

RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN DESTINATION COMPETITIVENESS AND BEHAVIORAL INTENTION: THE CASE OF AGRITOURISM DESTINATION

Abstract

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Purpose - This study analyses the relationship between destination competitiveness and behavioral intentions of agritourists in Prachinburi, Thailand. It investigates which competitiveness dimensions most influence intentions to revisit and recommend. It also explores the effects of sociodemographic as control variables.

Methodology/Design/Approach – Using models developed by Ritchie & Crouch (2010) and Dwyer & Kim (2003), data from on-site agritourists was analysed using Factor Analysis and Multiple Regression.

Findings –Results indicate that four competitiveness dimensions (accessibility, marketing strategy, created resources, and endowed resources) positively influence revisit intentions. Five dimensions (adding quality of service) influence recommendation intentions. Generational cohorts and distance from destination affect competitiveness's impact on revisit intentions, while sociodemographic variables don't influence recommendation intentions. The study concludes that the role of supporting factors cannot be mitigated if a destination aims to retain customers. Furthermore, destinations having less distinctive natural resources can still be competitive by enhancing created resources and marketing strategy.

Originality of the research – This research contributes to literature by focusing on Asia Pacific/developing countries, emphasizing the demand side, and exploring the agritourism context.

Keywords Destination Competitiveness, Behavioral Intention, Agritourism, Intention to Recommend and Intention to Revisit

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INTRODUCTION

Research Background & Significance

As tourism worldwide is highly competitive, all insights into the strengths and weaknesses of destinations become more crucial (Pearce, 1997). When tourism development programs are executed based on these insights, the program will contribute a positive impact on society in many aspects such as bringing revenue to a country (economic), improving local infrastructure (physical), and strengthening regional traditions and values (cultural) (Crouch & Ritchie, 1999). At the business level, destination competitiveness helps sustain market shares and secure superior market positions (Crouch, 2010). Since there is a positive relationship between destination competitiveness and desirable outcome, such as repeated visits and positive recommendation, which ultimately foster true destination loyalty or customer-based brand equity (El-Said & Aziz, 2019; Wong, 2018). Therefore, to enhance or sustain competitiveness, tourism managers must analyze their competitive positions and identify their strengths and weaknesses relative to competitors (Gomezelj & Mihalič, 2008).

Agritourism involves visiting farms for shopping, enjoyment, and education (Veeck & Veeck, 2006). By merging agriculture and tourism, it forms a significant part of rural tourism (Srikatanyoo & Campiranon, 2010). In essence, when tourism takes place on a farm, it's termed agritourism (Clarke, 1999). It encompasses recreational and educational activities on farms (Phillip et al., 2010). Agritourism can be categorized into three types: (a) direct market agritourism, (b) experience and education agritourism, and (c) event and recreation agritourism (Barbieri et al., 2019). This study focuses on the latter two types, as they offer unique experiences and are under-researched. Agritourism provides additional income for farmers and improves their living standards (Lucha et al., 2016). However, farmers face declining revenues due to natural factors (Busby & Rendle, 2000) and seek to diversify activities to reduce seasonal impacts (Fleischer & Pizam, 1997). As a result, it is crucial for tourism managers to enhance or sustain the competitiveness of their tourism destinations.

Contribution

This study makes several contributions to literature. First, limited research has explored destination competitiveness in the Asia-Pacific region or developing countries. Cronjé and du Plessis (2020) highlighted that most studies are European-focused, such as in Spain and France. Cvelbar et al. (2015) emphasized that competitive factors differ between developed and developing countries. For example, Kayar & Kozak (2010) identified transport infrastructure, natural/cultural resources, and health/hygiene as key factors in European countries, while Andrades & Dimanche (2017) found Russia's competitiveness centers on policy, infrastructure, and resources. For the UAE, competitiveness includes destination resources, infrastructure, and support services (Michael et al., 2019). As Ritchie & Crouch (2010) argued, competitiveness factors vary across destinations, making it essential for non-European or Asian countries to address their unique challenges. This is particularly crucial for tourism-dependent countries like Thailand.

Second, research predominantly focuses on the supply side of destination competitiveness as argued by Cronjé & du Plessis (2020) that 84% of studies adopt the supply side approach. This leaves a substantial gap in understanding the demand side, where tourist's perceptions play a pivotal role in shaping destination loyalty and behavioural intentions. Third, while behavioural intentions are well-studied in general tourism contexts, the relationship between these intentions and agritourism-specific destination competitiveness dimensions remains largely unexplored. Previous research highlighted the need for industry-specific competitiveness factors in rural tourism (Roman et al., 2020) For instance, competitiveness factors for Taiwan's hot springs tourism are natural resources, marketing strategies, and the environment (Lee & King, 2006).

Finally, the interplay of sociodemographic factors with destination competitiveness and behavioural intentions is an area that warrants further investigation (Mkwizu, 2020; Ma et al., 2018).). While generational and geographical variations have been noted in general tourism studies, their specific effects in the agritourism domain remain ambiguous (Kattiyapornpong & Miller, 2009).

By addressing these gaps, this study contributes to a nuanced understanding of agritourism competitiveness and its implications for destination management in developing countries, particularly in Thailand.

Based on the critical role of competitiveness as well as the interplay of sociodemographic variables, the following research questions and objectives are formulated.

Research Questions: (1) How do different dimensions of destination competitiveness (core resources, created resources, supporting factors, and destination management) influence agritourists' behavioral intentions, specifically their intention to revisit and intention to recommend? (2) What role do sociodemographic factors play as control variables in shaping the relationship between destination competitiveness dimensions and behavioral intentions in the agritourism context?

Research Objectives

The aim of this study is to assess the relationships among the dimensions of competitiveness and its effects on behavioral intentions, specifically focusing on two constructs: intention to revisit and intention to recommend. Additionally, the effect of sociodemographic as control variables will be explored. This will be examined using an agritourism destination as a case study.

1. LITERATURE REVIEW

1.1. Behavioral Intention (BI)

Based on Theory of Reasoned Action (TRA), behavioural Intention refers to an individual's likelihood to engage in a specific behavior (Ajzen & Fishbein, 1980; Oliver, 2014). While BI may not perfectly predict actual behaviour, it is widely recognized as a strong indicator of future actions (Chi et al., 2020). Goel & Parayitam, (2024) found that behavioral intention strongly predicts the use.

Rooted in the tripartite theory of attitudes—cognitive, affective, and conative dimensions—BI is used to gauge tourist loyalty, which goes beyond mere behavioural loyalty like repeat visits (Ajzen, 2005; Suhartanto et al., 2020). Conative loyalty, or behavioural intention, is a more comprehensive measure of action loyalty (Yang & Peterson, 2004), including both the intention to revisit and the willingness to recommend. Revisit intention, derived from social exchange theory (Thibault & Kelley, 1959), reflects the likelihood of a tourist returning to a destination (Gohary et al., 2020; Bui, T. T. B. (2023)).

Empirical studies support its use as a proxy for future behavior (Maxham III, 2001). Recommendation intention, or word-of-mouth (WOM), refers to the likelihood of recommending a product or service without commercial intent (Chang et al., 2018). WOM is a key marketing tool in tourism due to its credibility among consumers (Williams & Soutar, 2009).

Research on BI in tourism takes two approaches: BI as a single construct combining revisit and recommendation intentions, or as two distinct constructs. The former approach is seen in studies such as Žabkar et al. (2010), while the latter is supported by studies (Papadimitriou et al., 2015). Empirical evidence suggests different effects of destination attributes on these intentions. For example, satisfaction impacts recommendation more than revisit intention (Chen et al., 2020).

1.2. Destination's Competitiveness

The concept of destination competitiveness is founded on several key theories. First, the Comparative Advantage Theory, which was developed by a classical economist (Ricardo, 2004). This concept was elaborated by tourism scholars (Crouch & Ritchie, 1999) and integrated it into their destination competitiveness frameworks. The theory suggests that destinations can attract tourists by utilizing their natural or cultural resources effectively. Second, the Competitive Advantage Theory developed by Michael E. Porter (1990) suggests that quality of service, infrastructure, and marketing efforts can enhance a destination's overall appeal and performance. Finally, the Resource-Based View Theory (Barney, 1991). This theory postulates that a destination's

resources and capabilities (e.g., natural attractions, cultural heritage, skilled workforce) are critical for achieving competitive advantage. Furthermore, it emphasizes that effective management and utilization of these resources are essential for maintaining competitiveness. By synthesizing these theories, destination competitiveness frameworks offer a holistic perspective that links resources, management strategies, and sustainable development to enhance a destination's appeal and performance.

Destination competitiveness refers to the ability of a destination to attract and satisfy tourists while delivering sustainable economic, social, and cultural benefits to its stakeholders. Competitive destinations effectively leverage their core resources, such as natural and cultural assets, while enhancing visitor experiences through high-quality infrastructure, services, and innovative marketing strategies. Key frameworks, such as the Crouch and Ritchie Model of Destination Competitiveness, highlight the interplay of resources, destination management, and situational conditions in achieving a superior market position (Crouch & Ritchie, 1999; Ritchie & Crouch, 2003). Competitiveness not only contributes to destination loyalty through repeated visits and positive word-of-mouth but also fosters sustainable development by addressing the economic, social, and environmental dimensions of tourism. Thus, understanding destination competitiveness is essential for policymakers, managers, and marketers to navigate the challenges of the global tourism landscape.

1.3. Competitiveness Factors & Hypothesis Development

Numerous models attempt to assess the competitiveness of a destination. The most renowned being those developed by Crouch and Ritchie (1999). Alternatively, Ritchie and Crouch (2010) classify these resources into six categories: (1) physiography and climate of a destination; (2) culture and history; (3) range of activities; (4) special events; (5) entertainment; and (6) market ties and tourism superstructure. This study focuses on the first to fifth factors because they are on the demand side and can be easily assessed by tourists. Whereas the sixth focus more on the supply side, which may be difficult for tourists to evaluate.

Core Resources. Crouch and Ritchie (1999) suggest that core resources are the most important elements of a destination's appeal. These characteristics are the underlying reasons why potential visitors choose one destination over another. These attributes include physiography and climate, special events, culture and history, activities, entertainment facilities, tourism superstructure, and market ties (El-said & Aziz, 2019). These core attributes are further disaggregated into endowed and created resources by Dwyer and Kim (2003).

Endowed (Natural) Resources. This dimension refers to **physiography and climate** or overall landscape of a destination. It is ranked as the most important in destination competitiveness (Crouch, 2010) because it creates memorable experiences and evoke positive emotions, significantly impacting behavioral intentions (Chang et al., 2019). Another endowed resource is **culture and history**, which can enhance the competitiveness of a destination. Historical and cultural attractions are also core attributes due to their ability to showcase the diversity of human activity and artistic expression (Elsaid, O. & Aziz, H., 2019). If a destination provides visitors with a distinctive environment/lifestyle different from their usual routine, it gains a competitive edge (Crouch & Ritchie, 1999). Empirical studies confirm a positive relationship between cultural uniqueness and rural tourism destination competitiveness (Aziz et al., 2011). Scholars discovered that tourism experiences significantly impact BI (Kozak & Rimmington, 2000; Žabkar et al., 2010). Furthermore, research reveals that positive emotions are strong predictors of repurchase intentions (Morgan & Rego, 2006). As a result, if a customer has a pleasant experience with a product or service, their intent to recommend it increases (Wirtz & Chew, 2002). Therefore, this study postulates the following hypotheses:

H1a: Core (endowed) resources have a significant impact on BI (intention to revisit).

H1b: Core (endowed) resources have a significant impact on BI (intention to recommend).

1.4. Created Resources: Range of Activities and Events

The **range of activities** is becoming increasingly important as travelers become more active than passive, seeking experiences during their visits. These activities encompass a wide variety of recreational, educational, cultural, and natural experiences. These activities encompass recreational, educational, cultural, and natural experiences. Outdoor activities, for example, serve as key resources in rural tourism (Buhalis, 2000; Maksimovic et al., 2015). Tourism activities and events are often organized to enhance a destination's image and awareness, offering tourists unique cultural and heritage experiences (Jebbouri et al., 2022)). The destination in this study offers activities like "learning to plant fruits" and "understanding the benefits of herbs." The former emphasizes enjoyment and participation, while the latter combines participation with knowledge, aligning with Zhang et al. (2018), who noted that enjoyment, knowledge, and participation affect tourists' revisit intentions. Suhartanto et al. (2020) discovered that educational experiences significantly influence behavioral intentions, a key factor in tourist behavior (Back et al., 2019; Schmitt, 1999). Positive trip experiences evoke favorable emotions, enhancing behavioral intentions. Prayag et al. (2017) and Žabkar et al. (2010) found that such experiences boost recommendations, while Hollebeek & Rather (2019) highlighted their impact on revisit intentions. Based on these findings, the following hypotheses are proposed:

H2a: Core (created) resources have a significant impact on BI (intention to revisit).

H2b: Core (created) resources have a significant impact on BI (intention to recommend).

1.5. Supporting Factors

This dimension forms the foundation of a successful tourism industry, including transportation infrastructure, amenities, and essential resources like sanitation, water, and public facilities (Buhalis, 2000; Wilde & Cox, 2008). These factors significantly influence tourists' destination choices (Cucculelli & Goffi, 2016). **Infrastructure** is particularly important in rural tourism settings (Craggs & Schofield, 2011), as it is fundamental to improving the overall visitor experience (Nam et al., 2011). This positive experience is strongly correlated with tourists' revisit intentions (Bonn et al., 2007).

Accessibility is another key factor that contributes to destination competitiveness, particularly in rural tourism (Chin et al., 2022). Prayag (2009) found that accessibility and signage affect tourists' likelihood to recommend and return. The **hospitality of residents** is an equally important supporting factor. Empirical evidence suggests that the friendliness of local people can significantly influence tourists' likelihood of revisiting, as visitors expect to feel welcomed at their destination. Some studies have found positive relationships between local hospitality and tourists' behavioral intentions (Nazir et al., 2022; Žabkar et al., 2010). Collectively, these supporting factors shape tourists' experiences, satisfaction, and future behavior. They form the backbone of a destination's appeal and play a crucial role in creating positive experiences that encourage repeat visits and recommendations. Thus, the following hypotheses are proposed:

- H3a: Supporting factors (infrastructure, accessibility, and hospitality of residents) have a significant impact on BI (intention to revisit).
- H3b: Supporting factors (infrastructure, accessibility, and hospitality of residents) have a significant impact on BI (intention to recommend).

1.6. Destination Management

This dimension covers marketing activities like product development, pricing strategies, distribution management, and service management. These activities enhance core resources, strengthen supporting factors, and adapt to constraints or opportunities (Ritchie & Crouch, 2010). Key factors influencing tourist behavior include value for money and product quality (Buhalis & Cooper, 1998). Perceived trip quality and value positively influence tourists' intention to revisit and recommend (Chen & Tsai, 2007). Based on experience economy theory, Liu (2016) found that marketing strategies significantly affect consumers' willingness to consume, revisit, and recommend, aligning with Lee & King's (2006) findings on destination competitiveness.

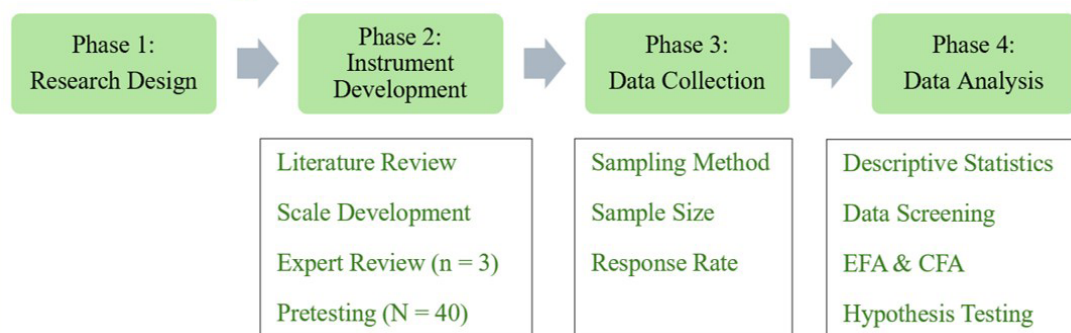
Regarding the **service dimension**, Keller & Smeral (1997) state that quality in tourism encompasses three main components: natural quality, material quality, and non-material quality (services). Perceived performance strongly influences customer satisfaction (Churchill & Surprenant, 1982; Patterson, 1993) and directly impacts BI (Baker & Crompton, 2000). Keaveney (1995) found that over half of customers switched due to poor service perceptions. consistently link service quality perception to behavioral intentions (Castro et al., 2007; Yacob et al., 2021). Delivering high-quality service is crucial for organizational success, as it not only boosts profitability but also helps achieve a competitive edge in the market (Padlee et al., 2019). In the systematic review by Dhewi et al.,(2024), it was revealed that service quality is the primary factor influencing the revisit intention of heritage hotel customers. Wu & Li (2017) found that interaction with service providers influences BI. Liu & Lee (2016) discovered that when tourists have a positive perception of service quality and value, their WOM communication increases. Similarly, Hutchinson et al., (2009) found both direct and indirect effects of service quality on WOM. Consequently, the following hypotheses are proposed:

- H4a: Destination management has a significant impact on BI (intention to revisit).
- H4b: Destination management has a significant impact on BI (intention to recommend).

2. METHODOLOGY

This study has followed the following steps in terms of methodology.

Figure 1: Research Methodology Framework



Population and Sample. The study targeted Thai agritourists visiting Bhumbhubej, Center for Herbal Learning and Health Wisdom (Bhumbhubej) in Bangdecha Subdistrict, Prachinburi Province, Thailand. Given that the total population of potential agritourists is undefined, the sample size was calculated using the infinite population formula. With a 95% confidence level ($Z = 1.96$), 0.5 probability (maximizing sample size), and 5% margin of error, the minimum required sample size was 385 respondents. A convenience sampling approach was employed, with 400 questionnaires distributed to account for potential invalid responses. The final sample of 320 valid responses provides a margin of error of 5.5%, which remains within acceptable ranges for tourism research (Cochran, 1977). This final sample represented an 80% response rate aided by a small incentive which is a free drinks coupon provided at the center.

Data Collection Context. Bhumbhubej Center was selected as the study site due to its comprehensive representation of agritourism elements, including cultural heritage (wooden house museum), agricultural activities (herb garden), and unique attractions (jar collection) (<https://thai.tourismthailand.org/Attraction/>). This destination focuses on wellness tourism with zones dedicated to herbal education and cultural preservation, aligning with the created resources and destination management. These features are considered one dimension of destination competitiveness and hypothesized to significantly influence tourists' satisfaction and revisiting intentions. This province has a strong focus on agriculture and health tourism (Prachinburi Provincial Office, 2023). It is also one of four provinces designated as an herbal city by the Ministry of Public Health. Its five-year development plan emphasizes promoting eco-tourism, eco-industry, and safe agriculture while fostering economic stability for local communities (Prachinburi Provincial Office, 2023). According to the Tourism Authority of Thailand^a (n.d.), Prachinburi is approximately 130 kilometers (81 miles) east of Bangkok. The travel time depends on the mode of transportation. From Bangkok, it takes 2 hours by car and 3 hours by bus/van. Tourists traveling with family and friends tend to use car while tourists traveling with group tour tend to use bus/van.

Data was collected on-site during the high tourism season from April to May 2023, covering both weekdays and weekends. This period was selected to capture a diverse range of visitors, including domestic tourists, educational groups, and weekend travelers. Data collection was conducted during operating hours (9:00 AM to 5:00 PM) to ensure representation across different visitor segments.

Measures. The questionnaire was developed in Thai language and structured into three main sections: (1) travel behavior, (2) destination competitiveness and behavioral intentions and (3) demographic information. The measurement scales were adapted from established tourism literature. For competitiveness measures, this study utilized the model by Ritchie & Crouch (2010) and Dwyer & Kim (2003), tailored to agritourism. The key factors include core resources (endowed or created), supporting factors, and destination management. (1) Endowed resources refer to natural assets like landscapes or cultural heritage. (2) Created resources include activities offering recreational, educational, and natural experiences. (3) Supporting factors cover tourism infrastructure, accessibility, and local hospitality (Buhalis, 2000; Wilde & Cox, 2008). (4) Destination management involves marketing and service management. Participants rated 24 items on a 5-point Likert scale (1 = strongly disagree to 5 = strongly agree), with items adapted from Wang & Hsu (2010) and Chi & Qu (2008).

Behavioral Intentions (BI). BI was measured through two constructs: intention to revisit (3 items) and intention to recommend (4 items) (Castro et al., 2007; Cronin & Taylor, 1992). Participants rated each item from 1 (would not) to 5 (definitely would), based on scales from Zeithaml et al. (1996) and Dagger et al. (2011). These constructs were placed in the second section of the questionnaire, while the first section addressed travel behavior and the third collected demographic data.

Validity and Reliability. The instrument underwent a rigorous validation process as follows. First, content validity was established through expert review by three university research professors specializing in tourism management and research methodology. After that, adjustments were made to fit the destination's context. The questionnaire was pre-tested on a sample of 40 respondents. Competitiveness dimensions achieved α ranging from 0.72 to 0.89 simultaneously behavioral intentions achieved $\alpha = 0.85$ for revisit intention and 0.88 for recommendation intention. Preliminary analysis using Cronbach's alpha (0.50 or higher; Zaichkowsky, 1985) confirmed the reliability of the constructs.

Preliminary Data Screening. Prior to the main analyses, data were screened for normality using skewness and kurtosis tests. The absolute values ranged from -0.31 to -0.96, well within the acceptable range of ± 2.0 (Kline, 2005), confirming normal distribution of the data.

3. DATA ANALYSIS

3.1. Respondents' Profile & Descriptive Statistics

Most respondents were women (64.5%) and fell within the 26 to 58 age group (75.8%). Agritourists tended to be highly educated, with 82.3% having completed college or higher. Their income was evenly distributed across four groups, but more than half earned 35,000 THB or less (56.7%). Among the respondents, 81.9% were employed, and 37.1% were repeat visitors. All respondents traveled with companions, most commonly with family (65.5%), while 34.5% participated in group tours..

3.2. Exploratory Factor Analysis (EFA)

EFA, using both Principal Axis Factoring and Principal Components Analysis, was conducted with all 24 items of destination competitiveness to validate the findings. The results identified five factors with Eigenvalues greater than one (Kaiser, 1960), explaining 69.49% of the variance, consistent with Cattell's (1966) guidelines. There was little difference between the Varimax and Oblimin solutions. Key statistics included KMO = .927, Bartlett's test of sphericity: $\chi^2 = 4907.002$ (df = 276, $p < 0.01$) indicating excellent sampling adequacy. The Varimax rotation results are shown in Table 1.

Factor retention decisions were based on Kaiser criterion (eigenvalues > 1.0). Scree plot examination also confirmed the 5-factor solution as well as explained variance threshold of 60% (achieved 69.49%). Item retention criteria are factor loading > 0.50, cross-loading difference > 0.20, communality > 0.40 as well as theoretical relevance to factor. Three items removed due to cross-loading issues (loading difference < 0.20). The five factors were labeled: (1) created resources, (2) destination management (DM): marketing strategy, (3) supporting factors, (4) endowed resources, and (5) destination management (DM): service quality. These results slightly differ from the model by Ritchie & Crouch (2010) and Dwyer & Kim (2003), which combine marketing strategy and service quality under DM. The EFA suggests DM can be split into two distinct dimensions. The final factors showed good internal consistency, with Cronbach's alpha values ranging from .833 to .888, exceeding the .70 threshold recommended by Nunnally & Bernstein (1994). For the intention to revisit and intention to recommend constructs, factor analyses confirmed one factor each, accounting for 74.09% and 73.96% of the total variance, respectively. Reliability coefficients of .817 and .871 respectively indicated acceptable reliability (Nunnally & Bernstein, 1994).

Tables 1: Results of Exploratory Factor Analysis of Destination Competitiveness

	Created Resources	DM: Marketing Strategy	Supporting Factors	Endowed Resources	DM: Quality of Service
B2.2 Providing a variety of products/ services.	.752				
B2.1 Famous destination	.674				
B2.3 Providing suitable tourism activities	.623				
B3.3 Appetizing and high standard restaurant.	.619		.437		
B3.1 Gas stations/restrooms are clean.	.569		.407		
B3.2 The souvenir shop has a diverse range of products	.553		.520		
B2.4 Providing memorable and impressive experience.	.502				
B5.2 Special sales promotion available (discount/premiums)		.804			
B5.4 Value-adding in processed herbs/ fruits		.753			
B5.3 Free site visit/product tasting		.714			
B5.5 Quality of accommodation		.690			
B5.1 Adequate tourist information		.606			
B3.5 Safe travel route			.822		
B3.4 Convenient travel access			.713		
B3.7 Local people are friendly and polite.			.679		
B3.6 Clear signage			.648		
B1.2 Possessing distinctive characteristics				.807	
B1.4 Stunning natural scenery				.748	
B1.3 Intriguing local lifestyle.				.745	
B1.1 Plentiful herb garden				.743	
B4.2 Ability to make online reservation or via telephone.					.786
B4.1 Knowledgeable staff					.767

	Created Resources	DM: Marketing Strategy	Supporting Factors	Endowed Resources	DM: Quality of Service
B4.4 Interesting educational workshop					.639
B4.3 Helpful staff.					.636
Total variance explained = 69.491	46.755	7.142	6.260	4.869	4.464
Eigenvalue	11.221	1.714	1.502	1.169	1.071
Cronbach alpha	.873	.833	.831	.869	.888

Notes: (1) = Destination Management; (2) Extraction Method: Principal Component Analysis using Varimax rotation.

3.3. Measurement Model

Following Patterson & Spreng (1997), CFA was conducted using AMOS 17.0 to refine the measurement model. Items with t-statistics above 1.96, factor loadings over 0.70, and average variance extracted (AVE) exceeding 0.50 were retained (Hair et al., 2018). Initial Model Fit: $\chi^2/df = 2.453$, RMSEA = 0.068, CFI = 0.91. Modification indices were examined using threshold values greater than 10.0. Error covariances were added systematically. Between items e23-e24 (MI = 18.42): conceptually related service quality indicators. Between items e16-e18 (MI = 15.76): shared method variance in supporting factors. Between items e4-e6 (MI = 12.33): related to physical facility aspects.

The final model, demonstrating convergent validity, included 21 reflective indicators for destination competitiveness. To improve model fit, error covariances were added between specific items (e.g., 23 & 24, 16 & 18). After adjustments, the model's goodness-of-fit indices were acceptable: Chi-square = 260.453, df = 150; CMIN/DF = 1.736; RMSEA = 0.04; SRMR = 0.01; GFI = 0.92; CFI = 0.97; NFI = 0.93; AGFI = 0.89.

For behavioral intentions (BI), after deleting items with low factor loadings, the final model included 2 indicators for intention to revisit and 3 for intention to recommend. This model also demonstrated an acceptable fit: Chi-square = 2.96, df = 3; CMIN/DF = 0.987, p = 0.398; RMSEA = 0.00; SRMR = 0.003; GFI = 0.99; CFI = 1.00; NFI = 0.99; AGFI = 0.98, meeting threshold values (Bollen, 1989; Hoyle, 1995; Shumacker & Lomax, 2006).

As shown in Table 2, the AVE exceeded 0.5, confirming convergent validity (Fornell & Larcker, 1981). Additionally, all composite reliability (CR) values were above 0.8, indicating strong reliability (Hair et al., 2018). These results confirm the constructs' reliability and validity.

Table 2: The Measurement Model Results for the First-Order Constructs

Constructs	Factor Loading	SMC
Endowed Resources (CR = .87, AVE = .63)		
B1.1 The herb garden is plentiful.	.79	.63
B1.2 The destination possesses unique characteristics (B1.2)	.72	.52
B1.3 The local lifestyle is intriguing.	.85	.72
B1.4 The natural scenery is stunning (B1.4).	.81	.66
Created Resources (CR = .80, AVE = .58)		
B2.1 The destination is famous.		
B2.2 The destination provides a variety of products or services.	.75	.57
B2.3 Suitable tourism activities are provided.	.76	.58
B2.4 The destination provides a memorable and impressive experience.	.78	.60
Supporting Factors (CR = .81, AVE = .59)		
B3.1 Gas stations/restrooms are clean.	.76	.58
B3.2 The souvenir shop offers a diverse range of products.	.83	.69
B3.3 The restaurant is appetizing and of high standard.	.80	.64
B3.4 Travel access is convenient.	.82	.67
B3.5 The pathway to the attraction is safe.	.77	.59
B3.6 There is clear signage.	.72	.52
B3.7 The local people are friendly and polite.		

Constructs	Factor Loading	SMC
Destination Management (DM): Quality of service (CR = .84, AVE = .58)		
B4.1 The staff is knowledgeable.	.76	.58
B4.2 It is possible to make reservations via telephone or online.	.80	.65
B4.3 The staff is helpful.	.76	.58
B4.4 Interesting educational workshops (herbs usage).	.74	.55
Destination Management (DM): Marketing Strategy (CR = .88, AVE = .61)		
B5.1 Presenting information about tourist attractions.	.77	.60
B5.2 Sales promotion is available.	.81	.65
B5.3 Free site visits/product tastings are available.	.80	.65
B5.4 Value-adding in processed herbs/fruits.	.76	.58
B5.5 Accommodation is of high quality.	.79	.62
Intention to revisit (CR = .85, AVE = .74)	.85	.74
C1.1 I will revisit this place.	.88	.77
C1.2 The likelihood of my return in the future is high.	.85	.73
C1.3 In the near future, I will return to this place.	removed	
Intention to recommend. (CR = .90, AVE = .76)		
C2.1 I would recommend this place to my family.	.86	.74
C2.2 I would recommend this place to my friends/acquaintances.	.82	.67
C2.3 I will say good things about my visit to this destination.	removed	
C2.4 I would encourage friends and relatives to visit this place.	.94	.88

Note: SMC = Squared Multiple correlation, CR = Composite reliability, AVE = Average variance extracted

Satisfactory discriminant validity was achieved based on the Fornell-Larcker (1981) criterion, as shown in Table 3. The square root of the AVE values (diagonal) is greater than the inter-items correlation values, indicating that the latent variables for destination competitiveness dimensions and BI (intention to revisit and intention to recommend) are not perfectly correlated. Additionally, as presented in Table 3, no correlation among factors exceeds 0.85 (Hair et al. (2018)).

Table 3: Intercorrelations of the Latent Variables for the First-Order Constructs

	Y1	Y2	X1	X2	X3	X4	X5
Intention to revisit (Y1)	r .87						
Intention to recommend (Y2)	r .73**	.86					
Endowed resources (X1)	r .44**	.48**	.79				
Created resources (X2)	r .53**	.58**	.63**	.76			
Supporting factors (X3)	r .58**	.61**	.55**	.70**	.76		
DM ¹ : Quality of service (X4)	r .48**	.52**	.58**	.59**	.61**	.76	
DM ¹ : Marketing Strategy (X5)	r .54**	.53**	.55**	.64**	.61**	.68**	.78

Note: (1) ** = Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed). (2) The diagonals (in bold) represent the square root of the AVE. (3) DM1 stands for Destination Management

3.4. Hypothesis Testing

3.4.1. Intention to Revisit

A multiple regression analysis was conducted to test the effects of competitiveness dimensions on the intention to revisit. Initially, cases 84 and 142, with standardized residuals above 3.00, were removed. Normal P-P plot showed no systematic deviations. Homoscedasticity verified through residual plots. The analysis showed that the quality of services had no significant effect ($\beta = 0.08$, $t = 1.25$, ns), leading to its removal. Case 85 was also deleted, and the final model showed no collinearity issues (Tolerance: 0.42-0.62, VIF: 1.60-2.35) or autocorrelation (Durbin-Watson: 1.67). The model was significant ($F = 50.806$, $p < 0.001$), explaining 40% of the variance in revisit intention ($R^2 = 0.43$, adjusted $R^2 = 0.394$). Four of five competitiveness dimensions significantly influenced revisit intention: **Supporting Factors: Accessibility** ($\beta = 0.29$, $t = 5.16$, $p < 0.05$), **DM: Marketing Strategies** ($\beta = 0.19$, $t = 3.09$, $p < 0.05$), **Created Resources** ($\beta = 0.17$, $t = 2.43$, $p < 0.05$), and **Endowed Resources** ($\beta = 0.13$, $t = 2.15$, $p < 0.05$).

Adding control variables (Gender, Generation, Income, Education, and Distance), the model showed that Generational cohorts: GenYZ or GenXB ($\beta = 0.091$, $t = 1.76$, $p = 0.079$) and Distance from destination (relatively close to the destination or farther away) ($\beta = -0.080$, $t = 1.71$, $p = 0.087$) had a slightly significant effect. This improved the R^2 from 40.2% to 42% representing a modest but meaningful improvement in the model's explanatory power (adjusted R^2 : 39.4% to 40%, $\Delta R^2 = .014$, F-change (5, 310) = 1.872, $p = .099$). This control-adding model remained significant ($F = 23.55$, $p < 0.01$), with minor changes in coefficient values. There were slight changes in the coefficient values such as: (1) **Supporting Factor: Accessibility** decreased from Std. $\beta = .30$ to $.29$, (2) **DM: Marketing Strategies** increased from Std. $\beta = .18$ to $.19$, (3) **Created Resources** remained at Std. $\beta = .17$, (4) **Endowed Resources** increased from Std. $\beta = .11$ to $.12$ ($p < .05$). The final model showed no collinearity issues (Tolerance: 0.41-0.94, VIF: 1.05-2.41) or autocorrelation (Durbin-Watson: 1.72), and it explained 40% of the variance in revisit intention ($R^2 = 0.43$, adjusted $R^2 = 0.394$).

Effect Size Analysis: The analysis revealed substantial effect sizes for both models. Model 1 (without controls) demonstrated a Cohen's f^2 of 0.672, indicating a large effect size according to Cohen's guidelines (> 0.35). Model 2 (with control variables) showed a slightly increased effect size with $f^2 = 0.712$, suggesting that the addition of control variables marginally enhanced the model's explanatory power.

Table 4: Regression Coefficients of Destination Competitiveness on Intention to Revisit Comparing between Model 1 & 2 (With & Without Control Variables)

Model 1: Without Control Variables		Unstandardized	Std.		Model 2: With Control Variables		Unstandardized	Std.	
β		SE	β	p	β		SE	β	p
1	(Constant)	.704	.270	.010	(Constant)	.704	.292		.017
	Endowed Resources	.134	.062	.127 4	Endowed Resources	.125	.062	.121 4	.043
	Created Resources	.178	.073	.166 5	Created Resources	.179	.073	.170 5	.014
	Supporting Factors: Accessibility	.317	.061	.291 1	Supporting Factors: Accessibility	.313	.060	.291 1	.000
	DM:Marketing Strategies	.210	.068	.186 2	DM:Marketing Strategies	.217	.068	.195 2	.002
	$R^2 = .402$				Gender	.067	.050	.062	.177
	Adj. $R^2 = .394$				Education	.002	.063	.001	.976
	Durbin-Watson=1.678				Income	.001	.061	.001	.990
					Generational cohorts	.095	.054	.091 5	.079
					Distance from Destination	-.094	.055	-.080 6	.017
					$R^2 = .416$				
					Adj. $R^2 = .399$				
					Durbin-Watson=1.720				

Note: Endowed Resources = (B1.1 + B1.2 + B1.3 + B1.4) / 4, Created resources = (B2.2 + B2.3 + B2.4) / 3, Supporting Factor: Accessibility = (B3.4 + B3.5 + B3.6) / 3, Quality of service = (B4.1 + B4.2 + B4.3 + B4.4) / 4, Intention to revisit [(C1.1 + C1.2) / 2]

3.4.2. Intention to Recommend

The authors followed the same analytical procedure by removing case numbers 84 and 93 due to standardized residuals greater than 3.00. After rerunning the regression analysis, no residuals surpassed this threshold. In terms of assumption checks, the final model did not violate the collinearity assumption, The final model met all assumptions, with Tolerance scores ranging from 0.42 to 0.58 and VIF scores from 1.69 to 2.34, indicating no collinearity issues. The Durbin-Watson value of 1.97 confirmed no autocorrelation. The model fit was acceptable, with an R^2 of 46.5% (adjusted $R^2 = 45.6\%$) and a significant F-test ($F = 26.84$, $p < .01$). The analysis revealed that all five independent variables were significant predictors of intention to recommend. **Supporting Factor: Accessibility** had the strongest effect ($\beta = .23$, $t = 4.13$, $p < .01$), followed by **Created Resources** ($\beta = .22$, $t = 3.36$, $p < .05$), **DM: Quality of Service** ($\beta = .18$, $t = 2.81$, $p < .05$), **Endowed Resources** ($\beta = .11$, $t = 1.96$, $p < .10$), and **DM: Marketing Strategies** ($\beta = .11$, $t = 1.68$, $p < .10$).

Including five sociodemographic variables in the model showed insignificant results. Nevertheless, the model remained significant ($F = 26.84$, $p < .01$) with a slight improvement in the R^2 value (from 46.5% to 47.5%; $\Delta R^2 = .010$, F-change (5, 309) = 1.153, $p = .333$), although there was no significant change in the adjusted R^2 . There was a slight decrease in the coefficient values, including: (1) **Supporting Factor: Accessibility** from Std. $\beta = .23$ to $.22$, (2) **Created Resources** from Std. $\beta = .22$ to $.21$, (3) **DM: Quality of Services** from Std. $\beta = .18$ to $.19$, (4) **Endowed Resources** from Std. $\beta = .11$ to $.12$, (5) **DM: Marketing Strategies** remained at Std. $\beta = .11$ ($p < .05$). The model did not violate assumptions, with Tolerance scores between 0.41 and 0.94, VIF scores between 1.05 and 2.41, and no autocorrelation (Durbin-Watson = 1.72). The model explained 40% of revisit intention variance ($R^2 = 0.43$, adjusted $R^2 = 0.394$).

Effect Size Analysis: Both models demonstrated notably larger effect sizes compared to the Intention to Revisit models. Model 1 showed a Cohen's f^2 of 0.869, while Model 2 achieved $f^2 = 0.905$, both indicating very large effect sizes substantially exceeding Cohen's threshold for large effects (0.35).

Model Improvement Assessment: The addition of control variables yielded a ΔR^2 of 0.010 (1.00% increase), slightly smaller than the improvement observed in the Intention to Revisit models. This modest improvement suggests that demographic variables play a minor role in explaining intention to recommend variance.

The substantial effect sizes ($f^2 > 0.35$) for both dependent variables indicate that destination competitiveness dimensions are robust predictors of both revisit and recommendation intentions. The larger effect sizes for the Intention to Recommend models ($f^2 \approx 0.9$) compared to Intention to Revisit ($f^2 \approx 0.7$) suggest that destination competitiveness factors may be more influential in shaping recommendation behavior than revisit intentions.

Table 5: Regression Coefficients of Destination Competitiveness on Intention to Recommend Comparing between Model 1 & 2 (With & Without Control Variables)

Model 1: Without Control Variables		Unstandardized			Std.	Model 2: With Control Variables		Unstandardized			Std.
β		SE	β	p	p	β	SE	β	p	p	
1	(Constant)	.540	.248		.030	(Constant)	.511	.276		.065	
	Endowed Resources	.113	.057	.114 ^④	.051	Endowed Resources	.115	.058	.116 ^④	.047	
	Created Resources	.219	.065	.217 ^②	.001	Created Resources	.208	.066	.206 ^②	.002	
	Supporting Factors: Accessibility	.233	.056	.227 ^①	.000	Supporting Factors: Accessibility	.228	.056	.221 ^①	.000	
	DM: Quality of Service	.195	.069	.176 ^⑤	.005	DM: Quality of Service	.206	.070	.186 ^⑤	.004	
	DM: Marketing Strategies	.113	.067	.106 ^⑤	.093	DM: Marketing Strategies	.120	.067	.113 ^⑤	.075	
						Gender	.051	.045	.049	.263	
						Education	-.024	.058	-.018	.679	
						Income	.056	.055	.049	.316	
						Education	-.024	.058	-.018	.679	
						Income	.056	.055	.049	.316	
						Generational Cohorts	.053	.049	.054	.274	
						Distance from Destination	-.068	.050	-.060	.176	

Note: Model 1 -Without Control Variables: $R^2 = .465$, Adj. $R^2 = .456$, Durbin-Watson = 1.971
 Model 2: With Demographic as Control Variables ($R^2 = .475$, Adj. $R^2 = .457$, Durbin-Watson = 1.971)

4. DISCUSSION

Research into the interrelationship between destination competitiveness and BI is essential from both theoretical and managerial perspectives.

The relationship between endowed resources and BI — specifically intention to revisit and intention to recommend — is supported. In this study, endowed resources include (1) the abundance of the herb garden, (2) the distinctive characteristics of the destination, (3) the intriguing local lifestyle, and (4) the stunning natural scenery. This result aligns with previous studies suggesting that endowed resources positively impact revisit intention. Empirical research has confirmed a positive relationship between cultural uniqueness and rural tourism destination competitiveness (Artuğer, 2015). When tourists encounter lifestyles different from their usual daily routine, they are likely to have a memorable experience, which leads to positive emotions (Rasoolimanesh et al., 2022). In terms of natural resources, Wu & Li (2017) found that the physical environment significantly

influences BI for heritage tourists. Similarly, Prayag (2009) demonstrated that the natural attractions of Mauritius impact tourists' likelihood to recommend and their likelihood of returning.

The relationship between created resources and BI — specifically intention to revisit and intention to recommend — is supported. In this study, created resources refer to (1) tourism activities, (2) a variety of products made from local herbs, and (3) impressive experiences. Created resources, such as (1) tourism activities, (2) products made from local herbs, and (3) impressive experiences, were also found to positively impact BI. Positive trip experiences encourage repeat visits and recommendations (Chen & Tsai, 2007; Lee et al., 2011). Furthermore, tourism activities can create positive experiences, leading to favorable feelings and emotions among customers. Additionally, previous research indicated that “relaxation and recreation” were the most important destination attributes and travel motives for repeat visitors to Sabah (Som et al., 2012).

The relationship between supporting factors and BI — specifically intention to revisit and intention to recommend — is also supported. Supporting factors such as accessibility, safe travel, and clear signage were found to influence BI. These results are consistent with Michael et al.,' study (2019), which indicated that destination resources, infrastructure, and support services significantly influence the UAE's tourism competitiveness. Moreover, the findings align with Han & Kim's (2010) study, which showed that location accessibility, distance, and ride difficulty are major factors affecting tourists' visits to restaurants. The reasoning behind this result is that when tourists recognize that a destination is easily accessible, the likelihood of revisiting increases.

The relationship between destination management (DM): quality of service and BI (intention to recommend) is partially supported. DM: quality of service in this study includes staff helpfulness, online reservations, and engaging courses. This aligns with Liu & Lee (2016), who found that positive service quality perception increases word-of-mouth (WOM).

The relationship between DM: marketing strategy and BI is supported. DM marketing strategy in this study includes (1) providing information for tourists, (2) attractive sales promotions, (3) free site visits, and (4) value-adding in herbs-related products. This result is consistent with empirical evidence, such as Liu & Lee's (2016) study, which found a relationship between pricing and WOM.

5. MANAGERIAL IMPLICATION

Knowledge of influential competitiveness dimensions can help destination marketers manage the offerings of destinations more effectively and efficiently. Destination managers are therefore advised to monitor and evaluate specific destination attributes to identify which predominantly influence BI and focus their efforts on improving those attributes. Such efforts would positively contribute to destination awareness, repeat visits, and ultimately enhance the financial performance of tourism suppliers.

First, the EFA and CFA results revealed that destination competitiveness for this agritourism site consists of five dimensions. These dimensions — including created resources, supporting factors like accessibility and signage, and service quality — should be emphasized when developing effective marketing strategies to compete in the tourism market (Kani et al., 2017). From this perspective, we suggest that managers focus on creating tourist activities and products that meet the unmet needs of tourists. For instance, (1) Interesting knowledge-based training topics such as learning about the use of herbal medicines are offered. (2) Processing herbs into value-added products are created such as herbal compress balls, herbal balm, and herbal inhalers. (3) Special offers such as discounts, exchanges, giveaways, or exclusive privileges. (4) Site visit services are provided. (5) Communication through online channels is undertaken to increase awareness. However, it is equally important to conserve natural resources, as they contribute to the quality and attractiveness of tourism products (Sok, 2010; Reimer & Walter, 2013).

The results are consistent with past research, indicating that tourism infrastructure — such as transportation infrastructure, lodging amenities, and tourist facilities — serves as a prerequisite for supporting tourism activities and competing with other destinations (Abdullah et al., 2015; Jovanović & Ilić, 2016). Improving accessibility by providing an efficient tourist transportation network is therefore critical, as this factor influences tourist flows and, consequently, the overall competitiveness of tourism destinations (Almstedt et al., 2016).). In this case, the routes to the site are educated via Tourism Authority of Thailand Website (Tourism Authority of Thailand, n.d.). Furthermore, travel information can be found on social platforms such as Facebook (Facebook, n.d.). The actual examples of marketing strategies are illustrated in Appendix 1.

Furthermore, as demonstrated in our model, the quality of service provided by tourism staff directly influences BIs, particularly the intention to recommend. This finding aligns with Buhalis's (2000) suggestion that interactions with tourism suppliers may affect tourists' perceptions of quality and overall satisfaction. All stakeholders should therefore be fully aware of the importance of quality perceptions for a destination's success. Consequently, destination managers must ensure that all tourism providers have the ability and willingness to deliver high-quality services to tourists

6. LIMITATIONS & FUTURE RESEARCH

Among the five competitiveness dimensions in our model, created resources and service quality most strongly influence behavioral intentions. However, this does not suggest the universality of these dimensions, as “there is no universal and optimal competitiveness model for every destination” (Omerzel et al., 2008, p. 302). Additionally, some competitiveness dimensions such as destination management and tourism planning, are difficult for tourists to evaluate (Enright & Newton, 2004). Future research should include tourism stakeholders who can better assess management issues (Crouch, 2010). Additionally, Rodrigues et al. (2023) argue that digital marketing increases visitor intention and promotes long-term sustainability. It is inevitable for future researchers to assess which platforms are efficient in agritourism and to determine how tourists’ behavior is influenced by those platforms.

This study’s cross-sectional design is also a limitation, as results may vary depending on the tourism season (Gkritzali et al., 2018). Longitudinal studies are recommended to account for seasonal effects (Chi & Qu, 2008). Lastly, competitiveness can be explored qualitatively or quantitatively, though quantitative data alone may not fully capture its multidimensional nature (Crouch, 2010). Combining methods could offer a more comprehensive view of tourist perceptions. Finally, the current study focuses solely on destination competitiveness as antecedents of BIs. Other factors may influence and interact with tourists’ BIs. For example, satisfaction could be included in the model as a mediator between competitiveness and BIs

CONCLUSION

This study empirically tested a model that investigates the influence of destination competitiveness on the behavioral intentions of agritourists. It contributes to the literature by examining the multi-dimensional nature of destination competitiveness in the agritourism context and by analyzing the impact of destination competitiveness on BI (intention to revisit and intention to recommend). The findings suggest that the competitiveness dimensions influencing behavioral intentions are supporting factors (accessibility), created resources, endowed resources, and DM: marketing strategies. Additionally, while the quality of service influences the intention to recommend, it does not significantly impact the intention to revisit.

These exploratory findings are expected to assist tourism marketers in developing effective strategies to promote agritourism. First, tourism marketers should focus on creating tourism resources and activities that enhance the destination’s attractiveness. Second, they should ensure that the service quality provided by tourism staff is delivered professionally to enhance visitor satisfaction. Finally, although some aspects of infrastructure may be beyond control, tourism managers should strive to make their destination as accessible and safe for travel as possible.

In preparing this paper, the authors used ChatGPT for correcting grammatical errors and polishing language to become more fluent. Following this tool, the authors have reviewed and edited the content as necessary and take full responsibility for the content of the published article.

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APPENDIX

Appendix 1: Examples of Current Marketing Strategies



Information for Tourists



Accommodation



Interesting Topics Workshops for Tourists



Souvenir Shop and Cafe

Value-added Products Processed from Herbs: 1.Herbal Inhaler, 2.Herbal Lip Balm, 3.Herbal Tea, 4.Pain Relief Cream, 5.Herbal Balm, 6. Mosquito Repellent Spray, 7. Aromatherapy Roll-On, 8. Pain Relief Spray,10. Black Sesame Herbal Massage Oil

