Measuring destination competitiveness: The Brazilian model

Requested comment

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Summary: The debate on international competitiveness has often been emotional and was described by Paul Krugman (1994) as a “dangerous obsession”. Ul Haque (1995) argues that the international debate has been centred on two questions: whether a country’s competitiveness has clear meaning, and whether anything can or should be done about it. Regarding countries or enterprises, the issue is commonly associated to sustainability and has strong relation to the tourism studies. This article highlights the possibilities to measure competitiveness of destinations using a methodology developed by the Brazilian School of Public and Business Administration at Getulio Vargas Foundation in Cooperation with the Brazilian Ministry of Tourism and SEBRAE (Brazilian Service of Support for Micro and Small Enterprises), dividing the object of analysis into (Macro) Dimensions and Variables. The adoption of a wide perspective, which may combine the main sub-sectors and the dimensions that compose the tourist activity, is considered the most appropriate one for the sector’s development. Such perspective must include analysis and scenarios connected with infrastructure, tourist potential, economy, public policies and sustainability, with the purpose of measuring the current capability of the destination and the potential for development.

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DESTINATION COMPETITIVENESS

Definition of competitiveness concepts

The ability to compete in the world market is a major concern today in the industrialized countries, a concern that is debated in the mass media as well as in academic research. It is one of the most important issues in public and political agendas in developed and developing countries (UL HALQUE, 1995; CHUDNOSVSKY & PORTA, 1990).

The debate on international competitiveness has often been emotional and was described by Krugman (1994) as a “dangerous obsession”. Ul Haque (1995), argues that the international debate has been centred on two questions: whether a country’s competitiveness has clear meaning, and whether anything can or should be done about it.

According to Chudnovsky & Porta (1990), some factors explain how the competitiveness issue has gained increasing importance in the past decades in various countries. In this sense, one must consider, among others, the oil crises in the 1970s that adversely affected the economic fundamentals of various developed countries within this period; the fiscal crises in Latin American countries during the 1980s (Mexico and Brazil, for instance); as well as the role of technological advances and the rise of new significant competitors in important markets, such as electronics from Japan and other nations in Eastern Asia.

However the developing countries have, by large, been left out of this discussion, even though the spectacular success of some in international trade is often cited as a problem. This is rather questionable, since the current in the developing world is running in the direction of a greater engagement in world trade. On the other hand, the competitiveness debate has had one important outcome. There is now a much greater appreciation of the critical role innovations and technological improvements play in the relative economic performance of the countries (UL HALQUE, 1995).

In general, the economic performance of countries is determined by the performance of individual firms in the market place. So, human capital, technological skill of the labour force, managerial practices and government policies influence a firm’s ability to compete (UL HALQUE, 1995; LEONARD-BARTON 1995; FIGUEIREDO, 2001).

A review of theoretical models of business competitiveness reveals the significance of two kinds of factors in regard to this area — internal factors pertaining to the actual firm, and external factors related to the structure of the industry in which the firm operates, as well as the economy of the country as a whole (CAMPOS-SORIA et al 2004).

Furthermore, according to Chudnovsky & Porta (1990), some authors state that a nation’s competitiveness goes beyond principles based only on international trade or on the protection of the domestic market, incorporating, into the theme, notions of economic wellbeing and improvement in its population’s quality of life (FAGERBERG, 1988; FAJNZYLBER, 1988; JONES & TEECE, 1988).

Besides the different scopes that may be applied to the term, the competitiveness phenomenon does not have a single concept in the literature (LASTRES & CASSIOLATO, 1995; KUPFER, 1992; HAGUENAUAER, 1989). In this sense, many studies on the issue do not share the same concept or methodological approach, not even the same assessment methods.
In relation to its evaluation, for example, Haguenauer (1989) summarizes the various models that concern competitiveness into two kinds of approach: (i) the one based on performance notions; and (ii) the one based on efficiency.

Thus, according to the author, competitiveness models based on performance notions are developed pursuant to the context of countries or industries, being associated with an ex-post concept, that is, the competitiveness of a national economy (or industrial sector) is measured by its effects upon foreign trade.

The main advantage of this approach consists in the simplicity of the construction of its indicators, which are usually based on the performance of local exports. Kupfer (1992), by extending the performance concept to the corporate level, affirms that the phenomenon may be measured on the basis of companies’ market share indicators at a given moment in time.

On the other hand, the competitiveness notion based on the efficiency derives from structural characteristics of countries, industries or organizations. Thus, in a line of thought that is opposed to the performance concept, the competitiveness approach, based on the efficiency premise, is eminently ex-ante, that is, based on certain production capacities or techniques that companies, industrial sectors or countries have. In this sense, the performance in the market is a consequence of competitiveness and not its expression (HAGUENAUER, 1989).

However, it is important to highlight that one is not better than other and they could be used simultaneously. The performance indicator could be a confirmation or make a fine-tune with the efficiency one.

Specifically in relation to research studies on the importance of public policies for the competitiveness of industrial sectors, it is possible to mention Dodgson (2005) with respect to Asian economies and Lee (2005), when he addressed the technological development in South Korea. Both pieces of research focus particularly on the electronics industry. In Brazil, similar research studies were conducted by Adler (1986), Baptista (1997; 1988) and Cassiolato & Baptista (1996).

Tourism competitiveness

Defining and measuring the competitiveness phenomenon are complex tasks. It reflects directly on the various methods and approaches used to prepare the competitiveness models. In the tourism sector, the difficulty to assess the competitiveness of destinations has further complications.

According to Crouch & Ritchie (1999), this occurs because of the analysis units and the analysts’ perspective on such units, in other words, the public administration handles the economy’s competitiveness as a whole; industries or business associations focus their interests on their respective areas of operation; and entrepreneurs and executives worry about the competitiveness of their own businesses.

Therefore, just like it occurs with companies, in order to succeed in the tourism market, every destination must ensure that its general attractiveness and the totality of the experiences provided to its visitors are similar or greater than what is offered by other destinations (DWYER & KIM, 2003).

In this light, the ability of destination’s public administration to coordinate the different economic and social agents which play a part in tourism and to stimulate the capacity for innovation in order to maintain one step ahead of other destinations is decisive for the
destination success in the travel and tourism industry. In consequence, Gooroochurn and Sugiyarto (2004) support that competitiveness of tourism destinations has become increasingly important for policymakers as they try for a bigger market share of the travel and tourism industry.


Gooroochurn and Sugiyarto (2004) argue that competitiveness is a complex concept encompassing various elements that can be difficult to measure. Competitiveness is multidimensional and relative concept and its measure will vary, depending on the choice of variables and/or the base year and/or the base country or region. In this light, to be more competitive the destination have to superior in several variables.

According to Claver-Corte’s et al (2007) despite the fact that the concept of competitiveness appears to simple n which there is little disagreement, when one tries to measure it, it becomes clear how difficult it is to define. A significant complication concerns the unit of analysis. In this sense, one main units of analysis can be considered: destinations.

Gooroochurn and Sugiyarto (2004) noted that different approaches for measuring competitiveness of tourist destinations can be distinguish in the literature. Destination competitiveness can be analyzed using Porter’s diamond model (1990), which includes four elements: factor conditions, demand conditions, related and supporting industries, and strategy, structure, and rivalry of the firms located at the destination.

Crouch and Ritchie (1999) develop the conceptual model of destination competitiveness, according to which competitiveness depends on four aspects: qualifying determinants, destination management, core resources and attractions, and supporting factors and resources. Using a adaptation of resource-based view of the firm (BARNEY, 1991; WERNERFELT, 1984), destination competitiveness depends on its own tangible and intangible resources, its management and its internal decisions (policies).

Claver-Corte’s et al (2007) noted that a reciprocal influence exists between the competitiveness of a destination and that of the firms located in it. Kozak and Rimmington (1999) classified tourism destinations under two main headings: Primary features include climate, ecology, culture and traditional architecture. Secondary destination features are those developments introduced specially for tourism such as hotels, catering, transport and entertainment. Together these two main groups of features contribute to the overall attractiveness and competitiveness of a tourist destination.

Enright, Scott, and Dodwell (1997) proposed an alternative framework that divides the drivers of competitiveness into six categories, that is “inputs”, “industrial and consumer demand”, “inter-firm competition and cooperation”, “industrial and regional clustering”, “internal organisation and strategy of firms”, and “institutions, social structures and agendas”.

According to Johns and Mattsson (2005) destination competitiveness can be evaluated both quantitatively and qualitatively. Quantitative performance of a destination can be measured by looking at such data as tourist arrivals and tourism incomes (hard data). However, there is also a need to take into account the relative qualitative aspects of destination competitiveness (soft data), as these ultimately drive quantitative performance.
Enright, and Newton (2004) noted that a destination is competitive if it can attract and satisfy potential tourists and this competitiveness is determined both by tourism-specific factors and by a much wider range of factors that influence the tourism service providers. They formulate a quantitative model in order to generate measures of competitiveness a broader spectrum, and to consider the usefulness of the approach for tourism practitioners and policy makers. The study revealed the practical importance of the identification of relevant competitors and understanding the importance of tourism attractors and business-related factors in determining tourism destination competitiveness.

Gooroochurn and Sugiyarto (2004) argue that the comparative advantage of tourism destinations is based on the endowment of factors of production and they prepared a framework for assessing the competitiveness of tourist destinations. In this case, the analysis unit consists of countries and the sample included more than 200 developed and developing nations. The authors’ model tries to be as comprehensive as possible, comprising eight themes: (i) prices; (ii) economic opening; (iii) technological advances; (iv) infrastructure; (v) human development in tourism; (vi) social development; (vii) the environment; and (viii) human resources.

Finally, one last research study must be mentioned due to its relevance. In this sense, the World Economic Forum, recognizing the importance of tourism for the global economy and for the economy of several nations, conducted in 2007 a study on competitiveness called The Travel & Tourism Competitiveness Report. Based on secondary data available in various international organizations and on questionnaires distributed to leaders and executives in the Forum’s annual opinion poll, a competitiveness index was prepared according to thirteen pillars: (i) public policies and regulations; (ii) environmental legislation; (iii) safety and security; (iv) health and hygiene; (v) prioritization of the tourism sector; (vi) air transport infrastructure; (vii) ground transport infrastructure; (viii) tourism infrastructure; (ix) communication infrastructure; (x) prices in the tourism sector; (xi) human resources; (xii) national perception of tourism; and (xiii) natural and cultural resources.

These pillars were grouped in three dimensions: (i) regulatory framework; (ii) business environment and infrastructure; and (iii) human, natural and cultural resources.

Brazil ranked 59th in the general index due to the variables taken into consideration in WEF’s methodology. Per dimension, Brazil’s best position was in business environment and infrastructure (48th place). Both in the regulatory framework and human, natural and cultural resources, Brazil did not stay above the 67th position.

**CORE CAPABILITIES FOR DESTINATION COMPETITIVENESS**

Any form of economic development requires consistent planning in order to attain the objective proposed. Today tourism is presented as being a sector which is capable of promoting economic acceleration and growth in social, cultural and environmental areas. Nevertheless, the option for development and regulation by means of tourism is more complex than it seems, because, besides being a multi-sector activity, it brings with its development several positive and negative impacts, and so requires effective public policies in order for it to be sustained for any length of time.

In Brazil, in spite of the unquestionable potential of tourism activity, most of the public authorities responsible for developing the sector do not yet use technical studies and research to guide their actions, so as to understand this complex activity better and minimize possible shortfalls.
The competitiveness in the tourism sector, whose theoretical construction is complex, requires, when it comes into effect, the complete understanding of its real meaning. The different combinations concerning the concept of competitiveness must be, as much as possible, in line with the object to be assessed, and they must be consistent with the justifications for the respective incorporation. Therefore, it is possible to define (according to the consistency and content) what such concept represents within the scope of this paper.

As a result of such premises and the theoretical-conceptual reference presented in previous sections, for the aims of this work, competitiveness is defined as follows:

*Competitiveness is the growing capacity for generating business in the economic activities connected with the tourism sector, in a sustainable way, providing the tourist with a positive experience.*

To put this concept into effect, five macro-dimensions were defined, being subdivided into thirteen dimensions (Figure 1). It is essential that, during the process of putting the adopted concepts into effect, they be transformed, by successive unfolding, into variables or indicators that may be directly extracted from reality.

The development of any economic activity needs, at first, a proactive approach and the preparation of strategies that will ensure that achievement of desired objectives. The establishment of such strategies requires profound understanding of the local reality — structures, economy, competitive advantages and fragility for its preparation process.

Specifically for the tourism sector, it is recommended that the strategy be built on the basis of a detailed situation analysis and taking into consideration different aspects concerning supply and demand.

The adoption of a wide perspective, which may combine the main sub-sectors and the dimensions that compose the tourist activity, is considered the most appropriate one for the sector’s development. Such perspective must include analyses and scenarios connected with infrastructure, tourist potential, economy, public policies and sustainability, with the purpose of measuring the current capability of the destination and the potential for development.

Issues related to demand, such as trends and market segments, must be incorporated into planning, in order to adjust and establish an area of balance between supply and demand.
The division of the strategy into dimensions may facilitate viewing and may show the primary need for the coordination of the various players for the development of the tourism sector.

**Macro-dimension: infrastructure**

Figure 2 below summarizes the macro-dimension Infrastructure and its respective dimensions and variables, examined in the competitiveness model of this study.

Figure 2. Macro-dimension Infrastructure

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**General infrastructure**

A region's capacity to attract people and business, in a sustainable way, is associated, among other factors, with the local infrastructure. In other words, with the provision of structural conditions necessary for people to enjoy the minimum amount of comfort and for businesses to be capable of prospering with the demand for their products and/or services, in a sustainable way. It is assumed that the greater and more diversified the local infrastructure is, the greater the capacity to attract people that go to the location with different purposes will be. Such attraction generates conditions necessary for the creation of businesses that will support the local economy's expansion.

The provision of infrastructure may be understood as a responsibility that involves the three levels of government: national, regional and local. Provision may be understood as the direct offer of services, as well as the licensing and regulation of such services. The development of a tourist destination requires the existence of an infrastructure capable of serving the resident population and the temporary population that arrives at the location for business or tourist purposes. According to Wanhill (1997), some aspects of infrastructure provision in tourist development must be considered, as follows:

- Existing infrastructure must be maximized;
- The geographic concentration of the development provides economies of scale, and so more efficient use; and
- A new infrastructure must have multiple purposes, serving the communities, both as regards the requirements of tourists and, if possible, acting as a catalyst for other forms of economic development.

Infrastructure constructed solely to meet the requirements of tourists is only justified if the fiscal, economic and social results benefit the local community or if such results generate external effects that are positive for this community and surrounding areas.
The appropriate infrastructure is essential for tourist destinations and it appears mainly in the form of transportation or access (roads, railways, airports, parking garages), public utility services (basic sanitation, electricity, communications) and other services (health, security and safety), and it must be shared among residents and visitors.

As an example, one may mention basic sanitation. An efficient sewage and water distribution system is essential for any type of urban space, mainly for tourist destinations, where the population increases on a season basis. In addition, special attention must be paid to the disposal of effluents coming from houses and industries so that a satisfactory level of water quality may be kept in beaches and rivers, both for tourists and residents. Thus, the basic infrastructure limits the number of visitors that a city may receive, since its physical infrastructure may be in jeopardy. Most of the time, negative external effects arise when the development limit is exceeded, mainly during high seasons.

Within this dimension, some variables were analyzed with the purpose of measuring the level of competitiveness of tourist destinations that are part of the study: (i) public health; (ii) energy, communication and financial facilities; (iii) public security; and (iv) urbanization.

Access

Access is one of the most important dimensions for tourism. The UNWTO (United Nations World Tourism Organization) defines access as the "activity of people who travel to or stay in places outside their usual environment for not more than one consecutive year, for business, leisure or other purposes." Therefore, what one may conclude from such definition is that the possibility of providing access is intrinsically connected with tourism, since the tourist trip implies that travellers will leave their "usual living environment" to one or more tourist destinations.

Even though there are several factors to attract a traveller to a given destination, the accessibility component is essential, because the scarcity of access to the destination may discourage the traveller’s trip to the planned destination. Lamb and Davidson (apud PAGE, 2008) affirm that transportation is one of the three essential components of tourism. The other two are the tourist product (supply) and the tourist market (the demand and the tourists themselves).

Access, as the factor that facilitates or obstructs the movement of tourists, is present in three stages of a trip: (i) when tourists leave and return to their usual living environment (their region of origin) until their first destination; (ii) between the first destination and the other tourist destinations visited in a trip; and (iii) the movement within the tourist destination, so that tourists may go to various places and tourist points of their interest, including lodging facilities, tourist attractions, transportation terminals, among others.

There are two essential aspects connected with the concept of access: the existing transportation infrastructure for this connection (for example, a highway) and the transportation service offered by means of the infrastructure (such a bus line between nearby cities). In relation to attributes concerning both the infrastructure and the service, it is possible to list some that assess the quality and service levels, such as: number of connections offered, variety of transportation modes that serve the destination (air, road, waterway and railway transport), reliability of transportation services (regularity and punctuality), integration among the various transportation modes, price, and safety.

Finally, it is essential to stress that the infrastructure and transportation services are arranged in network format. These transportation networks are composed of various nodes, which may be the regions of origin of the trips and also the tourist destinations, which are
interconnected. Depending on the arrangement of such networks, the accessibility of some nodes may be high, generating a movement of tourists on their way to or from other locations.

Considering what was presented in this justification, the following variables were taken into consideration in the assessment of the competitiveness of the tourist destinations in the Access dimension: (i) air transport; (ii) road access; (iii) other types of access (waterways and railways); and (iv) transportation system in the destination.

**Macro-dimension tourism**

Figure 3 below summarizes the macro-dimension “Tourism” and its respective dimensions and variables, examined in the competitiveness model of this study.

**Figure 3. Macro-dimension “Tourism”**

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**Tourist equipment and services**

In the past years, the emphasis on the importance of tourist equipment and services that are appropriate for a given market, or tourist segment, has gained greater relevance in the development of the activity, because tourists’ satisfaction is influenced, among other variables, by the availability and quality of the said tourist equipment and services.

While the infrastructure is supplied, most of the time, by the public sector, tourist services are usually activities carried out by the private sector, since this is the source of income for a tourist destination. The concept of tourist equipment and services includes the lodging facilities, restaurants, built attractions, retail stores, among others. It is important to highlight that these economic activities are essential components for the development of a tourist destination and they may be considered good indicators of the destination’s quality and of the trip value.

In this sense, tourist destinations have placed greater emphasis on the provision of quality tourist products and services. It is also important to stress that the provision of quality services, in each tourist undertaking, is essential for the maintenance and achievement of competitive advantages.

Another point to be highlighted is that tourism may be considered an activity in which there is a high level of involvement, in which people make a difference. Therefore, the high qualification of the people involved in the activity will allow companies to obtain a competitive margin and add value to the tourist destination.
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In this dimension, it is possible to highlight the necessity of human resources planning, since the provision of a polite and trained workforce to meet tourists’ demands has been a difficult task for governments and the private sector.

Thus, the following variables were taken into consideration in the assessment of the tourist destinations’ competitiveness in the Tourist Equipment and Services Dimension: (i) tourist signs; (ii) tourist service center; (iii) area for events; (iv) capacity of lodging facilities; (v) capacity of the reception tourism; (vi) professional qualification; and (vii) restaurants.

Tourist products and attractions

Attractions provide the destinations with the most important reason for leisure tourism. Many of the components of the tourism trip are demands deriving from consumers’ desire to get to know what a destination has to offer in terms of “to do” and “to see” activities (COOPER et al., 2001).

According to the UNWTO, local tourist attractions may be understood as the objects, equipment, people, phenomena, events or public demonstrations capable of motivating the movement of people to get to know such attractions, which may be classified into:

- **Natural attractions**
  Elements of nature that, when used for tourist purposes, start attracting flows of visitors (mountains, rivers, islands, beaches, dunes, caves, falls, weather, flora, fauna);

- **Cultural attractions**
  Elements of culture that, when used for tourist purposes, start attracting flows of visitors. They are the cultural values and assets of material and non-material nature produced by men and used by tourism, from prehistory up to modern times, as testimonials of a culture (handicrafts, gastronomy, etc.);

- **Scheduled events**
  Events that bring people together to address or debate topics of common interest, negotiate or exhibit products and services, of business-related, professional, technical, cultural, scientific, political, religious, tourist order, among many others, with previously established date and location. Such events result in the use of tourist equipment and services (trade shows, congresses, seminars, etc.);

- **Technical, scientific and artistic activities**
  Construction work, facilities, organizations, research activities from any time that, due to their characteristics, are capable of motivating the interest of tourists and, because of that, require the use of tourist equipment and services.

Additionally, the degree of representativeness of the attractions from a qualitative perspective was investigated (considering, for comparison purposes, other attractions of destinations that are relatively close to the city that was analyzed). Thus, their representativeness was classified into three items: (i) unique or rare attractions; (ii) composed of small groups of similar elements; and (iii) composed of quite common elements.

Another important data measured in the attractions was the state of preservation of the infrastructure. In this light, the attractions’ conditions and state of preservation were observed on-site, or by using the existing documentation, classifying as appropriate, regular (needs some improvements) or precarious (needs urgent intervention). Another piece of information directly related to the structure of the attractions of these four variables was the assessment
of the number of employees available to assist the tourists in the main attractions. Finally, for competitiveness purposes, the compliance with the Ministry of Tourism’s accessibility requirements for disabled people was checked.

In relation to the attractions connected with scheduled events and technical, scientific and artistic activities, two specific elements were also considered: (i) the scope of each one of these events (regional, national and international); (ii) and access conditions (only technical, scientific and artistic activities).

**Marketing and promotion**

According to Gilbert & Bailey (1991), the tourism market is becoming more mature and, in spite the fact that the demand rates continue going up, the forecast is that increase rate is going to be reduced in the coming decades. Thus, the role of marketing will become more and more important for tourism organizations, since they will need to increase their efforts to keep and expand their market share. The tourist destination, defined as the set of public and private players from a tourist region, must deal with the necessity of also worrying with such changes.

Marketing is essential in the organization in terms of provision of information and persuasion of possible tourists to visit a location, since, as such possible tourists gain experience by visiting other destinations, their perception of quality, which is directly linked to competitiveness, is going to play an essential role in the repetition of the visit or in the recommendation of the destination to friends and relatives. Implicitly or explicitly, tourists make comparisons between facilities, attractions and standards of services in various destinations (KOZAK e RIMMINGTON, 1999).

The marketing process and its management provide the organizations and the destinations with the tools for communication with their target markets. However, in relation to the destinations, it is advisable to consider that public tourism departments have little or no control over the quality of the product that they are promoting, which requires the integration with the private sector.

In this process, some actions must be outlined, as follows: participation in trade shows and events, preparation of promotional material, disclosure and, in an advanced stage, e-business, maintenance of a local office to provide tourist information and incentive for the community to participate in decisions about the destination’s tourist activity.

Another factor connected with the destination’s promotion is the marketing strategy to be used to attract pre-identified demand segments. According to Gilbert & Bailey (1991), it is essential that the variation and quality of the conveniences and facilities offered be compatible with what was informed to the target markets by means of the marketing process.

Therefore, the marketing plan plays a relevant role in the location's marketing combination. It succeeds the definition of its strategy - image to be disseminated, obstacles to overcome, attractions to be targeted, techniques and effort to promote the destination — and it establishes actions that will be taken.

Finally, state and federal initiatives to improve the several aspects of tourist activities must be carefully followed, so that the destination will be able to take advantage of actions in progress and will avoid repeated or conflicting efforts. To take part in forums and councils at these governmental levels is an activity that may be beneficial for the local marketing planning.
Therefore, the following variables were taken into consideration for assessment of the tourist destinations' competitiveness in the Marketing Dimension: (i) marketing planning; (ii) participation in trade shows and events; (iii) promotional material; and (iv) the destination's website.

**Macro-dimension “public policies”**

Figure 4 below summarizes the macro-dimension “Public Policies” and its respective dimensions and variables, examined in the competitiveness model of this study.

Figure 4. Macro-dimension “Public Policies”

**Public policies**

The public policies for the development of the tourism sector are prepared in different spheres of government: Local, Regional and National. In this light, different departments implement the planning and interventions, many times allowing a different set of goals and results.

It is important to highlight that the tourism development will not attain excellence if it is only handled by the public sector or by the private sector, because, in theory, the first one will aim at maximizing social benefits and the second one will aim at maximizing profits.

The essence of successful tourism development consists in a partnership among the various stakeholders in this sector, such as governments, state or semi-state departments, voluntary organizations and non-profit organizations, private sector, host community and visitors.

From a broad perspective, what is required is a balanced development of the several facilities necessary to meet visitors' requirements and to meet the local population's needs.

It is also important to stress that one shall no longer consider acceptable that such goals be achieved at the expense of the environment, or that they adversely affect the host community. Therefore, the implementation of the policy becomes a process of trying to keep the balance among the various goals, and not of trying to maximize any one of them, separately (LICKORISH, 1991).
Thus, the following variables were taken into consideration for the study of the competitiveness of the tourist dimensions in the dimension “Public Policies”: (i) city structure for tourism support; (ii) degree of cooperation with the state government; (iii) degree of cooperation with the federal government; (iv) planning; and (v) existence of public/private cooperation.

**Regional cooperation**

The designation of tourist regions provides the basis for regional planning, which generates the balance of amenities and facilities desired by tourists. It also allows transferring tourism from one region to another, opening new areas, as the existing ones become saturated.

Key characteristics of tourist regions consist of: (i) logical geographic unit; (ii) existence of significant tourist attractions; (iii) access or possibility of access provision; (iv) internal transportation network; (v) existence of tourist equipment, services and infrastructure or the possibility of their development; and (vi) administratively subject to being planned and managed.

An important aspect of the attractions planning is the concept of "set of attractions" or "concentration." The benefits resulting from such "set of attractions" or "concentration" are as follows: (i) to attract more tourists to the area; (ii) to lead to a longer stay, offering more activities to do and to see — then creating a limit of tourism mass; (iii) to support the main attractions, such as rural or coastal zones; (iv) to keep tourists away from environmentally sensitive areas and that may only withstand the use of low density; (v) to promote economies of scale in terms of infrastructure provision; and (vi) to prevent the negative impacts and provide easier control.

In Brazil, the adoption of the tourism regionalization model requires new attitude and new strategies in the management of public policies. That generates changes in the relationship among the levels of the public government and the civil society in respect of the negotiation, agreement, planning and social organization, besides the understanding of the region, unlike the administrative macro-division adopted in the Country (North, Northeast, South, Southeast, Central-Western).

For this model to be successful, the cooperation and partnership of the various segments involved is necessary. The various segments would be: the society's organizations, government offices, business people and workers, education institutions, tourists and community. This process of cooperation among the above-mentioned players allows the production of some results such as: (i) increasing the quality of the tourist product; (ii) diversifying the tourist offer; (iii) structuring the tourist destinations; (iv) expanding and qualifying the job market; (v) increasing the competitive insertion of the tourist product in the domestic market; (vi) expanding the consumption of the tourist product in the domestic market; and (vii) increasing the rate of stay and the average spending of tourists.

One must understand regionalization as the distribution of a geographic space into regions with various purposes, such as integrated and shared sale, promotion, management and planning of the tourist activity.

Therefore, the following variables were taken into consideration for the assessment of tourist destinations’ competitiveness in the Regional Cooperation Dimension: (i) governance; (ii) regional cooperation projects; (iii) definition of itineraries; and (iv) sales promotion and support.
Monitoring

Once a development plan is implemented, it must be closely monitored, aiming at detecting any deviations that may take place with time. Dwyer e Kim (2003) emphasize that the efficient use of information systems may provide managers with the information necessary for understanding the clients’ needs, as well as it make possible the properness to the better development of a new product, in addition to the marketing produced by tourism organizations, whether in private or in public sector.

Wanhill (1997) emphasizes the tourism industry typically waits the public sector to collect statistical information and to perform a market survey. On the other hand, governments are interested in monitoring alterations in industry and perform surveys, aiming at identifying the social benefits and tourism costs.

Inskeep (1991) advocates internal and external factors may influence the strategy performance, thus, being important the monitoring systems to qualify researchers and keep informed about significant changes and how they must react in such situations. This assertion corroborates one of the key management principles: it is only possible to manage effectively what can be measured.

Thus, information may reinforce the tourism sector’s stakeholders’ capacity to estimate the demand evolution, so as to guide the long-term planning.

Lastly, the strategic investigation and the competitive environment monitoring are integral part of the policy and strategy formulation, including the need to systematically assess the efficiency of the main policies and strategies that were previously implemented, in order to improve the destination competitiveness. Faulkner (1995) emphasizes the importance of more strict and comprehensive assessment approaches with regard to providing a more solid base for strategic decision making, stresses the relevance of the share analysis role in the assessment process as a key indicator, as the tourism national organization goals are attained. The author recommends the exploration of the best forms of communicating survey results, aiming at improving its usefulness to decision makers.

Therefore, the following variables were taken into consideration for the purpose of competitiveness of the tourist destinations in the Monitoring dimension: (i) demand surveys; (ii) supply surveys; (iii) tourism statistics survey; (iv) measurement of tourist activity impacts; and (v) specific sector of study and destination survey.

Macro-dimension economy

The Figure 5 below summarizes the Economics Macro-Dimension and its respective dimensions and variables examined with the competitiveness model of this study.

Figure 5 Micro-dimension Economy

Source: Author
Local economy

According to Cooper (2001), the tourism activities' direct effects are the expenditure made by visitors in establishments that supply tourism goods and services. Part of this value will immediately go out of the economy to cover the expenses with imports. Therefore, the direct impacts of the expenditure tend to be smaller than the import values, unless in rare cases, in which the local economy manages to produce and satisfy all tourists’ need.

On their turn, trade establishments that receive the direct expenditure of tourists need suppliers, i.e., need to purchase goods and services from other local economy’s sectors. For instance we point out the hotels that hire services, such as civil construction, banks, accountants and food and beverage suppliers. Parts of this expenditure go out of circulation, once suppliers will need to buy imported products to cover their needs. The economic activity generated created in consequence of the turns of purchase and expenditure is known as indirect effect.

Lastly, the induced effect is the one created by the wages, rental fees and interests received in connection with the tourism activities that, on their turn, generate other economic activities. Interests paid to bank institutions due to loans give rise to more capital for future financing, taking place, as a consequence, an increase in the economic activity.

The analysis of the tourism direct economic impact verifies the expenditure flow associated with the tourism activity, identifying changes in commerce, tax payment, income and employment generation and jobs managed by the tourism activity. In spite of each type of economic analysis having features distinguishing it from the other; they are often mistaken one from another, once a problem to be analyzed typically requires different methodologies.

In addition to the economic importance of the tourism activity for a destination, it is important we stress the significance of other economic activities as a way to add value and facilitate the tourism development.

It is important to point out, as example, the significance of the air transport for the tourism and the need to make possible not only the high availability of place for passenger in aircrafts, but also the transport of cargo coming from the local economic activities.

Strong economic activities and large corporations also make possible the flow of people and the interest of corporations of the tourism sector arising thereof (aviation, hotel network, events, restaurants, carriers etc.).

Another point that could be highlighted is the most varied segment companies’ need for qualified manpower, being an exchange of professionals between different economic sectors also possible.

Therefore, the following variables were taken into consideration for the purpose of competitiveness of the tourist destinations in the Local economy dimension: (i) relative participation of the private sector in the local economy; (ii) communication infrastructure; (iii) business infrastructure; and (iv) leveraging events and undertakings.
Business capacity

A country or a region economic performance is determined by the individual performance of companies in the markets they operate. Therefore, internal and external factors, such as the human capital, the managerial practices and the public policies directly influence the companies’ capacity for competition (UL HAQUE, 1995; LEONARD-BARTON 1995; FIGUEIREDO, 2003).

Therefore, the search for evidences of one destination’s capacity to perform tourism business is necessary. The professional qualification for the work, the percent of transactions or access points to credit/debit cards, broadband Internet connection points are examples of indicators not specific of the tourism and travels sector that clearly permit identifying the business dynamics of one destination and associate it to the competitiveness in the tourism business.

It must also be associated indicators more specific of the private sectors’ dynamics directly related to the tourism sector. Examples of this would be dimensions such as existence and level of adherence of sector’s associations, Conventions & Visitors Bureaus structure, participation of restaurants and hotels in the number of trade undertakings and car rental companies.

Therefore, these two groups of indicators aim at measuring the capacity of the private sector really operating at the destination and satisfy the sector’s growth and sophistication requirements, with the permanent pursuit for adding value in line with the new expectations of more and more demanding clients. “Adding value” is objectively defined as the additional offer of a benefit to a client, one that it desires and is willing to pay an extra value.

Therefore, the dimension Business Capacity is mainly oriented to a competence, or dynamic capacity, present at the destination, capable of promoting the necessary transformations whether in the infrastructure specific for the tourism, directly measured by the variables that put this dimension into operation, and indirectly in its capacity to draw local political and social forces to the sector’s development. It is different from the tourism infrastructure to the degree that it considers the conditions for this development, and not the tourism structure already in place, exception made to the one allowing the leverage the supply and not only dimension its current situation.

It is important to consider that most of the chosen indicators for the Business Capacity are available in official reference sources, mainly the federal ones, which assure the equal treatment of information, allowing its comparability. In addition, for the creation of categories and further score in the index building, this data is more easily divided by separators (median, quartiles etc.).

Therefore, the following variables were taken into consideration for the purpose of competitiveness of the tourist destinations in the Business capacity dimension: (i) professional qualification; (ii) presence of tourism sector’s national and international groups; (iii) competition and entry barriers; and (iv) number of large companies, branches and/or subsidiaries.

Macro-dimension sustainability

The Figure 6 below summarizes the Sustainability Macro-Dimension and its respective dimensions and variables examined with the competitiveness model of this study.
Social aspects

According to Higgins-Desbiolles (2006), the developing countries are encouraged to promote tourism as a tool for economic development, once it may act as a development promoter of other economic activities due to being less destructive than extractive industries.

In literature it is commonly emphasized that tourism, in addition to offer economic benefits, it may generate environmental, cultural and social gains. The tourism is pointed out as an activity capable of contributing to the cultural preservation in a period that a homogenization of culture takes place due to globalization.

Another aspect to be observed is related to the social benefits that the tourism may generate for a destination, such as: (i) improvement of life quality; (ii) increase of individual welfare; (iii) stimulus to understanding and respect of the several cultures; (iv) expansion of socioeconomic development; (v) and incentive to the environment and local populations’ protection.

According to Gooroochurn and Sugiyarto (2004), it is perceived that the life quality at the destination will contribute to the tourist experience in its visit. Thus, we may assume that the quality of the social aspects adds value to the destination.

The social dimension comprising this study aims at assessing the direct and/or indirect relationship with the tourism activity taking into account the perception of the current reality and its relationship with the present or future need for preservation and development of the tourism.

Therefore, the following variables were taken into consideration for the purpose of competitiveness of the tourist destinations in the Social aspects dimension: (i) education; (ii) jobs generated by the tourism; (iii) policy to fight back and prevent sexual exploitation; (iv) use of attractions and tourism functionalities by the population; and (v) citizenship.

Environmental aspects

The establishment of sustainable standards of development is capturing the attention of all society’s sectors throughout the last years. The contribution of the tourism sector in this effort is highly significant. Thus, the nature and the environment are capital factors for a type of tourism that integrates socioeconomic development and environmental preservation. This
commitment is corroborated by the UNWTO where it conceptualizes it as then one ecologically supportive in long term, economically feasible, as well as ethically and socially equitable for the local communities, requiring integration to the environment, natural, cultural and human environments and respect to the vulnerable balance that characterizes many tourist destinations.

The UN agency also identifies an increasing awareness of the main players involved, which is expressed in public and private sectors' initiatives and in the development of the use of clean technologies in the effort to reduce the negative impacts caused by the tourism. However, the actions are insufficient to assure the competitiveness of tourist destinations in what refers to the natural attractions by the moment.

In Brazil, the presence of some factors pointed out by UNWTO as barriers to the environmental preservation may be observed, namely:

- Difficulty to integrate tourism public policies with other government policies;
- Insufficiency of resources destined to public bodies of tourism administration;
- Insufficiency of public resources for works of basic infrastructure;
- Difficulties to investigate indicators of environmental sustainability; and
- Improved engagement of tourism private sector in environmental issues.

Therefore, the environment is naturally a matter integrating the methodological scenarios used in socioeconomic researches and studies, and scientifically produced on a diagnosis and/or proposal nature basis. In the globalization tendency of some common interest topics, the environment is one of the few ones that are fixed on the permanent discussions', studies' and projects' agenda.

The international scholars, in special those that discuss and organize world public policies, deal with the environment issue as a priority. In the same vein, the allocation of the amount of investments and individuals, of the regulation standards and the assessment and control processes, all in world scope, all of them have in the environment a matter of remarkable relevance.

In Brazil, where natural attractions are abundant, it may be found destinations that depend directly on the segments that have the natural attractions as basis and, consequently, need for diagnosis and conclusions of environmental nature. To name some examples: ecotourism, adventure tourism, Sun and beaches. It is relevant to emphasize that the surveys of national and international demand performed by the Tourism Ministry in its promotion plans (Cores Plan and Aquarela Plan), pointed out an increasing awareness of the visitors, mainly the foreign ones, in relation to the environmental aspects of the place to be visited.

Irrespective of the specific dependence of the environmental issues of these tourism segments, all the destinations as a whole keep a sustainability bond directly related with the environment conditions that they may provide the tourists with. In other words, among the infrastructure characteristics, the environmental status is a capital aspect in the choice processes.

We stress the importance of the detailed analysis of the aspects that not only affect the tourism directly, but also that may represent some kind of proxy of the quality and environmental responsibility of a destination. Thus, to assess the competitiveness of the destinations in connection with the Environmental aspects dimensions, the following variables were examined: (i) effectiveness of the Municipal Environmental Code; (ii) exercise of potentially pollutant activities; (iii) existence of public water supply network; (iv) existence of sewer collection and treatment public network; (v) availability of public disposal for wastes; and (vi) classification of (occasional) preservation areas existing in the city’s territory.
Cultural aspects

In a civic, religious, leisure or professional character, culture is the object of public administration in light of which the moves of a certain collectivity, population, tribe or nation are studied. Identities, values and tensions are expressed by means of attitudes and conducts and, in some cases, by the "imaginary" present in behaviours.

For the tourism management, more than the meaning of each move of a certain collectivity, it is important to study the dynamics, course and purposes of one time and their effects on a society, evaluating different properties, meanings and senses in relation to public and private organizational concepts to which such society is subject due to its inclusion in the leisure industry.

According to Thompson (1998), culture is an intertwined term that, as gathering so many activities and attributes in only one group may indeed cause confusion and hide distinctions. Even being a concept difficult to approach to, the culture is a constituent of the popular reality as a need or an expectation.

The pursuit for the cultural product finds its explanation in the individuals' need to confront their origins with the actual time socioeconomic reality, making the cultural tourism to be much more than seeing life styles, folklore or art from other cultures, but experiencing a different reality, finding interaction between the past and the present and pointing to some future parameters.

Even in the cultural context, the tourism is a service that requires the presence of the customer and, as such, according to Cooper (2001), implies in the interaction of the local population with an external agent, and the result of this relationship tends to bring benefits to both parties, once it generates economic development for the visited region and promotes different experiences to the visitors. The region, on its turn, finds in the cultural tourism the strongest manifestation, once, by means of the interaction of customs, cuisine and history, for instance, visitors have the opportunity to experience situations that may become memorable and that may bring loyalty to tourism.

The cultural factor is relevant for the competitiveness in tourism on account of its multifunctional characteristic. It functions as an attraction for several niches and contributes to local development. Thus, it is directly included in the public management once it is a product characteristic of the Brazilian leisure activities, generator of employment and promoter of the history patrimony.

Aiming to build a methodology of composition of this dimension, we performed a research in the literature and in bodies directly related with the topic, such as the Brazilian National and Historical Patrimony Institute (IPHAN), Culture Ministry (MinC), UNESCO and Brazilian Institute of Geography and Statistics (IBGE).

It is important to emphasize that measuring the cultural aspects of a destination is a tough issue. Producing an inventory and quantifying the cultural devices will not necessarily reflect the destination's actual situation. On account of that, qualitative indicators for the measurement of competitiveness of the destinations in connection with the Cultural aspects were also chosen for this study. They were based on the following variables: (i) cultural production associated to tourism; (ii) cultural and history patrimony; and (iii) government aspects.
METHODOLOGY

The research strategy

Prior to any large-scale quantitative study, particularly in a relatively unknown context such as competitiveness in tourism destinations, it is strongly recommended that some exploratory research is initially conducted (SCHOEFER, 2002). The main purpose is to understand the vocabulary and language used by the respondents, as well as to gain insights into their levels of competitiveness.

It is believed that the findings of such exploratory research can provide invaluable input to the quantitative research in terms of the line and tone of questioning, and of course the overall structure and contents of the quantitative levels.

Semi-structured interviews

After reviewing the literature on destination competitiveness, the researcher first propose to employ exploratory interviews to examine the relevance of the proposed conceptual model of destination competitiveness to help in the process of formulating the research hypotheses.

In particular, a series of semi-structured interviews will be conducted with a convenience sample, to explore pertinent aspects of competitiveness, strategy and destination development. The respondents will be asked to describe the details of capabilities levels for 13 dimensions of destination competitiveness (i) general infrastructure, (ii) access, (iii) tourism infrastructure, (iv) tourism attractiveness, (v) marketing and destination promotion, (vi) public policies sector capacity, (vii) regional cooperation (viii) Monitoring and research (ix) economic activities (x) business capacity, (xi) Social aspects, (xii) Environmental aspects, (xiii) Cultural aspects.

Experimental study

Given the relative novelty of measure competitiveness using field research, the researcher deemed it necessary that this theory be explored further before including any items in the survey instrument for the main study. Hence, experimental studies will be conducted to examine the ideal number of dimensions and variables that this research has to cover.

The dimensions are expressed by variables. Such variables will have objective questions presented according to a dichotomise answer (yes or no). There will be also secondary data, when it available in National level, to classify the competitiveness of each variable.

Before the field works, six destinations were chosen to serve as pilot units to test the data collection instrument. This pilot analysis had as a goal preparing the assessors to perform the survey in the other 59 destinations, being verified questions such as the properness of methodology, collection time and other organization aspects of the survey.

Main survey

In this section all major aspects of the methodology of the main survey will be addressed. This includes the decisions relating to the research design, questionnaire construction, measures as well as sampling and distribution procedures.
The competitiveness in the tourism sector, which theoretical construction is complex, requires, in the process of its operation, the total command of its actual meaning. The subtle distinctions underlying its conceptualization must be aligned in the extent possible to the object to be assessed, as well as consistent with the justifications of the respective incorporations. Thus, we may define (according to the consistence and content) what such content represents in the scope of this study.

**Survey instrument**

According to Robson (2003), the method by which data is collected in any study should be determined by the research questions which the researcher is attempting to answer. However, this is the ideal situation, and researchers often have to use methods which are in fact feasible, rather than ideal.

Questionnaires are a measurement instrument, but as has been suggested above, they are only relevant when certain types of data are being collected. Because of their nature they are much more appropriate when quantitative data is being collected, as this instrument restricts the length of respondents’ responses and does not allow the respondent to discuss certain areas in greater detail. In this light, if quantitative data is being collected, the questionnaire offers an ideal means of acquiring it, in a form that allows easy collection and analysis. (SCHOEFER 2002)

Another decision in survey research is the selection of a cross-section or longitudinal design. Cross-section studies investigate a sample of elements selected from a population of interest, which are measured at a single point in time, whereas longitudinal studies involve a fixed sample of elements that is measured repeatedly through time. Since the primary objective of this study was to measure the key dimensions and variables that influence de competitiveness of a tourism destination, a cross-sectional approach is more appropriate. Other constraints, such as time and financial resources, also support the selection of the cross-sectional design.

However, in future research a longitudinal design must be interesting to measure rate of technological capabilities accumulation, in other words, the number of years needed to attain each level and type of technological capability for different technological functions.

**Questionnaire structure**

In order to perform this research, it was decided to apply a standardized questionnaire with items measured in an objective way, on the investigation axes of the hypotheses, in order to verify the competitiveness of tourism destinations in 65 different tourism destinations in Brazil.

The fact that it adapts perfectly to the objectives specified for this study was the main determining factor in opting to use the questionnaire as the main instrument of collecting data. It can be applied simultaneously to a large number of people, generating answers that can be easily compared; this will ensure a certain uniformity from one situation to another. (SELLTIZ et al., 1987)

Additionally, for the specific case of this methodology, we privileged the objective aspects in the assessment of the variables, solely using, in a residual way, qualitative indicators. In this case, we provided the field analysts with equalization about the assessment form.
Measuring destination competitiveness: the Brazilian model

For building the competitiveness index for Brazil’s tourist destinations, we considered variables that allow the verification of capacities directly or indirectly related to the tourism, considering that these are those were the ones which Best qualified a destination as competitive in tourism, in higher or lower degree.

Score and formulas

The definition of each macro-dimension and their respective dimensions, as well as the variables and questions that comprises them allowed the production of score criteria. This procedure was validated with experts in each one of the dimensions and, afterwards, validated in joint section with representatives of the Tourism Ministry and the private sector.

Thus, for the competitiveness assessment of each of the 65 tourist destinations was attributed a score, or weight, for each question, variable and dimension, taking into consideration the respective contributions for the global competitiveness index.

Each variable was defined so as to capture the whole comprehensiveness of the real meaning of the dimension it is part of, in function of questions that, after the individual score, led to the score per variable, defining, thus, the score in each dimension, as per the following calculation:

Per dimension:

\[ \delta_i = \sum_{j=1}^{J} \sum_{k=1}^{K} x_{kj} + \left( \sum_{m=1}^{M} z_{mj} I_{kj} \right) \phi_{ij} \]

Where:
- \( Zm = \) total score of sub-question m. m = 1, 2, ..., M
- \( Xk = \) total score of question k. k = 1, 2, ..., K
- I = 1 if question k has sub-questions; 0, if the opposite takes place.
- \( w_j = \) weight attributed to variable j
- \( w_k = \) weight attributed to question k

This procedure allowed identifying the relative positioning of each destination in each of the 13 dimensions.

Per destination:

\[ \text{Final score} = \sum_{i=1}^{13} \left( \sum_{j=1}^{J} \sum_{k=1}^{K} x_{kj} + \left( \sum_{m=1}^{M} z_{mj} I_{kj} \right) \phi_{ij} \right) \phi_i \]

Where:
- w = weight attributed to dimension i

The set of weights used in measurement of the dimensions was discussed and validated in a forum in which participated technicians of the Tourism Ministry, the State Tourism Secretariats, SEBRAE, and of representatives of class entities and professionals of the sector, and of the academic researchers involved in this index building.

The score methodology used will allow the identification of strengths and weaknesses of each destination, its relative positioning against others and will be used as a subside for the establishment of public policies of allocation of resources for consolidation of competitiveness process f the destinations in question.
Data collection

Before the field works, among 65 in total (Figure 7) six destinations were chosen to serve as pilot units to test the data collection instrument. This pilot analysis had as a goal preparing the assessors to perform the survey in the other 59 destinations, being verified questions such as the properness of methodology, collection time and other organization aspects of the survey.

Figure 7: 65 Brazilian destinations

Source: FGV / Ministry of Tourism / SEBRAE

The questionnaire consisted solely of objective questions, excluding the possibility of judgment by the interviewer. The data collection was performed between the months of December 2007 and February 2008. In all the destinations, the researches relied on the Constant presence of Tourism Municipal Secretariats personnel, as well as of the respective tourism state body.

As interviewees, representative of other municipal secretariats, partner members of the City governments, such as SEBRAE and SENAC (National Commercial Education Service) also participated in the process of data obtainment, in addition to the professionals of education institutions and of bodies of representation of the hotel, restaurants, respective agencies and travel agencies sectors.

Additionally, persons in charge of the chamber of commerce and of the regional integration of tourism were also invited, in addition to the participative administrations in the destinations where there were such players, on the occasion of field works.

For the field work for this research, 10 researchers received a total of 20 hours of in-class training on the concepts employed by the study in each dimension, the main field difficulties and the strategies to check data. Data collected in loco in 65 target destinations were previously defined as per the tables below. Each research took five days.
The model comprised, in addition to the data collected in field, several other variables built using data available in official sources of recognized credit. This information served either to supplementing the model database and to treat variables that demanded a treatment in a comparative framework, i.e., needed to be balanced in relation to size, public budgets or population at the destinations surveyed, for the purpose of comparability between them.

Data analysis

For the data analysis, was built a system in which data was inserted and immediately tabulated and scored in their respective cities, dimensions of analysis and variables. This system was provided with relative weight for each variable and dimension, in a parameterized way, allowing the generated results to automatically consider such factor. In addition, this parameterization facilitated posterior analyses, extending relative size, segmentation or geographical location of the destinations assessment.

Additionally, quantitative analyses of data and consistency tests were performed by means of a specific statistic program (SPSS). This program was also used for other statistic treatments so as to facilitate the comprehension of the destinations studied. We produced descriptive statistics, frequency tables and implemented the comparison between variables.

For each 13 dimensions, the destinations were classified according to a direct scale of five levels (1-20, 21-40, 41-60, 61-80, 81-100), which did not consider the sample distribution. Thus, a destination that received 30 points was classified in the second level, irrespective of occasionally being the one that achieved the best score. The purpose of this classification is to allow the public and private managers to observe in which aspects it is necessary to make higher efforts to develop the tourism competitiveness.

It is also important to point the methodological aspects used to treat the missing data. In order to avoid the whole piece of information associated with the question was ruled out, two treatments were followed. In the situations characterized as “it is not applicable”, the destination information were replaced by the lower score obtained in the other destinations. In the other situations, the piece of information included was the average of the cluster of similar cities, pursuant to the population size, the state seat of government, or not, and the geographical region to which they belong. This piece of information was processed in a statistic program and replaced in the competitiveness analysis system.

CONCLUSION

The ability of a destination’s public administration to coordinate the different economic and social agents which play a part in tourism and to stimulate the capacity for innovation in order to maintain one step ahead of other destinations is decisive for the destination success in the travel and tourism industry. In consequence the competitiveness of tourism destinations has become increasingly important for policymakers as they try for a bigger market share of the travel and tourism industry.

Emphasizes the importance of more strict and comprehensive assessment approaches with regard to providing a more solid base for strategic decision making, stresses the relevance of the share analysis role in the assessment process as a key indicator, as the tourism national organization goals are attained.

This assertion corroborates one of the key management principles: it is only possible to manage effectively what can be measured.
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