

Tourism Destination Competitiveness: The Case of Dalyan - Turkey

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Abstract

This research seeks to contribute to the literature on destination competitiveness measurement by providing a structural equation model to evaluate tourism destination competitiveness. This study deals with the model for assessing competitiveness in the field of tourism and it is conducted on tourism suppliers in the district of Dalyan, Mugla, Turkey. The survey focuses Place Attachment, Environmental Attitude, Tourism Development Impacts, Development Preferences about Tourism Attractions and Support for Destination Competitive Strategies. Structural Equation Modelling used to analyze tourism destination competitiveness. Sample survey taken from among 268 randomly chosen stakeholders located in the Dalyan town. After the implication of SEM the results has shown that Place Attachment has an impact on Development Preferences About Tourism Attractions and Development Preferences About Tourism Attractions has an impact on Support for Destination Competitive Strategies.

Keywords: Tourism destination, competitiveness in tourism, destination management

Introduction

Tourism and travel is now considered as one of the world's largest industries. According to the statistics published by Republic of Turkey Ministry of Culture and Tourism, foreign tourist arrivals in Turkey reached 34.910.098 and tourism receipts reached 32.309 billion dollars in 2013 (Republic of Turkey Ministry of Culture and Tourism, 2013). Tourism 2020 Vision forecasts that international arrivals are expected to reach nearly 1.6 billion by the year 2020. Of these worldwide arrivals in 2020, 378 million will be long-haul travelers and 1.2 billion will be intraregional (UNWTO, 2008). In the conditions of growing global competition tourism destinations are continuously seeking ways to increase their competitiveness (Pavlic et al., 2009).

Literature Review

This research seeks to contribute to the literature on customer satisfaction measurement by providing a multi-item and multi-dimensional scale to evaluate tourism destination competitiveness. Tourism destinations are an important and intellectually fascinating component of the global tourism system. From an academic perspective, destinations (and resorts) have provided a fertile ground for research (Prideaux, 2009). Tourism destination reflects the feelings, beliefs, and opinions that an individual has about destinations (Hu and Ritchie, 1993). In tourism industry, competition among territorial areas is usually not centred on the single aspects of the tourist product (environmental resources, transportation, tourism services, hospitality, etc.), but on the tourist destination as an integrated set of facilities for the tourist (Buhalis, 2000; Ritchie & Crouch, 2003). The concepts of marketing planning and competitive development strategies are often incorporated in the concept of competitiveness definition (Buhalis, 2000; Heath and Wall, 1992; Kozak, 2001; Poon, 1993). The number of tourism destinations worldwide is constantly growing. As destinations strive for bigger market shares, there is great competition on the international tourism market. Competitiveness is increasingly being seen as a critical influence on the performance of tourism destinations in competitive world markets (Enright and Newton, 2005).

Enright and Newton (2005, p.340) stated that “a destination is competitive if it can attract and satisfy potential tourists, and this competitiveness is determined by both tourism specific factors and a much wider range of factors that influence the tourism service providers.” In order to achieve proper matches between tourism recourses and management strategies, it is necessary for the industry and government to understand where a country’s competitive position is the weakest as well as strongest. In addition, it is helpful for both industry and government to know how competitiveness is changing and why these changes are occurring (Dwyer et al., 2000). Destination Management includes the factors that can enhance the appeal of the core resources, attractors, strengthen the quality and effectiveness of the supporting factors, and best adapt to the situational conditions (Crouch, Ritchie 1999). Identifying competitors and determining the destination advantages and disadvantages relative to competitors is an integral part of successful marketing management of tourist destinations (Dragicevic et al., 2012). In the context of tourism, the concept of competitiveness has been examined and applied in different destination settings, generally related to the growth sustainability of destinations and the prosperity of their societies (Chen, at al., 2010). Basically, tourism destination is the essential component of a tourism system, and constitutes multifaceted elements and attractions such as social/natural resources, culture, transportation, facilities, services, and other infrastructures. These destination attributes have been considered as key components in both the tourism origin-destination system and the tourism functional system (Yoon, 2002). The idea of the competitive destination contains two elements: destination and competitiveness. A tourism destination is a well-defined geographical area within which the tourist enjoys various types of tourism experiences (Vanhove, 2005). Ritchie and Crouch (2003) distinguish several types and levels of tourism destinations:

A country

- A macro-region consisting of several countries (e.g. Africa)
- A province or another administrative entity
- A localized region (e.g. Flanders, Normandy)
- A city or town
- A unique locale with great drawing power (e.g. a national park, Iguacu Falls, Disney World in Orlando, the Notre Dame in Paris).

The fundamental product in tourism is the destination experience. Competition, therefore, centres on the destination’. For most tourists, this experience takes place in a rather small geographical area such as a town or a region. This is an entity which, from the tourism management point of view, is managerial (Ritchie and Crouch, 2003). Competitiveness in tourism can be described as the elements that make a destination competitive as defined by Ritchie and Crouch (2003):... 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. Competitiveness has become a central point of tourism policy. As competition increases and tourism activity intensifies, tourism policy focuses on improving competitiveness by creating a statutory framework to monitor, control and enhance quality and efficiency in the industry, and to protect resources (Goeldner et al., 2000). A number of studies have introduced and applied the concept of competitiveness in the area of tourism destinations (Ahmed & Krohn, 1990; Bordas, 1994; Buhalis, 2000; Crouch & Ritchie, 1999; d’Hautesserre, 2000; Go & Govers, 2000; Hassan, 2000; Kozak, 2001; Kozak & Rimmington, 1999; Mihalič, 2000; Pearce, 1997; Ritchie & Crouch, 1993; Thomas & Long, 2000; Woodside & Carr, 1988; Yoon, 2002).

Competitiveness in the tourism literature has been considered as “a destination’s ability to create and integrate value-added products that sustain its resources while maintaining market position relative to competitors” (Hassan, 2000). It is also defined as “the ability of a country to create added value and thus increases national wealth by managing assets and processes, attractiveness, and aggressiveness, and proximity, and by integrating these relationship into an economic and social model” (Ritchie & Crouch, 2000).

Data and Methodology

In order to identify the current situation in Dalyan town, empirical research was carried out using a sample survey taken from among 268 randomly chosen stake holders located in the Dalyan town. The questionnaire was adapted from Yoon (2012). The research was carried out from September 1st to October 1st, 2013. In total, 300 questionnaires were distributed out of which 268 were correctly filled.

According to that, the goals of the research aimed to prove or reject the following hypothesis:

- H1- Place Attachment has an impact on Development Preferences about Tourism Attractions
- H2- Environmental Attitude has an impact on Development Preferences about Tourism Attractions
- H3- Tourism Development Impacts have an impact on Development Preferences about Tourism Attractions
- H4- Development Preferences about Tourism Attractions have an impact on Support for Destination Competitive Strategies

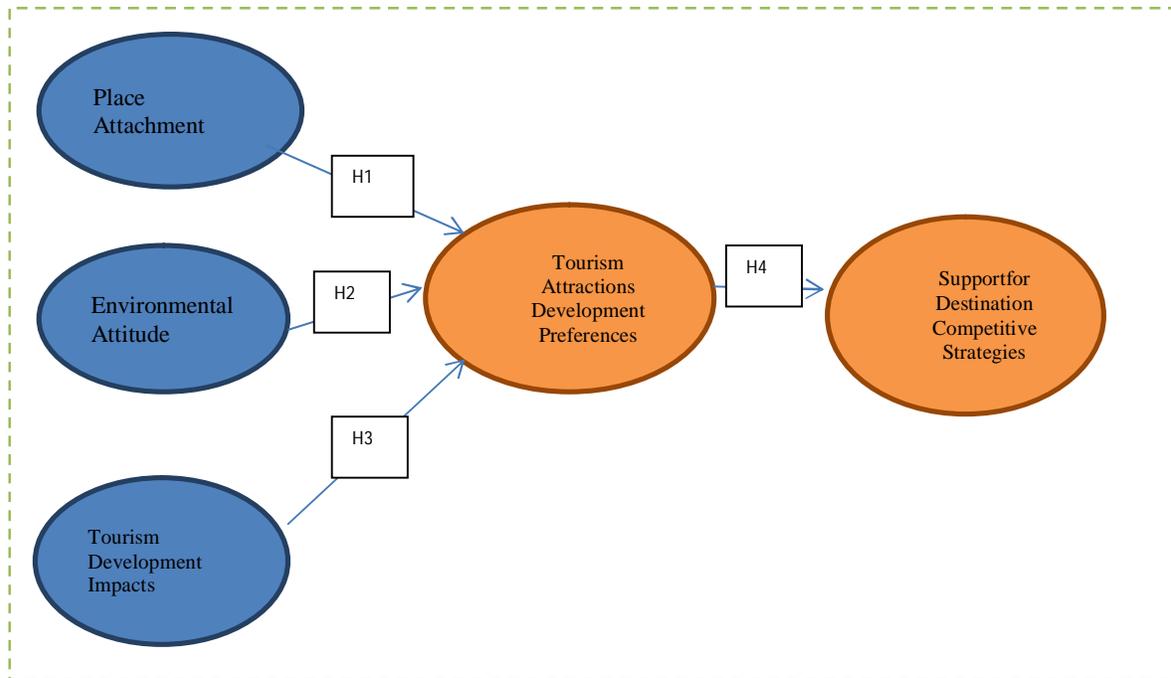


Figure I. Graphical Illustration of the Proposed Structural Equation Model

The questionnaire contained sixty contextual sets of questions used to assess the attitudes and opinions of targeted respondents. A five point Likert scale was employed for the measurement of notions. The data were screened using the SPSS program (Version 22). Deletion of missing cases was undertaken and outliers were examined to ensure that extreme values did not influence the results. In order to evaluate simultaneously the relationships shown in Figure I, and to evaluate the measurement properties of the important factors in the model so that the findings of the study could more widely applied, it was decided to conduct confirmatory analysis using LISREL 9.1.

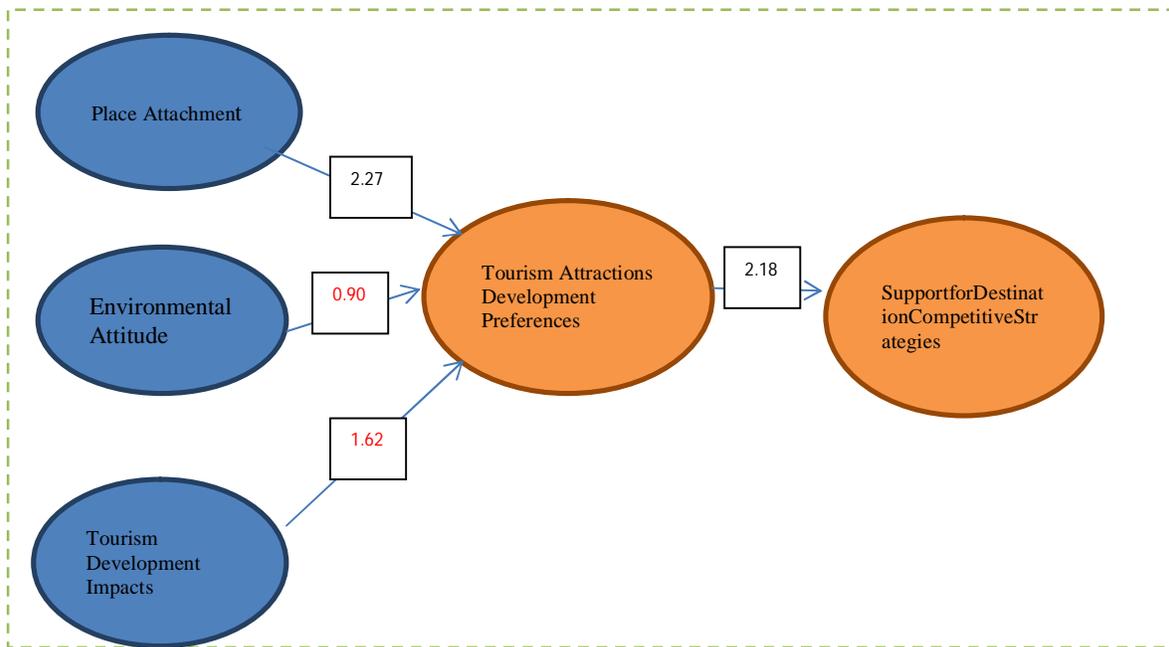


Figure II. Graphical Illustration of the Proposed Structural Equation Model with T-Values

After the measurement of structure equation model in LISREL programme it is found that observation model has sufficient goodness of fit statistics. Afterwards, the structural equation model is analyzed. Results of the analysis show that Environmental Attitude and Tourism Development Impacts dimensions did not provide sufficient goodness of fit statistics, path from Environmental Attitude and Tourism Development Impacts to Development Preferences about Tourism Attractions is under critical t-value of 1.96. This is shown in Figure II. Environmental Attitude and Tourism Development Impacts dimensions were removed and a new model formed. This is shown in Figure III.



Figure III. Graphical Illustration of the New Proposed Structural Equation Model

According to the new proposed structural equation model, its aimed to prove or reject the following hypothesis:

H1- Place Attachment has an impact on Development Preferences about Tourism Attractions

H2- Development Preferences about Tourism Attractions have an impact on Support for Destination Competitive Strategies

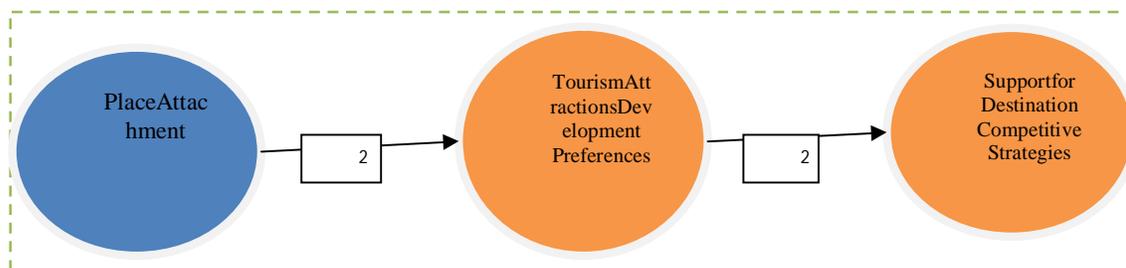


Figure III: Graphical Illustration of the New Proposed Structural Equation Model with T-Values

Results of the analysis show that Place Attachment provided sufficient goodness of fit statistics, path from Place Attachment to Development Preferences about Tourism Attractions is over critical t-value of 1.96. Path from Development Preferences about Tourism Attractions to Support for Destination Competitive Strategies is over critical value of 1.96.

Table I: Goodness of Fit Statistics

<u>FIT STATISTICS</u>	<u>GOOD FIT</u>	<u>ACCEPTABLE FIT</u>	<u>MODEL RESULTS</u>
χ^2	$0 \leq \chi^2 \leq 2sd$	$2sd \leq \chi^2 \leq 4sd$	2-
χ^2 / sd	$0 \leq \chi^2 / sd \leq 2$	$2 \leq \chi^2 / sd \leq 4$	2.54
RMSEA	$0 \leq RMSEA \leq 0.05$	$0.05 \leq RMSEA \leq 0.09$	0.072
SRMR	$0 \leq SRMR \leq 0.05$	$0.05 \leq SRMR \leq 0.10$	0.067
NFI	$0.95 \leq NFI \leq 1.00^a$	$0.90 \leq NFI \leq 0.95$	0.93
NNFI	$0.97 \leq NNFI \leq 1.00^b$	$0.95 \leq NNFI \leq 0.97$	0.91
CFI	$0.97 \leq CFI \leq 1.00$	$0.95 \leq CFI \leq 0.97$	0.94
GFI	$0.95 \leq GFI \leq 1.00$	$0.90 \leq GFI \leq 0.95$	0.91
AGFI	$0.90 \leq AGFI \leq 1.00$	$0.85 \leq AGFI \leq 1.00$	0.86

Source: Jöreskog and Sorbom, 2002, 2004; Schermelleh-Engel and Moosbrugger, 2003; Raykov and Marcoulides, 2006; Şimşek, 2007; Çelik and Yılmaz, 2009

Conclusion

The study reported here has indicated that, in general, Place Attachment, Environmental Attitude, Tourism Development Impacts, Tourism Attractions Development Preferences and Support for Destination Competitive Strategies, in the context of tourism sector stakeholders in the district of Dalyan. Environmental Attitude did not provide sufficient goodness of fit statistics possibly because of the district of Dalyan may be seen as a protected and preserved destination among stakeholders. Tourism Development Impacts did not provide sufficient goodness of fit statistics possibly because of stakeholders in the district of Dalyan may not want Dalyan to enlarge and be spoiled. Results show that Place Attachment provide sufficient goodness of fit statistics and paths from Place Attachment to Development Preferences and from Development Preferences to Support for Destination Competitive Strategies indicated positive results. This may show that Place Attachment and being a member of Dalyan district is important among stakeholders and this has a positive effect to Development Preferences and accordingly to Destination Competitive Strategies.

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