

HOW TO MAKE A DESTINATION MORE COMPETITIVE IN TOURISM

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Abstract

The aim of the article is to make an overview on the concept of destination competitiveness, starting with the importance of tourism in the economy and ending with what actually means the concept, taking into consideration also the importance of developing quality tourism products. Powerful destinations manage to attract millions of tourists annually. The key of establishing proper strategies for tourism destinations is to determine the competitiveness of a tourism destination. This subject has been researched by many important researchers from the tourism area and the findings obtained can help marketers. It must also be taken into discussion the fact that competitiveness may not only relate to factors of related to the destination.

Keywords: *tourism, destination, destination competitiveness, tourism product.*

Classification JEL: Z00,Z3

1. INTRODUCTION

The fact that the world economies are dominated by services rather than goods has brought a special attention to tourism. Each destination has unique features and since each tourist has special needs there must exist a connection between the two. And that is why "destination competitiveness" receives a special attention from the marketing researchers.

Professors Geoffrey I. Crouch and J.R. Brent Ritchie used the theory available in this field of interest and come up with one of the most important models for understanding destination competitiveness. The aim of the article is to present readers why it is so important for destinations to take into consideration the "destination competitiveness" model in case they want to gain competitive advantages in the competition with other destinations.

But the first we must introduce the reader to what means a destination for a marketer. "From the demand perspective, destinations are places that attract visitors for a temporary stay, and range from continents to countries, to states, to provinces, to cities to villages, to purpose-built resort areas, an inhabited islands"[3](Pike,2012).

People come and go from different destinations according to the aim of their visit. Some take business travels and can stay from one day to several weeks, some go on vacation and in the same way they can stay only a few days or more days. If people find something that appeals to their interest they can decide to stay more than a simple city break."Tourism happens only when a tourist has to leave his (or her) residence for a certain destination by means of transport for various purposes, for example to enjoy the beautiful landscapes or the different culture of the destination the tourist is visiting"[4](Wang and Pizam,2011).

1.2. THE COMPLEXITY OF TOURISM DESTINATIONS

Tourists buy tourism products when they choose a destination for a holiday. " The tourism product at the destination level is a combination of goods and services that are produced by independent enterprises, each one acting autonomously according to its own needs and interests, and with little consideration for the needs and activities of other enterprises."[4](Wang and Pizam,2011). Companies have as main aim the maximization of their profit and not all of them understand that in order to have profit you must have satisfied customers and satisfied customers must receive quality products. And that is why " tourists do not perceive the situation in this manner. From a tourist perspective, the tourism destination is a unified product regardless of its numerous components. When a tourist has an unpleasant experience with a local tourism provider, this experience may result in a halo effect that causes a negative carry-over judgment to other tourism providers and to the destination as a whole"[4](Wang and Pizam,2011). This makes it clearly how important is for companies from a certain destination to make a tourism product that will satisfy tourists.

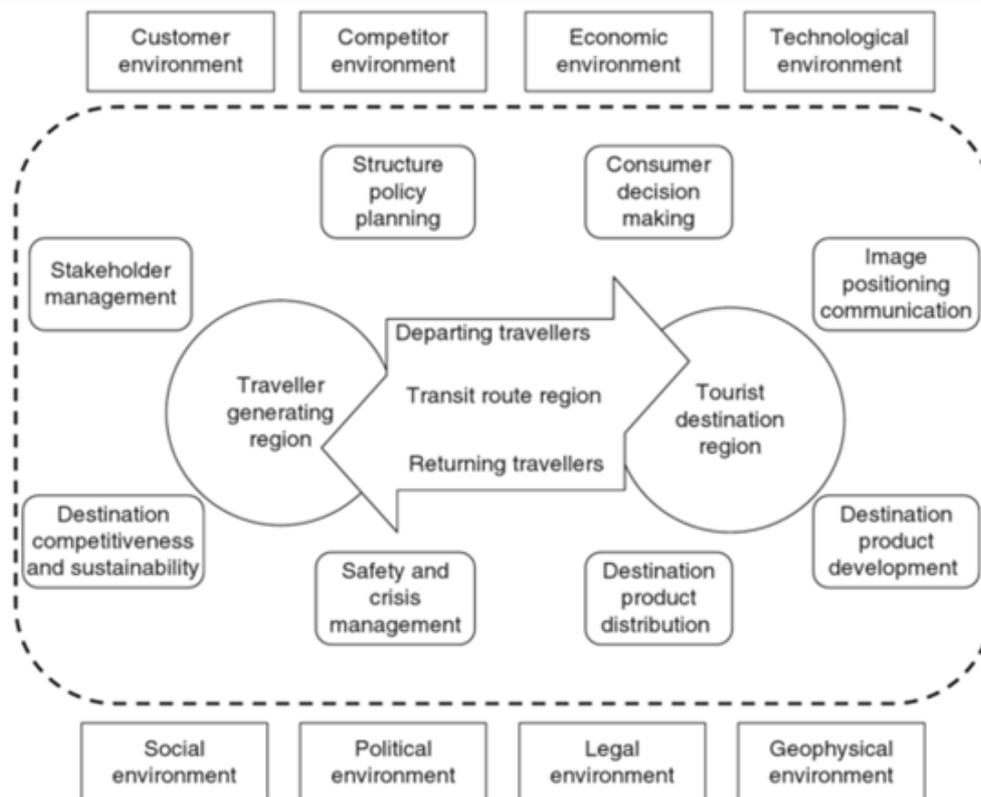


Figure 1. Concept and scope of destination marketing and management

Source: Youcheng Wang, Abraham Pizam, Destination marketing and management: theories and application, CABI, 2011.

As we can notice in figure number 1 the concept of destination is a complex one and its scope has to be well understood in order for marketers to create and apply destination strategies. The figure highlights the fact that if something goes wrong with one of the elements than the image of the destination will not be the same anymore. A destination does not need only an image positioning communication, a destination product development, a destination product distribution, a stakeholder management, a safety and crisis management, a structure policy planning or consumer decision making it also needs destination competitiveness and sustainability.

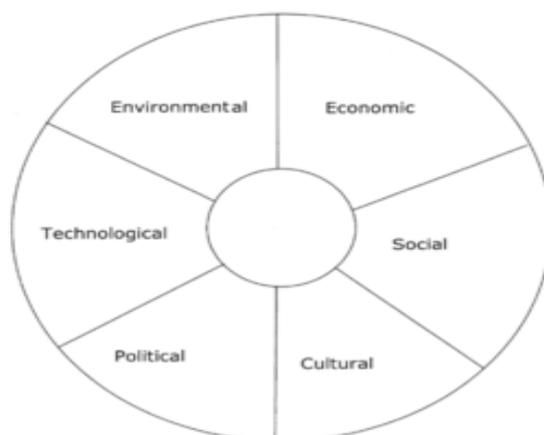


Figure 2. The multidimensional strengths of a tourism destination

Source: J.R., Brent Ritchie, Crouch, Geoffrey, *The competitive destination: a sustainable tourism perspective*, Cabi Publishing, Cambridge, 2003

As we can notice from the second figure all the components of the environment affect a destination. Here we can mention not only the economic, political and social environment but also the environmental, technological, cultural ones. "In summary, what makes a tourism destination truly competitive is its ability to increase tourism expenditure, to increasingly attract visitors while providing them with satisfying, memorable experiences, and to do so in a profitable

way, while enhancing the well-being of destination residents and preserving the natural capital of the destination for future generations"[1](Brent Ritchie,Crouch,2003).

Tourists choose a destination according to their needs and these needs can be subjective to factors as income, lack of security, the existence of a cultural agenda, of local habits.

2. DESTINATION COMPETITIVENESS

As we discussed earlier destination competitiveness also has a crucial role in creating a competitive destination. Researchers and specialists in the area have discussed for many years about the elements that support destination competitiveness and some of them have created proper models for managing to develop destinations.

One of the most important models is the one of professors Geoffrey I. Crouch and J.R. Brent Ritchie. They created a model that "recognizes that destination competitiveness is based upon a destination's resource endowments (comparative advantage) as well as its capacity to deploy resources (competitive advantage).The model also acknowledges the impact of global macro-environmental forces (e.g. the global economy, terrorism, cultural and demographic trends, etc.) and competitive micro-environmental circumstances that impact the functioning of the tourism system associated with the destination"[2](Crouch,2007).

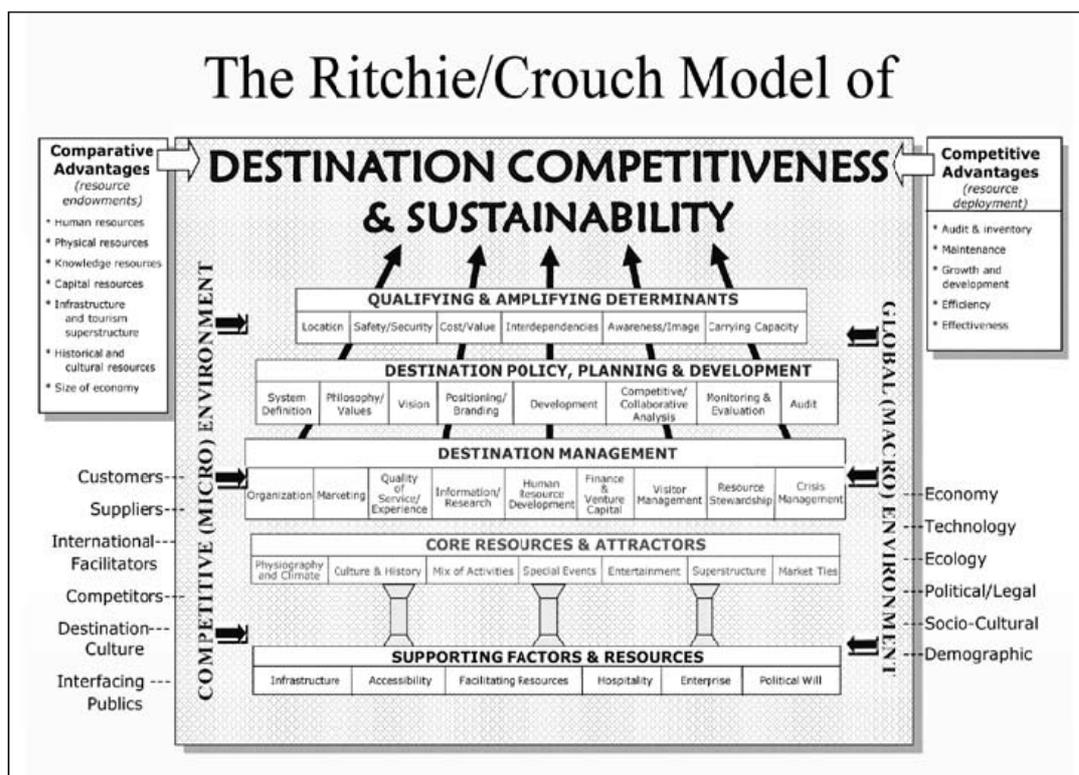


Figure 3. The Ritchie/Crouch Model of Destination Competitiveness & Sustainability

Source: Brent Ritchie, J.R., Crouch, Geoffrey, *A model of destination competitiveness / sustainability: Brazilian perspectives*, Revista da Administracao publica, Rio de Janeiro, 44(5):1049-66, [2010]

Figure number three highlights the fact that in order for a destination to be competitive it is necessary that different relationships exist among several key factors. The management of a destination cannot make it competitive without the existence of factors as customers, suppliers, facilitators, competitors, destination culture, interfacing publics, factors that must take into consideration the environment, meaning: the economy, technology, ecology, political/legal, socio-cultural, demographic. All of these help the destination make a unique proposal that makes it competitive.

In what regards destination competitiveness attributes "the ten most important were found to be:

- physiographic and climate
- market ties
- culture and history
- tourism superstructure
- safety and security
- cost/value
- accessibility

- awareness/image
- location
- infrastructure"[2](Crouch,2007).

Tourists take into consideration some of these attributes when they decide where to go for a holiday. According to their needs and wishes they rank the attributes and after that they choose a destination.

CONCLUSIONS

The development of a destination cannot exist without fulfilling certain requirements. One of this requirements regards the competitiveness of the destination. The most important attributes of competitiveness show us that not only climate, culture and history count, but also tourism infrastructure, safety and security, cost/value and infrastructure.

This article tries to introduce the reader to the importance of paying attention to the competitiveness of a destination and tries to make marketers come up with new strategies of developing destinations.

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