Doris Gomezelj Omerzel

The local business sector's perception of the competitiveness of Slovenia as a tourist destination

Abstract

The purpose of this paper is to illustrate different definitions of tourism destination competitiveness and some models developed from various environments containing different measures of competitiveness. The objective of the study was to empirically test the Slovenian tourism stakeholders' perception of different determinants of competitiveness. The study was carried out by a systematic review of the literature on national competitiveness and, in particular, of the literature on tourism destination competitiveness. The empirical part is based on a survey. A principal component analysis was performed and followed by a cluster analysis with the aim of classifying the tourism stakeholders into different groups, taking into account their view of the competitiveness of Slovenia as a tourism destination. The findings indicate that the tourism stakeholders do not share the same opinion about the competitiveness of Slovenia as a tourism destination. The empirical part is limited to the stakeholders at the supply side and should be explored further by researching the stakeholders at the demand side - tourists, on the one hand, and, on the other, the local population. The study provides insights into different models of tourism destination competitiveness. It provides the local business sector's perspective on the competitiveness of Slovenia as a tourism destination.

Keywords:

tourism destination; competitiveness; tourism destination models; tourism stakeholders; Slovenia

Introduction

The constant development of new tourism destinations and quality growth of existing ones constitute a great responsibility for individuals holding responsible positions in tourism destinations (Konecnik, 2004; Konecnik & Ruzzier, 2006). They must continually seek new ways to maintain tourism destination image and its competitiveness (Brezovec, Brezovec & Jančič, 2004). In order to succeed on the international market, they must ensure that the attractions and experience that are on offer to tourists in their respective tourism destinations at least equal, if not surpass, the attractions and experience of alternative tourism destinations (Crouch & Ritchie, 1999). The actual, and potential, demands on the tourism market are inseparably linked to the competitiveness of a tourism destination, regardless of the way in which the competitiveness is defined or measured. The very first step to be taken in this direction is undoubtedly to identify, recognize and understand the factors of the competitiveness of a tourism destination.

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The existing economic literature provides a number of models for measuring the competitiveness of tourism destinations ((Ritchie & Crouch, 1993; Hassan, 2000; Kozak, 2001; De Keyser & Vanhove , 1994, Crouch, 2006; Mathew, 2009; Gruescu, Nanu & Pirvu, 2009; Gomezelj & Mihalič, 2008). The majority of these studies focus on the problem of how to increase the competitiveness of a tourism destination in the increasingly competitive markets. Most frequently, the competitiveness of a tourism destination is being assessed in the light of tourists and visitors. It seems that the results of such studies are limited by the short period of visits and also by non-acquaintance with all the attractions of a tourism destination. For this reason, Liu (1988) and Formica (2000) suggested it would be better if the studies covered tourism stakeholders. They define tourism stakeholders as persons who are involved in any way whatsoever in tourism operations on the supply side. Consequently, numerous academic researchers have advocated the importance of research on residents' and stakeholders perceptions (Reisinger & Mavondo, 2006; Vodeb, 2006; Nemec-Rudež & Mihalič, 2007; Byrd, Bosley & Dronberger, 2009, Diedrich & Garcìa-Buades, 2009; Lee, Kang, Long & Reisinger, 2010).

The aim of this paper is to present the definitions of competitiveness and, separately, also the models for identifying the competitiveness of tourism destinations. We will study the opinions of Slovenian tourism stakeholders and undertake an analysis, on the one hand, of the factors of the competitiveness of Slovenia as a tourism destination which are at a satisfactory level and, on the other, of those which constitute critical points in the Slovenian tourism industry. The empirical part will involve a survey of Slovenian tourism stakeholders which will be conducted by means of a questionnaire. The application of the statistical classification method will allow for the classification (division) of units into different tourism stakeholder populations (groups) and, thereby, for the identification of tourism stakeholder groups providing similar assessments of the competitiveness of Slovenia as a tourism destination by the individual elements of the model. The purpose of classifying units into groups is to have them broken down into groups according to the principle of similarity, namely, in such a manner as to classify the units which are similar to one another into an individual group according to a predetermined criterion and the units which differ from one another into different groups according to the same predetermined criterion with a view to avoiding the overlapping of groups. The method of classification into groups allows for a differentiation of populations according to a single or several basic variables.

Study settings: Slovenia as a tourism destination

Slovenia is situated in the southern part of Central Europe and the northern part of the Mediterranean. The country borders to Italy on the west, to Austria and to Hungary on the north, and to Croatia on the east and south. The capital of Slovenia is Ljubljana. Slovenia has an area of 20,273 km², with the Slovenian coast of the Adriatic Sea that is 46.6 km long.

Figure 1
TOURIST OVERNIGHT STAYS
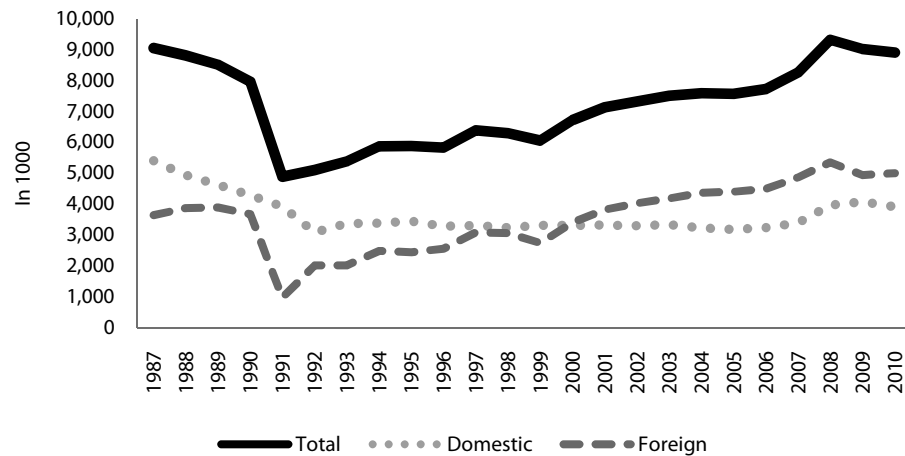
Source: SURS 2010, SURS 2005

Slovenia as a tourism destination is characterized by safety and accessibility, hospitality, ecological integrity, dynamism, and challenges. Moreover, Slovenia can pride itself on its rich natural and cultural heritage. In terms of the tourist arrivals and overnights its best year was 1987, when 9 million overnights were recorded, of which 60% was realised by international tourists. Its tourism performance was seriously disrupted by the 10 days war in 1991 and the subsequent conflict in Croatia. It is only in 2010, that the number of arrivals and overnights reached the 1997 record, with 3 million arrivals and 9 million overnights (Figure 1).

Despite the fact that tourism is performing relatively well in terms of arrivals and overnights Ivanković, Jerman and Janković (2009) pointed out that from the financial point of view Slovenian tourism is not so successfull. According to the data of the Bank of Slovenia, foreign tourists spent more than EUR 600 million in Slovenia in the first five months (or, precisely EUR 620,245,000). The export of tourism (travel) services declined by 15% in comparison to the same period last year. The greatest decrease in the volume of tourists at the European level is being perceived in the more remote markets, owing primarily to costlier air transport services.

Theoretical positions: Competitiveness

A tourism destination is the reason for travelling and tourist attractions of a tourism destination generate tourism demand. Bieger (2000) defines a tourism destination in the sense of a geographic area (community, region, country, continent) that the respective visitor (or a visitor segment) selects as a travel tourism destination. It encompasses all necessary amenities for a stay, including accommodation, catering, entertainment, and activities. According to Mathieson and Wall (1996), a tourism destination area is a place having characteristics which are known to a sufficient number of potential visitors to justify its consideration as an entity, attracting travel independent of the attractions of other locations. Gunn (1994) defines a tourism destination zone from

the perspective of planning as a geographic area containing a critical mass of development that satisfies traveller objectives. Keller (1998) defines a tourism destination as a travel destination that a tourist desires to visit because of the attractions it offers. The attractions can be either natural or man-made. They may have existed prior to the phenomenon of tourism or were created purposefully for tourists. The tourist perceives a tourism destination as a whole, which fact allows the providers in a destination to develop a joint tourism product which can, in itself, represent the attraction of a tourism destination. The above definitions of a tourism destination are all geographically defined concepts. However, a tourism destination can also be defined as a highly frequented location combining infrastructure, superstructure and a series of private business facilities providing tourism services to visitors. The majority of countries have more than one tourism destination corresponding to the indicated definition and local governmental organizations participate actively in and coordinate the activities on the supply side (Middleton, 1998).

Tourism destinations are, in fact, a mixture of attractions, service activities and transport system. If one of the above elements is missing, the tourism industry cannot develop. Even more, the above elements must have a certain harmony and consistent quality to them. While it is relatively easy to plan the construction of a certain tourism destination, it is much harder to attain the harmony and quality of tourism services on offer. Tourism destinations can be classified as perishable goods. They can not only suffer irreparable damage on account of mass tourism, the greater problem is that the unexploited tourism capacities can perish forever. They cannot be stored. When considering the development of tourism destinations, the tourists have to be considered. If tourists do not consider a tourism destination worthwhile visiting, it will disappear from the tourist maps sooner or later. This can present a major problem for destinations where tourism is an important economic activity (Cooper, Fletcher, Gilbert & Wanhill, 1993). Even more comprehensive definition of tourism destination was developed by Konecnik (2005), where tourism destination is defined as 'a complex entity based on a variety of different products, services and experiences; managed by different stakeholders (tourism industry sector, public sector, government, destination management organization, locals) with a variety of ownership forms; and perceived from different perspectives (from the tourist's, local's and manager's perspectives). In order for tourists to understand a tourism destination as a unique entity, managers should focus on strategic management's multiple roles that should be underpinned by competitive and sustainable dimensions'.

COMPETITIVENESS

From a macro perspective, competitiveness is, above all, the domain of the government with the ultimate objective of increasing the welfare of citizens. This is a large-scale project involving economic, social and cultural variables that affect the efficiency and performance of a country in the international market. Looking from a micro perspective, the competitiveness is a phenomenon at the level of companies. Every company that wants to be competitive must offer products or services for which consumers

are willing to offer a satisfactory payment. A long-term competitiveness of companies means the ability of enterprises to remain on the market, protect investor capital and ensure profit to investors, and ensure jobs in the future (Dwyer & Kim, 2001).

DEFINING COMPETITIVENESS

The economic literature does not provide a single definition of the notions of competitiveness, competitive advantage, and sources of competitiveness (Čater & Čater, 2009), despite the fact that competitiveness is one of the most frequently considered notions. Competitiveness can be studied from the point of view of national economy, industries, companies or products. Can countries compete with one another as companies do? If not for other reasons, this question is controversial because a country cannot go bankrupt if non-competitive.

The issue of competitiveness is always relevant, irrespective of whether companies pursue business in the national or international market. Competitiveness is, therefore, both, a macroeconomic and a microeconomic category (Gmeiner, Chiaiutta, Kovačič, Lipovšek & Sečnik, 2001). Definitions of competitiveness and competitive advantages differ from one another with respect to the level at which competitiveness is being measured (country, industry, or company level). All definitions essentially consider competitiveness as a relative notion. Competitiveness is also a markedly dynamic category subject to constant change. The standard of living and the growth of real income are an objective, and not a condition, of competitiveness. It is the duty of the government to ensure and create the conditions for the allocation of companies to attractive activities (Figar, 2004). Competition is a dynamic process and arises whenever two or more parties strive for something that all cannot obtain. It is a rivalry between individual economic entities.

COMPETITIVENESS OF A TOURISM DESTINATION

The main characteristic of competitiveness is the ambition to be more successful than others. To be competitive is to have the ability to survive amongst the competition despite conflicts of interests. One can distinguish between several levels of competitiveness. The lowest level is the ability to survive. At this level, it is a question of passive adaptation to the competitive environment. The middle level is the ability to develop. At this level, a stakeholder actively improves its quality and thereby actively affects the environment. The highest level is superiority which means the ability to develop faster and more effectively than others. The tourism system is highly structured. It is affected by non-static factors. The tourism system is dependent upon the economic, political, social, technological, and cultural environments. For this reason, the national tourism policy must constantly observe and assess the factors which, in fact, constitute the possibility for the development of tourism activity. In addition to the analysis of the macro-environment, it is also necessary to undertake an analysis of the determinants within tourism activity. The literature review revealed a huge amount of different definitions of tourism destination competitiveness. For Hassan (2000) the competitiveness is the ability of a destination to create and improve products with high

added value, sustain its resources, and, at the same time, maintain its market position in relation to the competition. Pearce (1997) described the competitiveness of a destination with techniques and methods allowing for a systematic analysis and comparison of different competing characteristics of destinations. Such systematic evaluation and comparison of relevant tourism elements between competitors can contribute to a better understanding of competitive advantages which, in turn, can contribute to the development of an effective tourism policy. Mihalič (2000) defined the competitiveness of a destination in particular from the environmental point of view which relates to both, natural and created resources and sociocultural environment. The competitiveness of a destination can be increased by appropriate achievements of the management and further enhanced through reliable marketing activities and strategies. For Ritchie and Crouch (2003) the competitiveness of a tourist destination is the ability to increase tourism consumption, attract ever-greater numbers of visitors and satisfy them, and offer unforgettable experience. In so doing, a destination must generate profit, increase the welfare of residents, and preserve the natural resources for posterity. In view of the multidimensional nature of a tourist destination, the authors propose different types of competitiveness, namely, economic, political, socio-cultural, technological, and environmental.

There are reasons why it is necessary to accompany the traditional definitions of competitiveness by the definitions of the competitiveness of a tourism destination. The basic specificity of the tourism market is related to the existence of a tourism product and its difference in comparison to industrial products. In contrast to traditional industrial products, a tourism destination should be considered as an amalgam of individual products and services which together create the overall experience of the area visited (Murphy, Pritchard & Smith, 2000). Murphy et al. understand a tourism destination as a product which is simultaneously composed of a series of certain advantages from which a visitor can benefit via the tourism infrastructure. Comparative advantages of tourism destinations are related to natural resources (climate, natural beauties, flora, fauna, etc.). It is actually a question of factor conditions from Porter's competitive advantage theory. The following can be classified as competitive advantages: created resources (hotels, events, and transport connections), quality of management, education of labour force, government policy, and so forth. The fact that natural resources cannot be exhausted although tourists paid for their use can be considered as a phenomenon of tourism. This phenomenon constitutes an important difference of tourism products in comparison to other physical products (Ritchie & Crouch, 1993). Comparative advantages constitute, in fact, the primary tourism offer (natural resources, cultural and historical sights). These are the goods that are not the product of work or which man can no longer produce in equal quality and utility value. The elements of competitive advantages constitute the secondary tourism offer (tourism infrastructure, quality of management, human resources, etc.). These are the tourism goods that are the product of work and which man can still produce at required quantities and quality, provided that other circumstances remain unchanged (Planina & Mihalič, 2002).

MODELS OF A TOURISM DESTINATION COMPETITIVENESS

Numerous studies conducted in recent years have confirmed the importance of the competitiveness of a tourism destination. Its increasing importance can be attributed to the increasing numbers of international tourists who are presented with ever-greater opportunities to choose from different tourism destinations. When developing models for the study of the competitiveness of a tourism destination, various authors included a great number of variables in their analyses and thus actually developed different models. These include objective variables (quantitative variables), such as the number of tourists, market share, tourism consumption, number of employees in tourism activity, and added value, and subjectively measured quantities (qualitative variables), such as the richness of inherited (cultural and natural) resources, quality of experience, landscape appeal, and so forth.

In their study on Asian destinations with a developed congress tourism, Go and Govers (2000) assessed the competitiveness of a tourism destination by measuring the quality of hotels, quality of services, accessibility of a destination, diversity of offer, image of a destination, climate and environment, and appeal of a destination. The selected groups of factors are important for congress tourism, in particular. In his model, Hassan (2000) focuses on the environment and factors of sustainable tourism which he classifies into four groups. These are comparative advantages (factors of the micro- and macro-environment critical to competitiveness), demand-orientation (the ability of a tourism destination to respond to the changes on the side of tourism demand), tourism sector structure (existence or non-existence of organized tourism activity), and environmental care (a tourism destination's care for the environment). Hassan's model attributes great importance to the factors of the environmentally-friendly and sustainable tourism. Only an effective tourism policy in this area can assure a tourism destination a sufficiently competitive position on the international market.

Mikulicz (Ritchie & Crouch, 1993) elaborated a model with three groups of variables that affect tourism demand. These are *tourism market volume* (number of residents, income, leisure time, education, and type of employment), *cost of a tourist visit* (transportation costs, distance in kilometres, time distance, and cost of tourism services, inclusive of the impact of inflation and exchange rate), and *image* (tourist attractions, advertising, information, weather, language, etc.). When developing their model, De Keyser and Vanhove (1994) also focused on the understanding of the difference between the factors and indicators of competitiveness. They organized the factors into five groups. These are *macroeconomic factors, factors on the supply side, transport factors, factors on the demand side,* and *tourism policy-related factors*. This model was adapted for the measurement of the competitive position of eight Caribbean destinations.

Kim's model (Dwyer, 2001) is a model with four groups of factors to which Kim attributes different importance or weight. Kim simply terms them *primary sources of competitiveness* (entities, external environment and resources), *secondary sources of competitiveness* (tourism policy, tourism development planning, management, investments

in tourism and tax on tourism activity, and prices), *tertiary sources of competitiveness* (tourism infrastructure, system of tourist reception, attractiveness of resources, public information, and labour force), and *resultants of the sources of competitiveness* (tourism demand, employment in tourism, tourism performance, and export of tourism). Kim claims that the sources of the fourth group of competitiveness are the most important and simply terms them the results (resultants) of competitiveness. This model was subject to frequent criticism. Especially problematic is the fact that Kim failed to furnish any argument for the classification of the sources of competitiveness into primary, secondary, tertiary, and resultant sources. Why, for example, are investments considered as a secondary source and attractiveness as a tertiary source? Namely, numerous researchers advocate the fact that the attractions of a tourism destination constitute the basic factor of competitiveness. Moreover, the sources in the fourth group, the so-called resultants, are actually the indicators, and not factors, of competitiveness (Dwyer & Kim, 2001).

Crouch and Ritchie presented their model for the first time in 1993 at the 43rd AIEST congress (Association Internationale d'Experts Scientifiques du Tourisme). After having tested the model on several occasions they updated it on the basis of empirical results. Their model aggregates the factors of competitiveness into five groups (Ritchie & Crouch, 2003). These are *sources of attraction* (climate and landscape, cultural and historical resources, offer of activities, special events, entertainment, tourism superstructure, and special reasons for visiting), *tourism supporting factors* (infrastructure, accessibility of a tourism destination, amenities, hospitality, entrepreneurship, and political situation), *tourism policy of a destination* (functioning of a destination as a system, consensus about tourism policy, clearly defined vision, development and performance monitoring, monitoring of the performance of competitive destinations, positioning of a destination, development policy, and analysis of the effectiveness of tourism policy), *management* (marketing, quality of services, data collection, research, organized destination management, system of education, tourism inspectors, crisis management, and resource managers), and *limiting and strengthening conditions* (geographical position, interdependence of destinations, safety conditions, perception of a destination and its image, relationship price/value, and capacity of a destination). Based on their experience and understanding of which of the specific determinants provide a more useful guidance to those who are responsible for the ongoing management of a DMO, Ritchie and Crouch (2010) provided a detailed review and explanation of their model. They presented and discussed once more all the factors that they believe determine the competitiveness and success of tourism destinations, In their last study they adapted the model to a Brazilian context, since their objective was to suggest how to apply their model to enhance the competitiveness and success of tourism in Brazil.

As far as we reviewed the literature, the last proposed was the Tourism Cluster Model, developed by Kim and Wicks (2010) and presented at the 2010 International CHRIE Conference 2010. Their model is based on Porter's theory (1990), the Crouch and

Ritchie model (2003) and also on the Dwyer and Kim's work (2003). Their revised model is indeed a strategic tourism cluster development and it emphasizes the importance of interconnections between all tourism cluster actors and their critical role for the tourism destination competitiveness.

All the indicated models, and in particular the Crouch-Ritchie model, served as a basis for the design of the Integrated Model for Measuring the Competitiveness of a Tourism Destination, which is the result of the joint efforts of the Australian and Korean government and research organizations. The model was presented in 2001 in Sydney at the symposium of Australian and Korean tourism industry stakeholders. Owing to the newly added demand factors, the model constitutes an improvement of the Crouch-Ritchie model. Moreover, the model explicitly emphasizes that the competitiveness of a tourism destination is not, and should not be, the ultimate aim of the tourism policy, but merely the right way towards the regional and national economic welfare. The integrated model aggregates the following variables that determine competitiveness: *inherited natural resources* (climate, mountains, lakes, rivers, sea, and beaches), *inherited cultural resources* (folk customs, language, habits, and historical sights), *created resources* (tourism infrastructure, exceptional events, offer of tourism activities, entertainment, and shopping), *supporting factors* (quality of services, accessibility of a tourism destination, and hospitality), *situational conditions* (economic, social, cultural, demographic, and political conditions, technological development, and government incentives), *management* (development of a national tourism strategy, marketing, promotion, care for appropriate educational programmes, environmental protection legislation, and harmonious development of tourism and overall economy), and *demand* (visibility, image, and preferences).

Research methodology

Following the model, a survey was conducted in order to determine the competitiveness of Slovenia as a tourism destination with the specific aims to classify the tourism stakeholders into different groups through cluster analysis method. A survey instrument was prepared. The questionnaire design was developed in accordance with previous research. Based on the Integrated model (Dwyer et al., 2003), the questionnaire was translated and adapted for Slovenia. In total, 85 competitive variables were created in the form of 85 statements. A five point Likert scale was used, which represents the degree of agreement/disagreement with individual statements. In order to obtain a clearer picture of the answers provided by the respondents to the various questions, they were grouped into each of the six categories of the Model of Tourism Destination Competitiveness: Inherited Resources (9 questions), Created Resources (24 questions), Supporting Factors (12 questions), Situational Conditions (11 questions), Management (25 questions), and Demand (4 questions). The statements in the questionnaire were not grouped according to these categories as it was not necessary for the respondent to distinguish between the groups of questions. The last part of the questionnaire contained questions on the socio-demographic characteristics of the respondents. The questionnaire was pilot tested on 11 tourism stakeholders. Although some ambiguities

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had to be discussed and some questions changed, no essential corrections were made. These 11 completed questionnaires were not included in the further analysis.

Although the most common research method is from the visitors' perspectives, this approach was limited due to the short period of visiting time and the limited knowledge of domestic and foreign visitors about a given tourism destination, particularly about the determinants of tourism destination management. The use of tourism experts as tourism stakeholders has certain benefits and advantages. Their knowledge about the entire portfolio of the competitive resources of a tourism destination can help discover a tourism destination more appropriately. This was the reason for deciding to select the respondents from among the tourism stakeholders on the supply side, i.e. tourism industry stakeholders, government officials, tourism academics, and postgraduate students on tourism courses. Any further use of the model would require the incorporation of tourism consumer input and perception. Therefore, the target group of research participants represented Slovenian tourism on the supply side.

Table 1
PROFILE OF RESPONDENTS (N=118)

Characteristics	%
Place of work	
Government officials	6.80
Tourist agency managers	12.80
Hospitality sector managers	26.40
Tourism school academics	6.00
Tourism service managers	15.00
Postgraduate students on tourism courses	12.00
Employers in local tourist organisations	15.00
Others	6.00
Total	100.00
Work experience in tourism industry	
Less than 10 years	63.60
From 11 to 20 years	18.50
From 21 to 30 years	10.20
More than 30 years	7.70
Total	100.00
Gender	
Female	66.11
Male	33.90
Total	100.00

In total, 291 questionnaires were distributed as follows: (a) 59 questionnaires were personally deliverd to participants at the Holiday Fair in Ljubljana (a wide spectrum of Slovenian tourism experts were present), (b) 214 questionnaires were sent by post to tourism stakeholders (hotels, educational institutions in the field of tou-rism, the Ministry of Economy, NTO, tourism associations, travel agencies, local tourism organizations, and (c) 18 questionnaires were personally distributed to graduate students at

the Faculty of Economics (students that had at least two tou-rism subjects as a part of their study program). Out of the 291 questionnaires sent, 118 or 41% were returned. The sample characteristics in terms of the sector employed in, experience in tourism industry (directly or indirectly) and gender indicated that the questionnaires were collected from various tourism stakeholders who are currently involved in tourism-related organisations, associations and business (Table 1).

Results and discussion

The initial database comprised 118 observation units for 85 variables which were classified into six groups. As the variables in individual groups were interdependent in terms of content, our empirical analysis considered each group as a whole. Since the analysis ultimately aimed at classifying the respondents into groups on the basis of their assessments of individual groups of variables, the main components method was employed in the first phase. The purpose of this method is to determine a smaller number of variables, which are a linear combination of the variables measured, namely, in such a manner as to explain through them as great a proportion of the entire data variance as possible.

Therefore, the main components method was applied with a view to define one new variable for each of the six groups which was determined by explaining with a new variable as great a proportion of the variability of the initial variables as possible. It does mean, the new synthetic variable was created – a main component which presented a linear combination of the initial variables – for each of the six groups of variables. However, before undertaking the analysis with the application of the main components method, it had to be verified whether or not our data were appropriate for the application of this method. Namely, the analysis requires only the variables that are correlated with one another to a certain extent which allows for their organization into groups of variables representing main components. From the point of view of content, we anticipated a correlation between the variables in each of the six groups.

We empirically verified the assumption at the very outset, namely, with the correlation matrix analysis which was further upgraded with Bartlett's sphericity test and the Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin measure. Regarding the data from all groups, Bartlett's test of sphericity has shown significant differences with the power $p = 0.000$. The Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin measures of sampling adequacy were also sufficiently high. The lowest measure of adequacy (0.790) was established for the variables classified in the *Resources* group and the highest measure of adequacy (0.967) for the variables classified in the *Management* group. Since all the measures of adequacy were higher than 0.5, t all groups of data were suitable for the analysis of the main components.

When employing the main component method, a question of reaching a compromise between the proportion of variability we wish to keep and the number of variables we wish to exclude from our analysis, appears which also depends on the type of analysis. In marketing analyses, it sometimes suffices if 40% of variability is explained with a

few components, while bank analysts require a percentage higher than 95%. In our case, we decided to choose a single component. Having arrived at the explanation of the overall variance, we were also interested in the proportion of variability of individual variables we were able to retain with the selected first main component which information can be obtained from the analysis of communalities upgraded with the analysis of the factor weight matrix, with the weights representing the correlation coefficients between the main component and individual variables. A greater factor weight (according to the absolute value) implies a greater impact of a variable on the main component. In our next step, the main component for each group of variables is determined.

MAIN COMPONENT FOR THE AREA OF INHERITED RESOURCES

The first main component explains 40.7% of the overall variability of the variables under consideration. As it constitutes a linear combination of all the variables studied, it can be explained with them. The factor weight matrix was resorted, where weights stand to represent the correlation coefficients between the main component and individual variables (Table 2). It is evident from Table 2 that there is a positive relationship between the first main component and all the variables. The greater the weight between the main component and individual variables, the greater the impact of individual variables on the main component. Thus it follows from the table that the main component is most affected by A8 – *Cultural Heritage* (0.788) and A7 – *Historical Sights* (0.779), which are followed by A5 – *Folk Customs* (0.711) and A6 – *Architecture* (0.711). Variable A1 – *Hygiene, Maintenance of Cleanliness* (0.327) provides the poorest explanation of the first main component.

Table 2
FACTOR INHERITED RESOURCES: VARIABLE WEIGHTS ON THE FIRST MAIN COMPONENT

	Variables	Loading	Eigenvalue	Variance explained (%)
			3.66	40.7
A1	Cleanliness	0.33		
A2	Attractiveness of climate for tourism	0.53		
A3	Unspoiled Nature	0.61		
A4	Flora and fauna (e.g. animals, birds, forests)	0.58		
A5	Traditional arts	0.71		
A6	Artistic and architectural feature	0.71		
A7	Historic sites	0.78		
A8	Heritage	0.79		
A9	National parks	0.57		

On the basis of the above analysis it can be concluded that the first group of variables is satisfactorily represented by the first main component which can be justifiably termed *Inherited Resources*. For the purposes of our analysis, we shall hereinafter designate it as *InhResources*.

MAIN COMPONENT FOR THE AREA OF CREATED RESOURCES

The first main component explains 31.6% of the overall variability of the variables under consideration. It is evident from Table 3 that there is a positive relationship between the first main component and all the variables. The first main component is best represented by variables B13 – *Offer of Recreational Activities* and B20 – *Rural Tourism*, and worst represented by variable B12 – *Health Tourism*. On the basis of the above facts it can be concluded that the second group of variables is satisfactorily represented by the first main component which can be justifiably termed *Created Resources*. For the purposes of our analysis, we shall hereinafter designate it as *CreResources*.

Table 3

FACTOR CREATED RESOURCES: VARIABLE WEIGHTS ON THE FIRST MAIN COMPONENT

	Variables	Loading	Eigenvalue	Variance explained (%)
			7.58	31.6
B10	Water based activities	0.53		
B11	Winter based activities	0.62		
B12	Nature based activities	0.61		
B13	Recreation facilities	0.67		
B14	Sport facilities	0.61		
B15	Adventure activities	0.43		
B16	Variety of cuisine	0.50		
B17	Food service facilities	0.62		
B18	Visitor accessibility to natural areas	0.43		
B19	Congress tourism	0.59		
B20	Rural tourism	0.65		
B21	Health resorts, spa	0.39		
B22	Accommodation (variety/ quality)	0.60		
B23	Airport efficiency/quality	0.51		
B24	Tourist guidance and information	0.61		
B25	Special events/festivals	0.54		
B26	Entertainment (e.g. theatre, galleries, cinemas)	0.58		
B27	Casino	0.41		
B28	Community support for special events	0.48		
B29	Night life (e.g. bars, discos, dancing)	0.63		
B30	Local tourism transportation efficiency/quality	0.60		
B31	Diversity of shopping experience	0.58		
B32	Amusement/Theme parks	0.59		
B50	Existence of tourism programs for visitors	0.55		

MAIN COMPONENT FOR THE AREA OF SUPPORTING FACTORS

The first main component explains 38.1% of the overall variability of the variables under consideration. It is evident from Table 4 that there is a positive relationship between the first main component and all the variables. The first main component is best represented by variables C39 – *Mutual Trust and Honesty between Tourists and Locals*

and C41– *Effectiveness of the Border Staff upon Entry into the Country*, and worst represented by variable C44 – *Existence of Administrative Barriers to Entry into the Country*. It can be concluded on the basis of the above facts that the third group of variables is satisfactorily represented by the first main component which can be justifiably termed *Supporting Factors*. For the purposes of our analysis, we shall hereinafter designate it as *SuppFactors*.

Table 4
FACTOR SUPPORTING FACTORS: VARIABLE WEIGHTS ON THE FIRST MAIN COMPONENT

	Variables	Loading	Eigenvalue	Variance explained (%)
			4.57	38.1
C33	Health/medical facilities to serve tourists	0.60		
C34	Financial institutions and currency exchange facilities	0.62		
C35	Animation	0.57		
C36	Financial institutions and currency exchange facilities	0.68		
C37	Telecommunication system for tourists	0.61		
C38	Accessibility of destination	0.51		
C39	Mutual trust between tourists and locals	0.70		
C40	Com. and trust between tourists and residents	0.68		
C41	Attitudes of custom/immigration officials	0.70		
C42	Hospitality of residents towards tourists	0.67		
C43	Destination links with major origin markets	0.55		
C44	Visa requirements as impediment to visitation	0.48		

MAIN COMPONENT FOR THE AREA OF MANAGEMENT

The first main component explains 42.9% of the overall variability of the variables under consideration. It is evident from Table 5 that there is a positive relationship between the first main component and all the variables. The first main component is best represented by variables D77 – *Investments of Foreign Capital in Tourism Companies* and D81 – *Reputation of National Tourism Organizations*, and worst represented by variable D72 – *Favourable Attitude of the Local Population toward Tourism Development*. It can be concluded on the basis of the above facts that the fourth group of variables is satisfactorily represented by the first main component which can be justifiably termed *Management*. For the purposes of our analysis, we shall hereinafter designate it as *Mgt*.

Table 5

FACTOR MANAGEMENT: VARIABLE WEIGHTS ON THE FIRST MAIN COMPONENT

	Variables	Loading	Eigen-value	Variance explained (%)
			10.74	42.9
D51	Public sector recognition of importance of sustainable tourism	0.71		
D52	Private sector recognition of sustainable tourism development	0.60		
D57	Entrepreneurial qualities of local tourism businesses	0.59		
D60	Efficiency of tourism /hospitality firms	0.62		
D61	Existence of adequacy tourism education programs	0.60		
D62	Tourism / hosp. training responsive to visitor needs	0.69		
D63	Destination vision reflecting tourist values	0.71		
D64	Destination vision reflecting resident values	0.67		
D65	Destination vision reflecting stakeholder values	0.68		
D66	Destination vision reflecting community values	0.68		
D67	Developing and promoting new tourism products	0.70		
D68	Destination has clear policies in social tourism	0.61		
D69	Quality of research input to tourism policy, planning	0.71		
D70	Tourism development integr. with overall develop.	0.70		
D71	Government co-operation in development of tourism	0.69		
D72	Resident support for tourism development	0.50		
D73	Public sector commitment to tourism / hospitality education and training	0.65		
D74	Private sector commitment to tourism / hospitality education and training	0.64		
D75	Educational structure/profile of employees in tourism	0.51		
D76	Development of effective destination branding	0.67		
D77	Extent of foreign investment in tourism industry	0.76		
D78	Level of co-operation between firms in destination	0.65		
D79	Appreciation of service quality importance	0.58		
D80	Quality in performing tourism services	0.63		
D81	NTO reputation	0.74		

MAIN COMPONENT FOR THE AREA OF SITUATIONAL CONDITIONS

The first main component explains 35.6% of the overall variability of the variables under consideration. It is evident from Table 6 that there is a positive relationship between the first main component and all the variables. It is best represented by variables E49 – *Effectiveness and Qualification of Tourism Employees* and E47 – *Relationship between Quality/Price of Tourism Services*, and worst represented by variable E45 – *Personal Safety of Tourists*. It can be concluded on the basis of the above facts that the fifth group of variables is satisfactorily represented by the first main component which can be justifiably termed *Situational Conditions*. For the purposes of our analysis, we shall hereinafter designate it as *SitCon*.

Table 6
FACTOR SITUATIONAL CONDITIONS: VARIABLE WEIGHTS ON THE FIRST MAIN COMPONENT

	Variables	Loading	Eigenvalue	Variance explained (%)
			3.92	35.6
E45	Security/safety of visitors	0.40		
E46	Political stability	0.43		
E47	Value for money in destination tourism experiences	0.70		
E48	Value for money in accommodation	0.64		
E49	Manager capabilities	0.74		
E53	Value for money in shopping items	0.48		
E54	Use of e-commerce	0.67		
E55	Use of IT by firms	0.68		
E56	Co-operation between public and private sector	0.46		
E58	Access to venture capital	0.62		
E59	Investment environment	0.62		

MAIN COMPONENT FOR THE AREA OF DEMAND

The first main component explains 73.3% of the overall variability of the variables under consideration. It is evident from Table 7 that there is a positive relationship between the first main component and all the variables. The first main component is represented extremely well by all the variables of this group. It is best represented by variable F85 – *Visibility of the Slovenian Tourism Offer and Products in the World*, and worst represented by variable F82 – *Image of Slovenia*. It can be concluded on the basis of the above facts that the sixth group of variables is satisfactorily represented by the first main component which can be justifiably termed *Demand*. For the purposes of our analysis, we shall hereinafter designate it as *Dmnd*.

Table 7
FACTOR DEMAND: VARIABLE WEIGHTS ON THE FIRST MAIN COMPONENT

	Variables	Loading	Eigenvalue	Variance
			2.93	73.3
F82	Overall destination image	0.82		
F83	International awareness of destination	0.88		
F84	"Fit" between dest. products and tourist preferences	0.83		
F85	International awareness of destination products	0.90		

CLASSIFICATION INTO GROUPS

Classification into groups is a process of designating groups of objects which we believe are similar to one another in a certain way. A group is defined as an aggregation of related units, meaning, therefore, that while units within a group are similar, they differ from one group to another. Similarities or differences between units are measured with the distance between them. In our analysis, the Euclidean distance to determine the measure of similarity was used and Ward's hierarchical method applied. With Ward's method, groups are formed in such a manner as to increase the sum of squared

distances within a group as little as possible and maintain the homogeneity of groups. When classifying elements into groups, it is difficult to predict the number of groups derivable from the structure of data. For this reason, a dendrogram was used – hierarchical cluster tree, from which one can see the course of the amalgamation of units. We decide on the number of groups there where all horizontal lines are relatively long and apart from one another. This means that groups are relatively homogenous. Using dendogram four distinctly separate groups were identified. The determination of the number of groups with this method is, of course, subjective. Observing the principle and make a "cut" at the greatest leap at the level of amalgamation, it is reasonable to decide on four groups. The Table 8 shows the mean values of individual variables for the four groups.

Table 8
MEAN VALUES OF VARIABLES BY GROUPS

Group		InhResources	CreResources	SuppFactors	Mgt	SitCon	Dmnd
	AM	0.6112	0.5760	0.4216	0.7554	0.5659	0.6281
1	N	38	38	38	38	38	38
	SD	0.6078	0.4334	0.7792	0.4884	0.7211	0.5637
	AM	-0.1679	-0.0646	-0.0525	-0.2952	-0.1353	-0.2600
2	N	56	56	56	56	56	56
	SD	0.8271	0.6582	0.6472	0.5645	0.5837	0.7969
	AM	1.9685	2.4134	2.3299	2.5499	2.3453	2.4816
3	N	4	4	4	4	4	4
	SD	0.2857	0.7183	0.9289	1.2135	1.0928	0.8118
	AM	-1.0847	-1.3961	-1.1199	-1.1188	-1.1655	-0.9617
4	N	20	20	20	20	20	20
	SD	0.7488	0.7091	0.8945	0.6735	0.8295	0.5816
	AM	0	0	0	0	0	0
Total	N	118	118	118	118	118	118
	SD	1	1	1	1	1	1

* AM Arithmetic Mean; SD Standard Deviation

We can, on the basis of the above table, define the groups in the following manner:

1. 'moderate positivists': the first group containing 38 units has characteristically a moderately positive opinion on all the variables. One can establish that this group shares the opinion that Slovenia as a tourism destination ranks just above the average of the competitive countries in all areas.

2. 'moderate negativists': the second group containing 56 units has characteristically a moderately negative opinion on all the variables. One can claim that this group shares the opinion that Slovenia as a tourism destination ranks just below the average of the competitive countries in all areas.

3. 'positivists': the third group containing only 4 units has characteristically a very positive opinion on all the variables. This means that this group shares the opinion that Slovenia as a tourism destination ranks high above the average of the competi-
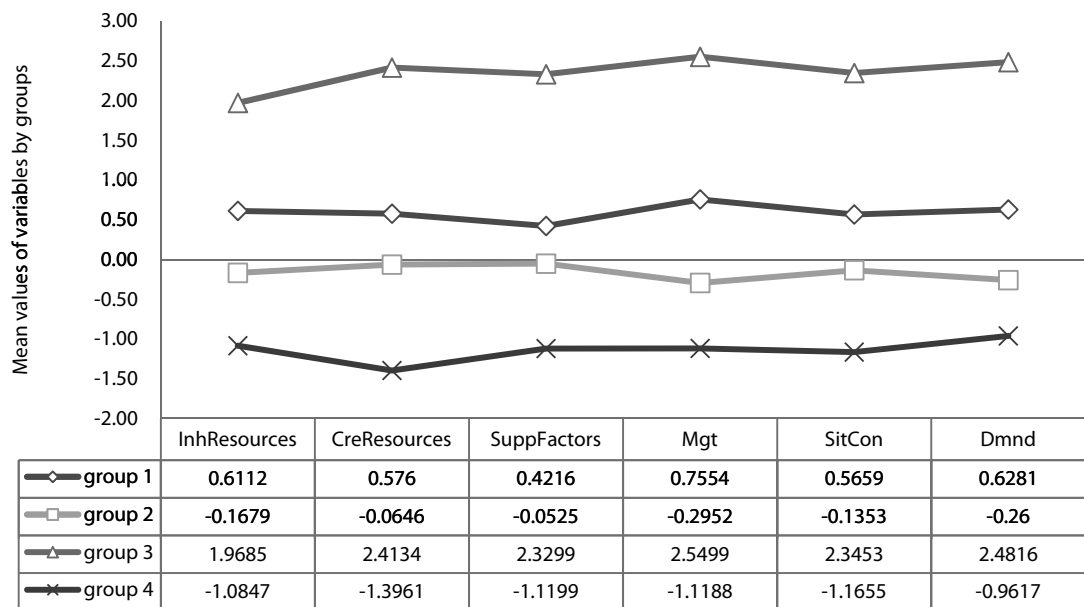
tive countries in all areas. The indicated definition of the group applies only to the group's average and should be taken somewhat cautiously, considering that the group's heterogeneity is rather high, in particular as regards the variable *Management* where the standard deviation exceeds the value 1. The group is in greatest agreement with respect to the variable *Inherited Resources*.

4. 'negativists': the fourth group containing 20 units has characteristically a very negative opinion on all the variables. One can claim that this group shares the opinion that Slovenia as a tourism destination ranks way below the average of the competitive countries in all areas.

The groups are well-separated from one another in terms of all variables. Below the group centroids are represented in the linear graph.

Figure 2
CENTROIDS OF GROUPS

	InhResources	CreResources	SuppFactors	Mgt	SitCon	Dmnd
group 1	0.6112	0.576	0.4216	0.7554	0.5659	0.6281
group 2	-0.1679	-0.0646	-0.0525	-0.2952	-0.1353	-0.26
group 3	1.9685	2.4134	2.3299	2.5499	2.3453	2.4816
group 4	-1.0847	-1.3961	-1.1199	-1.1188	-1.1655	-0.9617

Conclusion

Owing to the constantly increasing numbers of tourism destinations around the world, the countries are becoming aware of the importance of knowledge in the area of competitiveness. Although in the economic literature one continually encounters claims which advocate the necessity of continuous improvement of the competitive position of tourism activities, we found that in this area there are an extremely small number of applicable methodological models which would allow for the study of all the factors that determine the competitiveness in the area of tourism. The lack of studies on tourism economies' possibilities to become more competitive than the competition constitutes in many tourism destinations an insurmountable obstacle to the development of national tourism economies. Despite the numerous discussions on the competitiveness of tourism destinations, we are still unable to coin a clear definition of this notion.

This attests to the fact that competitiveness is actually a very comprehensive and complex phenomenon. It is complex because there exists a great number of factors which affect competitiveness (Čater & Čater, 2009). Competitiveness can be considered, on the one hand, as a relative quantity (competitiveness in relation to others) and, on the other, as a multidimensional variable. In our paper, the factors of competitiveness were amalgamated into six sets which were termed Inherited Resources, Created Resources, Supporting Factors, Situational Conditions, Management, and Demand. These variables were applied as the criteria for the classification of respondents into groups.

The conducted research constitutes only a single step in the analyses of the competitiveness of Slovenia as a tourism destination. By applying the statistical method of classification into groups, we were able to classify the Slovenian tourism stakeholders on the supply side into 4 relatively separate groups. These can be defined in the following manner. The biggest is the group which was termed 'moderate negativists' and contains 56 units. The units of this group share the opinion that Slovenia as a tourism destination is just below the average of the competitive countries in all areas and are most critical of the variable *Management*. The second largest group is the group of 'moderate positivists' containing 38 units which is most critical of the competitiveness of Slovenia in the area of *Supporting Factors* and least critical in the area of *Management*. The third group, the so-called 'negativists', is also powerful. It contains as much as 20 units which share the opinion that Slovenia is way below the average of the competition in all areas. The units of this group were most critical of the area of *Created Resources*. The last group of the so-called 'positivists' contains only 4 units. It can be said that as little as 4 respondents share the opinion that Slovenia is high above the average of the competition. This group is least critical of the competitiveness of Slovenia in the area of *Management* and most critical of its competitiveness in the area of *Inherited Resources*.

The aim of this study was to show where, from the view of tourism stakeholders at the supply side, the weak points of Slovenian tourism were. It would be interesting and useful to continue this research in comparing our results with the opinion of tourists, which might indicate the areas in which Slovenia give an advantage over other competing destinations. It would also be useful to conduct this kind of research separately in each of Slovenian tourist regions. This would enable us to determine which are the advantages and weaknesses of specific regions. This would help the tourism stakeholders to decide where they should improve the determinants of tourism destination competitiveness. The research has some limitations, i.e. (1) the sample was limited to tourism stakeholders at the supply side, (2) factors were studied on the basis of data collected with a questionnaire, which used perceptual measures, which are subjective in nature but capture detailed information about the concepts studied and (3) the acquired data represent the situation on a certain date, a longitudinal component could lead to a better validity and could reinforce the findings of our study. Although the economic literature is constantly claiming the necessity of continuous improvement of the competitive position of tourism activities, we note that in this area, Slovenia does not make satisfactory progress.

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