



Analysis of destination competitiveness by IPA and IPCA methods: The case of Costa Brava, Spain against Antalya, Turkey

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ABSTRACT

In a highly competitive market place, understanding competitive position of the destination is important for destination managers. Importance Performance Analysis (IPA) and its extension Importance Performance Competitor Analysis (IPCA) are two common methods used by the researchers for this purpose. By using IPA and IPCA methods, this study identifies the competitive position of the Costa Brava, Spain against Antalya, Turkey as popular resort destinations. The data were collected from Russian tourists visiting the destinations. IPA results showed that Costa Brava has some strength attributes, such as clean beaches, local cuisine, and value for money. However, IPCA findings revealed that most of these attributes are null advantage, when the performance of its rival Antalya is taken into account. Thus, the results of the study signify the importance of determining a resort destination's competitiveness by using different analytical frameworks.

1. Introduction

Estimations of United Nations World Tourism Organization (UNWTO-Tourism towards 2030 Report, 2011) show that international tourist arrivals will reach to 1.8 billion, in 2030 with an average annually increase ratio of 3.3%, and majority of tourists will continue to travel mostly by leisure, recreation, and holiday purposes. With this respect, mainly the resort destinations which are closely competing with each other in the global marketplace need to reinforce their positions by highly satisfying their visitors. It is widely acknowledged that tourists' satisfaction with a destination is combined by various attributes (e.g. Meng, Tepanon, & Uysal, 2008; Yuksel, 2001). Hence, one of the destination managers' tasks is to understand the role and importance of destination attributes in tourists' satisfaction. With this purpose, Importance Performance Analysis (IPA) has been a popularly used method by the researchers and managers, since it was firstly introduced by Martilla and James (1977). IPA suggests different strategies for each of the destination attributes by considering its relative importance for tourists and destination's performance.

In a highly competitive marketplace, destination managers have to also know their strengths and weaknesses relative to their competing destinations. This is mainly because tourists' destination selections and expectations are significantly influenced by other destinations' offerings. Therefore, for identifying a destination's competitive position,

managers should compare their own destination attributes' performance with others'. Unfortunately, IPA method does not consider the performance of competing destinations. Unlike IPA, its extension IPCA which is recently proposed by Albayrak (2015), simultaneously investigates the importance of the destination attributes, destination's own performance in these attributes, and its competitor destination's.

Costa Brava, Spain where the first signs of tourism go back to the 19th century, is the focal resort destination of this study. Tourist activity gradually extended during the 50s and 60s, and the Costa Brava has turned into a popular mass tourism destination by the beauty of its landscape, mild climate and friendliness of the local people (Sardá, Joan, & Conxita, 2004). The competing destination of the Costa Brava in this study, is selected as Antalya, Turkey which is one of the similar mass resort destinations in characteristics. Both destinations representing mass resort destinations located in the Mediterranean basin, and are at the consolidation stage of Butler's (1980) the Destination Life Cycle Model. In the present research, Russian tourists, who were visiting one of these destinations has been targeted, since Russia is one of the major tourism source markets, with more than 34 million outbound tourists in 2015 (The World Bank, 2018).

With above background in mind, the objectives of this study are: (1) to identify the strengths and weaknesses of the Costa Brava destination by IPA, (2) to determine Costa Brava's competitive position relative to Antalya by IPCA, (3) and finally to compare the results of IPA and IPCA.

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By achieving these objectives, this study intends to contribute to methodological literature about the use of IPA technique and its implications. Moreover, findings are assumed to enhance the literature about destination competitiveness of the mass resort destinations.

The paper is structured as follows. In the next section, a literature review is presented about destination attributes and their roles in destination competitiveness. This is followed by a section which summarizes how IPA was used in the previous studies for analysing destination competitiveness. After the comparison of the Costa Brava and Antalya by using Butler's Destination Life Cycle Model, the study method is provided. Results of the IPA and IPCA are summarized in the following section. Findings are discussed and further research potentials are identified in the final section.

2. Destination attributes and their roles in destination competitiveness

In tourism destinations, services are supplied and delivered by different types of complementary and competing organizations, multiple sectors, and infrastructures which makes complex to the management of the area and difficult to create memorable tourist experiences (Pavlovich, 2003: 203; Crouch, 2011). In general, a destination is competitive, if “it can attract and satisfy potential tourists and this competitiveness is determined both by tourism-related and much wider range of attributes that impact the tourism service providers” (Enright & Newton, 2004:778). As stated by Kozak (1999), specific destination attributes can be grouped either in the input side such as physical resources (tourist facilities, infrastructure, and environment), human capital endowment (services), marketing and promotion expenses; or in the output side such as the number of tourist arrivals, tourism revenues, and productivity.

Previous studies broadly show that tourist' decision making process, expectations, travel experiences, satisfactions, and post-visit behaviours (revisit intention, recommendation etc.) are impacted by various destination attributes (Cracolici & Nijkamp, 2008; Eusébio & Vieira, 2013; Truong & Foster, 2006). Destination attributes also determine the competitiveness capability, attractiveness, and sustainability of a destination (Caber, Albayrak, & Matzler, 2012; Rodríguez-Díaz & Espino-Rodríguez, 2008; Wilde, 2010). Starting with the studies in 1990s (Crouch & Ritchie, 1999; Faulkner, Oppermann, & Fredline, 1999; Hu & Ritchie, 1993; Kozak & Rimmington, 1999; Ritchie & Crouch, 1993, 2000) identification of the main destination attributes and their relative importance both for tourists and destination competitiveness had been attractive research topics in the tourism and travel field.

Most of the early models developed for understanding destination competitiveness are based on Porter's 'Diamond Model' (2008) which recognizes that a region's competitiveness is based upon its resource endowments (comparative advantage), and its capacity to deploy resources (competitive advantage) including the impacts of global and competitive environment factors. By following this approach, conceptual destination competitiveness models are developed by Crouch and Ritchie (1999, 2000), Enright and Newton (2004, 2005), and Dwyer and Kim (2003). These models can be considered as the most known and inspiring early attempts, where destination competitiveness is closely linked with socio-economic prosperity of the local people, memorable tourist experience, and sustainability. In the Calgary Model, which is developed by Crouch and Ritchie (1999, 2000), five different layers (qualifying and amplifying determinants; destination policy, planning and development; destination management; core resources and attractors; and supporting factors and resources) are proposed for understanding the destinations' competitiveness. In the Dwyer and Kim's (2003) model, it is considered that destination competitiveness consists of endowed resources (both natural and heritage), created resources, and supporting resources which are linked with destination

management. Enright and Newton (2004, 2005) attempted to determine the relative importance of core tourism attractors and business features of a destination's competitiveness (Mazanec, Wöber, & Zins, 2007). The main shortcoming of these conceptual models was that it was impossible to empirically test the relationships among the destination attributes and their influences on destinations' competitiveness.

One of the significant developments in destination competitiveness measurement studies is the introduction of Travel and Tourism Competitiveness Index (TTCI) in 2007, which is prepared by the World Economic Forum. This index ranks the countries depending on their tourism competitive performance, owing to 13 'pillars' of competitiveness, such as policy rules and regulations, environmental regulation, safety and security, and tourism infrastructure. However, country comparisons can be made by pillar-based rankings in this index, which avoids the destination-level comparisons and the identification of various attributes' impacts on a specific destination's overall competitiveness.

Principally, destination attributes which are important for the competitiveness of a destination may not be seen equally important by tourists. Therefore, the use of 'determinant attributes' term, which is firstly suggested by Myers and Alpert (1968) in the marketing field for the attributes that have relatively higher impacts on competitiveness than others, is adapted to the tourism and travel field by the researchers. It is mainly because, both destination attributes and their performance determine a specific destination's competitiveness in the global marketplace as noted by Crouch (2011). Following to this perspective, investigation of destinations' competitiveness by the use of methods that may enable to highlight the 'determinant' destination attributes is a necessity (Pearce, 1997). With this purpose, some researchers attempted to classify destination attributes in terms of their roles on destination competitiveness by adapting De Keyser-Vanhove Model (Gomezelj & Mihalič, 2008), by using IPA technique (Caber et al., 2012; Enright & Newton, 2004; Go & Govers, 1999; Khin, Daengbuppha, & Nonsiri, 2014), and by introducing Regional Tourist Attractiveness Index (Cracolici & Nijkamp, 2008).

3. The use of IPA in the destination competitiveness literature

Literature review shows that IPA had been one of the most popular analysis methods for the evaluation of destination attributes and for the comparison of competing destinations performance. For example, in an early study, Evans and Chon (1989) examined the efficiency of IPA for resolving tourism policies in two different destinations in the USA. The results belong to mature destination showed that local business operators were dissatisfied with destination marketing organization's performance.

By combining destination attributes with generic business factors of competitiveness, Enright and Newton (2004) compared Hong Kong with its major competitors in Asia-Pacific region. To perform this combined approach, they used IPA, since it provides a basis for strategy development. In another research, Griffin and Edwards (2012) applied IPA to urban tourism destinations in Australia, namely Sydney and Canberra. By segmenting participants from both cities into international and domestic tourists, they showed that for some destination attributes (e.g. helpful local people) different strategies should be formulated to better satisfy these groups. They concluded that IPA is a useful diagnostic tool for destination managers, if it is implemented to the market segments. Similarly, Caber et al. (2012), by applying IPA to the four leading markets of Antalya, Turkey (i.e. German, Dutch, British, and Russian), identified the varying role of destination attributes for market segments. Their results highlighted that without segmentation IPA may offer limited value to the managers. In another study, De Nisco, Riviezzo, and Napolitano (2015), attempted to measure national and international tourists' destination level satisfactions

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