

# THE ANALYSIS OF TOURISM DESTINATION COMPETITIVENESS FROM A SUSTAINABLE PERSPECTIVE: SUBJECTS, TOOLS AND METHODOLOGIES

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In different studies of tourism, researchers have introduced concepts and relevant models about tourism destination competitiveness. They fail to clearly identify the strategic relationships between the critical factors in the models and how they can be integrated for sustainable growth and competitive advantage.

There exist different approaches that model the competitiveness (Ritchie and Crouch 1993; Evans and Johnson 1995; Hassan 2000; Kozak 2001; Dwyer, Livaic and Mellor 2003).

The most detailed work undertaken by tourism researchers on overall tourism competitiveness is that of Crouch and Ritchie (1993,1994, 1995, 1999, 2000, 2001). To be competitive, a destination's development of tourism must be sustainable, not just economically and not just ecologically, but socially, culturally and politically as well. They focus on long-term economic prosperity as the yardstick by which destinations can be assessed competitively. Thus the most competitive destination is that which most effectively creates sustainable well-being for its residents.

The objective of this study is to compare destination competitiveness by an empirically model that can be used to identify and integrate critical success factors for international tourism destinations. An analysis of various contemporary sources on critical success factors, strategic management, destination strategic management and destination competitiveness models will be analysed to find a theoretical framework for the development of a destination competitiveness model that could be used for the successful identification and integration of critical success factors.

The framework that is proposed starts from those main components:

- ⇒ FIRM FACTORS
- ⇒ LOCAL AREA FACTORS
- ⇒ COUNTRY FACTORS

The Competitive Advantage of Tourism Destination is function of the sum of those factors:

$$\textit{Destination Competitiveness} = f(\textit{FF} + \textit{LAF} + \textit{CF})$$

Given the new challenges related to the strategic identification and integration of critical success factors the following questions come up:

1. How can critical success factors be identified and integrated to achieve competitive advantage?
  2. Which are the most appropriate performance indexes to use for measuring those factors?
- Both literature study and empirical investigation will be done. Particularly, the main actions will be:
- ⇒ Postulating a destination competitiveness model that allowed for the significant identification and integration of critical success factors.
  - ⇒ Testing the postulated destination competitiveness model in practice by using it to identify and integrate critical success factors.

Remembering that for the purpose of this research we propose this definition of tourism destination: "destinations are places that have some form of actual or perceived boundary, such as the physical boundary of an island, political boundaries, or even market-created boundaries" (Hudson, 2005: 329), the significance and potential contribution of this study can be discussed from both theoretical and practical standpoints. Basically the study want to contribute to the scientific debate in the comparison between destinations. On expected advantage of the proposed model is the framework

that will enable any destination to identify critical success factors in a balanced, coordinated and integrated manner.