

Cómo citar este trabajo: Blanco-Cerradelo, L., Diéguez-Castrillón, M.I., Gueimonde-Canto, A. & Rodríguez-López, N. (2022). Sustainable thermal tourism destination competitiveness: A multistakeholder perspective. *Journal of Tourism Analysis*, (29), 1, 36-71
<https://doi.org/10.53596/jta.v29i1.383>

Competitividad de los destinos sostenibles de turismo termal: una perspectiva multistakeholders

Sustainable thermal tourism destination competitiveness: A multistakeholder perspective

Lidia Blanco-Cerradelo¹

M. Isabel Diéguez-Castrillón²

Ana Gueimonde-Canto³

Nuria Rodríguez-López (corresponding author)⁴

¹ Vocational training center CIFP Portovello, Departamento de Comercio e Marketing, 32004 Ourense, Spain. ORCID ID: 0000-0002-5869-6755. lyblanco@uvigo.es

² Universidade de Vigo, Facultade de Ciencias Empresariais e Turismo, 32004 Ourense, Spain. ORCID ID: 0000-0001-6557-4847. idiiguez@uvigo.es

³ Universidade de Vigo, Facultade de Ciencias Empresariais e Turismo, 32004 Ourense, Spain. ORCID ID: 0000-0002-7720-914X. agueimonde@uvigo.es

⁴ ECOBAS, Universidade de Vigo, Facultade de Ciencias Empresariais e Turismo, 32004 Ourense, Spain. ORCID ID: 0000-0002-5426-8104. nrl@uvigo.es

Resumen

El presente estudio explora la competitividad de los destinos de turismo termal desde el punto de vista de los stakeholders, con el objetivo de ofrecer pautas para la toma de decisiones sostenibles. Se seleccionó una metodología de análisis cualitativa en la que los datos se recolectaron a través de entrevistas semiestructuradas y fuentes secundarias. El marco empírico se situó en la ciudad de Ourense, referente destacado del turismo termal en España.

Los resultados muestran que la competitividad de los destinos termales es un concepto tridimensional complejo debido a la existencia de interacciones entre sus factores determinantes. Los resultados enfatizan que el diseño de estrategias para mejorar la competitividad de los destinos termales debe considerar no solo la mayor o menor importancia de los determinantes de la competitividad, sino también las interacciones entre ellos, así como su influencia heterogénea en cada dimensión de la competitividad de los destinos termales. Además, las características y la posición de los destinos dentro del ciclo de vida del área turística condicionan la relevancia de dichos factores.

Palabras clave: competitividad del destino; gestión de destinos; turismo termal; stakeholders; análisis cualitativo; sostenibilidad.

Abstract

The present study explores thermal tourism destination competitiveness from the stakeholder viewpoint, aiming to offer guidelines to decision makers for making sustainable decisions. Qualitative research was conducted to collect data through semistructured interviews and from secondary sources. The empirical framework is set in the city of Ourense, an outstanding reference for thermal tourism in Spain.

The results show that thermal destination competitiveness is a complex three-dimensional concept due to the existence of interactions between its determining factors. The results emphasize that when strategies to improve the competitiveness of thermal destinations are designed, one must consider not only the greater or lesser importance of the determinants of competitiveness but also the interactions between them and their heterogeneous influences on each dimension of thermal destination competitiveness. Moreover, destinations' characteristics and positions within the tourism area life cycle condition the relevance of such factors.

Key words: destination competitiveness; destination management; thermal tourism; local stakeholders; qualitative analysis; sustainability.

1 Introduction

In recent decades, the increasing competition between tourism destinations has been remarkable. Hence, in the academic literature, especially since the 1990s, different theoretical models of the competitiveness of tourism destinations have been developed. These models combine multiple factors and elements based on different conceptualizations of the term competitiveness. Many driving forces of destination competitiveness have been identified, sparking a debate regarding the relative importance of each factor (Albayrak et al., 2018; Crouch, 2011; Perles-Ribes et al., 2011).

However, all of the conceptual models that address the determining factors of destination competitiveness differ in their understanding of these factors. Furthermore, the academic literature has shown that there is no single, universal set of factors that determines destination competitiveness and applies to all destinations at all times. The relative importance of the factors determining destination competitiveness might not be the same within a destination or across destinations (Crouch, 2011) because while all destinations share a common and basic anatomy, they are heterogeneous (Howie, 2003). Consequently, there is a need to investigate the factors determining competitiveness in specific destinations (Albayrak et al., 2018; Coban & Yildiz, 2019; Crouch, 2011; Dragićević et al., 2012; Drakulić Kovačević et al., 2018; Gooroochurn & Sugiyarto, 2005; Michael et al., 2019) or in destinations characterized by a defining trait: destinations in a specific life-cycle stage (Michael et al., 2019; Qu et al., 2021), small destinations (Dwyer & Kim, 2003; Goffi & Cucculelli, 2019) or destinations thought to be noncentral from a geographical point of view (Goffi et al., 2019).

From an analytical point of view, based on the aforementioned theoretical models, it is possible to differentiate between empirical studies that measure competitiveness with quantitative information about demand and investigate tourists' perceptions and opinions (Caber et al., 2012; Djeri et al., 2018; Kozak & Rimmington, 1999) and those based on published data or surveys of entrepreneurs and tourism stakeholders on the supply side (Albayrak et al., 2018; Armenski et al., 2012; Dragićević et al., 2012; Dwyer et al., 2004; Enright & Newton, 2004; Perles-Ribes et al., 2011). In general, studies that focus on the demand or supply perspective have been predominant (Cronjé & du Plessis, 2020; Zehrer &

Hallmann, 2015), and the consideration of a destination as a set of stakeholders that interact in the corresponding sector with supply and demand effects has been neglected. Although recent literature has awarded special relevance to stakeholders in the planning and sustainable development of tourism destinations (Graci & Vliet, 2020; Renfors, 2020; Yrza & Filimonau, 2021), a research gap still exists concerning tourism and destination competitiveness studies that combine the demand and supply sides (Cronjé & du Plessis, 2020).

With respect to thermal tourism destinations, several works, such as Deng (2007), Dryglas and Salamaga (2018), Chen (2014), Hsieh et al. (2008), Silvestri et al. (2017), Moschidis (2016), Boekstein (2014) and Timur (2018), have specifically addressed the influence of certain individual factors on a global measure of thermal destination competitiveness through tourist satisfaction. However, these studies have exclusively addressed the tourism competitiveness of thermal establishments based on information from tourists. Lee and King (2006, 2009, 2010) and Erbaş and Perçin (2015) studied the construct of destination competitiveness, which reflects the specificities of thermal destinations from a supply-side perspective. Nevertheless, none of these works have integrated demand- and supply-side perspectives into their models of competitiveness. The consideration of information from different types of stakeholders is relevant because they are responsible for operationalizing the concept of competitiveness in practice.

Furthermore, regarding the multidimensionality of competitiveness, previous works on other destinations have integrated the multidimensionality of sustainability tourism into the concept of competitiveness (Mendola & Volo, 2017), showing that sustainable tourism has, at a minimum, environmental, social and economic pillars (Blancas et al., 2010, 2011; Blanco-Cerradelo et al., 2018; Carrillo & Jorge, 2017; Pérez et al., 2013); moreover, it is site-specific and should be adjusted to individual destinations (Goffi et al., 2019; Gomezelj & Mihalič, 2008). However, all of the aforementioned works on thermal destinations have referred to factors that determine thermal tourism competitiveness without addressing the dimensions of competitiveness. In fact, Erbaş and Perçin (2015) showed that no special attention has been given to the multidimensionality of thermal destination competitiveness, and Espiner et al. (2017) stated that tourist activity in thermal destinations affects economic, social and

environmental realms but did not delve into this issue. Therefore, there is a need to incorporate the triple bottom line (TBL) perspective of competitiveness into the study of thermal tourism destination competitiveness. The consideration of various stakeholders around a destination and the clear link between competitiveness and sustainability make the TBL perspective essential (Roxas et al., 2020; Wondirad et al., 2020). Thus, in the present work, the sustainable competitiveness of thermal destinations is understood as a multidimensional concept composed of economic, social and environmental dimensions.

The aim of this paper is to explore sustainable thermal tourism competitiveness from a stakeholder perspective through qualitative methodology. The empirical framework is set in the city of Ourense, which is an outstanding reference for thermal tourism destinations in Spain. Three research questions are proposed to examine the aforementioned issues in Ourense.

RQ1: What factors drive sustainable thermal tourism competitiveness?

RQ2: What are the relationships between the factors and each of the three dimensions of thermal sustainable competitiveness?

RQ3: What is the sustainable competitiveness model of the Ourense thermal destination?

The contributions of this paper are twofold. First, to identify the factors that should be considered in a specific three-dimensional competitiveness model of thermal destinations and to reveal the relationships between the various types of factors and each of the dimensions of competitiveness. This issue has not been addressed in previous studies, which have been limited to identifying, classifying and ranking the different types of factors or elements linked to thermal tourism competitiveness (Erbaş & Perçin, 2015; Lee & King, 2006, 2009, 2010).

Second, we use the stakeholder perspective to draw conclusions through immersion in the examined context and to overcome the limitations inherent to working exclusively with information from tourists or a specific aspect of a tourism offer (Aqueveque & Bianchi, 2017; Evren & Kozak, 2018; Junio et al., 2017; Tom Dieck & Jung, 2017; Vellecco & Mancino, 2010; Zehrer & Hallmann, 2015). We include supply-side stakeholders, such as governments,

business owners, associations and local residents, as well as tourists, whose perspectives have long been recognized as important to any attempt to measure competitiveness (Abreu Novais et al., 2018) and who usually have different viewpoints (Coban & Yildiz, 2019). In this sense, the results of the study allow for the future design of appropriate strategies to improve the competitiveness of thermal destinations.

This work is structured in five sections. In the second section, relevant literature is reviewed to define the scope of the present study in relation to previous studies. In the third section, the methodology and the empirical framework of the study are provided. In the fourth section, the main results are presented. The fifth section presents a discussion and conclusions, as well as the limitations of this research, future lines of research and possible improvements.

2 Competitiveness of thermal tourism destinations and its determining factors

Traditionally, the concept of tourism destination competitiveness has been related exclusively to its economic dimension. Some authors have linked the competitiveness of destinations to the competitiveness of companies through a dependent relationship, since an increase in business competitiveness leads to a corresponding increase in destination competitiveness (Claver-Cortés et al., 2007; Dwyer & Kim, 2003; Rodríguez-Díaz & Espino-Rodríguez, 2008). Other authors have considered destinations competitive if they maintain their positions in the market with respect to their competitors (D’Hautesserre, 2000; Hassan, 2000; Hong, 2009), and they have affirmed that a destination can be considered competitive only when it can convert its advantageous position into economic profitability. Similarly, the conceptualization of competitiveness as a unidimensional construct is the foundation of specific studies on thermal tourism (Boekstein, 2014; Chen, 2014; Moschidis, 2016; Silvestri et al., 2017; Timur, 2018).

However, the topic of tourism destination competitiveness has gradually evolved to include a complex set of economic, noneconomic, objective and subjective elements (Knežević Cvelbar et al., 2016). In addition to the economic dimension, other components of this concept have been highlighted and must be considered, such as environmental, social, cultural, political and technological components (Glatzer, 2012). If competitiveness is viewed as exclusively linked to economic maximization objectives, the sustainability of destinations

with limited resources could be compromised. Therefore, it is necessary to relate the competitiveness of tourism destinations to the achievement of a variety of objectives associated with economic, social and environmental aspects. In this sense, sustainability is linked to the rational use of territory, resource control and the minimization of negative impacts.

In fact, Abreu Novais et al. (2018) noted that the most prominent definitions of the concept are linked to the notion of “ability”, namely, the ability of a destination to achieve a wide range of goals. The multifaceted nature of the concept is clearly highlighted in the literature (Abreu Novais et al., 2018; Cronjé & du Plessis, 2020), and three basic dimensions are noted: the economic dimension linked to visitors' attraction, the well-being of local populations and the sustainability dimension (Blanco-Cerradelo et al., 2018). Recently, a trend connecting competitiveness with concepts of sustainability has emerged (Cronjé & du Plessis, 2020).

This perspective corresponds to the original concept of the TBL, which simultaneously considers and balances economic, environmental and social goals from a microeconomic standpoint. The TBL perspective, which integrates environmental, social and economic dimensions into decision-making about tourism competitiveness (Dwyer, 2015; Stoddard et al., 2012), emphasizes sustainability issues characterized by high complexity and uncertainty: interactions between dimensions (Tyrrell et al., 2013), competitive synergies (Boley & Uysal, 2013), resilience, sustained survival, and stakeholder cooperation (Roxas et al., 2020; Wondirad et al., 2020). These interactions refer to the existence of shared zones between the dimensions that add complexity to the sustainability problem. Competitive synergies arise when the benefits of implementing TBL practices coalesce with an overall increase in competitiveness. To facilitate resilience, sustained survival, and stakeholder cooperation, a firm's strategy has to be based on active dialogues with all of society and the management of business ecosystems rather than only its products and process. Thus, the TBL approach is the most comprehensive approach to achieving sustainable operations in tourism organizations and presents multiple potential benefits for tourism organizations (Dwyer, 2015). Destinations that incorporate the TBL into their strategic decision making can generate substantial competitive advantages derived from the resulting benefits.

Although the establishment of a commonly accepted definition for the concept of tourism destination competitiveness has contributed much toward a consensus around the necessity of sustainability, the other major debate in the field is related to the factors/attributes that determine tourism destination competitiveness. Numerous works addressing the determining factors of tourism competitiveness among multiple types of destinations have classified these factors as tourism infrastructure, activities, quality, cooperation, institutional environments, natural and cultural resources, and strategies (Bornhorst et al., 2010; Caber et al., 2012; Claver-Cortés et al., 2007; Crouch, 2011; Dwyer et al., 2004, 2016; Enright & Newton, 2004; Gomezelj & Mihalič, 2008; Hong, 2009; Ritchie & Crouch, 2003; Rodríguez-Díaz & Espino-Rodríguez, 2008; Silvestri et al., 2017).

The efforts that have been made to identify a broad set of categories of the drivers of tourism competitiveness are valuable. However, the fact that different sectors involve different competitiveness factors continues to be emphasized (Goffi et al., 2019). Indeed, with respect to thermal destinations, only the works of Lee and King (2006, 2009, 2010) and Erbaş and Perçin (2015) have presented a set of factors that influence the competitiveness of the thermal sectors of three consolidated destinations: Taiwan, Japan and Turkey. These works analyzed the importance and hierarchical order of the factors related to destination resources and attractors, strategies, and environments to identify the main attributes of competitive advantages. Table 1 summarizes these studies. However, neither of these works addressed competitiveness from the TBL perspective of sustainability. The present paper addresses this issue and outlines a model of sustainable competitiveness in a thermal tourism destination.

Table 1. Previous studies on the competitiveness of thermal tourist destinations

MAIN ELEMENTS	LEE & KING, 2009, 2010	ERBAŞ & PERÇİN, 2015
Objective	To identify competitiveness factors To weight competitiveness factors To define hierarchical order factors	To weight factors To compare destinations
Competitiveness variables	Resources and attractions Management variables Demand and situational factors	Resources and attractions Destination management Environment

Information sources	15 experts from the public, business and academic sectors	10 managers and 2 academics
Methodology	Hierarchical analysis process (HAP)	HAP and importance-performance-analysis
Destination	Taiwan and Japan	Kozakli, Kişceir and Kizilcahama (Turkey)
Results	Preponderance of resources and tourist attractions - natural resources (abundance and quality of thermal waters) and safety and hygiene Private strategies of the owners of thermal establishments and public strategies to protect and manage the environment Coordination between government and industry to protect natural resources, ensure the prosperity of businesses and improve the quality of life of the community	Abundance of springs Local transportation network Accommodation availability Health and leisure activities

Source: author elaboration

3 Methodology

In this section, we first present the empirical framework, and then we explain the research method used to analyze competitiveness.

3.1 Empirical framework

This study was conducted in Ourense, an emerging thermal destination of Galicia, in northwestern Spain. The city has aquifers more than 1km deep that spring to the surface with a flow of between 3 and 4 million liters per day -- an amount that exceeds that of Budapest. A thermal bath tradition has been associated with the city since its origin and is practiced in many available facilities, including historical thermal baths, swimming pools surrounded by natural landscaping, and spas. Because of its thermal heritage, Ourense became one of the six founding cities of the European Association of Historic Thermal Cities in 2009, and it is called the "Thermal Capital of Galicia".

Today, fountains, a museum, an outdoor swimming pool covering more than 200 m², gardens, and free facilities offer the opportunity to enjoy a Roman sauna (humid heat) and a

bath at 38°C. The banks of the Miño River also feature numerous thermal springs and seven thermal installations designed for bathing. This location is included along the European Route of Historic Thermal Towns and among the thermal cities of the European Cultural Routes.

Various public and private initiatives, including the Thermal Tourism Plan for 2014-2020 developed by the regional government, have made strong efforts to value all this natural and cultural heritage (Deputación de Ourense, 2013). These initiatives are based, however, on the recognition of a series of tourism-related problems: weak specialization, insufficient infrastructure, outdated regulations, coordination problems between stakeholders, and weak connections to consolidated marketing channels.

3.2 Research method

The present study, nested within the constructivist paradigm, used an inductive and qualitative methodology. This methodology was particularly useful in this case because the goal of this research was to understand tourism phenomena through the identification and description of concepts, categories and relations (Czernek et al., 2017; Jennings, 2012; Oggionni & Kwok, 2018).

Semistructured interviews were used to collect in-depth information. The following open-ended questions were used to guide the interviews:

- (1) In your opinion, what factors are relevant to enhancing competitiveness in a tourism thermal destination?
- (2) In your opinion, what specific factors are the most important to prioritize (for example, tourist expenses, visitor attractions, visitor satisfaction, profitability, local community well-being, community way of life, safety, peace and tranquility, cultural and historic sites, nature, or pollution)?
- (3) Do you think that Ourense stands out in relation to any of these factors?
- (4) Do you think that Ourense has shortcomings in relation to any of these factors?

After each question, the interviewers asked the respondents for comments and the reasons for their answers. The interviews lasted between 30 and 60 minutes each, and the data were

recorded in researcher notes with the participants' permission. Following Creswell (2014), two researchers were present at each interview and took their own notes; after the interview, they discussed and integrated the data.

Following common rules, transcriptions of the interviews were made by the researchers to ensure accuracy in relation to what the respondents said (Rapley, 2018). Researchers are able to produce a transcript that enables research questions to be addressed through the application of an approach that is suited to the needs of a specific study (Lapadat, 2000). In this study, all the interviews were transcribed by the researchers, which is considered important in the context of maintaining close proximity to data and encouraging both creativity and sensibility.

Denaturalized transcription was carried out (Bucholtz, 2000; Oliver et al., 2005) to facilitate a content analysis process (Nascimento & Steinbruch, 2019). To ensure the quality of the transcripts, multiple possible interpretations of and differences among the versions of the interview transcripts were discussed by the researchers as they reviewed their field notes and their memories of the interviews (Poland, 1995).

Purposive sampling was chosen in this analysis to ensure the inclusion of all types of stakeholders and their diverse perspectives regarding the topic under study (Coban & Yildiz, 2019). All of the interviewees had held their current positions for more than five years, which ensured that they had the necessary experience and ability to answer the questions (Butler et al., 2018).

The selection of the interview participants was based on their relevance to tourist destination competitiveness in Ourense. The individuals considered for this research included those who were recognized sector leaders and active participants in the Ourense tourism industry. Some stakeholder organizations had more than one potential respondent. Thus, the stakeholder participants that were chosen for this study had similar levels of in-depth knowledge of the Ourense tourism industry.

The interviewees were managers of four hospitality businesses—firm1, firm2, firm3 and firm4—and one travel agency—firm5. Three of the stakeholders worked for government agencies or played decision-making roles in municipal, provincial or regional governments:

The Ourense Thermal Council – public inst.1, the Ourense Institute of Economic Development – public inst.2, and the Ourense Fairs and Exhibitions Foundation – public inst.3. One of the participants was the general manager of the local business association. Moreover, we interviewed three experts on the sector: a director of a tourism school and two salient tourism researchers. Finally, three users of thermal products were interviewed.

Fifteen semistructured personal interviews with stakeholders were analyzed. The number of informants was in accordance with studies on tourism destinations from the stakeholder perspective, such as those of Mijnheer and Gamble (2019) and Aqueveque and Bianchi (2017). Similar numbers have also been recommended for qualitative analysis (see, for example, Kuzel, 1992; Filimonau et al., 2019). Table 2 shows the stakeholders interviewed.

The four criteria of quality trustworthiness proposed by Decrop (2004) – dependability, confirmability, credibility and transferability – were ensured through the use of purposive sampling and cross-checking conducted by a research auditor and member (Decrop, 2004; McGehee, 2012).

Table 2. Sources of information and names assigned during the analysis

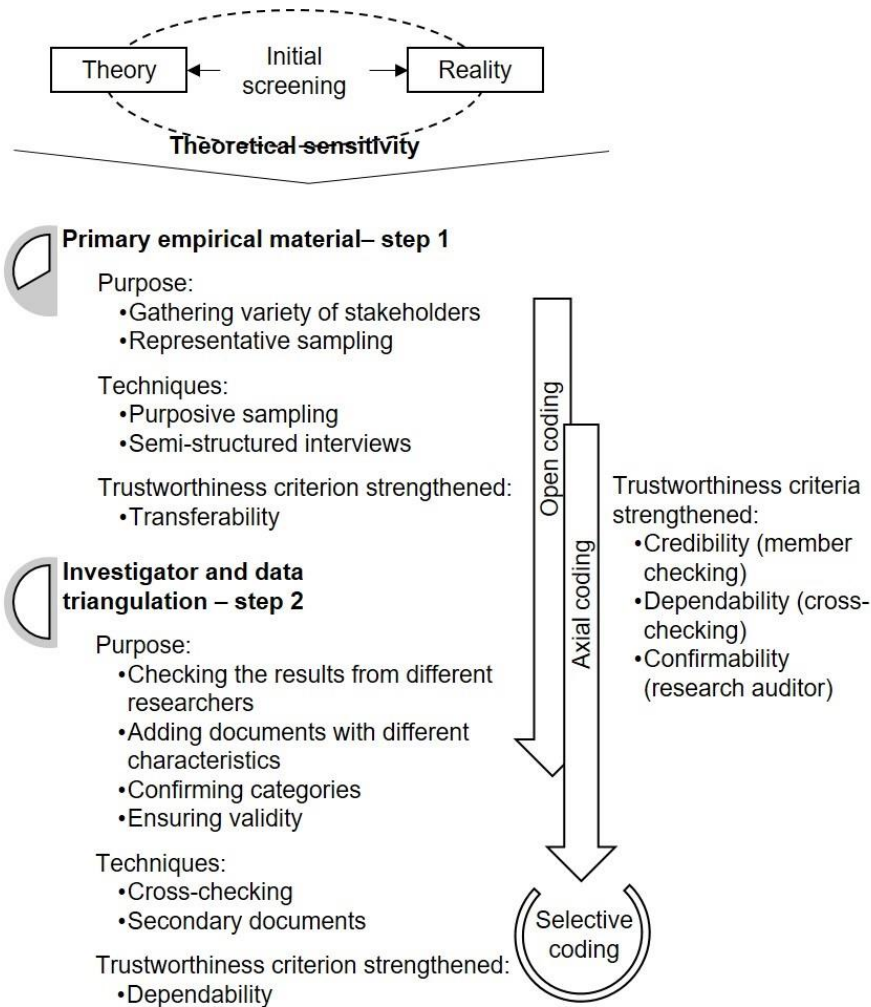
STAKEHOLDERS' SEMISTRUCTURED PERSONAL INTERVIEWS	NAME ASSIGNED
Five interviews with thermal firms (1 travel agency, 2 hotels and 2 spas)	firm1, firm2, firm3, firm4, firm5
One interview with the local business association	business assoc.
Three interviews with public organizations (local, provincial and regional governments)	public inst.1, public inst.2, public inst.3
Three interviews with experts in the sector	expert1, expert2, expert3
Three interviews with users	user1, user2, user3
SECONDARY DOCUMENTS	NAME ASSIGNED
All news items related to the thermal sector from the main local newspaper in the last two years (eight documents)	news1, news2, news3, news4, news5, news6, news7, news8
One informative article from a specialized tourism journal	article
Three interviews with experts working in public administration published in informative journals	expert opinion1, expert opinion2, expert opinion3

Source: author elaboration

In accordance with the work of Corbin and Strauss (2008), the interviews were analyzed following a codification process. Subfactors were identified through open coding, axial coding was used to identify factors, and selective coding was used to reveal the three dimensions. ATLAS.ti Scientific Software Development GmbH, version 8, was used. The members of the research team coordinated with one another and shared their codes and analyses, and the codes were cross-checked (Creswell, 2014; Stepchenkova, 2012). In addition, following Creswell (2014), Decrop (2004) and McGehee (2012), the identified topics were revised by an independent expert (a research auditor) and returned to the participants to ensure their accuracy (member checking).

Finally, in addition to other methods designed to ensure trustworthiness, triangulation through alternative sources is recommended to ensure qualitative validity (Creswell, 2014; Tegegne et al., 2018; Watts et al., 2017; Webster, 2017). Both investigator triangulation and data triangulation were performed (Decrop, 2004; McGehee, 2012). Investigator triangulation was implemented through cross-checking and a consensus-based approach. Data triangulation was performed during the coding process. To accomplish this, following authors such as Butler et al. (2018), Creswell (2014), and Jennings (2012), new data from other empirical materials, called secondary documents, were analyzed to cross-validate the primary data and identify additional links. The process of adding new documents continued until no significant new information was contributed, i.e., theoretical saturation was reached (Brockhaus et al., 2017; Jennings, 2012). Twelve secondary documents with information about Ourense's thermal destination were analyzed. Table 2 shows the secondary documents used, and Figure 1 shows the sampling and codification process. In step 1, data were collected; in step 2, validity was ensured through investigator and data triangulation. The vertical arrows in the figure show the codification process and the techniques used to ensure trustworthiness.

Figure 1. Sampling and codification process



Source: author elaboration

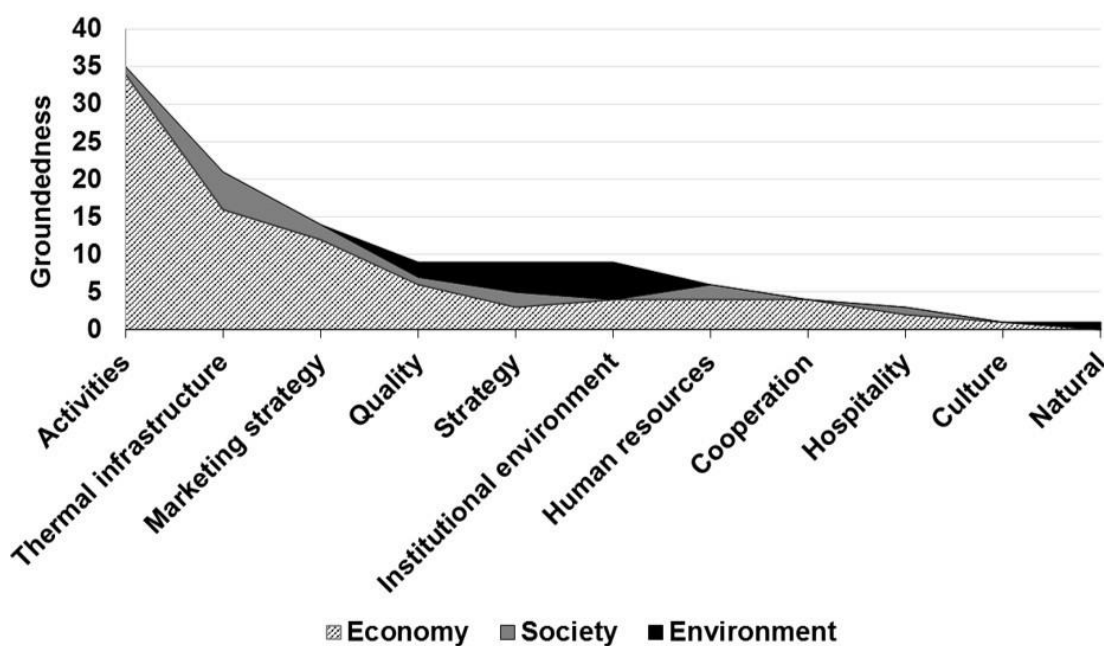
4 Findings

4.1 Factors of sustainable thermal tourism competitiveness and their relationships with the dimensions of competitiveness

From the results, we identified the following groups of factors: thermal infrastructure, activities, quality (water quality and quantity, and quality management systems), natural and cultural resources, cooperation, institutional environment, hospitality and business strategy (planning, marketing and human resources). These factors are in line with the factors of tourism destination competitiveness proposed in the previous literature (Ritchie & Crouch, 2003; Tom Dieck & Jung, 2017). According to Coban and Yildiz (2019), this similarity further enhances the validity of the content analysis.

Moreover, we identified the multidimensionality of the competitiveness construct of thermal destinations in relation to its three dimensions: an economic dimension, a social dimension and an environmental dimension. These dimensions are consistent with the main components of competitiveness according to the concept of Ritchie and Crouch (2003). However, we observed that these factors exert different types of influences depending on the dimension of competitiveness considered. Thus, stakeholders perceive the economic dimension as the main dimension of competitiveness, and this is closely followed by social well-being. The dimension related to the environment was hardly mentioned in the stakeholder discourse. The relevance of each factor to each of the three dimensions of competitiveness is measured according to their groundedness and shown in Figure 2 using a stacked area chart.

Figure 2. Factors affecting competitiveness and its dimensions



Source: author elaboration

Activities and thermal infrastructure are the most relevant factors in the context of thermal tourism competitiveness. These factors mainly influence the economic dimension of competitiveness but also influence its social dimension. The variety of activities and the availability of complementary activities, such as cultural and innovative attractions, are highlighted due to their importance since these factors facilitate pleasant and surprising

experiences that exert direct impacts on visitor attraction, satisfaction, spending and overall business performance. This issue is emphasized by statements made by certain stakeholders:

“Tourists view traveling as a therapy that enriches their lives with experiences, so currently, tourism destinations seek to combine attractive cultural programs with health programs based on medical or wellness treatments” (news5).

The variety of thermal infrastructures and their quality also constitute favorable elements of competitiveness. Several informants highlighted topics associated with economic features such as the following:

“Thermal establishments”, “thermal infrastructure” and “accommodation in thermal establishments” (public inst.2, public inst.3, user1).

In this sense, the importance of investing in the improvement of facilities and the positive effect that institutional support has in terms of facilitating such investments are emphasized. Thus, a representative of public institutions and an expert state the following:

“Thermal infrastructure is a factor that is required to serve the resident population and visitors who arrive motivated by tourism or business, so it is essential in thermal tourism destinations” (public inst.3)

“[The sector] needed a setup to make it more modern and competitive; [...] the institutional support was an incentive for many thermal [...] establishments to undertake the necessary reforms” (expert opinion1).

Third, marketing strategy is highlighted because of its effect on the economic and social dimensions. The participating stakeholders of the thermal sector expressed consensus regarding promotions of and communication about the destination, the number of distribution channels, and the use of social networks because these practices help publicize the destination, the products offered and their possibilities as relevant factors for attracting tourists and increasing the business benefit. Indeed, a manager of a public institution said the following:

“Promotions through advertising campaigns that value the destination and have continuity are relevant” since “to facilitate the attraction of visitors, the existence

of more distribution and sales channels, for example, Turespaña, is relevant” (public inst.1).

In addition, an expert stated the following:

“The fundamental actions must be carried out at the destination itself so that the visitor does collaborative marketing through social networks using phrases and images” (expert2).

Quality, the institutional environment and strategy are in the fourth position. In relation to quality, the stakeholders mentioned both the quality and the quantity of the water in the thermal establishments, as well as the existence of quality management systems. Thus, they stated the following:

“Owned resources – the mineral-medicinal waters – are the most important in terms of quantity, quality and value to a thermal destination” (public inst.3)

The stakeholders emphasized the need for “accredited quality systems, especially the certification ‘Q’ given by the Spanish Tourist Quality Institute in the field of Tourism Quality and Health Tourism” (expert opinion2).

Thus, these two factors can help ensure the attainment of performance standards and the attraction and satisfaction of tourists, and they contribute to the economic, social and environmental dimensions of competitiveness.

Furthermore, in relation to quality, the need to control and avoid saturation levels is specifically related to the social dimension. This was expressly indicated by an expert and a user in the following way:

“Of course, we must avoid the saturation of the destination. The residents come first” (expert2)

“It is necessary to establish control of the facilities and establish limitations on the number of simultaneous users if the deterioration is due to the number of users” (user1).

However, it is interesting to note that although the well-being of the local population is negatively impacted by the possible saturation and quasi-monopolization of the facilities by

tourists, their well-being is also positively affected because the local inhabitants can use the facilities. The data gathered show that, at present, the positive effect is more relevant than the negative effect and that a balance has been achieved between use by local residents and by tourists.

The factors related to the institutional environment and strategy acquire relevance due to their effects on the environmental dimension; thus, their influence on the economic dimension comes second, and there is no effect of the institutional environment on the social dimension. Users and a representative from a public institution mentioned the following:

“[The possibility of giving] awards of excellence for the good conservation of heritage and nature” (user2).

“The establishment of rigorous technical usage control by thermal companies” (user1).

“The importance of public sector participation in the maintenance of natural spaces” (public inst.2).

Thus, the stakeholders referred to actions of public entities oriented toward supporting the preservation of the environment.

Various issues and factors related to institutional support are also reflected in quotations regarding the advanced implementation of the plan “Ourense, Thermal Province” (news3) and the design of “a new plan for the thermal sector” by the provincial government (news8).

Support from government entities helps attract tourists and improve business performance. Regarding institutional support, several stakeholders mentioned aspects such as the following:

“The resurgence of spas thanks to institutional support” (news8).

“The need for the elimination of bureaucratic obstacles and the reduction of taxes” (user2).

“It is necessary to incentivize entrepreneurship” (business assoc.).

Within the business environment, safety is a relevant positive factor. Thus, the words “safety” and “peace” appear repeatedly in descriptions of the destination.

In relation to human resources strategy, some interviewees highlighted the importance of training and experience as elements related to the economic and social dimensions. Indeed, an expert referred to “qualified staff” (expert1).

A representative from a public institution highlighted the following:

“There is a need for qualified professionals linked to this sector. This factor is undoubtedly very important since it affects the satisfaction of tourists” (public inst.2).

Similarly, the orientation of these strategies toward sustainability is identified as an element that allows for competitive advantages to be obtained in the long term without undermining the social and environmental value received by stakeholders. These factors were referred to, for example, by the stakeholders as follows:

“good management of the resources [...] of sustainability” (public inst.2).

The association between human resources, which relate to the object under study, and the improvement of the quality of life of the local population was mentioned by the stakeholders as follows:

“It is necessary to involve the institutions so that the labor offer that may be generated prioritizes the hiring of local staff, since this would generate satisfaction that would result in the offer itself” (business assoc.).

Finally, hospitality and other cultural factors (including cultural, historical, artistic and gastronomic elements) were also associated with the economic dimension of competitiveness at a lower level of relevance. Regarding these factors, occasionally, the respondents mentioned terms such as the following:

“tradition” (news8), “cultural attractions (tangible and intangible heritage)” (public inst.2), “heritage resources” (public inst.3) and “gastronomy” (expert1; business assoc.; expert2).

Hospitality also affects the social dimension, and the kindness of the residents stood out in user statements such as the following:

“In general, there is good treatment” and “the inhabitants usually have a natural kindness” (user2).

Natural resources, thermal water and green areas, although mentioned, were shown to have very little effect on competitiveness and affect only the environmental dimension. The references made by the stakeholders to these factors emphasized the richness of the Ourense thermal destination but did not indicate that such factors could be elements that would improve competitiveness on their own; for example, a stakeholder suggested the following:

“Ourense has a thermal richness in terms of the resource of mineral-medicinal and thermal waters that few sites in Europe equal, both in flow and in the number of thermal springs that are complemented by other natural resources (river banks, Montealegre Park, Oira, etc.)” (public inst.3).

Therefore, improvements in competitiveness come through complementing existing natural resources with other factors, such as business and government strategies, that promote sustainable competitive advantages and a favorable institutional environment.

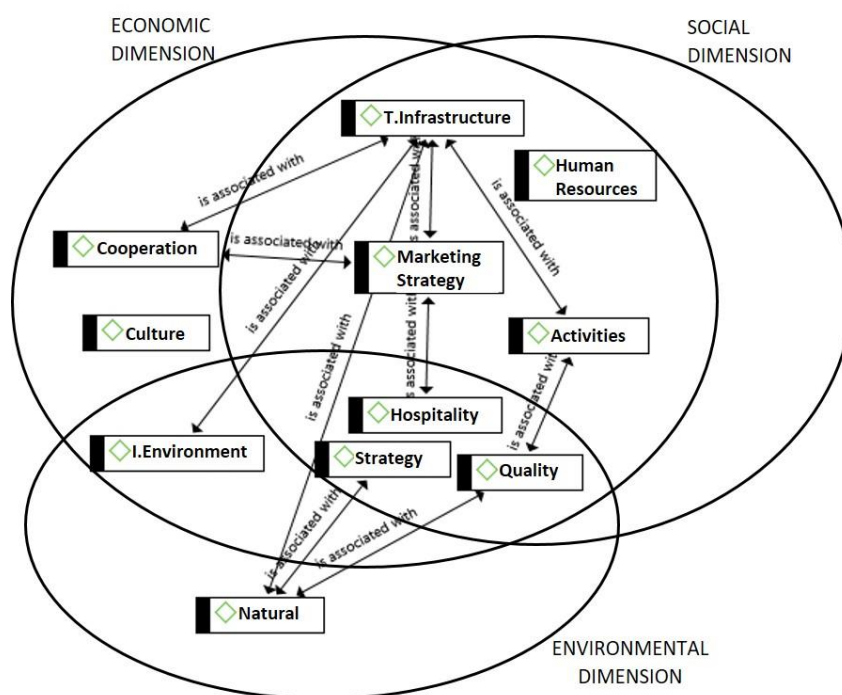
4.2 The sustainable competitiveness model of the Ourense thermal destination: Impact of factors on competitiveness complexity

From the results obtained and analyzed thus far, a competitiveness model was established for the thermal destination under study with two clear characteristics: (1) it involves three dimensions of competitiveness (economic, social and environmental), and (2) its determining factors affect these dimensions differently; that is, not all of the factors affect all of the dimensions, there are no one-to-one correspondences (since the same factor can affect several dimensions at the same time), and the strength of the relationships is heterogeneous because the factors affect each dimension differently, and the intensity of their influence in the global model is unequal.

We wanted to delve into an analysis of this complex structure, measuring the interactions between the factors that were indicated by the stakeholders and the number of different aspects that these agents highlighted in relation to each dimension when discussing each factor. Figure 3 shows the interactions between the factors. The Venn diagrams show the

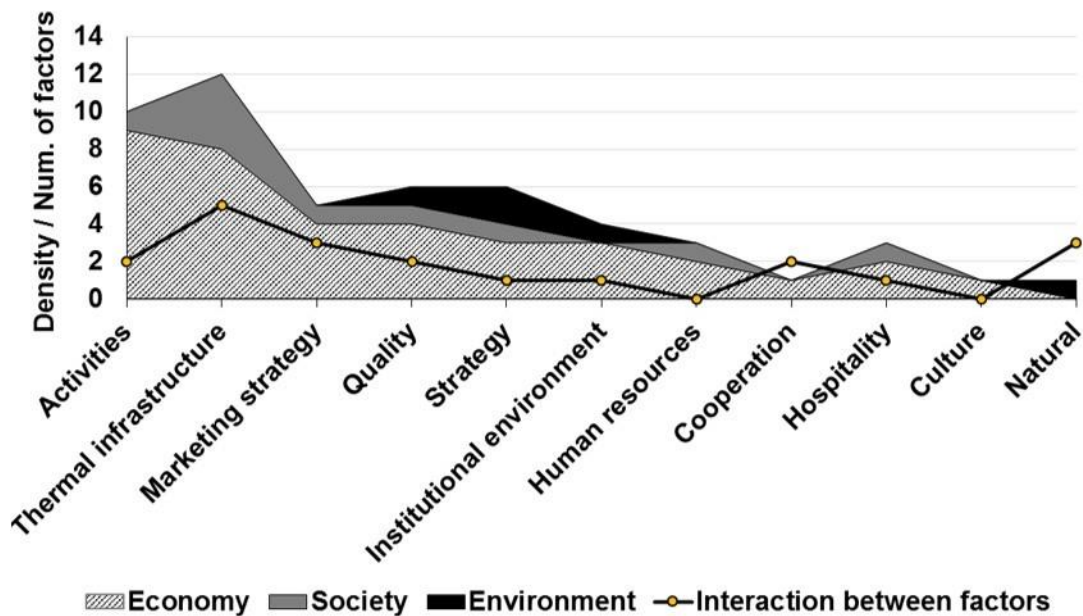
factors included in each dimension, and the arrows show the interactions between the factors according to the stakeholders' discourse. The economic dimension contains the majority of the factors, and the social dimension ranks second and is connected with the economic dimension. The environmental dimension ranks third. The line in Figure 4 shows the number of links between each factor and the rest of the factors (density); thermal infrastructure, marketing strategy and natural resources stand out due to their interactions. The stacked areas in Figure 4 show the number of different aspects that the stakeholders highlighted in each dimension; thermal infrastructure, activities, quality and strategy are the most diverse factors.

Figure 3. Interactions between factors



Source: author elaboration

Figure 4. Factor complexity per dimension and level of interaction between factors



Source: author elaboration

Thermal infrastructure, marketing strategy and natural resources stand out due to the quantity of links between them and the rest of the factors, which position them as elements that enhance the other factors. Among these factors, thermal infrastructure stands out due to its relationships with activities, cooperation, marketing, the institutional environment and natural resources. This factor is not only more frequently associated with the other factors but also the most diverse, as highlighted by its many socioeconomic aspects (thermal infrastructure, quality, accommodation, accessibility, cost, financial resources, variety and general infrastructure).

Regarding factor diversity, activities rank second, and this factor is followed by quality and strategy; the influence of the latter two on the three dimensions is also shown. Marketing strategy and institutional environment reflect average levels of diversity, and human resources strategy, hospitality, culture and natural resources appear to be the most uniformly accepted factors.

The importance of marketing strategy and natural resources is highlighted in the interactions between the factors. Marketing strategy appears to be related to thermal infrastructure, hospitality and cooperation. Natural resources are associated with thermal infrastructure, strategy and quality. Activities and quality of service exhibit an intermediate level of interaction with the other factors, and institutional environment, strategy and

hospitality present a low level of interaction. Human resources and cultural factors do not appear to be practically associated with the rest of the factors that favor competitiveness, which reduces their relevance in terms of generating synergies regarding competitiveness.

5 Discussion and conclusions

Previous studies have been limited to ranking the factors that determine competitiveness (Caber et al., 2012; Crouch, 2011; Drakulić Kovačević et al., 2018; Enright & Newton, 2004; Hong, 2009). Erbaş and Perçin (2015) and Lee and King (2006, 2009, 2010) carried out competitiveness classifications specifically for the thermal sector. In such classifications, the factors with the highest scores should be selected and prioritized in decision making. In addition to providing such a ranking, our analysis offers complementary information about the system and complexity of the relationships between these factors, thereby identifying the interactions between them and the heterogeneity in the influence of each factor on the different dimensions of competitiveness. The development of strategies should account for the effects of these factors on each dimension of competitiveness, their complexity and their interrelations to define actions that affect the appropriate factors and allow for the achievement of sustainable competitiveness. Thus, although some factors have been shown to be very important due to their global influence on competitiveness, they affect only one dimension. The managers, private or public, of destinations must decide whether it is preferable to act on any of these factors or on others that exert less influence but have the capacity to impact all the dimensions at the same time, as well as other factors.

The holistic conceptual model of competitiveness of the Ourense thermal destination developed from the information gleaned from the participating stakeholders' perceptions includes the economic, social and environmental dimensions of competitiveness. The findings confirm that the TBL approach to destination management offers broader destination competitiveness (Dwyer, 2005; Faux & Dwyer, 2009). The integration and interconnectedness of the dimensions reveal the set of factors on which managers should act to enhance the competitiveness of thermal tourism while maintaining its sustainability. The right combination and connection of strategy, quality, thermal infrastructure, activities, marketing strategy, human resources, hospitality, natural resources, cooperation, cultural

features and institutional environments (public and private) can enable sustainable tourism development in Ourense thermal tourism destinations.

In particular, in the case of Ourense thermal destinations, the participating stakeholders highlighted quality and strategic planning as relevant factors, given their influence on the three dimensions of competitiveness. These factors endow the competitiveness model with sustainability.

The strategy factor is associated with sustainability and appears to be an element that allows long-term competitive advantages to be obtained without undermining the social and environmental value obtained by stakeholders. Sustainability is reflected as the planning and adaptation of sustainable strategies in thermal destinations, and its effect on the three dimensions of competitiveness is shown. Planning practices that provide a long-term vision and enable a balance of stakeholder interests in this local tourism destination must be actively or adequately oriented to plan and manage tourism development (Ruhanen, 2004).

The quality factor comprises quality of life, which is associated mainly with environmental and social issues related to sustainability and the quality of tourist products and services as perceived by customers, and it further ensures sustainability (Garrigos-Simon et al., 2019).

Therefore, the developed framework links tourism planning efforts and quality to a variety of factors to focus on competitiveness. The results in terms of competitiveness reflect the interplay of different components resulting in sustainable success. Specifically, sustainable tourism development links should be highlighted to facilitate the development of tourism infrastructure (created resources) and activities that acknowledge the value of natural resources. Close cooperation between public and private entities and adequate marketing strategies should be used to develop destination policies.

Our diagnosis regarding the competitiveness of the Ourense thermal sector contrasts, however, with the suggestions that other authors have made regarding other thermal destinations. In Japan, Taiwan and Turkey (Erbaş & Perçin, 2015; Lee & King, 2006, 2009, 2010), for example, the maintenance of basic or inherited resources (abundance of springs, water quality) and the deployment of activities related to these resources are more important than created resources or support resources.

The differences between these analyzed thermal destinations might be due to their different positions within the tourism area life cycle. Taiwan, Japan and Turkey are mature and internationally consolidated thermal destinations (Global Wellness Institute, 2018). Therefore, it is necessary in these places to focus on strengthening and maintaining the destinations' characteristics of uniqueness and exceptionality, which constitute their main tourist attractions (Butler, 2006). Their great attractiveness and recognition also force decision makers to control the possible harmful impacts of the influx of tourists on the sustainability of these destinations (Butler, 2006; Di Benedetto & Bojanic, 1993; Priestley & Mundet, 1998). Ourense, however, is an emerging thermal destination that is attempting to position itself in competition with other territories. Its lower degree of maturity makes it advisable to develop strategies focused on creating and consolidating thermal infrastructure or to introduce marketing campaigns that allow a coherent offer to be transferred to society and build a strong image as a sustainable thermal and health destination.

5.1 Theoretical implications

This study contributes to the existing knowledge about destination competitiveness and illustrates its complexity. First, our results highlight the importance of viewing competitiveness as a construct with three dimensions, i.e., economic, social and environmental dimensions, which in turn are affected by a combination of different factors. Thus, the present study shows that a concept of competitiveness that integrates the sustainability perspective (Blancas et al., 2010, 2011; Carrillo & Jorge, 2017; Pérez et al., 2013) can and should be applied in thermal tourism destinations.

5.2 Managerial and practical implications

Although multiple benefits are associated with the TBL approach for sustainable tourism development, most applications of the TBL have been overly theoretical and impractical (Tyrrell et al., 2013). Nevertheless, from a managerial perspective, the identified competitiveness model represents a decision-making tool for tourism planning and sustainable development in Ourense thermal tourism destinations. The model incorporates new elements to consider in the decision-making process of thermal tourism. Considering our results, decision makers should be very careful with the actions they take and the factors they affect. Infrastructure appears to be the main factor in this context, given its effect on

competitiveness and influence on other factors. However, if the goal is to favor sustainability, efforts should be focused on quality and strategy, both of which are also related to natural resources and their preservation. This model can guide managers of Ourense thermal destinations to find a balance that satisfies every stakeholder and achieves sustainable tourism development.

5.3 Future research directions

The integrated model of sustainable competitiveness developed here helps bridge the gap between sustainability principles and application. It can constitute a starting point for additional empirical research. Future research could explore the relationships between the different factors and the three dimensions in depth. It would, for example, be interesting to conduct a comparative analysis of the perceptions of different groups of stakeholders, as well as the relationships between stakeholders, regarding the offer and demand sides. Finally, the application of techniques that would allow us to quantify the importance of the factors for each dimension would complement the results obtained here.

This study also has some limitations. We used purposive sampling and qualitative research; consequently, the results cannot be generalized. Although generalization is not a goal of qualitative research, replicating the analysis in other similar contexts would enhance its credibility (Houser, 2018) and, in turn, the contributions of its results. Thus, this study should be replicated in other thermal destinations.

Bibliographic references

- Abreu Novais, M., Ruhanen, L., & Arcodia, C. (2018). Destination competitiveness: A phenomenographic study. *Tourism Management*, *64*, 324–334. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.tourman.2017.08.014>
- Albayrak, T., Caber, M., González-Rodríguez, M. R., & Aksu, A. (2018). Analysis of destination competitiveness by IPA and IPCA methods: The case of Costa Brava, Spain against Antalya, Turkey. *Tourism Management Perspectives*, *28*, 53–61.
- Aqueveque, C., & Bianchi, C. (2017). Tourism destination competitiveness of Chile: A stakeholder perspective. *Tourism Planning & Development*, *14*(4), 447–466.
- Armenski, T., Gomezelj, D. O., Djurdjev, B., Ćurčić, N., & Dragin, A. (2012). Tourism destination competitiveness-between two flags. *Economic Research-Ekonomska Istraživanja*, *25*(2), 485–502. <https://doi.org/10.1080/1331677X.2012.11517519>
- Blancas, F. J., González, M., Lozano-Oyola, M., & Pérez, F. (2010). The assessment of sustainable tourism: Application to Spanish coastal destinations. *Ecological Indicators*, *10*(2), 484–492. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.ecolind.2009.08.001>
- Blancas, F. J., Lozano-Oyola, M., González, M., Guerrero, F. M., & Caballero, R. (2011). How to use sustainability indicators for tourism planning: The case of rural tourism in Andalusia (Spain). *Science of The Total Environment*, *412–413*, 28–45. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.scitotenv.2011.09.066>
- Blanco-Cerradelo, L., Gueimonde-Canto, A., Fraiz-Brea, J. A., & Diéguez-Castrillón, M. I. (2018). Dimensions of destination competitiveness: Analyses of protected areas in Spain. *Journal of Cleaner Production*, *177*, 782–794. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.jclepro.2017.12.242>
- Boekstein, M. (2014). From illness to wellness-has thermal spring health tourism reached a new turning point? *African Journal of Hospitality, Tourism and Leisure*, *3*(2), 1–11.
- Boley, B. B., & Uysal, M. (2013). Competitive synergy through practicing triple bottom line sustainability: Evidence from three hospitality case studies. *Tourism and Hospitality Research*, *13*(4), 226–238.

- Bornhorst, T., Ritchie, J. B., & Sheehan, L. (2010). Determinants of tourism success for DMOs & destinations: An empirical examination of stakeholders' perspectives. *Tourism Management, 31*(5), 572–589.
- Brockhaus, S., Fawcett, S. E., Knemeyer, A. M., & Fawcett, A. M. (2017). Motivations for environmental and social consciousness: Reevaluating the sustainability-based view. *Journal of Cleaner Production, 143*, 933–947. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.jclepro.2016.12.027>
- Bucholtz, M. (2000). The politics of transcription. *Journal of Pragmatics, 32*(10), 1439–1465.
- Butler, A. E., Copnell, B., & Hall, H. (2018). The development of theoretical sampling in practice. *Collegian, 25*(5), 561–566. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.colegn.2018.01.002>
- Butler, R. (2006). *The Tourism Area Life Cycle*. Channel View Publications.
- Caber, M., Albayrak, T., & Matzler, K. (2012). Classification of the destination attributes in the content of competitiveness by IPA. *Journal of Vacation Marketing, 18*(1), 43–56.
- Carrillo, M., & Jorge, J. M. (2017). Multidimensional analysis of regional tourism sustainability in Spain. *Ecological Economics, 140*, 89–98. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.ecolecon.2017.05.004>
- Chen, K.-Y. (2014). Improving importance-performance analysis: The role of the zone of tolerance and competitor performance. The case of Taiwan's hot spring hotels. *Tourism Management, 40*, 260–272. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.tourman.2013.06.009>
- Claver-Cortés, E., Molina-Azorín, J. F., & Pereira-Moliner, J. (2007). Competitiveness in mass tourism. *Annals of Tourism Research, 34*(3), 727–745. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.annals.2007.03.010>
- Coban, G., & Yildiz, O. S. (2019). Developing a destination management model: Case of Cappadocia. *Tourism Management Perspectives, 30*, 117–128. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.tmp.2019.02.012>
- Corbin, J., & Strauss, A. (2008). *Basics of Qualitative Research: Techniques and Procedures for Developing Grounded Theory*. SAGE.
- Creswell, J. W. (2014). *Research Design: Qualitative, Quantitative, and Mixed Methods Approaches* (4th ed). SAGE Publications.

- Cronjé, D. F., & du Plessis, E. (2020). A review on tourism destination competitiveness. *Journal of Hospitality and Tourism Management*, 45, 256–265. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.jhtm.2020.06.012>
- Crouch, G. I. (2011). Destination competitiveness: An analysis of determinant attributes. *Journal of Travel Research*, 50(1), 27–45. <https://doi.org/10.1177/0047287510362776>
- Czernek, K., Czakon, W., & Marszałek, P. (2017). Trust and formal contracts: Complements or substitutes? A study of tourism collaboration in Poland. *Journal of Destination Marketing & Management*, 6(4), 318–326. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.jdmm.2017.07.001>
- Decrop, A. (2004). Trustworthiness in qualitative tourism research. In J. Phillmore & L. Goodson (Eds.), *Qualitative Research in Tourism: Ontologies, Epistemologies and Methodologies* (1st ed., pp. 156–169). Routledge. <https://doi.org/10.4324/9780203642986>
- Deng, W. (2007). Using a revised importance–performance analysis approach: The case of Taiwanese hot springs tourism. *Tourism Management*, 28(5), 1274–1284. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.tourman.2006.07.010>
- Deputación de Ourense. (2013). *Ourense, Provincia Termal. Galicia, Destino Termal. Plan de Turismo Termal para a Provincia de Ourense 2014-2020* (p. 133). https://www.turismo.gal/osdam/filestore/1/6/1/9/5_61a0897df732392/16195_3c2daac b1a5027a.pdf
- D’Hautesserre, A.-M. (2000). Lessons in managed destination competitiveness: The case of Foxwoods Casino Resort. *Tourism Management*, 21(1), 23–32. [https://doi.org/10.1016/S0261-5177\(99\)00097-7](https://doi.org/10.1016/S0261-5177(99)00097-7)
- Di Benedetto, C. A., & Bojanic, D. C. (1993). Tourism area life cycle extensions. *Annals of Tourism Research*, 20(3), 557–570.
- Djeri, L., Stamenković, P., Blešić, I., Milićević, S., & Ivkov, M. (2018). An importance-performance analysis of destination competitiveness factors: Case of Jablanica district in Serbia. *Economic Research-Ekonomska Istraživanja*, 31(1), 811–826. <https://doi.org/10.1080/1331677X.2018.1456351>

Dragičević, V., Jovičić, D., Blešić, I., Stankov, U., & Bošković, D. (2012). Business tourism destination competitiveness: A case of Vojvodina Province (Serbia). *Economic Research*, 25(2), 311–332.

Drakulić Kovačević, N., Kovačević, L., Stankov, U., Dragičević, V., & Miletić, A. (2018). Applying destination competitiveness model to strategic tourism development of small destinations: The case of South Banat district. *Journal of Destination Marketing & Management*, 8, 114–124. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.jdmm.2017.01.002>

Dryglas, D., & Salamaga, M. (2018). Segmentation by push motives in health tourism destinations: A case study of Polish spa resorts. *Journal of Destination Marketing & Management*, 9, 234–246. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.jdmm.2018.01.008>

Dwyer, L. (2005). Relevance of triple bottom line reporting to achievement of sustainable tourism: A scoping study. *Tourism Review International*, 9(1), 79–93.

Dwyer, L. (2015). Triple bottom line reporting as a basis for sustainable tourism: Opportunities and challenges. *Acta Turistica*, 27(1), 33–62.

Dwyer, L., Dragičević, V., Armenski, T., Mihalič, T., & Knežević Cvelbar, L. (2016). Achieving destination competitiveness: An importance–performance analysis of Serbia. *Current Issues in Tourism*, 19(13), 1309–1336.

Dwyer, L., & Kim, C. (2003). Destination competitiveness: Determinants and indicators. *Current Issues in Tourism*, 6(5), 369–414. <https://doi.org/10.1080/13683500308667962>

Dwyer, L., Mellor, R., Livaic, Z., Edwards, D., & ChulWon, K. (2004). Attributes of destination competitiveness: A factor analysis. *Tourism Analysis*, 9(1/2), 91–101.

Enright, M. J., & Newton, J. (2004). Tourism destination competitiveness: A quantitative approach. *Tourism Management*, 25(6), 777–788. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.tourman.2004.06.008>

Erbaş, E., & Perçin, N. Ş. (2015). Competitive importance performance analysis (CIPA): An illustration from thermal tourism destination. *Business & Economics Research Journal*, 6(4), 137–154.

- Espiner, S., Orchiston, C., & Higham, J. (2017). Resilience and sustainability: A complementary relationship? Towards a practical conceptual model for the sustainability–resilience nexus in tourism. *Journal of Sustainable Tourism*, 25(10), 1385–1400. <https://doi.org/10.1080/09669582.2017.1281929>
- Evren, S., & Kozak, N. (2018). Competitive positioning of winter tourism destinations: A comparative analysis of demand and supply sides perspectives–Cases from Turkey. *Journal of Destination Marketing & Management*, 9, 247–257. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.jdmm.2018.01.009>
- Faux, J., & Dwyer, L. (2009). *Triple bottom line reporting of tourism organizations to support sustainable development*. University of Technology Sydney.
- Filimonau, V., Fidan, H., Alexieva, I., Dragoev, S., & Marinova, D. D. (2019). Restaurant food waste and the determinants of its effective management in Bulgaria: An exploratory case study of restaurants in Plovdiv. *Tourism Management Perspectives*, 32, 100577. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.tmp.2019.100577>
- Garrigos-Simon, F. J., Narangajavana-Kaosiri, Y., & Narangajavana, Y. (2019). Quality in Tourism Literature: A Bibliometric Review. *Sustainability*, 11(14), 3859. <https://doi.org/10.3390/su11143859>
- Glatzer, W. (2012). Cross-national comparisons of quality of life in developed nations, including the impact of globalization. In K. C. Land, A. C. Michalos, & M. J. Sirgy (Eds.), *Handbook of Social Indicators and Quality of Life Research* (pp. 381–398). Springer Netherlands. https://doi.org/10.1007/978-94-007-2421-1_18
- Global Wellness Institute. (2018). *Global Wellness Tourism Economy. November 2018* (p. 102). Global Wellness Institute. https://globalwellnessinstitute.org/wp-content/uploads/2018/11/GWI_GlobalWellnessTourismEconomyReport.pdf
- Goffi, G., & Cucculelli, M. (2019). Explaining tourism competitiveness in small and medium destinations: The Italian case. *Current Issues in Tourism*, 22(17), 2109–2139.
- Goffi, G., Cucculelli, M., & Masiero, L. (2019). Fostering tourism destination competitiveness in developing countries: The role of sustainability. *Journal of Cleaner Production*, 209, 101–115. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.jclepro.2018.10.208>

- Gomezelj, D. O., & Mihalič, T. (2008). Destination competitiveness—Applying different models, the case of Slovenia. *Tourism Management*, 29(2), 294–307. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.tourman.2007.03.009>
- Gooroochurn, N., & Sugiyarto, G. (2005). Competitiveness Indicators in the Travel and Tourism Industry. *Tourism Economics*, 11(1), 25–43. <https://doi.org/10.5367/0000000053297130>
- Graci, S., & Vliet, L. V. (2020). Examining stakeholder perceptions towards sustainable tourism in an island destination. The case of Savusavu, Fiji. *Tourism Planning & Development*, 17(1), 62–81. <https://doi.org/10.1080/21568316.2019.1657933>
- Hassan, S. S. (2000). Determinants of market competitiveness in an environmentally sustainable tourism industry. *Journal of Travel Research*, 38(3), 239–245. <https://doi.org/10.1177/004728750003800305>
- Hong, W.-C. (2009). Global competitiveness measurement for the tourism sector. *Current Issues in Tourism*, 12(2), 105–132. <https://doi.org/10.1080/13683500802596359>
- Houser, J. (2018). *Nursing Research: Reading, Using and Creating Evidence* (Fourth edition). Jones & Bartlett Learning.
- Howie, F. (2003). *Managing the tourist destination*. Thomson Learning.
- Hsieh, L.-F., Lin, L.-H., & Lin, Y.-Y. (2008). A service quality measurement architecture for hot spring hotels in Taiwan. *Tourism Management*, 29(3), 429–438. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.tourman.2007.05.009>
- Jennings, G. R. (2012). Qualitative research methods. In L. Dwyer, A. Gill, & N. Seetaram (Eds.), *Handbook of Research Methods in Tourism* (pp. 309–323). Edward Elgar Publishing. <https://doi.org/10.4337/9781781001295>
- Junio, M. M. V., Kim, J. H., & Lee, T. J. (2017). Competitiveness attributes of a medical tourism destination: The case of South Korea with importance-performance analysis. *Journal of Travel & Tourism Marketing*, 34(4), 444–460. <https://doi.org/10.1080/10548408.2016.1182454>

- Knežević Cvelbar, L., Dwyer, L., Koman, M., & Mihalič, T. (2016). Drivers of destination competitiveness in tourism: A global investigation. *Journal of Travel Research*, 55(8), 1041–1050. <https://doi.org/10.1177/0047287515617299>
- Kozak, M., & Rimmington, M. (1999). Measuring tourist destination competitiveness: Conceptual considerations and empirical findings. *International Journal of Hospitality Management*, 18(3), 273–283. [https://doi.org/10.1016/S0278-4319\(99\)00034-1](https://doi.org/10.1016/S0278-4319(99)00034-1)
- Kuzel, A. J. (1992). Sampling in qualitative inquiry. In *Doing Qualitative Research* (pp. 31–44). Sage Publications, Inc.
- Lapadat, J. C. (2000). Problematizing transcription: Purpose, paradigm and quality. *International Journal of Social Research Methodology*, 3(3), 203–219.
- Lee, C.-F., & King, B. (2006). Assessing destination competitiveness, An application to the hot springs sector. *Tourism and Hospitality Planning & Development*, 3(3), 179–197. <https://doi.org/10.1080/14790530601132328>
- Lee, C.-F., & King, B. (2009). A determination of destination competitiveness for Taiwan's hot springs tourism sector using the Delphi technique. *Journal of Vacation Marketing*, 15(3), 243–257. <https://doi.org/10.1177/1356766709104270>
- Lee, C.-F., & King, B. (2010). *International competitiveness in hot springs tourism: An application of the analytical hierarchy process approach*. 15(5), 531–544. <https://doi.org/info:doi/10.3727/108354210X12889831783233>
- McGehee, N. G. (2012). Interview techniques. In L. Dwyer, A. Gill, & N. Seetaram (Eds.), *Handbook of Research Methods in Tourism* (pp. 365–376). Edward Elgar Publishing. <https://doi.org/10.4337/9781781001295>
- Mendola, D., & Volo, S. (2017). Building composite indicators in tourism studies: Measurements and applications in tourism destination competitiveness. *Tourism Management*, 59, 541–553. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.tourman.2016.08.011>
- Michael, N., Reisinger, Y., & Hayes, J. P. (2019). The UAE's tourism competitiveness: A business perspective. *Tourism Management Perspectives*, 30, 53–64.

Mijnheer, C. L., & Gamble, J. R. (2019). Value co-creation at heritage visitor attractions: A case study of Gladstone's Land. *Tourism Management Perspectives*, 32, 100567. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.tmp.2019.100567>

Moschidis, O. (2016, June 9). *Greek thermal springs as an alternative tourism destination: A study of satisfaction level*. 5th International Symposium & 27th National Conference on Operational Research Piraeus University of Applied Science and the Hellenic Operational Research Society (HELORS), Athens-Greece.

Nascimento, L. da S., & Steinbruch, F. K. (2019). "The interviews were transcribed", but how? Reflections on management research. *RAUSP Management Journal*, 54, 413–429.

Oggionni, T., & Kwok, L. (2018). A qualitative inquiry of DMO services to hotels: How valuable are they perceived? *Journal of Destination Marketing & Management*, 9, 85–96. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.jdmm.2017.11.003>

Oliver, D. G., Serovich, J. M., & Mason, T. L. (2005). Constraints and opportunities with interview transcription: Towards reflection in qualitative research. *Social Forces*, 84(2), 1273–1289.

Pérez, V., Guerrero, F., González, M., Pérez, F., & Caballero, R. (2013). Composite indicator for the assessment of sustainability: The case of Cuban nature-based tourism destinations. *Ecological Indicators*, 29, 316–324. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.ecolind.2012.12.027>

Perles-Ribes, J. F., Rodríguez, A. R., & Jiménez, M. S. (2011). Determinants of the competitive advantage of residential tourism destinations in Spain. *Tourism Economics*, 17(2), 373–403. <https://doi.org/10.5367/te.2011.0040>

Poland, B. D. (1995). Transcription quality as an aspect of rigor in qualitative research. *Qualitative Inquiry*, 1(3), 290–310.

Priestley, G., & Mundet, L. (1998). The post-stagnation phase of the resort cycle. *Annals of Tourism Research*, 25(1), 85–111.

Qu, Y., Dong, Y., & Xiang, G. (2021). Attachment-triggered attributes and destination revisit. *Annals of Tourism Research*, 89, 103202.

Rapley, T. (2018). *Doing Conversation, Discourse and Document Analysis* (Vol. 7). Sage.

- Renfors, S.-M. (2020). Stakeholders' perceptions of sustainable tourism development in a cold-water destination: The case of the Finnish archipelago. *Tourism Planning & Development*, 0(0), 1–19. <https://doi.org/10.1080/21568316.2020.1816566>
- Ritchie, J. R. B., & Crouch, G. I. (2003). *The Competitive Destination: A Sustainable Tourism Perspective*. CABI.
- Rodríguez-Díaz, M., & Espino-Rodríguez, T. F. (2008). A model of strategic evaluation of a tourism destination based on internal and relational capabilities. *Journal of Travel Research*, 46(4), 368–380. <https://doi.org/10.1177/0047287507308324>
- Roxas, F. M. Y., Rivera, J. P. R., & Gutierrez, E. L. M. (2020). Mapping stakeholders' roles in governing sustainable tourism destinations. *Journal of Hospitality and Tourism Management*, 45, 387–398.
- Ruhanen, L. (2004). Strategic planning for local tourism destinations: An analysis of tourism plans. *Tourism and Hospitality Planning & Development*, 1(3), 239–253. <https://doi.org/10.1080/1479053042000314502>
- Silvestri, C., Aquilani, B., Ruggieri, A., Aquilani, B., Silvestri, C., & Ruggieri, A. (2017). Service quality and customer satisfaction in thermal tourism. *The TQM Journal*, 29(1), 55–81. <https://doi.org/10.1108/TQM-06-2015-0089>
- Stepchenkova, S. (2012). Content analysis. In L. Dwyer, A. Gill, & N. Seetaram (Eds.), *Handbook of Research Methods in Tourism* (pp. 443–458). Edward Elgar Publishing. <https://doi.org/10.4337/9781781001295>
- Stoddard, J. E., Pollard, C. E., & Evans, M. R. (2012). The triple bottom line: A framework for sustainable tourism development. *International Journal of Hospitality & Tourism Administration*, 13(3), 233–258.
- Tegegne, W. A., Moyle, B. D., & Becken, S. (2018). A qualitative system dynamics approach to understanding destination image. *Journal of Destination Marketing & Management*, 8, 14–22. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.jdmm.2016.09.001>
- Timur, B. (2018). Service quality, destination image and revisit intention relationships at thermal tourism businesses. *Journal of Gastronomy, Hospitality and Travel*, 1(1), 38–48.

- Tom Dieck, M. C., & Jung, T. H. (2017). Value of augmented reality at cultural heritage sites: A stakeholder approach. *Journal of Destination Marketing & Management*, 6(2), 110–117. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.jdmm.2017.03.002>
- Tyrrell, T., Paris, C., & Biaett, V. (2013). A quantified triple bottom line for tourism experimental results. *Journal of Travel Research*, 52(3), 279–293. <https://doi.org/10.1177/0047287512465963>
- Vellecco, I., & Mancino, A. (2010). Sustainability and tourism development in three Italian destinations: Stakeholders' opinions and behaviours. *The Service Industries Journal*, 30(13), 2201–2223. <https://doi.org/10.1080/02642060903287500>
- Watts, L. L., Todd, E. M., Mulhearn, T. J., Medeiros, K. E., Mumford, M. D., & Connelly, S. (2017). Qualitative Evaluation Methods in Ethics Education: A Systematic Review and Analysis of Best Practices. *Accountability in Research*, 24(4), 225–242. <https://doi.org/10.1080/08989621.2016.1274975>
- Webster, M. D. (2017). Philosophy of technology assumptions in educational technology leadership. *Educational Technology & Society*, 20(1), 25–36.
- Wondirad, A., Tolkach, D., & King, B. (2020). Stakeholder collaboration as a major factor for sustainable ecotourism development in developing countries. *Tourism Management*, 78, 104024.
- Yrza, B., & Filimonau, V. (2021). Integrating sustainability in destination management plans and policies of a post-Soviet state. *Tourism Planning & Development*, 0(0), 1–23. <https://doi.org/10.1080/21568316.2021.1875037>
- Zehrer, A., & Hallmann, K. (2015). A stakeholder perspective on policy indicators of destination competitiveness. *Journal of Destination Marketing & Management*, 4(2), 120–126. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.jdmm.2015.03.003>