

**ESTABLISHING A SCALE TO ASSESS THE FACTORS AFFECTING THE
COMPETITIVENESS OF TOURIST DESTINATIONS,
A CASE STUDY IN HOI AN CITY, QUANG NAM PROVINCE**

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Abstract. The competitiveness index of tourist destinations is essential for attracting visitors and adequately addressing their needs. Given that competitiveness is influenced by numerous factors, it is essential to create a scale for assessing these factors. This study developed a scale to evaluate factors affecting competitiveness in Hoi An city, Quang Nam province, a notable tourist destination recognized for the World Cultural Heritage site of Hoi An ancient town. The research employed descriptive statistics, utilizing Mean and Standard Deviation to develop a scale comprising seven-factor categories and 64 rating criteria. The preliminary results indicate that visitors largely concur with most groupings of elements affecting Hoi An's competitiveness; however, several issues related to infrastructure and connectivity require attention in the destination's tourism development.

Keywords: Competitiveness, tourist destination, scale, Hoi An city, Quang Nam province.

1. Introduction

With the increasing number of tourists around the world, tourist destination must constantly increase their competitiveness to attract more visitors. As a result, competitiveness has become an important criterion in determining the direction of destination tourism development. Ritchie and Crouch's model defines competitiveness as a combination of comparative and competitive advantages for a tourism destination [1]. Comparative advantage is defined as a destination's endowment of resources (natural or cultural attractors), supporting resources (infrastructure, accommodation, tourist facilities), and destination management (managerial capabilities of a destination), whereas competitive advantage focuses on the efficiency and effectiveness with which those resources are managed. Over the last decade, there has been an increasing interest in assessing the Competitiveness of Tourist Destinations (CTD) and identifying the variables that assist destinations in improving their standing. There are studies in the tourism literature that aim to rank countries based on tourism destinations' resources and policies, with a focus on the comparative advantage dimension of competitiveness.

Numerous tourism studies indicate that the CTD comprises various variables. Crouch and Ritchie define the factors that draw resources to a destination as the destination's attractiveness, which defines its competitiveness. They include natural elements, climate, cultural characteristics, infrastructure, attitudes toward tourists, costs, prices, socio-economic relationships, and the

tourism product's distinctiveness. According to Qian Cao (2020), CTD depends on three criteria: core competitiveness of mountain tourism, competitiveness of the economic environment, and competitiveness of infrastructure [2].

In Vietnam, the topic of CTD has been investigated in a variety of ways, given its growing importance. In terms of impact, research focuses on defining the system of elements influencing the destination, including the economy, culture, and history. In addition to focusing on the macro backdrop, several management studies focus on understanding the impact of competitiveness from a company perspective [3]. Many studies have used quantitative research models to develop factor evaluation scales, including PSL [4]. Nguyen Thanh Sang and Nguyen Phu Son (2018) identified elements influencing the CTD of Bac Lieu, such as scenic locations, infrastructure, destination organization information, restaurant services, hotels, entertainment areas, and shopping. These criteria are seen as significant in meeting the needs of tourists visiting a tourist location [5].

From the examined literature on tourism, most research has focused on relevant elements using a one-dimensional approach connected to economic or cultural issues, with few multidimensional methods. To address this constraint, this study employs an integrated combination technique to create a multidimensional scale with numerous groupings of characteristics that directly or indirectly influence the competitiveness of tourism locations. Based on the preceding arguments, the current study seeks two primary goals that extend beyond the prior talks. The first goal is to provide criteria for evaluating influencing factors with reliability using Ritchie and Crouch's competitiveness model. The second goal is to determine the competitiveness of a specific destination, Hoi An city, to better navigate and explain the impact of each group of elements on competitiveness. These findings can give tourism managers vital and up-to-date information on issues such as the capacity to capitalize on the destination's potential as well as the influence context surrounding the destination to boost competitiveness.

2. Content

2.1. Literature review

2.1.1. Tourist destination

The tourist destination is one of the primary topics of interest and research in the tourism business, and researchers and practitioners have yet to reach an agreement on how it should be defined. The phrase “tourist destination” is widely used, both professionally and academically, because the majority of activities occur at destinations. According to Leiper (1979), tourist destinations are areas that attract tourists and encourage them to stay for an extended amount of time [6]. Destinations generally include features that support that appeal. In this context, the tourist attraction can be viewed as a foreshadowing of various features that are lacking in the visitor's home location and that he wishes to experience. Moreover, Morgan (2004) illustrates that tourist destinations have become “the largest brands in the tourism industry”. As a result, tourist sites and their marketing have emerged as the primary focus of tourism research [7].

The UNWTO defines a tourist destination as “the basic unit of analysis in tourism” [8] .

As one of the most crucial components of the tourism system, tourist destinations are the primary setting for tourism activities, distinguishing tourist studies from other disciplines [9]. In addition to the concept of a tourist destination, which is predicated on geographical factors or territorial space and is characterized by the diversity of resources, quality, and a series of amenities and services that are provided to visitors, numerous other perspectives view a tourist destination as a product or brand that is a synthesis of numerous constituent factors, including weather and climate conditions, infrastructure, facilities or superstructure, services, natural and

cultural features, and the ability to provide a unique experience to tourists [10]. On the other hand, Mike and Caster (2007) believe that a tourist destination consists of six aspects that attract travelers, including attractions, amenities, accessibility, human resources, image, and attributes, as well as price [11]. The provision and satisfaction level of these 6 elements will affect the decision to choose a destination as well as the satisfaction of tourists after visiting the destination, including: (1) Attractions are sightseeing spots; a destination often has many attractions; (2) Public and Private Amenities including facilities such as roads, electricity, water and direct services such as accommodation systems, food establishments, shopping centers, information centers, tour guides, etc.; (3) Accessibility is reflected in the ease and convenience of traveling to and from the destination or visa requirements, customs and other entry and exit conditions; (4) Human resources include the labor force in the industry and local people at the destination; (5) Images and characteristics of the destination are the characteristics of the destination and are a very important factor in attracting visitors to any destination, emphasizing aspects such as: characteristics, landscape, culture, environment, safety level, comfort level, friendliness of local people or a combination of these factors; (6) Price is one of the factors affecting the CTD as well as the decision of tourists to choose a destination. The price encompasses all costs for tourists, beginning with the cost of travel to the location, followed by the cost of consuming products/services at the destination, and lastly departing the destination.

Overall, through the theoretical overview of tourist destinations, it can be seen that the common characteristics of tourist destinations are places where tourists often come to experience entertainment, recreation, exploration, and relaxation. Each tourist destination will have its own unique characteristics to suit the needs and preferences of each tourist. Most tourist destinations have common factors such as beautiful natural scenery, diverse culture and history, accommodation services and amenities, entertainment and educational activities, ensuring safety and easy access.

2.1.2. The competitiveness of tourist destination

Over the last decade, there has been an increasing interest in assessing the CTD and identifying the variables that assist destinations in improving their standing. There are studies in the tourism literature that aim to rank countries based on tourism destinations' resources and policies, with a focus on the comparative advantage dimension of competitiveness. While comparative advantage tends to be more about available resources, competitive advantage depends on how these resources are managed and optimized at the destination. In this vein, the majority of research on

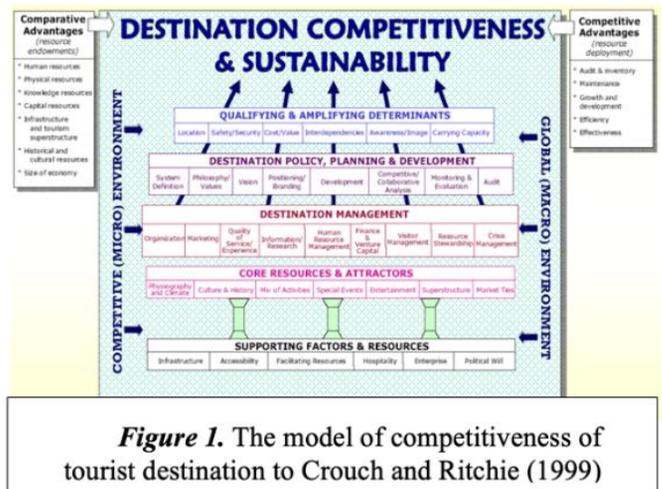


Figure 1. The model of competitiveness of tourist destination to Crouch and Ritchie (1999)

CTD has focused on developing composite indicators to serve as benchmarking tools for rating tourist destinations in terms of competitiveness. Based on the multidimensional nature of competitiveness, Dwyer and Kim (2003) proposed a set of destination competitiveness indicators for comparing countries: resource endowments, resource creation, service quality and accessibility, and destination management components [12].

Gooroochurn and Sugiyarto (2005) then suggested a weighted composite index for tourism competitiveness based on eight indices and twenty-three components for more than 200 countries, which served as a useful tool for identifying destination strengths and weaknesses [13].

Recent studies on CTD have improved by calculating weights for TTCI sub-indices [14]. Other studies evaluate tourist destination competitiveness using tourism efficiency and then focus on the competitive advantage dimension of competitiveness.

Due to the synthetic character of the CTD index, there are numerous techniques for researching the elements influencing it. Stakeholder orientation, strategic competence, mutual value creation, information and communication technology preparedness, and corporate social responsibility practices are all important aspects in determining CTD. Stakeholder orientation and strategic competence have a direct, positive, and significant effect on competitiveness [15]. Information and communication

technology readiness is critical for remaining competitive and drawing visitors [16]. Furthermore, corporate social responsibility initiatives such as community involvement, environmental sustainability, and customer perception of CSR image improve a CTD [17]. These qualities are critical in distinguishing a destination from its competitors and building favorable associations with travelers, increasing its competitiveness in the tourism business. In Vietnam, according to Le Manh Hung's findings, the following factors influence the competitiveness of Vietnam's tourism destinations: The most influential component is environmental quality, followed by tourism infrastructure and tourist satisfaction [4]. Historical and social viewpoints, as well as human resources, have an impact on the TDC. Additionally, Pham Viet Hung and his research team identified factors influencing the competitiveness of tourism enterprises based on competitiveness theory and qualitative research, including tourism marketing capacity, brand, technology application capacity, management capacity, organization of operational linkage, social responsibility, tourism products and services, human resources, financial capacity, infrastructure - facilities, pricing strategy, and business strategy [3]. Nguyen Thanh Sang and Nguyen Phu Son (2018) studied the CTD of Bac Lieu province, with a scale of 30 indicators, assessing factors such as places of interest, infrastructure, restaurants, hotels, entertainment, and shopping, and among all factors, "There are many food services around the destinations" under the Tourism Services factor has the most important influence on the CTD of Bac Lieu [5].

In general, studies on tourism destination competitiveness have been analyzed from many aspects. The research results have been summarized and provided many assessment aspects related to CTD, thereby emphasizing the importance of CTD in tourism destination development. These studies have initially outlined frameworks and theories for research on tourism destination competitiveness, examining and analyzing prominent factors in different spaces. However, the above studies have only focused on some pure aspects of CTD such as infrastructure, resources,...; many external support aspects for the destination have not been included in the assessment scale. On the other hand, for the tourist destination of Hoi An city, the studies have almost only focused on analyzing the current situation and some types of tourism at this destination. Research on competitiveness, therefore, is still a gap that needs to be fully studied.

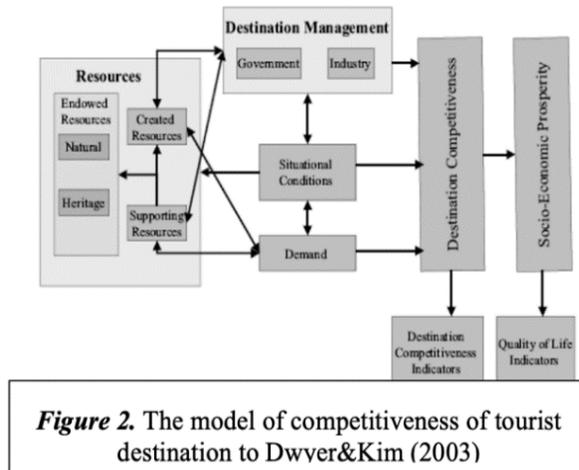


Figure 2. The model of competitiveness of tourist destination to Dwver&Kim (2003)

2.2. Research area and methods

2.2.1. Research area

Hoi An city is situated in the central region of Vietnam, specifically in the province of Quang Nam. Hoi An is a renowned tourist destination for its tranquility and historical significance. It draws visitors from across the globe, as well as domestic travelers. UNESCO acknowledged x Hoi An Ancient Town as a World Heritage Site in 1999. Hoi An Ancient Town is located on the north bank of the Thu Bon River, near its mouth, in central Quang Nam Province, Vietnam. The inscribed property is 30 hectares in size, with a 280-hectare buffer zone. It is an extraordinarily well-preserved example of a small-scale trading port that operated from the 15th to the 19th century, trading extensively with Southeast and East Asian countries as well as the rest of the world. Its fall in the late nineteenth century guaranteed that it preserved its conventional urban tissue to a surprising extent.

2.2.2. Research methods

In this study, the scale was constructed based on the following research steps.

Step 1: Building a scale of criteria

Based on a literature review and a practical assessment of the Hoi An destination, the article developed a scale with seven categories of urban competitiveness criteria. Table1 contains 64 specific assessment criteria for the seven factor groupings.

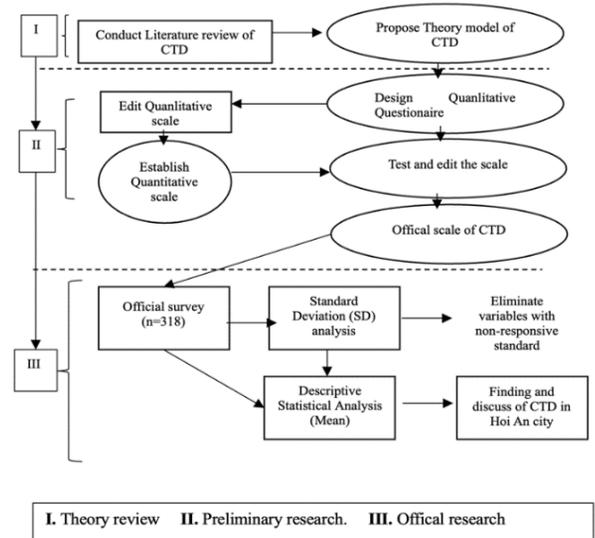


Figure 3. Research process

Table 1. The list of indicators of evaluating the TDC in Hoi An city

Indicators	Criteria
1) CORE RESOURCES AND KEY ATTRACTORS	1. Distinctive natural resources and heritage 2. World Cultural Heritage, Historical and Archaeological Sites 3. Architectural and artistic features that are unique to the old town 4. Green areas at the destination. 5. Diverse and appealing cultural attractions 6. Diverse and appealing cultural events 7. Diverse and appealing entertainment options 8. The evening activities and nightlife of Hoi An are attractive. 9. Attractive cuisine and traditional products from the ancient town 10. Numerous retail options in the ancient town.
2) TOURISM SERVICES	11. The quantity and quality of accommodations are guaranteed. 12. The quantity and quality of food and beverage services are assured. 13. The number and quality of entertainment facilities are met. 14. Service facilities provide a friendly environment. 15. Diversified-oriented services
3) GENERAL INFRASTRUCTURES	16. Environmentally friendly transportation service quality 17. Modern and convenient road system quality 18. A modern communication system to fulfill demand. 19. Easy access to medical facilities.

	<p>20. Modern medical and health-care facilities.</p> <p>21. Toilet, wastewater, and solid waste treatment</p>
4) CONDITIONING AND SUPPORTING FACTORS	<p>22. Easy access to the destination.</p> <p>23. Easy connection to other tourist destinations.</p> <p>24. Destination linked to major tourist markets (Da Nang, Hue, etc.)</p> <p>25. The destination has reasonable costs for guests to experience.</p> <p>26. Reasonably priced accommodations</p> <p>27. Existence of local business activities</p> <p>28. The tourist destination has good management capacity.</p> <p>29. Tourism businesses utilize advanced technology.</p> <p>30. Local goods and services are assured.</p> <p>31. High degree of professionalism in tourism</p> <p>32. Locals are quite welcoming to tourists.</p> <p>33. The environmental quality of Hoi An is ensured.</p> <p>34. Security and safety for tourism in Hoi An are ensured.</p>
5) TOURISM POLICY, PLANNING AND DEVELOPMENT	<p>35. Local policy commitment to tourism.</p> <p>36. An Integrated Approach to Effective Tourism Planning</p> <p>37. An environmentally friendly approach to good tourism development planning.</p> <p>38. Government commitment to reducing the negative environmental impacts of tourism</p> <p>39. Government's commitment to reducing the harmful social repercussions of tourism on local communities</p> <p>40. The government's commitment to increasing the economic impact of tourism on local communities</p> <p>41. A clear policy for establishing formal work opportunities.</p> <p>42. Emphasizes communal empowerment.</p> <p>43. Government support for tourism and hospitality education and training</p> <p>44. Collaboration among public sector bodies to promote local tourist development</p> <p>45. Public-private partnership for local tourism development</p> <p>46. Focus on community participation in tourism planning.</p>
6) DESTINATION MANAGEMENT	<p>47. Effective destination positioning</p> <p>48. Market segmentation</p> <p>49. Tourism experience creation</p> <p>50. Effective destination communication</p> <p>51. Visitor satisfaction management.</p> <p>52. Visible tourist guides and information</p> <p>53. Proper natural environment management</p> <p>54. Effective management and monitoring of tourism impacts.</p> <p>55. Effective Destination Management Structures</p> <p>56. Fostering relationships between public and private stakeholders.</p> <p>57. Promote cooperation between tourism businesses</p>
7) DEMAND FACTOR	<p>58. Tourists are interested in local natural and cultural heritage.</p> <p>59. Tourists respect local traditions and values.</p> <p>60. Tourists' environmental awareness</p> <p>61. Their view of the destination.</p> <p>62. Seasonality in tourism flows (no)</p> <p>63. Percentage of repeat visitors</p> <p>64. "Fit" of destination product and visitor preferences</p>

Compared to previous studies, the scale in this study includes internal and external factors, direct and indirect factors, and the evaluation criteria are based on spatial characteristics associated with typical values of world cultural heritage in Hoi An. While the evaluation of CTD depends heavily on the characteristics of each destination, this allows the study to both inherit the traditional research model and outline the unique characteristics associated with the space of Hoi An destination.

Step 2: Designing and setting the tool for the survey

A survey instrument was developed based on the set of indicators of CTD. A Google form survey helped to get the data. On a 5-point Likert scale, respondents to the web poll had to score the performance of their own travel destination against a reference group of destinations on each of the 64 competitiveness parameters. This is driven by the fact that a given site is not competitive in a vacuum but rather against other sites. According to the questionnaire, 318 customers were questioned. And finally, the 318 questionnaire responses met the information and substance standards.

Step 3: Analysis and output data

This data was examined using SPSS software to determine the scale's reliability and to perform regression testing on the analyzed variables. In this paper, the value of Mean (M) and Standard Deviation (Sd) is used to assess tourists' level of consensus on the impact of the aspects of Hoi An's CTD. M is the average value of a set of numbers. It is calculated by taking the sum of all the numbers in the set and dividing by the number of numbers in the set. Using a 5-level Likert scale and based on the interval value (with each interval size being 0.8), the M value is divided into five levels with the following meanings:

Table 2. The Likert scale with value

Value	Meaning
1,00-1,8	Strongly disagree
1,81-2,60	Disagree
2,61-3,4	Confused
3,41-4,2	Agree
4,21-5,0	Strongly agree

Standard Deviation (Std) shows the average distance (dispersion) of data points from the average value (Mean). If the standard deviation is low, the data has low volatility, and vice versa.

2.3. Preliminary findings and discussion

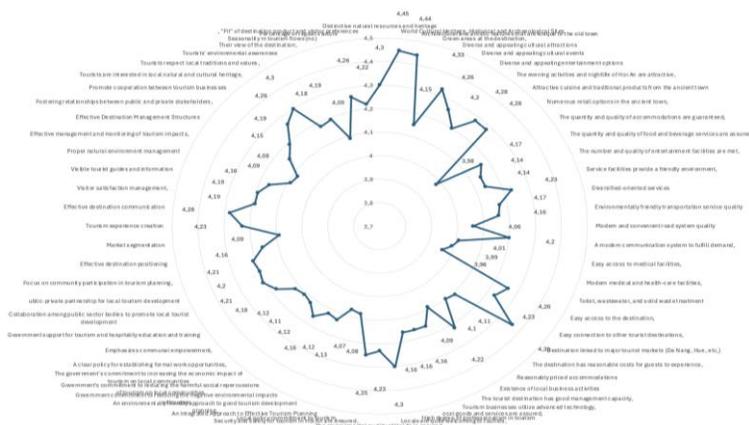


Figure 4. The Mean value of CTD in Hoi An city

The before figure displays the findings of the overall evaluation of destinations in Hoi An city.

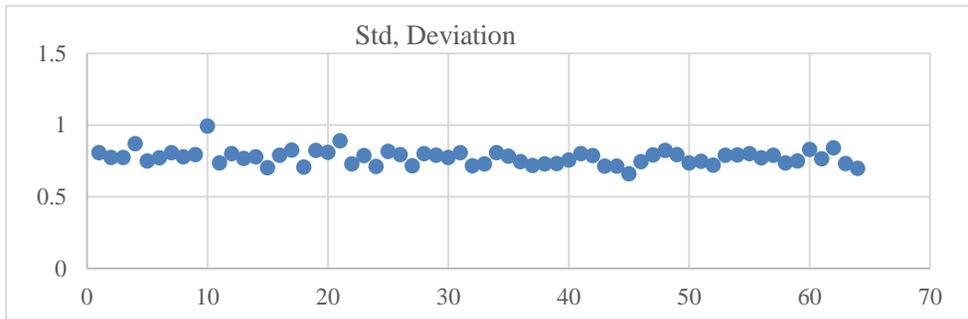


Figure 5. The Std Deviation of the scale

Figure 4 depicts the variation in the average value of the CTD evaluation criteria system in Hoi An city. The average values for CTD in Hoi An range from 3.96 to 4.45, indicating a positive perception among tourists. This also reinforces Hoi An's position as a locality with a tourism competitiveness index (TCI) among destinations in Vietnam and contributes to increasing the TCI of the entire Quang Nam province (according to records, Quang Nam province has a TCI ranked fourth out of ten destinations with the highest index in Vietnam in 2022). The index with the greatest mean value is 4.45 (World Cultural Heritage, Historical, and Archaeological Sites), while the lowest mean value is 3.96 (Toilet, wastewater, and solid waste treatment).

Figure 5 depicts the standard deviation of the criterion in Hoi An's CTD scale. The standard deviation values for most criteria are less than one, indicating weak average fluctuation data and modest response differences among tourists. This also demonstrates that tourist consensus on CTD is high and consistent. Only one criterion has Sdt > 1, indicating that the data is very variable and lacks homogeneity. The difference in Mean value is demonstrated in each of the following criteria groupings.

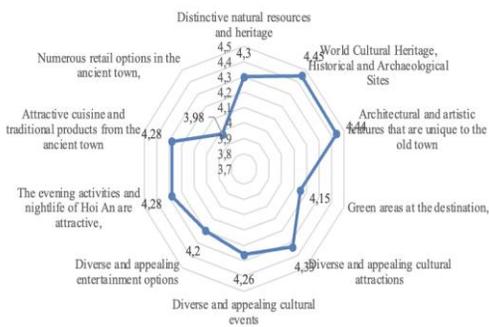


Figure 6. The core resources and key attractors

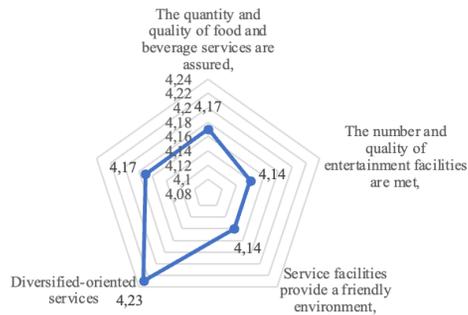


Figure 7. The tourism services

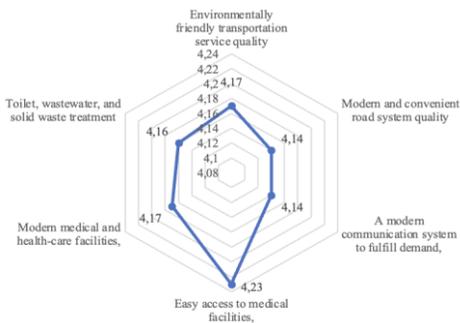


Figure 8. General infrastructures

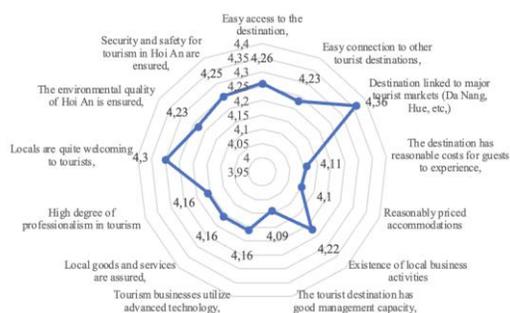


Figure 9. Conditioning and supporting factors

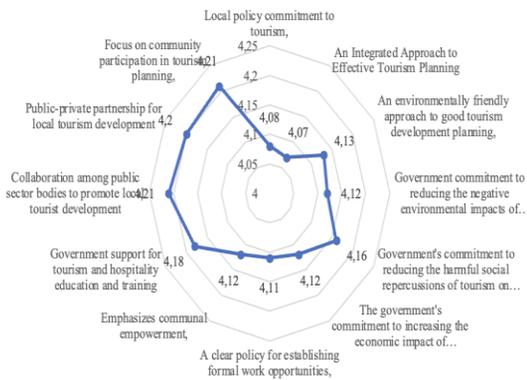


Figure 10. Tourism policy, planning, and development

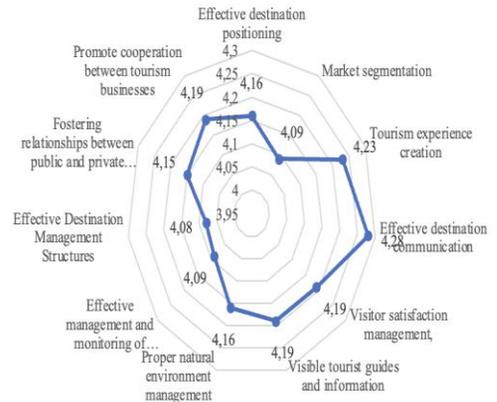


Figure 11. Destination management

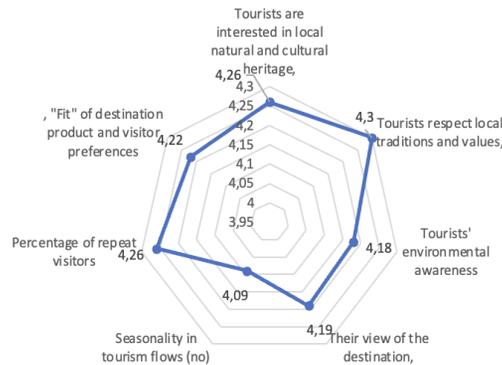


Figure 12. Demand factors

2.3.1. Core resources and key attractors

This factor group contains 12 criteria (Figure 6), with a Mean value of 4.267 which is the largest value in the factor groups. The two categories having the highest mean values, 4.45 and 4.44, are “World Cultural Heritage, Historical and Archaeological Sites Architectural” and “Artistic features that are unique to the old town”. Meanwhile, the smallest mean value is 3.98 (several shop possibilities in the ancient town). The study's findings indicate that the attraction of tourism resources, particularly the visible cultural heritage of Hoi An Ancient Town, is a key factor in the city's tourism development. Hoi An Ancient Town has kept its original wooden architecture and townscape, including plot size, materials, facade, and roof line. It retains its original street design, with buildings backing onto the river, as well as its infrastructure of quays, canals, and bridges. The historic landscape backdrop is also preserved, consisting of a coastal environment with a river, shoreline, dunes, and islands. The other criteria in the group all have high Mean values, ranging from 3.15 to 4.33, indicating that tourists strongly agree on the importance of strengthening the destination's competitiveness.

2.3.2. Tourism services

The tourism service's mean value is 4.172, which includes five criteria (Figure 7). The highest average rating is 4.23 (Service facilities provide a friendly environment). The criterion “The quantity and quality of food and beverage services are assured” and “Service facilities provide a friendly environment” had the lowest mean values, both 4.14. Tourism services are a critical aspect of competitiveness, and the findings indicate that tourists value both the number

and quality of tourism services in Hoi An. Providing friendly assistance generates a positive impression for guests visiting the destination.

2.3.3. General infrastructures

The group's mean value is 4.063, which includes five criteria (Figure 8). The criterion “A modern communication system to fulfill demand” gets the group's highest mean rating of 4.2. The criterion “Toilet, wastewater, and solid waste treatment” has the lowest mean value at 3.96. A developed tourism infrastructure improves facilities and services for both tourists and visitors, including transportation networks, public facilities, and entertainment activities. This improves the quality of life and increases the city's appeal to visitors. The mean values range from 3.96 to 4.2, indicating that the infrastructure characteristics of the Hoi An destination initially generate positive impressions among visitors. However, when compared to other groups of criteria, the infrastructure group has the lowest mean value. This also demonstrates that tourism infrastructure still has limitations, posing difficulties and challenges to further increasing the competitiveness of the Hoi An destination.

2.3.4. Conditioning and supporting factors

This group has a Mean score of 4.202 and 13 evaluation criteria (Figure 9). This, along with the Core resources and key attractors groups, has the highest Mean value of the Hoi An CTD factor groupings. The highest value is 4.36 (Destination related to major tourist markets (Da Nang, Hue, etc.)), while the lowest mean value is Reasonably priced accommodations (4.1). In general, the variables in this group help to build the foundation for tourism activities while also increasing the destination's competitiveness. Tourists strongly agree on the importance of market linkages and the involvement of locals, demonstrating that competitiveness requires both locational advantages and internal community strength. Furthermore, providing security and safety, as well as a harmonious and fresh natural environment, are vital characteristics that leave a lasting impression on travelers who visit Hoi An.

2.3.5. Tourism policy, planning and development

With 12 criteria, the mean value for this group is 4.1425. “Collaboration among public sector bodies to promote local tourist development” and “Focus on community participation in tourism planning” had the same mean value of 4.21 (Figure 10). The criterion “An Integrated Approach to Effective Tourism Planning” has the lowest mean value, at 4.07 points. Tourism development's success is determined by how the industry is regarded and supported at the state level, and tourism policy is critical for maximizing the sector's potential and improving tourism's socioeconomic impacts. The participation and contribution of local officials and residents in Hoi An demonstrate the execution of the tourism capacity-building policy system.

Local authorities' assistance, as well as the participation and cooperation of public and commercial entities in promoting the destination, have helped to effectively present the destination's image to tourists, enhancing domestic competitiveness. Furthermore, increased opportunities for the community to participate in tourism policy-making, as well as a clear system of accessing and disseminating policies, have created favorable conditions for the implementation of the goals of increasing the city's inherent tourism competitiveness.

2.3.6. Destination management

This group has an average score of 4.164 and 13 evaluation criteria. The greatest mean score is 4.28 (effective destination communication), while the lowest is 4.09 (effective management and monitoring of tourist impacts) (Figure 11).

Tourism Management in Hoi An aim to promote economic growth while preserving traditional values and conserving the destination's resources. This includes creating a stable legal

environment, harmonizing tourism with other economic sectors, and ensuring harmony between community and tourism interests.

2.3.7. Demand factors

This group's mean score is 4.214285714, using 13 evaluation criteria (Figure 12). The maximum value is 4.3 (tourists respect local customs and values), while the lowest mean value is 4.09 (seasonality in tourism flows). Meeting tourists' demands will increase their satisfaction and ability to return to the destination. Tourists in Hoi An enjoy the destination's ability to suit their needs due to its attractive resource values and tourism infrastructure. However, it is critical to consider seasonality by diversifying products and services to enhance the coefficient of accommodation and visitation at different times of the year.

3. Conclusions

This research examines the factors influencing TDC in Hoi An city, Quang Nam province. The assessment scale comprises seven groups of factors, encompassing 64 component criteria. The research findings indicate that the factors exerting the most significant influence on the competitiveness of tourist destinations in Hoi An are those related to natural and heritage resources, categorized under core resources and key attractors. Furthermore, tourists demonstrate strong agreement with the factors analyzed. Moreover, it is essential to consider factors associated with service infrastructure and supporting factors. To enhance the competitiveness of Hoi An city's tourist destinations, this article presents several fundamental recommendations:

- Improving the service infrastructure system to effectively utilize the appealing values of tourism resources, particularly those linked to Hoi An's cultural heritage.
- Enhancing the promotion of Hoi An's image by employing diverse modern technological methods to reach both domestic and international tourists.
- Encouraging investment and collaboration with travel companies to create tourism programs that highlight the indigenous values of Hoi An, thereby effectively leveraging internal resources and supporting factors for tourism development.
- Continuously improving the tourism environment in a green direction, promoting educational activities to raise awareness of improving the destination tourism environment for the community and tourists, contributing to further improving the environmental index in the tourism competitiveness index of Hoi An.

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