service sector has been implemented since the 2000s, which laid the foundation for the emergence of the cluster theory of service development.

Research in this area began to be studied in the works of A.Yu. Aleksandrova, V.A. Kruzhalin, E.N. Mitrofanova, A.N. Dunes, Q.J. Mirzayev, D.Kh. Aslanova and other scientists. Consequently, all planned and implemented cluster projects in the service sector are mainly based on foreign research in the field of industrial cluster formation (theories of A. Marshall, M. Porter). "Despite the many definitions of a cluster, they are based on the theoretical ideas of M. Porter, according to which a cluster is a group of companies and related organizations operating in a certain territory and characterized by common activities and complementing each other, geographically adjacent and interconnected". The main aspects of cluster formation are as follows: (Figure 1)[3].

- a. Unification of enterprises and organizations (cluster members) located in a geographically limited area;
- b. Realistic prospects for economic indicators due to the mutual cooperation of each participant;
- c. The presence of a well-established mechanism for motivation (economic, scientific, production, social, etc.), coordination of activities and inter-sectoral cooperation, uniting cluster members[4].



**Figure 1.** Key aspects of cluster formation.

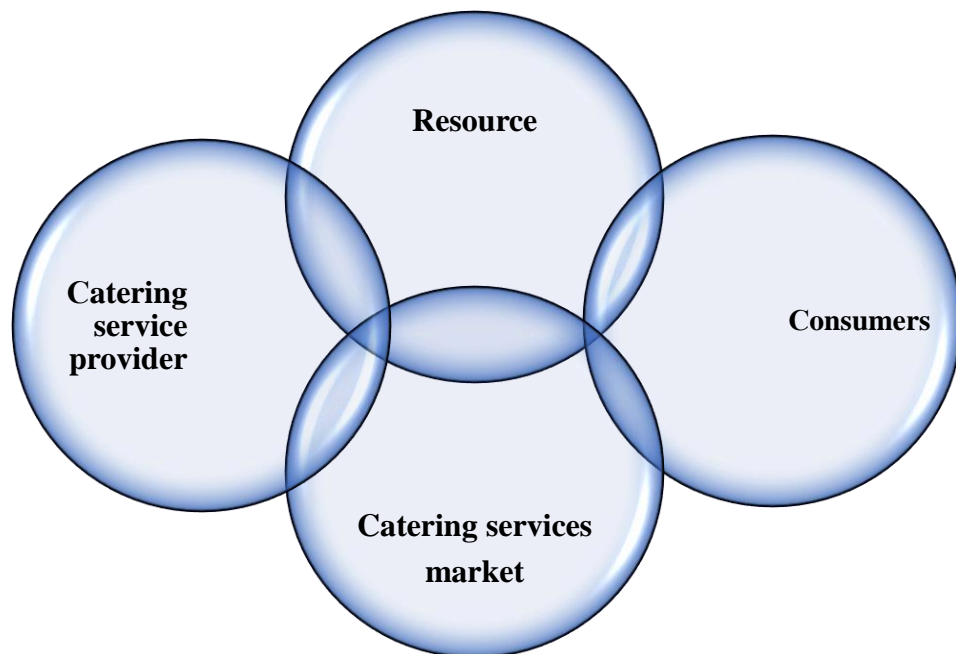
Figure 1 presents a Venn diagram illustrating the three fundamental components necessary for the effective formation and operation of a regional cluster, particularly in the context of public catering or similar service-oriented sectors. The top circle emphasizes the importance of uniting enterprises and organizations (cluster members) that are located within a geographically dispersed area. This highlights the spatial aspect of clustering, where physical proximity or regional cohesion enables coordinated development. The bottom-left circle focuses on the existence of a well-established coordination mechanism, which includes motivational activities and inter-sectoral cooperation. This component reflects the need for strategic management, governance structures, and incentives that unify diverse stakeholders. The bottom-right circle addresses the economic prospects that arise from the mutual cooperation of all cluster participants. It underscores the synergistic effects achieved when businesses and institutions collaborate to improve productivity, innovation, and shared value. The intersection of all three circles represents the ideal cluster structure, where geographical proximity, coordinated actions, and mutual cooperation converge to create a dynamic, efficient, and economically viable cluster ecosystem[5].

The term, developed by the founder of cluster theory in economics, M. Porter, has migrated from the manufacturing sector and is widely developing in the service sector. In the scientific works of our country and foreign scientists, various definitions of the concepts of "cluster", "clusterization", "cluster policy", "cluster theory", "cluster development" have been proposed, and so far there is no general agreement among legislators trying to unify the above concepts in regulatory and legal documents[6]. According to S.Yu. Grishin, "the existing signs and definitions of clusters are controversial and cause many criticisms, the most important of which are the following:

- a. In the era of the Internet and other global networks and the development of an information-oriented society, the presence of territorial proximity cannot be a necessary condition for the emergence of clusters in the service sector[7].

- b. The existing definitions of the concept of “cluster” do not reflect the decisive role of the state in the formation and development of cluster structures. According to M. Porter, the state is only one element of the cluster, represented by its administrative bodies and institutions, which contradicts modern trends in market development in all sectors of the national economy[8].
- c. It should be noted that the emerging cluster entities are not only interconnected with each other, but also have a mutual socio-economic impact. The degree of interaction is determined by the degree of interaction and the relationship in the cluster market”[9].

In the process of research, we will pay attention to the following cases and important features of clustering in the service sector. At the heart of any service sector cluster is always a humanitarian component, since all services are always aimed at the consumer and his interests, and in terms of regulating the service sector, they are weakly dependent on the policy of the state and individual regions. In our opinion, unlike an industrial cluster, a service cluster always exists only when there is a complex sequence of four units: “resource - consumer - producer - seller of tourism products and services” (Figure 2). The omission of any one element in this reduces the efficiency and competitiveness of the cluster and other territorial organizations[10].



**Figure 2.** Cluster components of catering services.

Figure 2 illustrates a conceptual model of the catering services market as the intersection of four core components: Catering Service Provider, Resources, Consumers, and the Market Itself. This four-circle Venn diagram highlights the interdependence of all elements essential for the functioning and development of public catering services. The Catering Service Provider represents the supply side of the market, including restaurants, cafés, canteens, and food delivery businesses that prepare and deliver meals to customers[11].

Resources refer to the necessary inputs for service provision—such as labor, ingredients, equipment, facilities, and logistics infrastructure—that enable catering providers to operate efficiently. Consumers represent the demand side of the market. Their preferences, income levels, and consumption behavior directly influence market trends and service offerings. The Catering Services Market, placed at the center where all circles overlap, is formed through the interaction of providers, resources, and consumers. It is within this shared space that value is created, competition arises, and innovation occurs. This figure underscores that a well-functioning catering market requires effective

coordination and balance between service provision, resource allocation, and consumer needs. Disruption or inefficiency in any one area can impact the overall performance and sustainability of the sector[12].

If industrial clusters are territorial in nature and their effectiveness is determined by the proximity of enterprises, then service clusters are often formed as extraterritorial structures based on a certain specialization, the resource capabilities of the territory, as well as the existing needs of consumers. The creation of clusters in the service sector is distinguished by the “resources” and “needs” approach. The uniqueness of the service cluster is that the service it produces and sells has a complex description. If in most cases the final product is created in the activities of industrial cluster enterprises, then in the service cluster environment the final product is designed and developed only by a special group of service enterprises - managers, and then sold to end consumers. This requires special approaches to the design and formation of service clusters, taking into account the service capabilities and organizations of individual regions, as well as the capabilities and place of clusters in a specific service sector, and marketing methodology[13].

T.V. Sikhian “distinguishes the following three features of cluster formation:

- a. Territorially limited forms and directions of economic activity of internal close-knit sectors, usually associated with scientific and educational institutions;
- b. Vertical production-economic chains;
- c. A narrow sector of industries, the core of which is the adjacent stages of the production process;
- d. A sector of industrial production sectors or sectors of a more significant level of total production, determined at a significant level of aggregation”[14].

This approach, in fact, reflects all the main aspects of an economic cluster: territorial-geographic, innovative, aggregated (integration), network, production, etc. However, this point of view does not express the main aspect, namely the advantages of forming an economic cluster, the main results of clustering and their application in the service sector. The answer to the question remains open, namely, what can be achieved with the help of clustering and what is its main goal? In addition, the above perspective has a very clear production description, according to our approach, economic clustering in the service sector of our country is the main object of research. We recommend the following structural structure of the Samarakand region catering services cluster model, which is considered a new organizational and economic structure that can play an important role in the development of the service sector in catering enterprises and increasing the efficiency of enterprises[15].

#### **4. Conclusion**

In conclusion, it should be said that, in our opinion, one of the most important problems of catering services clustering is the low initial and final innovative activity of cluster structures, since:

- a. Modernization within the cluster is of only secondary importance and is aimed only at meeting consumer needs and improving services;
- b. A small number of research and educational institutions located directly in the area of cluster formation;
- c. A low level of involvement of research organizations in the activities of managers;
- d. A significant level of consumption orientation exclusively to the domestic market does not require the use of these products and other innovations, since the main functions are performed by the host country.

The study of the possibilities for developing public catering on a regional cluster basis reveals a multifaceted and strategically significant approach for advancing the food service industry, especially in the context of regional economic development and service innovation. As global economies continue to shift towards knowledge-based and service-

oriented structures, the public catering sector has emerged as a vital component not only in satisfying everyday consumer needs but also in promoting tourism, employment, and entrepreneurship. Clustering, as a regional development strategy, offers a promising pathway to maximize the sector's potential by fostering collaboration, integration, and shared growth among diverse actors. One of the central findings of this research is that the regional cluster model creates a system of interdependent relationships between catering service providers, suppliers, consumers, educational institutions, and local governance bodies. Such a system is designed to generate synergy through resource sharing, coordinated training, innovation diffusion, and supply chain optimization. Clusters enable the collective competitiveness of firms that might otherwise struggle to scale individually. In the context of public catering, this is particularly valuable, as many businesses are small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs) that benefit from shared services, infrastructure, and knowledge.

The establishment of public catering clusters contributes significantly to regional economic growth. By uniting geographically concentrated enterprises, clusters create a critical mass of activity that attracts further investment, encourages specialization, and supports innovation. Moreover, the proximity of actors within a cluster allows for greater agility in responding to consumer demands, improving the quality and diversity of offerings in the catering market. This, in turn, can stimulate culinary tourism, enhance the region's gastronomic reputation, and increase the income of both individual businesses and the region as a whole. Another important conclusion derived from the study is the need for a systematic coordination mechanism within the cluster. The existence of effective governance and leadership structures is essential for aligning the interests of cluster members, defining shared goals, and implementing joint initiatives such as training programs, marketing campaigns, and technological upgrades. Without such coordination, clusters may become fragmented, losing their potential to generate long-term benefits. A well-functioning cluster operates not merely as a collection of co-located businesses but as an interconnected ecosystem driven by common purpose and sustained by active cooperation. Furthermore, the role of local governments and public institutions is crucial in the success of catering clusters. Authorities can support the clustering process through strategic urban planning, simplified regulations, tax incentives, and investment in public infrastructure such as transport, sanitation, and digital connectivity. Local governments can also act as facilitators, bringing together key stakeholders and creating platforms for dialogue, planning, and feedback. Public-private partnerships (PPPs) emerge as a key mechanism for financing and implementing cluster development initiatives, especially in regions where the catering sector is underdeveloped or fragmented. Education and capacity building are also central to cluster success.

The study highlights that vocational training institutions and universities must be actively involved in the cluster to provide tailored programs that develop culinary, managerial, and digital skills. This contributes not only to the employability of the local workforce but also to the professionalization of the catering industry. Moreover, involving students and researchers in practical problem-solving projects within the cluster can foster a culture of innovation and continuous improvement. In the long term, such educational integration can drive the development of a knowledge-based catering economy, where value is created through creativity, sustainability, and responsiveness to trends. An equally significant aspect revealed in the research is the importance of consumer orientation and market responsiveness. Successful clusters must be closely attuned to the evolving preferences and expectations of customers, including trends toward healthy eating, sustainable sourcing, and personalized experiences. The cluster model enables rapid knowledge transfer and coordinated experimentation, allowing businesses to innovate in their service offerings and delivery models. This enhances both customer satisfaction and market adaptability, which are critical in a highly competitive sector like

public catering. Despite its many advantages, the cluster approach is not without challenges.

The study identifies several barriers to effective cluster formation, including limited trust among businesses, resistance to cooperation, lack of access to finance, and weak institutional support. Addressing these challenges requires sustained efforts in building stakeholder relationships, creating clear value propositions for collaboration, and ensuring transparency and inclusiveness in cluster governance. Financial and policy support from national and regional governments is also necessary to overcome initial inertia and to incentivize participation.

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