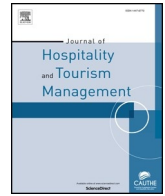




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A review on tourism destination competitiveness

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ABSTRACT

The term competitiveness is a well discussed research theme in various subject areas and research fields. Most of the research conducted on tourism destination competitiveness are based on the work of Porter, but prior to this, the issue of competitiveness was developed as a scientific discipline by Smith in the late 70's. Due to the reason that tourism is primarily a service driven industry, tourism researchers had to adjust definitions, develop new models and identify factors that would be applicable to the tourism industry. The main purpose of this research was to conduct a comprehensive review on previous and current research conducted on tourism destination competitiveness to provide insight and clarity on the work that has been done on this diverse topic. The review concentrated on 121 obtainable and usable articles that focused on tourism destination competitiveness. The key findings of this review reveal that (1) tourism destination competitiveness will remain a popular research topic within the tourism industry that will enable destination to keep their market share; (2) most research case studies were based in Europe and therefore emphasise the need for focus on other continents as well; (3) the majority of the research studies were conducted from a supply side and (4) forty-eight (48) of the articles focussed on the factors/indicators/aspects of destination competitiveness. By having more insight into the literature of destination competitiveness, future researchers can more effectively answer current research questions related to an ever changing tourism industry. This will further enable them to base the studies on a solid foundation of literature.

1. Introduction

The purpose of this research was to review previous research studies conducted on tourism destination competitiveness, which contributes to an enhanced understanding of the current research on tourism destination competitiveness, factors of tourism competitiveness identified in literature and the approaches used. Within literature, competitiveness is applied in different industries as well as disciplines and described to be perceived differently among these industries (Hong, 2008; Santos et al., 2014; Tsai et al., 2009), hence it was the aim of the study to focus primarily on the tourism industry and to review the distinctiveness regarding competitiveness in this industry.

The tourism industry is expected to grow at a pace of 3.3% a year, reaching 1.8 billion tourists arrivals by 2030 (UNWTO, 2016). This growth in the number of tourists visiting different destinations in the world, increased the competition between destinations (Cracolici et al., 2008; Iraqi, 2009), which infers that a destination is dependent upon its ability to sustain a competitive advantage (Ritchie & Crouch, 2003). Competitiveness is essential for a destination's success and for ensuring its prosperity (Go & Govers, 2000; Gooroochurn & Sugiyarto, 2005;

Mazanec et al., 2007). It is therefore crucial for destinations to be aware of what needs to be done to be more competitive than other destinations.

To understand the role competitiveness plays within tourism, it is important to first define and describe this concept (Hamarnah, 2015). Even though several authors such as Crouch and Ritchie (1999), Dwyer and Kim (2003), Enright and Newton (2004) and Heath (2002) defined tourism competitiveness, there is still confusion within literature as to what competitiveness entails (Hamarnah, 2015). This originates from discrepancies between definitions identified, competitiveness factors of tourism destinations and models of competitiveness in the tourism industry. Due to the differences within the literature and the ample research available on this topic the need exists to conduct a review on tourism destination competitiveness to ensure more insight for future studies and ensure greater benefit. It is valuable to the tourism industry and government to have knowledge of the changing nature of competitiveness and the reason for it occurring at destinations (Dwyer et al., 2000). It therefore becomes very important to continuously research tourism destination competitiveness as well as to have an understanding of the current research thereof. The review on the different

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perspectives that have been explored on this topic will give an alternative lens for further investigation of destination competitiveness. This allows for an array of perceptions enabling a more holistic perspective on the research topic.

2. Literature study

Tourism destination competitiveness is important for a destination to obtain a favourable position in the world tourism market (Leung & Baloglu, 2013) and sustain a competitive advantage. The management of these destinations are essential in studying the tourism industry (Pike & Page, 2014). The reality of change makes competitiveness a real concept, and for tourism managers, industry players and tourism destinations, competitive strategies, ways of competing in the global market, are important to stay ahead of the competition (Saayman & Du Plessis, 2003). Gaining a sustainable competitive advantage according to Athiyaman and Robertson (1995) requires the continual application of energy and resources to strategic planning and results from decisions and actions, based on concrete research findings. Destinations should be aware of what it means to be competitive based on a universal definition of competitiveness and to understand competitiveness models and factors. Abreu-Novais et al. (2016) point out that there is an increased interest in striving to measure the competitiveness of destinations and to identify the factors or aspects that assist in enhancing their competitive positions.

The term *competitiveness* is originally obtained from the Latin word “*competere*” which could refer to the competition between businesses (Plumins, Sceulovs & Gaile –Sarkane, 2016, p. 380). To this day there is no predominant definition of competitiveness (Alexandros & Metaxas, 2016; Hamarneh, 2015). The primitive principle in the philosophy of science indicates however that definitions are “neither true nor false” but can appear to be less valuable regarding its contribution to formulating a hypothesis (Mazanec et al., 2007, p. 86). The concept was initially researched on firm-level by Porter (1980) and research on tourism competitiveness only commenced in 1993. Irrespective of the industry in which competitiveness is researched, competition exists and will intensify. (Porter, 1980). Prior to 1993, one definition that provides the foundation for defining competitiveness on firm-level is that of Porter and Van der Linde (1995, p. 97) who posit that competitiveness results from “superior productivity, either in terms of lower costs than rivals or the ability to offer products with superior values that justifies premium price.” Thereafter other authors commenced with investigating competitiveness on firm-level. Author, Newall (1992) states that the superior productivity of a firm or company includes producing more enhanced quality goods and services than the competition. Together with this productivity it is important that the firms show growth whilst competing with one another in order to obtain sustainable profitability (Reinert, 1995). Therefore, national competitiveness on firm-level is linked to “productivity” (Porter, 1990, p. 76).

Regardless of the industry, competitiveness remains important for a company to be successful (Porter, 1980). This principle can be applied to the tourism industry even though tourism is not a physical product (Du Plessis et al., 2015). The first tourism researcher to conduct research on tourism competitiveness was Poon (1993). The author identified four key principles of competitive success aspects which include putting the environment first, being a leader in quality, developing radical innovations and strengthening the player's strategic position. Subsequent to 1993, several authors such as, Crouch and Ritchie (1999), Dwyer and Kim (2003), Enright and Newton (2004), Hassan (2000), Heath (2002, 2003), Pearce (1997) and Ritchie and Crouch (2003) analysed tourism competitiveness mainly by creating definitions, developing models and identifying factors and aspect contributing to competitiveness.

Although various definitions feature in tourism literature, the definition by Crouch and Ritchie (1999, p. 137) has been adapted as the primary definition which describes tourism competitiveness as “the

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” (Dupeyras & MacCallum, 2013). Therefore, tourism competitiveness in literature refers to the destination as a whole (Croes, 2010) which makes this definition even more relevant and signifies the importance of a clear definition for a research theme. Within the tourism industry, competitiveness is characterised as a critical element for tourism destinations to obtain success (Goffi, 2013).

Researchers have also been concerned with the development of destination models which aim at identifying and explaining the forces that drive destination competitiveness. Various researchers (Dwyer & Kim, 2003; Heath, 2003; Poon, 1993; Porter, 1980, 1990; Ritchie & Crouch, 2003) have proposed tourism models that include drivers and factors. Factors or drivers are unique products and services as well as benefits to persuade tourists to choose their destination above others (Crouch, 2011), making the destination more competitive. These factors can differ depending on the destination and the approach used to obtain the competitiveness factors (Du Plessis et al., 2015); making factors or drivers destination specific. These mentioned aspects of competitiveness can be applied within various industries and disciplines (Hong, 2008; Santos et al., 2014). Prominent authors within the competitiveness tourism industry, Ritchie and Crouch (2003) and Dwyer and Kim (2003) were some of the first authors who conducted research on tourism competitiveness-specific factors or aspects.

Although the majority of the underlying ideas regarding the factors and determinants of destination competitiveness are somewhat similar, these aspects are influenced by the internal and external environment of the specific destination (Du Plessis et al., 2015), adding to the complexity and diversity of this research topic. External factors or attributes include amongst others inflation, an aging population, terrorism and political instability. Whereas internal factors include cultural resources, air transport infrastructure, tourism infrastructure and safety and security (Blanke & Chiesa, 2013). An example where research concurs regarding the factors or aspects determining competitiveness is research conducted by Hong (2008:40), Crouch and Ritchie (1999) and Hassan (2000) where they all researched comparative advantage as a contributing competitiveness factor; including comparative aspects such as climate, scenery, landscape, minerals, history, music, paintings and special events. There are various examples of researchers agreeing with regards to competitiveness aspects or factors, but there is also a diversity of opinions on this topic, which can differ with regards to destinations and respondents of the conducted research. Authors Heath (2002) and Ritchie and Crouch (2003) provided their own set of factors, not necessarily concurring with other researchers. Destinations need to be aware of the type of product they are offering (Flagestad & Hope, 2001), because each destination offers unique products and therefore need to focus on different competitiveness factors and models. A variety of factors/aspects exist that contribute to competitiveness which then leads to the creation of models (Hong, 2008).

Heath (2002 p. 335) explains that the motivation for developing a model of competitiveness with the focus on the tourism sector is based on the tourism offering “product.” Developing a model in this service-intensive industry, provides clarity on how to improve destination competitiveness (Crouch, 2007; Enright & Newton, 2004). Author Poon (1993), introduced competitive strategies applicable to the tourism industry and developed a model containing these strategies. However, the conceptual model of destination competitiveness by Ritchie and Crouch (2003) is the model most prominently used for measuring the competitiveness of destinations (Santos et al., 2014) and has inspired other tourism models, as mentioned above. Competitiveness can be measured in different ways including economically, according to determinants, factors and different scales. In a study done by Zengeni (2015) he explained that the measurement of competitiveness can

either be classified in objectively or subjectively measured variables. Zengeni noted that researchers have made use of published secondary data in order to measure tourism destination competitiveness. Quantitative data have often been applied because these were seen as more precise and accurate. Two approaches concerning qualitative data or “soft measures” could be found in tourism literature. Firstly, competitiveness is measured using survey data of tourists’ opinions and perceptions and the second approach is based on the empirical evaluation of a number of subjective indicators of tourism competitiveness, surveyed on key tourism stakeholders such as the TTCI (Travel and Tourism competitiveness index) and report (Zengeni, 2015, p. 58). The Travel & Tourism Competitiveness Report (2019) indicates which factors are needed to allow the sustainable development of the tourism sector, which will then further contribute to the competitiveness of a destination (Calderwood & Soshkin, 2019). These factors are determined by the Travel & Tourism Competitiveness Index, which is derived from the World Economic Forum’s Executive Opinion Survey and is then measured on a 1–7 scale, where 7 is the desirable outcome (Calderwood & Soshkin, 2019).

Based on the variety of opinions, the different definitions presented of tourism destination competitiveness as well as universal factors and models, a review was needed in order to fully understand the current research on the topic as well as to identify the gaps in literature.

3. Empirical literature analysis

This study adopted a qualitative research design, that supported the application of a systematic review as the informant of the research method (Creswell & Poth, 2018; Sansoni, 2011; White & Marsh, 2006). Attride-Stirling (2001) regards systematic theoretical review as entailing the reduction, exploration of text, and integration of the exploration. In this context, this study adapted a content -thematic analysis (Creswell, 2014).

The data analysis was conducted concurrently with the data collection process. The authors gathered data, from the beginning of 2017 until the end of 2018, through an electronic search for scientific research-published articles from online research journals as shown in Table 1.

Based on the fact that this is a review paper, a literature search was conducted in order to find journals on competitiveness (tourism and destination competitiveness) within the tourism industry, accessible from the African continent. These journals were obtained by using certain databases such as: Google scholar, EbscoHost, Sage journals online and ScienceDirect. In order to conduct this literature review, key words such as: “competitiveness”, “tourism competitiveness”, “destination competitiveness”, “Tourism comparative advantage”, “competitiveness factors”, “tourism competitiveness models” or “competitive advantage” were used. The articles needed to comply with the set criteria in order to be included in the sample articles. The criteria were that only articles in journals were used for the review and that the above mentioned key words needed to appear in the title or the focus of the journal article for it to be to use within this review article and be relevant to the tourism industry.

These articles also needed to contain information regarding the approach used to conduct the research, research focus and research topics of the articles. Articles with limited access or that were irrelevant to the study were not used. A few challenges were encountered when attempting to obtain some of the articles such as the fact that not all articles were accessible in South Africa and some articles were not published in English, which made it problematic to analyse these mentioned articles.

The article identification, screening and documentation process was set simultaneously through reading the abstracts of each publication to initially determine whether it is tourism and disability/impairment competitiveness related (Walker & Myrick, 2006). The full papers were read as means to ascertain the context and the relevance of the

Table 1
Distribution of articles among journals.

Journal	Total articles
TOURISM MANAGEMENT	13
JOURNAL OF TRAVEL RESEARCH	11
ANNALS OF TOURISM RESEARCH	7
TOURISM ECONOMICS	7
CURRENT ISSUES IN TOURISM	5
TOURISM ANALYSIS	4
JOURNAL OF VACATION MARKETING	3
AFRICAN JOURNAL OF HOSPITALITY, TOURISM & LEISURE	2
ANATOLIA	2
ECONOMIC RESEARCH	2
JOURNAL OF CLEANER PRODUCTION.	2
JOURNAL OF DESTINATION MARKETING & MANAGEMENT	2
JOURNAL OF TOURISM RESEARCH	2
JOURNAL OF TOURISM PLANNING & DEVELOPMENT	2
JOURNAL OF TRAVEL & TOURISM MARKETING	2
MANAGING GLOBAL TRANSITIONS	2
PROCEDIA -SOCIAL & BEHAVIOURAL SCIENCES	2
AN INTERNATIONAL BUSINESS JOURNAL	1
ANNALES UNIVERSITATIS APULENSIS: AERIES OECONOMICA	1
ANUARIO TURISMO Y SOCIEDAD	1
ASIAN SOCIAL SCIENCE	1
BUSINESS STRATEGY SERIES	1
CHINESE GEOGRAPHICAL SCIENCE	1
ENCYCLOPEDIA OF TOURISM	1
ENGINEERING ECONOMICS	1
ENVIRONMENTAL AND RESOURCE ECONOMICS	1
EUROPEAN JOURNAL OF TOURISM RESEARCH	1
EUROPEAN JOURNAL OF TOURISM, HOSPITALITY & RECREATION	1
EUROPEAN RESEARCH STUDIES	1
GEOGRAPHICA PANNONICA	1
INTERNATIONAL JOURNAL OF HOSPITALITY & TOURISM ADMINISTRATION	1
INTERNATIONAL JOURNAL OF HOSPITALITY MANAGEMENT	1
INTERNATIONAL JOURNAL OF SCIENTIFIC & ENGINEERING	1
INTERNATIONAL JOURNAL OF SERVICES & OPERATIONS MANAGEMENT	1
JOURNAL OF MANAGEMENT & SUSTAINABILITY	1
JOURNAL OF AIR TRANSPORT MANAGEMENT	1
JOURNAL OF BUSINESS RESEARCH	1
JOURNAL OF CHINA TOURISM RESEARCH	1
JOURNAL OF ECONOMICS & BEHAVIOURAL STUDIES	1
JOURNAL OF ECONOMIC & MANAGEMENT SCIENCES	1
JOURNAL OF ECONOMIC STUDIES	1
JOURNAL OF HOSPITALITY, MARKETING & MANAGEMENT	1
JOURNAL OF INDUSTRY, COMPETITION & TRADE	1
JOURNAL OF PUBLIC ADMINISTRATION	1
JOURNAL OF MANAGEMENT CASES	1
JOURNAL OF RELATIONSHIP MARKETING	1
JOURNAL OF TOURISM & SERVICES	1
RAP — RIO DE JANEIRO	1
RESEARCH IN IN TRANSPORTATION ECONOMICS	2
REVIEW OF EUROPEAN STUDIES	1
REVISTA DE ADMINISTRACAO PUBLICA	1
RIDING THE WAVE OF TOURISM & HOSPITALITY RESEARCH	1
SITCON	1
SOUTH AFRICAN JOURNAL FOR RESEARCH IN SPORT, PHYSICAL EDUCATION & RECREATION	1
SOUTH AFRICAN JOURNAL OF ECONOMIC & MANAGEMENT SCIENCES	2
SOUTH ASIAN JOURNAL OF TOURISM & HERITAGE	1
SOUTHERN AFRICAN BUSINESS REVIEW	1
THE SOUTHERN AFRICAN JOURNAL OF ENTREPRENEURSHIP & SMALL BUSINESS MANAGEMENT	1
TOURISM MANAGEMENT PERSPECTIVES	3
TOURISM & MANAGEMENT STUDIES	1
TOURISM & HOSPITALITY INTERNATIONAL JOURNAL	1
TOURISM REVIEW	1
TOURISM TODAY	1
TURIZAM: MEDUNARODNI ZNANSTVENO-STRUČNI ČASOPIS	1

document. A total of one hundred and twenty-one (121) articles on tourism and destination competitiveness were used within tourism-

related journals such as *Tourism Management*, *Journal of Travel Research* and those that were published between 1997 and 2018. These articles were adopted for use in this systematic review due to the relevancy of their content. This implies that full text articles which did not address the issue on discussion and internet columns, conferences or book reviews were excluded.

The compiled data from selected articles were streamlined through a more comprehensive reading of full articles. This established a grouping of the general areas of focus within each article's line of discourse. Such enhanced a narrative and chronological sequence of groups and sub-groups within the tourism and competitiveness knowledge body that was developed between 1997 and 2018 (Walker & Myrick, 2006).

According to Creswell (2014) coding is regarded as fragmenting and classifying text to form explanations and comprehensive themes in the data. In the same vein, Miles et al. (2014) explains coding as the examination of the discrete part of data to determine differences and similarities through open (discrete concepts) and axial (showing relationships between the themes). The current researchers upheld coding which established themes, that were organised for a distinctive and comparative motive that enhanced the identification of areas which received tourism and Competitiveness research attention.

4. Results

The results were depicted with regard to the (1) analysis according to articles published in academic journals; (2) timeframe of the published articles that focus on tourism competitiveness; (3) journal articles on tourism competitiveness according to the continent of the case study; (4) journal articles conducted on tourism competitiveness from a demand or supply approach; (5) journal articles distributed regarding research focus; (6) research topics of the articles and (7) review of tourism competitiveness factors or aspects. These specific categories were chosen because it complies with the purpose of this review and analysis. By having knowledge of which journals competitiveness research was published in, when these articles were published and the continents the case study articles were based on, shows the gaps and opportunities of where in the world and in which journals future competitiveness research should be conducted and published. The other categories such as the approach used for the research, the research focus and topics as well as the different competitiveness factors or aspects indicate what within competitiveness needs to be researched more thoroughly and what is already being investigated extensively.

4.1. Journal articles focussing on tourism and destination competitiveness

To start off the analysis, it is important to first consider all the articles on tourism and destination competitiveness published in journals as well as over time.

4.1.1. Analysis according to articles published in academic journals

The journal, *Tourism Management* published the most articles on tourism or destination competitiveness (13 articles). This is followed by *Journal of Travel Research* which published eleven (11) articles on the concept. The *Annals of Tourism Research* published seven (7) articles (see Table 1). These top three journals are all high-impact journals, which are journals that are highly influential in their field. In other words, these journals form part of the top ten tourism journals indicating destination competitiveness as an important topic within the literature.

The journal, *Tourism Economics* published seven (7) articles, *Current Issues in Tourism* journal five (5) and *Tourism Analysis* published three (3) articles. The journals that each published two (2) articles on tourism or destination competitiveness are *Journal of Cleaner Production*, *Journal of Tourism Research*, *Journal of Travel and Tourism Marketing*, *Managing Global Transitions*, *Procedia -Social &*

Behavioural Sciences as well as *South African Journal of Economic and Management Sciences*. The rest of the journals each published one (1) of the articles. The fact that the articles were published in a wide variety of journals, indicates that tourism and destination competitiveness is investigated in other sectors and industries as well, these include business, management, social sciences and tourism. However, the sample could be viewed as bias because it just focussed on English articles and those that are accessible. This can also be indicated as a limitation when a review article is being compiled and future researchers should keep this in mind.

4.1.2. Year of publication of tourism destination competitiveness articles

Since 1997, articles were published every year, with the exception of the year 1998. Most articles were published in 2009 (14 articles) and twelve (12) articles in 2011 and 2012 respectively. It is clear that more articles have been published since 2009 than in the preceding years where no more than eight (8) articles were published yearly. The articles published in 2009 focussed on destination competitiveness, where half of these studies conducted a case study on a specific destination's competitiveness aspects or factors or the models of competitiveness. Not less than four articles were published annually since 2009, which could be due to the fact that researchers started realising the necessity for researching tourism and destination competitiveness seeing that it is essential for tourism destinations. The first listed articles in Fig. 1, which focussed on Africa was published in 2002 and this was followed by two (2) articles published in 2003, which focussed on South Africa specifically. Even though the amount of published articles on tourism and destination competitiveness is increasing, it is still not sufficient in light of the growing importance of destination competitiveness.

4.2. A review of the key aspects of the articles

The next section of the analyses observes the key aspects of the publications, which includes analyses according to continent on which the research is focussed (case study), supply and demand perceptions, research focus and research topic.

4.2.1. Journal articles on tourism competitiveness according to the continent of the case study

This includes the continents or case studies on which the research was based. If a review was conducted by the authors or simply no case study was performed, those articles fell under the option "not specified". It is clear from Fig. 3 that forty-four (44) of the one hundred and twenty-one (121) articles were not based on a specific country/continent, but were reviews of tourism or destination competitiveness. As depicted in Fig. 3, twenty-seven (27) out of the one hundred and twenty-one (121) articles focussed on European countries or were published there. This could be ascribed to the fact that tourism research was driven by European researchers in the early 1900s (Aiest, 1993). Most studies were based on countries such as Spain (seven articles), France (three articles), Serbia (three articles) and Slovenia (two articles). From the sample, seventeen (17) of the articles were based on countries from the Asian continent including countries such as Turkey (five articles), China (three articles) and Taiwan (two articles). The African continent had a total of twelve (12) articles of which eleven (11) were based on South Africa specifically. Fig. 2 indicates the lack of sufficient research on tourism and destination competitiveness in South African literature.

4.2.2. Journal articles conducted on tourism competitiveness from a demand or supply approach

It is important for the tourism demands of tourists to be met by the tourism supply of goods and services (Saayman, 2013). Demand is measured by observing the number of foreign or local tourists to a destination, tourism expenditures, distance travelled and number of nights spent by the tourist at the destination. The supply side on the

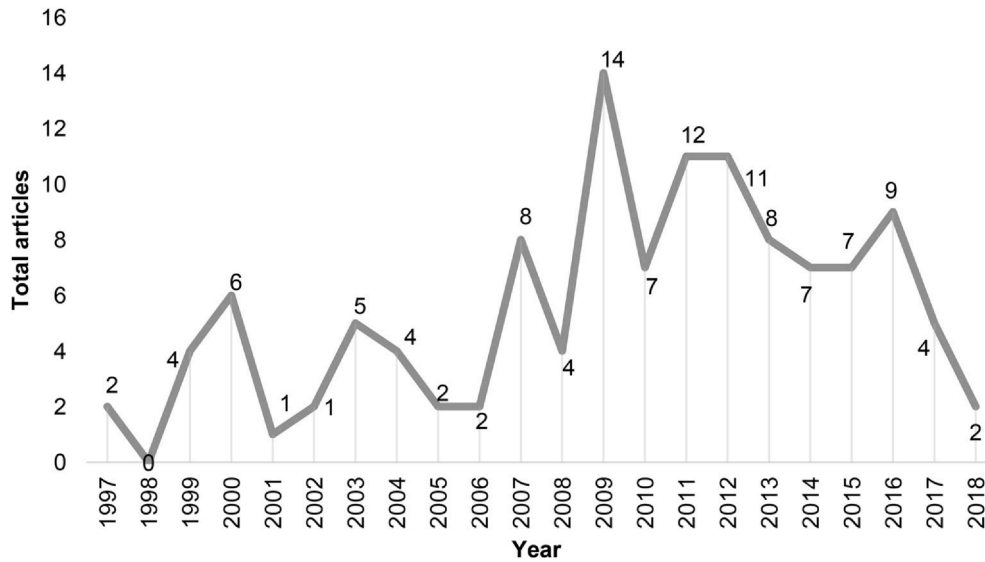


Fig. 1. Distribution of articles over time.

other hand, focusses on what the destination has to offer such as attractions, services and accommodation (Fridgen, 1996). The research articles in the sample could either be conducted from a demand or supply side or both (see Fig. 3). Fig. 3 indicates that the vast majority of the articles (84%) used a supply side approach whereas only fourteen percent (14%) of the articles used a demand-side approach. Only four percent (4%) of the articles used both these approaches (demand and supply side). This could be due to researchers preferring to ask the opinions of experts in this field of tourism on how to be more competitive, rather than asking the opinions of the tourists. This statement could be debatable because the experts might know more about what makes a destination competitive (Enright & Newton, 2004), but the tourists are the people who partially determine the competitiveness of a destination seeing that they decide which countries to visit or not (Andrades-Caldito et al., 2014). However, a gap still exists in research concerning tourism and destination competitiveness from a demand side to determine the tourist's opinion on the topic.

4.2.3. Journal articles distributed in accordance with research focus

The research focus of the articles could consist of one of the following: tourism competitiveness, destination competitiveness, price competitiveness, tourism destination competitiveness and other (see Fig. 4). The majority of the articles, fifty-eight percent (58%) within the sample focussed on destination competitiveness. Some of these articles include those of Crouch (2011), Dwyer and Kim (2003), Enright and Newton (2004) and Ritchie and Crouch (2003). Twenty-three (23) of the articles focussed on tourism competitiveness and comprises of articles from authors such as Azzopardi and Nash (2017), Heath (2002), Hong (2009), Mihalič (2000) and Ribes, Rodríguez, & Jiménez (2011). It is clear that some of the studies (8%) conducted on competitiveness had an economic focus, seeing that the focus was on price competitiveness. More research can be conducted on tourism competitiveness or the difference between destination and tourism competitiveness concepts, to rule out even more confusion of the competitiveness concept.

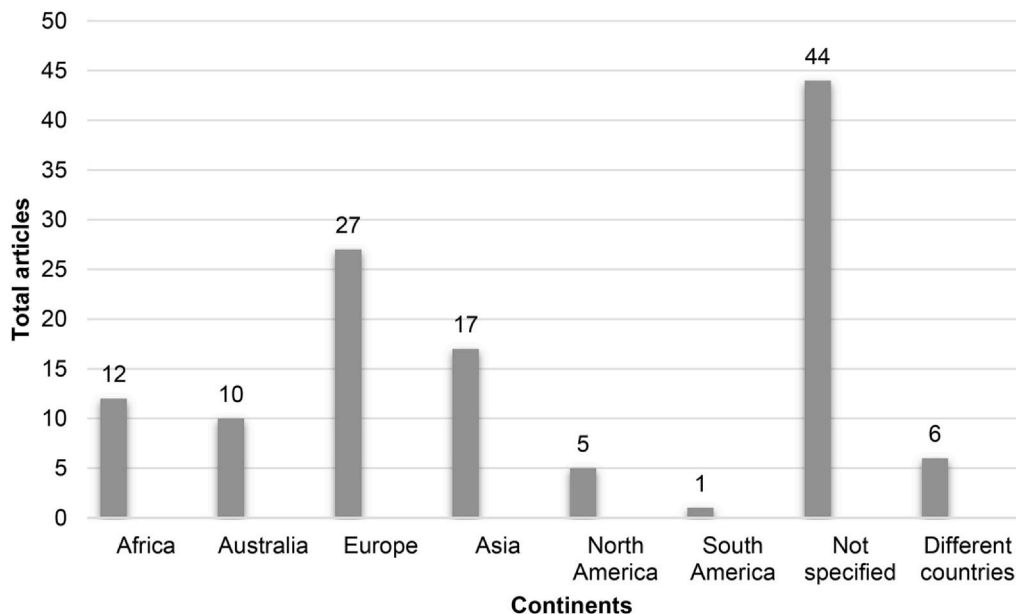


Fig. 2. Journal articles on competitiveness according to continent of case study.

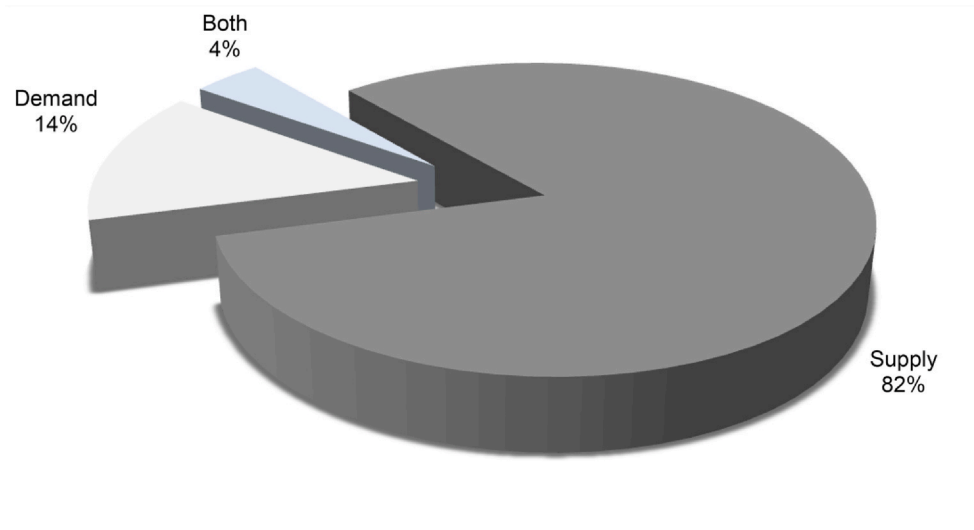


Fig. 3. Distribution of articles in term of approach.

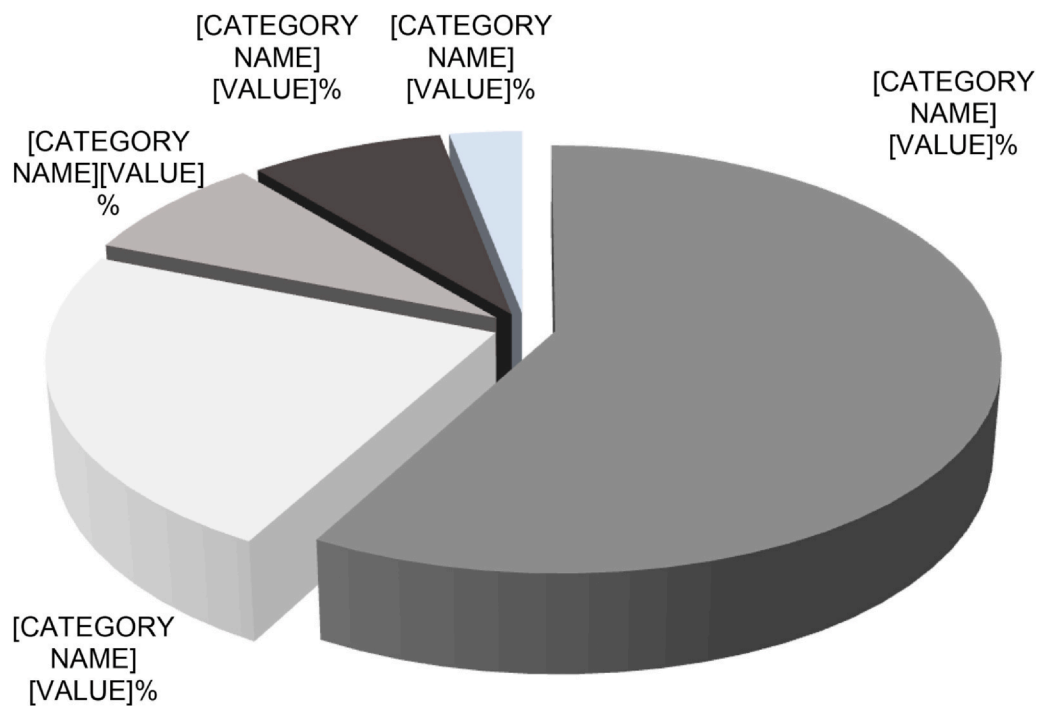


Fig. 4. Journal articles distributed in accordance with research focus.

4.2.4. Journal articles distributed regarding research topic

The research topics used in the sample articles were divided into four main categories, namely models, factors/indicators, definitions or other aspects (see Fig. 5). Some of the articles in the sample focussed on more than one of the mentioned aspects, and in these cases each one of the aspects was considered separately, meaning that the total number of articles in Fig. 5 will not calculate to the total of one hundred and twenty-one (121) articles. Fifty (50) of the articles in the sample were conducted on other elements such as price competitiveness, nature-based destination competitiveness or the comparative advantage of a destination. The price competitiveness articles focussed on how competitive the destinations are in terms of the price competitiveness thereof. The total number of articles that focussed on models was forty-eight (48) and includes, amongst others, the Dwyer-Kim model of destination competitiveness, the conceptual model of destination competitiveness or the Ritchie and Crouch model, which is the most

used. These are all models which are used within the tourism sector. Forty-eight (48) of the articles focussed on the factors/indicators/aspects of destination competitiveness. The majority of the authors have their own opinion of what these factors or indicators are. Some authors refer to indicators whereas others refer to factor aspects that influence the competitiveness of a destination. There is a lack in current research that solely focusses on the definitions or provides a universal definition of tourism or destination competitiveness. Some of these studies that investigate tourism or destination competitiveness definitions either compile new definitions or compare current definitions with each other, instead of compiling a universal definition.

4.3. A review of tourism competitiveness factors or aspects

The following section of the analysis aimed at identifying the top ten most used competitiveness factors or aspects from the sample of articles

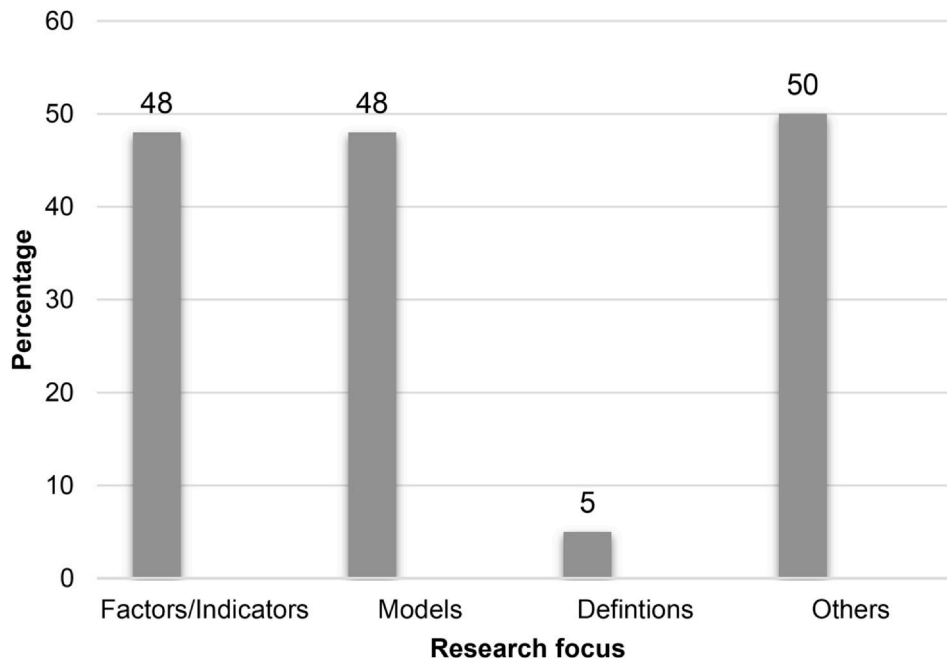


Fig. 5. Distribution of articles regarding research focus.

(Fig. 6). Dwyer and Kim (2003) highlight that there is a variety of factors, indicators or aspects that influence the tourism or destination competitiveness of a destination. The factors/aspects that were obtained came from the research articles indicated in the sample articles. There were more than thirty (30) different publications on the competitiveness factors/aspects of a tourist destination (Fig. 6). It is interesting to observe that each author indeed holds an own opinion and the factors/aspects do differ from each destination, which means that it is important to conduct destination-specific research on destination competitiveness. Authors such as Du Plessis et al. (2015), Heath (2002) and Pansiri (2014) identified destination-specific competitiveness factors of Africa including the African experience, access to wild orplant life viewing and interpretation of wild or plant life. These are factors/

aspects that can directly influence the competitiveness of Africa or even more specifically South Africa as a competitive tourist destination. These factors/aspects will not necessarily be applicable to other continents such as Europe or Asia, but apply to South Africa only and vice versa. The identification of factors or aspects could influence future research to be conducted on tourism or destination competitiveness factors of other destinations or approaches.

4.3.1. Top ten identified competitiveness factors or aspects

The top ten identified competitiveness factors depicted were identified by using the one-hundred and twenty-one (121) articles and finding the articles that investigated factors/aspects specifically. The activities factor was identified twenty-five (25) times and includes

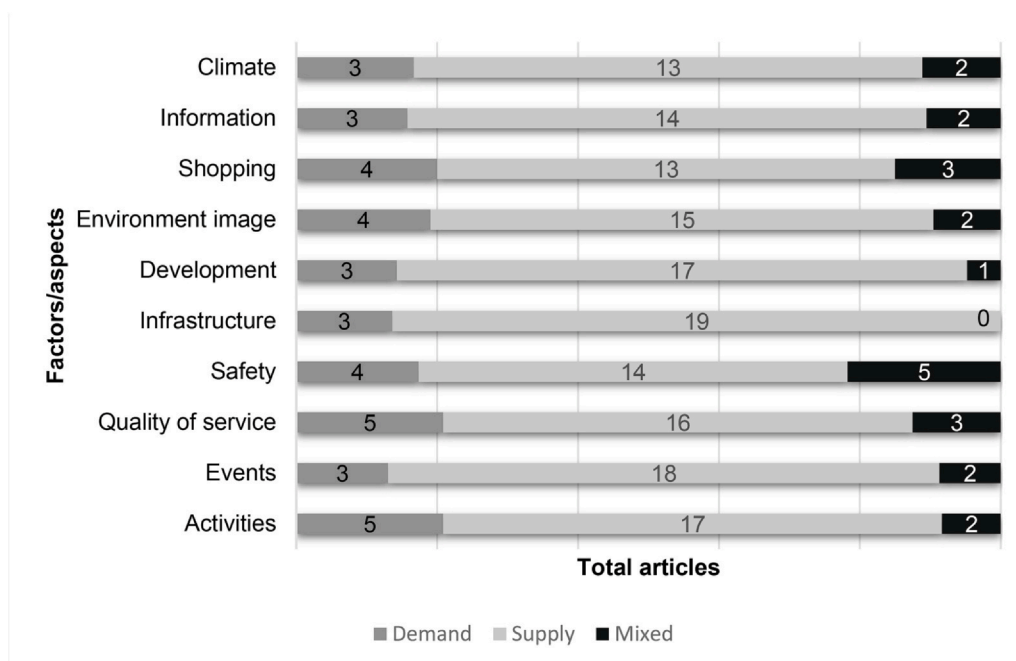


Fig. 6. Top 10 competitiveness factors identified from demand, supply and mixed approach.

aspects such as water-based activities, nature-based activities, recreational activities as well as any other activities hosted by a destination. The second most frequently identified factor was special events, which was identified twenty-four (24) times. This factor includes aspects such as festivals that take place at a destination and attract local and foreign tourists to the destination for this reason. Infrastructure was identified twenty-two (22) times and includes aspects such as accessibility to infrastructure, quality of the railroad network at the destination, water supply facilities as well as the sanitation at the destination. The quality of service factor was also identified twenty-four (24) times, together with the safety factor. Quality of service refers to a destination's ability to provide services that enhance the visitor's experience at the destination. Safety includes the safety of visitors to the destination, overall safety and security of the destination. These factors were the top five most identified factors.

The other factors which form part of the top ten identified competitiveness factors include development (hospitality development, human resources development, social development and position of destination), environment management (includes establishing environmental standards and attractiveness of environment), shopping (the availability of shopping facilities such as malls, value for money of shopping items), information which includes factors such as the availability of tourist information, visitor statistics, market segmentation studies as well as other research which could provide information to visitors on the internet for example. The last factor is climate, which refers to how warm or cold a destination is or even whether it is a rainy area. The following section divided these top ten most identified competitiveness aspects/factors of the articles into demand, supply or mixed side approach.

4.3.2. A review of tourism competitiveness factors from different approaches

The next analysis was conducted on the top ten factors identified from all three approaches. It is clear that most of the articles in the sample were conducted from a supply side. The infrastructure factor was identified the most, nineteen (19) times from a supply side, three (3) times from a demand side and not even once from a mixed approach. This means that the tourism experts, who formed part of the sample for these studies from a supply side, indicated that the infrastructure of a destination is seen to be important. The second most identified aspect from a supply side was events, which was identified eighteen (18) times, followed by demand side three (3) times and then the mixed approach twice. This includes any events taking place at the destination such as festivals or even sport events.

The activities factor as well as quality of service were identified the most under the demand side factors but was overall identified seventeen (17) times and sixteen (16) times respectively from a supply side. The development factor was also identified seventeen (17) times from a supply side, three (3) times from a demand side and only once from a mixed approach. The environment image factor was identified fifteen (15) times from a supply side, four (4) times from a demand side and twice from a mixed approach. The next factor, safety, was mentioned the most (five times) under the mixed approach, fourteen (14) times under the supply side approach and then four (4) times in the demand side approach. The safety factor includes the safety of the destination and how safe the tourist will feel at the destination. It is interesting to observe that the safety factor was not mentioned the most in either of the three approaches, which could mean that each approach may focus on its own important aspects.

The last three factors, which were mentioned the least number of times in the articles focussing on supply approach were shopping, information and climate. Even though the factors were not identified as much in this approach, in articles focussing on the other two approaches these factors were not identified the least amount of times.

5. Findings and implications

The first finding showed that tourism destination competitiveness is a popular research topic within the tourism industry, seeing that numerous articles on the topic have been published and various topics were highlighted in the research such as definitions, models and factors. To contribute to this implication, it is evident that sectors have different competitiveness factors (Du Plessis et al., 2015) thereby stressing the importance of research in all the sectors of tourism. Together with this it is imperative to conduct more research on what tourists' opinions are with regards to what makes a destination competitive. In the end, it is the tourists who must make the decision of which destination they ought to visit, which is dependent of its competitiveness.

The second finding revealed that most of the case studies from the articles were based on Europe by leaders in the field (Go & Govers, 2000; Goffi, 2013; Hamarneh, 2015) during the time period when tourism was recognised as an important research field. However, research that is conducted on Europe, does not necessarily provide answers or guidelines to developing countries as how to improve its competitiveness.

The third finding indicates that most of the research studies were conducted from a supply side approach. This could be due to the fact that competitiveness has been considered part of the management and marketing approach of a destination or company. The owners of tourism products and services want to establish what could be done to improve their products and services at the destination. Therefore, the supply side articles can be used to adapt to the demand side articles to establish the perceptions from a demand side by asking tourists if they agree with the research obtained from a supply side (e.g. the tour operators).

The fourth finding showed that forty-eight (48) of the one hundred and twenty-one (121) articles focussed on the factors/indicators/aspects of destination competitiveness. Thus, the unique factors within the different sectors and industries need to be continually analysed. Consequently, aspects and factors differ from year to year, from place to place and that is why it is imperative to continuously conduct research on aspects and factors of competitiveness.

6. Limitations

The databases and journals used for the analysis are limited to articles published in English, which possible leaves out literature not published in English.

7. Conclusions

It is clear that competitiveness is an important aspect when considering the development and promotion of a destination. Even though this article indicated that there has been a decrease in competitiveness research, this is primarily due to the keywords used to obtain the research. The new trend within competitiveness is that competitiveness is connecting with concepts of sustainability, smart destinations especially in the European context. This fact should be taken in consideration with future research towards destination competitiveness.

This study however showed that different perceptions and views are portrayed in literature concerning this term. These perceptions differ from a demand and supply side and it is therefore of importance that continuous research is conducted on competitiveness from both the demand and supply side. However, the majority of the current competitiveness research is conducted from a supply side, meaning that most of the opinions regarding what makes a destination competitive is determined through the opinions of tourism experts. By conducting more research using different approaches, a variety and diversity of opinions are formed which could help with understanding competitiveness to a greater extent.

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