DEVELOPMENT OF A PROPOSED COMPETITIVE TOURISM MODEL FOR SOUTH AFRICA

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Abstract—Tourism is of significant importance to the economy of any country. The successful political transformation in South Africa has virtually opened the country's tourism potential to the rest of the world. This has prompted this paper to develop a model for determining indicators that influence tourism competitiveness for South Africa. As there are few South African studies on competitive tourism, global literature was surveyed and several indicators that influence tourism competitiveness were identified using content analysis. Main indicators such as core resources, destination supporting structures and destination marketing were identified to influence tourism competitiveness. Secondary indicators were also identified within each main indicator. This study adds to the debate and literature on tourism competitiveness, especially in the South African context.

Index Terms—Competitiveness, core indicators, South Africa, Tourism.

I. INTRODUCTION

In 2012, the G20 heads of state recognised tourism as a main driver of economic growth and development. Furthermore, it was mentioned that the tourism industry has the potential to spark global economic recovery [1]. G20 is short for “Group of Twenty”, which consists of a group of finance ministers and bank governors of nineteen of the world’s largest economies, as well as the European Union [2]. Thus, everyone from national governments to local communities is actively engaging in tourism [3]. It is predicted by the World Travel and Tourism Council (WTTC) that tourism will contribute 9.6% of the world’s Gross Domestic Product (GDP) and will employ over 120 million people by 2021 [4]. This was confirmed that the tourism industry is directly responsible for one out of every twelve jobs in advanced and emerging economies worldwide, and for every job created within the tourism industry on average, two more jobs are created within tourism related sectors [5].

The successful political transformation in South Africa has virtually ‘opened’ the country’s tourism potential to the rest of the world. Tourism is of significant importance to the South African economy as it contributes approximately 4% (R 93.3 billion) directly to the country’s GDP [6; 7]. In South Africa, the tourism sector employs 4.6% (617 287) of the country’s formal workforce [7]. As the tourism industry is booming, the competitiveness of the tourism destination is becoming an important issue [8; 9]. Tourism competitiveness is seen as a critical influencer on the performance of tourism destinations, due to the growth and competition within the tourism industry focus tends towards tourism destination marketing, management, and competitiveness issues [10].

What makes the tourism industry distinctive is that it is characterised by continuous change and development [11; 12]. The tourism industry is a complex system with many interrelated components and involves many stakeholders [13; 14]. Stakeholders in tourism include tourists (as the demand), tourism industries, national government organisations (as the supplier) and the local communities as the hosts [15; 16]. It is therefore evident that the tourism industry does not exist in a vacuum. As tourism becomes more and more sophisticated, competitive and global, the public and private sector stakeholders will be compelled to keep up with the rapidly changing market. If planning of tourism is executed effectively, it will generate revenue and employment [17; 18].

Against this background, the aim of this paper is to determine the indicators influencing tourism competitiveness for South Africa. The paper follows the succeeding structure: firstly, the problem statement is highlighted. This is followed by a description of the research method and procedures used in the study. The results of the summative content analysis conducted on the extant literature relevant to tourism competitiveness indicators, is thereafter presented. The model developed showing the indicators that influence competitive tourism in South Africa is presented next. Finally, the paper has been concluded and suggestions regarding future research are offered.

II. PROBLEM STATEMENT

Various South African authors [19; 20; 21; 22] debate tourism competitiveness in their works. Many destinations face the dilemma of tourism economic growth with the less desirable social and environmental impacts associated with it [22].
Political- and economic stability are the biggest weaknesses for South African tourism to be competitive and if these issues are not addressed and managed it will hinder tourism growth [19]. Tourism role-players should develop competitive policies and marketing strategies [20]. Competitive management policies is necessary and safety and security provisions should be built into national, provincial and local policies, including specific tourism security initiatives [21].

The South African tourism industry is greatly dependent on its natural resources for future global competitiveness [23]. From the year 2014 to the year 2015, South Africa has slipped down one position, in the world competitiveness ranking, which highlighted power and infrastructure constraints, a high (youth) unemployment rate, as well as insufficient education and technical skills as main challenges to the country’s competitive position [24]. Furthermore, China, Australia and the United Kingdom issued travel warnings to their citizens not to travel to South Africa in the month of April 2015, due to xenophobic attacks within the country [25]. South Africa was also criticised over its latest visa requirements legislation in 2015, and was warned that these new visa regulations could seriously affect its tourism industry [26]. Moreover, tourism-related organisations within South Africa have voiced their concerns over the long-term impact of repeated negative exposure on the country’s tourism industry.

In 2015, the South African Department of Tourism launched a Tourism Incentive Programme (TIP) to ensure the country stays competitive and attracts more tourists; the TIP will also include a subsidy for tourism businesses to participate in trade exhibition and marketing road shows both locally and internationally [27]. However, within The Global Competitiveness Report 2014–2015, South Africa is only ranked number 56 of the 140 countries used within the report [28]. Furthermore, South Africa is ranked number 48 within The Travel and Tourism Competitiveness Report 2015 [29].

It is evident that research on the concept of competitive tourism, within a South African context, is limited. This has led to the research in question: Which indicators should a competitive tourism model for South Africa contain to increase the country’s tourism competitiveness.

III. RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

For the purpose of this paper, the data analysis strategy used is a summative content analysis [30]. It must be noted that if a summative content analysis does not go further than searching for the recurrence of particular words or content, then it will merely be a manifest content analysis [31]. However, the data analysis went beyond a manifest content analysis, as the responses were not just analysed based on observable text, but were interpreted within the context of the main indicators and subsequent secondary indicators within each main indicator. Tesch’s process to identify relevant indicators was followed to ensure a systematic analysis of the extant literature [32]. The researchers read through all the extant literature and identified the most descriptive words for emerging indicators. These emerging indicators were then grouped together into main indicators. The refining and renaming of some of the main and secondary indicators within each core indicator finalized the analysis process.

Objectivity of the clustering process was ensured as both the researchers were to avoid researcher subjective bias. Therefore investigator triangulation was ensured as two competent researchers that are experts in tourism and familiar with desktop data analysis, interpreted the data. The findings were then presented as a proposed model showing the indicators for competitive tourism for South Africa. As the findings of this paper was based on extant global literature and sourced mostly from the most recent journal articles available, it can be regarded as trustworthy.

IV. THEORETICAL OVERVIEW OF COMPETITIVE TOURISM INDICATORS

Competitiveness in tourism refers to what makes a given destination attractive to tourists [33; 34]. Tourism competitiveness can be viewed as a country’s ability to use its human-, financial- and natural resources [35]. To determine how competitive a tourist destination is, will require an analysis of the strengths and weaknesses of tourist destinations taking into consideration how much it enhances the interest of local inhabitants, ability to attract tourists (both actual and potential), and the competitiveness of the tourism industry at the destination [36]. The ability of a national economy to reap gains from tourism, depends in totality on the availability of investment to develop the necessary infrastructure and its ability to supply to the needs of tourists [37]. A review of the extant literature reveals competitive tourism indicators most frequently considered are natural-, man-made and cultural attractions, safety and security, marketing campaigns, quality of service delivery, basic and tourist infrastructure, accessibility and events. A brief discussion of these competitive tourism indicators follow.

A. Natural Attractions

Tourism that focuses on the natural environment is a fast growing part of the tourism industry [38]. Natural resources such as: national parks and reserves,
waterfalls, lakes, dams and other water catchment areas, beaches, caves, rock formations, scenic lookouts, viewing areas, vistas and areas of impressive natural beauty, attract tourists to destinations [39]. Natural attractions are defined as the features that the physical environment consists of like the landscape, climate and forests, including plants and wildlife [40]. These types of attractions are primarily concerned with exceptional natural beauty and interest; they are the oldest forms of attractions and include geological formations, mountains, natural spas and scenic beauty [41]. Examples of natural attractions include: Table Mountain in South Africa, the Grand Canyon in The United States of America and The Great Barrier Reef in Australia. South Africa’s natural resources form the foundation of the tourism industry and attract a vast numbers of local and international tourists every year [23; 42]. Although South Africa is well-known for its already well-established network of national parks and is regarded as a global leader in ecotourism, it has by far not realised its full potential in tourism [43]. Concerns relating to the management of natural resources in relation to economic growth are on the increase, as more and more of the world’s natural resources are consumed and contaminated by the human population [44]. The World Economic Forum launched the travel and tourism competitiveness index report on the sets of factors and policies that enable the competitive development of the travel and tourism industry and of countries [45]. In this report, the importance of the availability of resources and the distribution thereof were emphasised [46]. However, the competitive advantage of tourism destinations globally and also in South Africa no longer just focus on natural attractions, but increasingly so on man-made attractions [43].

B. Man-made attractions

Any type of feature the destination has, including places or venues which lure tourists, can be classified as an attraction [47]. Destinations regularly comprise of more than one attraction. In some cases some man-made structures were not originally intended as a tourist attraction. However, over time they became visitor attractions due to their uniqueness [11]. Examples of man-made structures not intended for tourism include; The Great Pyramids of Giza in Egypt, The Great Wall of China in China, Sydney Harbour Bridge in Australia, The Tower of London and Windsor Castle in England. Man-made structures specifically designed for tourism were premeditated to attract visitors and are purpose-built to accommodate the needs of the tourist [48]. These attractions were built by man specifically for the purpose of becoming visitor attractions [41]. Examples of man-made structures specifically designed for tourism include: theme parks, casinos and aquariums. The more secondary attractions available at the destination, the more appealing the destination becomes [8].

C. Cultural attractions

Destinations can attract tourists by providing a wide variety of cultural and heritage attractions [49]. Cultural resources as defined by language, religion, cuisine, social habits, music, arts and history, can make a specific destination also more appealing [50; 51]. Cultural tourist attractions depend greatly upon distinctiveness and authenticity [49]. It is concerned with the culture of a specific country or region, focusing on traditional communities who have unique customs, art and social practices which distinguish them from other cultures [52]. Culture is one of the most important factors which attract tourists to destinations as people are curious to experience foreign countries and their cultures [53]. People are becoming more and more interested in the study of pre- or early history of mankind [47]. A wide variety of cultural sites, heritage attractions and museums can attract tourists [49; 54]. Heritage attractions centre around history, archaeological sites and pilgrimages [55]. One of the most important archaeological sites is the Cradle of Mankind found in South Africa [56].

D. Safety and security

Safety and security of tourists is a prerequisite for a thriving tourist destination [57]. The World Economic Forum confirmed that safety and security plays a major role in travel and tourism competitiveness [46]. Elements of safety include low crime rates, transportation safety, visual policing and similarities in laws between the host and origin country. Safety and security of tourists is a prerequisite for a thriving tourist destination [57; 58]. Individuals travelling to foreign countries frequently face health-related issues that the individual would not normally experience in his or her home country [59]. Health risks, related to travelling to certain destinations, might arise from disease outbreaks, special events or gatherings, natural disasters, or other circumstances which may affect travellers’ health [60]. High levels of crime in South Africa threaten the growth of the tourism industry [61]. Tourists become victims of crime as they are usually relaxed, off guard and unaware of local crime hot spots [62]. Furthermore, tourist destinations with a proven track record for disaster management and prompt rescue operation services are considered more appealing to tourists [61].

E. Marketing campaigns

Marketing will have a major effect on the tourist as it can make the destination more attractive and exciting [63]. The more a destination is advertised, the more enticing it becomes to the individual. If information about a certain destination is hard to access, the destination becomes less appealing. Inexperienced
travellers will rely more on marketing and advertising than experienced travellers [64]. Proven destination marketing methods such as advertising campaigns or industry fairs are gradually being displaced. Interactive communication with tourists through online channels is becoming increasingly important [65]. This, in turn, has destination managers and developers redesigning their existing marketing strategies.

F. Quality of service delivery
Services and ancillary services at the destination play an important role in the choice of destination - the more services available at the destination, the more appealing the destination becomes [66]. High levels of quality services and customer satisfaction are the most important determinants with regard to destination competitiveness [8; 66]. Friendly and quality service, food- and accommodation standards are important factors in determining the overall tourist satisfaction within a destination [67]. Tourists also travel to specific countries to sample new cuisine and purchase produce [68]. Price competitiveness also play a vital role in the tourism industry [69]. Due to the economic benefit that tourism offers, governments of many countries impose a wide range of tourism taxes [70].

G. Basic Infrastructure
Tourists choose destinations with an effective basic infrastructure in terms of availability of public bus and train transport, bus tours and rental cars, good roads, fast and reliable communication networks, availability of water supply and reliability of energy and power, general sanitation, sewage and waste disposal, availability of public institutions such as medical services, post offices, prisons and airports with regular domestic and international aviation services [8; 41; 71; 72; 73].

H. Tourism Infrastructure
In addition to the basic infrastructure of a country, the tourist service infrastructure should also be of an acceptable standard with favourable visa requirements, wide variety of accommodation and dining establishments [74]. Accommodation standards are important factors in determining overall tourist satisfaction within a destination [67]. A destination’s tourist infrastructure can present itself, in for example: outdoor activities, gambling, nightlife, visitor services (especially if English is widely spoken and understood) [54]. In addition to visiting primary attractions, tourists can also visit secondary attractions which are smaller sites at which tourists stop on their way to and from their primary attractions. The vicinity of different attractions within a geographical area is important for tourism development as it helps attract tourists [75].

I. Accessibility
Accessibility in tourism refers to how accessible a destination is for tourists and the ability to access desired goods, services and activities at the destination [76]. Accessibility to and at the destination plays a vital role in how appealing a destination may be for a tourist [77]. The more accessible a destination is and the more attractions within the destination there are, the more appealing the destination becomes to the tourist [78]. To increase accessibility, destination tourism institutions need to meet the tourists’ needs; this can be done by providing multilingual guides and signage in different languages at the destination [13]. Visa- and health requirements as well as transportation influence the accessibility of a destination [79]. At times an individual will have to travel to the embassy, or to one of the few consulates to obtain a visa, and often have to wait for hours for any service [80]. In addition there is no guarantee that the issuing consulate or embassy will approve a visa. Individuals travelling to foreign countries frequently face health-related issues the individual would not normally experience at his or her home country [59]. When travelling to some parts of the world, the tourist will have to get vaccinated against local diseases or present proof of vaccination if travelling from infected areas [81]. Africa, Asia and South America are perceived as parts of the world where travellers could contract infectious diseases [82]. Tourists will usually not travel to these destinations where travel warnings have been issued, especially if these circumstances occur regularly [13]. These health risks might arise from epidemics, special events or gatherings, floods, earthquakes or hurricane that causes great damage or loss of life, or other circumstances that may affect travellers’ health [60]. It is the responsibility of the traveller to ensure they have the needed vaccinations to visit destinations where they are required. If not they will not be allowed entry into the specific country. However, if a destination is unique, the accessibility to the destination will have less influence on the attractiveness of the destination [83].

J. Events
Attractions at destinations may include events and business tourism. Events are perceived to be a one-time or infrequent occurrence outside normal tourism programmes within the destination [84]. There are three basic types of events: sports events, arts and culture, and commercial events [47; 85]. The increase in leisure time and disposable income have led to a growth in events, celebrations and entertainment within the tourism industry worldwide; these include national days and celebrations, important civic occasions, unique cultural performances, major sporting fixtures, corporate functions, trade promotions and product launches [84]. On a global scale events and festivals with a
cultural component are significantly increasing in numbers [87]. Events such as specific rituals, performances or celebrations can attract tourists perceived it as a special occasion and make them favour a specific destination. Tourists actively pursue entertainment during their holiday [54]. Destination marketers have turned their attention to marketing their destinations as favourable to hosting conferences thus also attracting business travellers [86].

V. PROPOSED TOURISM COMPETITIVENESS INDICATORS MODEL

A proposed tourism competitiveness indicators model has been developed based on the extant literature in the previous sections and is shown in Fig. 1.

![Proposed tourism competitiveness indicators model](image)

As can be seen in Fig. 1, three main indicators have been identified for tourism competitiveness. The first main indicator is core resources, which include natural-, culture- and made-made attractions and events. These indicators can appeal to tourists and make them prefer one destination above the other. Most important is the second main indicator namely destination supporting structures. The safety and security, basic- and tourist infrastructure and accessibility to the destination can make a destination attractive or unattractive for tourists. How appealing the marketing of the destination is (third main indicator), can be influenced by the marketing campaign launched to attract tourists as well as the service delivery quality in the country.

CONCLUSIONS, LIMITATIONS AND FUTURE RESEARCH

This study has focused on the development of a model showing the indicators for competitive tourism for South Africa. Three main indicators were identified namely core resources, destination supporting structures and destination marketing. Core resources that can attract tourists to a country include natural-, man-made and cultural attractions as well as events taking place. Destination supporting structures include the presence of safety and security measures, having a good basic and tourist infrastructure and accessibility. The role of destination marketing in making a destination appealing to tourists was emphasized, in particular with regards to marketing campaigns and quality of service delivery. When considering the limitations of the study, it is important to note that although this study focused on providing an extant global literature overview on the indicators influencing tourism competitiveness, it may be possible that other indicators exist. It is also acknowledged that many of these indicators are generic and can be applied to any country, not just South Africa. However, this study adds to the debate and literature on tourism competitiveness within the South African context. It is suggested that the proposed model mentioned in this paper be empirically tested by means of a quantitative study, and the perceptions of both South Africans and potential tourists from other countries be gauged.

REFERENCES


