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Tourism Destination Competitiveness Assessment: Research & Planning Practice

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A B S T R A C T

The paper is focused on the issue of tourism destination competitiveness and its assessment by the factors of competitiveness. It reflects the fifteen years' history of two most cited models of tourism destination competitiveness – the Conceptual Model of Destination Competitiveness developed by Ritchie and Crouch, and the Integrated Model of Destination Competitiveness developed by Dwyer and Kim. It tracks the application of the models in research practice defined by the various research papers published in journals involved in ProQuest Central and EBSCO databases from 2005. It compares the research designs by the means of the comparative content analysis focused on the factors of competitiveness, and data source & data assessment methods. The paper also explores the application of the models in planning practice. It uses the qualitative case study approach focusing on the tourism development strategies of the Czech self-governing regions. On the basis of the interviews with regional destination managers the paper analyses an accordance between the long-time aiming of the strategies and the key factors of competitiveness defined by the general models of destination competitiveness. Finally, the paper reveals a gap between research and planning practice within the context of the generic model of tourism destination competitiveness. It suggests the improvement of the model enabling regional destination managers to reduce the gap and enhance the destination's competitive position via intensive collaboration with destination stakeholders.

Keywords: Tourism, Tourism Destination Competitiveness, Research, Strategic Planning

1 . Introduction

The travel & tourism sector is ranked as one of the most progressive industries. It shows steady growth from the time of the global economic crisis. According to UNWTO (2017), the number of international tourist arrivals increased by 3.9 % in 2016. However, tourism also faces competitive pressures which are substantially

on the rise in our contemporary globalized society. Therefore, the national and regional governments are concentrating their efforts on increasing competitiveness in tourism to reach multiple positive effects the tourism sector has on tourism destinations in terms of the economic, socio-cultural and environmental spheres (Stylidis, Biran, Sit & Szivas, 2014; Mazhenova, Choi & Chung, 2016).

It is not a surprise that a concept of tourism destination competitiveness has become a matter of interest of many scholars since the 1990's. Since that time, numberless research papers have been focused on the different issues related to destination

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competitiveness, such as the (a) assessment of the overall competitive position of tourism destination by various factors of competitiveness, (b) assessment of specific attributes (factors) of competitiveness (e.g. price policy, branding, service quality), (c) elaboration of general model of destination competitiveness and its application in practice, or (d) comparison of tourism destination competitiveness by various indexes.

This paper places emphasis on the general models of tourism destination competitiveness and their usage in research and planning practice. Its aim is to identify a possible gap between utilization of the factors of competitiveness defined in two most cited models in research articles and planning practices defined by the tourism development strategies elaborated on the regional level. As the first step, the paper tracks evolution of the models by a comparative content analysis of 18 research papers published after 2004. It compares two components of the research designs, namely the factors of competitiveness and data source & data assessment methods used for evaluating the competitive position of particular tourism destination. Secondly, the paper uses the qualitative case study approach focusing on the tourism development strategies of six Czech self-governing regions. On the basis of the interviews with regional destination managers the paper analyses an accordance between the long-time aiming of the strategies and the key factors of competitiveness defined by the general models of destination competitiveness. The research results in identification of a gap between research and planning practice within the context of the generic model of tourism destination competitiveness. It suggests an activation of destination stakeholders as an effective way how to improve the strategic aiming of the development strategies and enhance the destination's competitive position.

To be able to meet the main aim, the researchers have identified the following research questions:

RQ1: Which models of tourism destination competitiveness are mostly reflected in the research papers published after 2004?

RQ2: Which factors of competitiveness defined in the most cited models are examined by

the research papers, i.e. reflected in research practice?

RQ3: Which factors of competitiveness defined in the most cited models are targeted by regional tourism development strategies, i.e. reflected in planning practice?

RQ4: Is it possible to identify a gap between research and planning practice?

II. Literature Review

We can find many definitions of destination competitiveness. We can distinguish quantitative approach in which the competitive position is associated with the number of visitors as an indicator of the market share (e.g. D'Hautserre, 2000; Hassan, 2000) or tourism expenditures and profitability (e.g. Buhalis, 2000). On the other hand, many authors stress qualitative approach focusing on factors like quality of services, or uniqueness of tourism experience (e.g. Dwyer & Kim, 2003; Enright & Newton, 2005; Valeri, 2015; Kaleji, Hesam & Kazemi, 2017). The socio-economic approach - combining quantitative and qualitative factors and stressing concept of sustainable tourism development - is also frequently applied when defining destination competitiveness. Ritchie and Crouch (2003, p. 2), for example, describe competitiveness as "the ability to increase tourism expenditure, to increasingly attract visitors while providing them with satisfying, memorable experiences and to do so in a profitable way, while enhancing the well-being of destination residents and preserving the natural capital of the destination for future generations".

As indicated by such heterogeneity, many research perspectives forming particular research designs for assessment of destination competitiveness have been carried out: (a) the economic perspective, (b) the socio-economic perspective, (c) the community development perspective, together with (d) the sustainable development perspective. Nevertheless, a link between competitiveness of a destination and

its overall development can be seen as the common research framework. An enhancement of destination competitiveness is widely considered to be a vital condition for reaching tourism benefits and consequently for enhancing residents' quality of life (e.g. Mihalič, 2000; Ritchie & Crouch, 2003; Goeldner & Ritchie, 2012). Following such a framework, tourism researchers have begun to consider how destination competitiveness can be conceptualized and measured by different models.

A. Tourism Destination Competitiveness Models

Dozens of different models that tried to identify and describe the various factors that influence tourism destination competitiveness has been created since 1994. In general, we can distinguish three broad categories of the models: (a) general / theoretical / conceptual models (e.g. De Keyser & Vanhove, 1994; Crouch & Ritchie, 1999; Ritchie & Crouch, 2003; Dwyer & Kim, 2003; Gomezelj & Mihalič, 2008), (b) aggregate index model created by the World Economic Forum (WEF), and (c) various special-purpose / empirical models (e.g. Sirše & Mihalič, 1999; Hassan, 2000; Heath, 2002; Dwyer, Livaic & Mellor, 2003; Enright & Newton, 2004; Baggio, 2008; Lee & King, 2010).

The following table contains references to 26 papers published after 2004 that were analyzed and compared. The table shows the link between their research designs and various tourism destination competitiveness models which serve as the initial basis for the research.

The analysis indicates the continuing validity of the models created from 1994-2004, which still serve as the initial basis for almost all of the research that was analyzed. Although some authors based their research on WEF's aggregate index of destination competitiveness or some specific models, it is clear that the dominant position have two conceptual models: (a) the Conceptual Model of Destination Competitiveness developed by Ritchie and Crouch between 1993-1999 and redesigned in 2003, and (b) the Integrated Model of Destination Competitiveness developed by Dwyer and Kim and applied by Dwyer,

Livaic and Mellor in 2003. The newest models have a rather marginal position, i.e. they serve almost exclusively as an additional source of information / supporting methodological basis of the research.

The Conceptual Model of Destination Competitiveness of Ritchie and Crouch (2003) is the most widespread conceptual model of destination competitiveness. The model modified the Porter's Competitiveness Framework to the environment of tourism destinations. It distinguishes 36 attributes of competitiveness grouped into five key factors: (A) supporting factors and resources, (B) core resources and attractions, (C) destination management, (D) destination policy, planning and development, (E) qualifying and amplifying determinants. It also points out the importance of the environment surrounding the destination - namely the global macro environment and the competitive micro environment.

Dwyer and Kim (2003) modified and developed the model of Ritchie and Crouch and thus created the Integrated Model of Destination Competitiveness. Their model combines elements of competitiveness of countries and companies, and destination competitiveness into one overall model. The model identifies new key factors of demand conditions and situational conditions as determinants of destination competitiveness. Moreover, the factors of destination policy, planning and development do not create a separate group; they are an integral part of destination management. The model classifies the determinants of destination competitiveness under the following six groups: (F) inherited resources, (G) created resources, (H) supporting factors and resources, (I) situational conditions, (J) destination management, (K) demand conditions. The model has been empirically tested in Korea and Australia.

B. Strategic Planning as a Factor of Tourism Destination Competitiveness

The governments try to promote the positive impacts of tourism through their tourism policy. Tourism policy can be considered as a specific public policy that aims to support development objectives

Table 1. Initial Model of Tourism Destination Competitiveness

Analyzed papers	Models of Tourism Destination Competitiveness
Enright & Newton (2005)	Crouch & Ritchie (1999)
Gomezelj (2006)	Dwyer, Livaic & Mellor (2003)
Gomezelj & Mihalič (2008)	Dwyer & Kim (2003)
Balan, Balaure & Veghes (2009)	WEF: The Travel & Tourism Competitiveness Reports
Crouch (2010)	Ritchie & Crouch (2003)
Mechinda, Serirat, Popajjit, Lertwannawit & Anuwichanont (2010)	Dwyer & Kim (2003)
Croitoru (2011)	WEF: The Travel & Tourism Competitiveness Reports
Zhang, Gu, Gu & Zhang (2011)	Mihalič (2000); Ritchie & Crouch (2003); Enright & Newton (2004)
Bigovic (2012)	Dwyer & Kim (2003)
Armenski, Gomezelj, Djurdjev, Ćurčić & Dragin (2012)	Dwyer & Kim (2003); Dwyer, Livaic & Mellor (2003)
Dragičević, Jovičić, Blešić, Stankov & Bošković (2012)	Ritchie & Crouch (2003)
Vodeb (2012)	Ritchie & Crouch (1993)
Bagarić & Žitinić (2013)	Dwyer & Kim (2003); Gomezelj & Mihalič (2008)
Goffi (2013)	Crouch & Ritchie (1999); Enright & Newton (2004); Gomezelj & Mihalič (2008)
Štetić, Šimičević, Pavlović & Stanić (2014)	Ritchie & Crouch (2003)
Jovanović, Janković Milić & Krstić (2014)	WEF: The Travel & Tourism Competitiveness Reports
Pulido-Fernandez, Cardenas-Garcia & Sanchez-Rivero (2014)	WEF: The Travel & Tourism Competitiveness Reports
Mahika, Bran & Tigu (2014)	WEF: The Travel & Tourism Competitiveness Reports
Dorta-Afonso & Hernández-Martín (2015)	Ritchie & Crouch (2003)
Erbas & Perçin (2015)	Lee & King (2010)
Chin, Lo, Nair & Songan (2016)	Crouch & Ritchie (1999); Hassan (2000), Mihalič (2000); Dwyer & Kim (2003)
Topolansky Barbe, Gonzalez Triay & Häufe (2016)	Ritchie & Crouch (2003); Dwyer & Kim (2003)
Du Plessis, Saayman & van der Merwe (2017)	Crouch & Ritchie (1999); Du Plessis (2002)
Kaleji, Hesam & Kazemi (2017)	Heath & Wall (1992); Ritchie & Crouch (2003); Dwyer & Kim (2003); Baggio (2008); Pearce (2014)
Kovalov, Burlakova & Voronenko (2017)	WEF: The Travel & Tourism Competitiveness Reports
Krstić, Radivojević & Stanišić (2017)	WEF: The Travel & Tourism Competitiveness Reports

relevant to tourism established at the local, regional or national levels (Chuck, 1997). The main reason for tourism policy is to create “the environment which provides maximum benefits to regional stakeholders while minimize the negative impacts of tourism” (Ritchie & Crouch, 2003, p. 148). The defined goals and results are implemented through the planning process, resulting in a tourism development strategy (plan). In such a way, the government defines basic orientation of tourism development in a given territory

(tourism destination). As many authors note, the planning process enables the destination to enhance its competitiveness and maximizes the benefits of tourism at the same time (e.g. Edgell, DelMastro, Smith & Swanson, 2008; Goeldner & Ritchie, 2012; Gajdošik, Gajdošiková & Stražanová, 2018). Štumpf, Vojtko and Valtrová (2018) see the main aim of destination management & planning in enhancement of destination’s competitiveness in tourism market.

Vourc’h and Denman (2003) stress the fact that

tourism must be managed with a respect to the long-term concept of sustainability to enable the destinations to fully utilize their potential. The national and regional governments use the strategic planning to fulfil this aim as well. They try to balance the quality and the quantity of tourism supply and the corresponding tourism demand with respects to the socio-economic development and environmental factors (Edgell et al., 2008).

Ritchie and Crouch (2003) point out that an attractive, efficient and highly competitive destination cannot exist only by pure coincidence. This requires a well-planned environment that supports and enables the development of tourism. The key to this environment is the factor of strategic planning. In the travel and tourism industry, it is a process that attempts to determine the appropriate course of the strategy that reflects new trends, mutable markets, and competition to provide a competitive advantage (Edgell et al., 2008). In this way, strategic planning determines the desirable direction and aligns the ownership and method to use available resources according to the conditions of the external environment and individual expectations of those involved (Johnson, Scholes & Whittington, 2008; David, 2009). The main objective of strategic planning is to balance the quality and the quantity of the tourism supply and the corresponding demand with respects to the socio-economic development and environmental factors (Edgell et al., 2008). Moreover, a carefully elaborated strategy represents a source of potential competitive advantages and simultaneously, the sustainable competitive advantage is an important prerequisite for the success in an

environment characterized by a higher intensity of competition (Ritchie & Crouch, 2003; Edgell et al., 2008; Goeldner & Ritchie, 2012).

To be able to fulfil its task, the process of strategic planning is divided into basic phases that are illustrated in Figure 1.

A clear definition of the planning sense, the initial conditions, and individuals involved form the initial phase of the planning cycle. A strategic analysis follows. It produces an information base to formulate a vision of tourism development and strategy for its achievement. As tourism responds strongly to various external changes, these are equally considered (Evans, Campbell & Stonehouse, 2003). The external strategic analysis involves the development of the tourism market, identifies main trends and demand conditions (Cooper et al., 2008). The analysis is then followed by a detailed competitive analysis. In this way, the destination determines the foremost competitors by the number of visitors, but also the services offered, and related goals, strengths and weaknesses.

The success of the strategy depends, however, not only on external conditions, but on internal resources and their usage too. The analysis of the internal environment deals primarily with these facts. Furthermore, it replies to the question whether they are in harmony with the environment of a given destination and contribute to its competitiveness (Johnson, Scholes & Whittington, 2008).

A clear definition of a long-term vision and main strategic objectives follows the strategic analysis. The vision reflects the ultimate status the tourist destination seeks to obtain. The objectives elaborate the vision

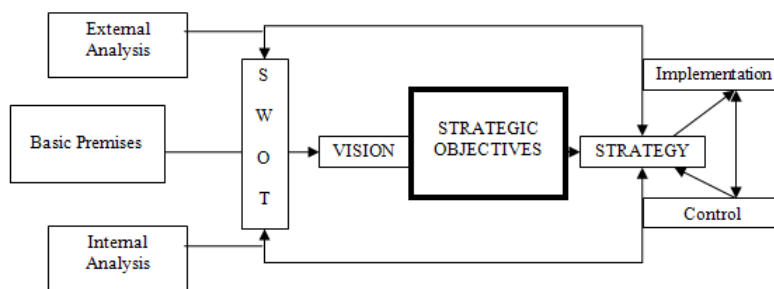


Figure 1. Strategic Planning Cycle

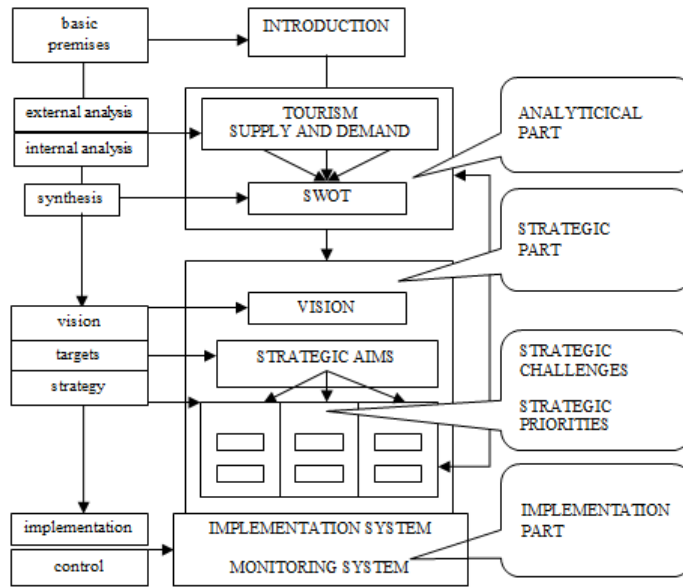


Figure 2. Structure of Tourism Development Plan

in greater detail. The proposed strategy represents the method to achieve the objectives. The strategy supports the development of internal resources and capabilities to assist the destination to use external opportunities and to defend against threats. It also aids to diminish significant internal weaknesses, and develop the most important strengths in accordance with the key stakeholders’ interests and requests (Johnson, Scholes & Whittington, 2008; Goeldner & Ritchie, 2012; Morrison, 2013).

The implementation phase identifies the specific conditions for strategy gradual conversion into practice. The outcomes from the previous stages are further developed and specified into particular arrangements or actions that include a detailed time schedule, a delimitation of resources necessary and responsibilities. The integral part of strategic planning process incorporates the specification of monitoring mechanisms based on pre-defined criteria (Johnson, Scholes & Whittington, 2008; David, 2009; Page, 2013).

The tourism development plan can be considered as a formal output of the strategic planning process summarizing its results in a clear and understandable format (Johnson, Scholes & Whittington, 2008; Hall,

2008; Goeldner & Ritchie, 2012; Morrison, 2013). As the Figure 2 depicts, the typical structure of the development plan reflects all main phases of the planning cycle. In such a way it allows readers (researchers) to easily find the planning results and ex-post assess their implementation in practice afterwards.

III. Method

The research methodology follows paper’s main aim and consequent research questions. The previous literature review including the content analysis of 26 papers (Table 1) clearly proves persisting validity of two models created by Ritchie and Crouch, and by Dwyer and Kim. These model are cited in the majority of examined articles and thus can be considered as the models which are mostly reflected in the research papers published after 2004 (RQ1). With respect to their dominance, the next steps of the research are focused purely on application of Ritchie and Crouch’s model and Dwyer and Kim’s model

in research and planning practice.

The process of examination of research practice is based on comparative content analysis of 18 papers selected from Table 1. The selection process is realized based on the following criteria: (a) an indexation in ProQuest Central or EBCO database, (b) a publication in a peer-reviewed journal as an original research paper, (c) a publication in a period of 2005-2017, (d) clear research methodology and (e) research based on Ritchie and Crouch's model or Dwyer and Kim's model. The analysis examines two main aspects of their research designs: (a) the factors of competitiveness and (b) data source & data assessment methods. The results are presented in a form of comparative table (Table 2) and summary diagram (Figure 3). The table quotes relative ratio of the factors correlating with the factors that have been identified in Ritchie and Crouch's model or Dwyer and Kim's model. It also includes the average ratio on which the summary diagram is based. In such a way the table indicates which factors of competitiveness are mostly examined by the research papers (RQ2).

The next step lies in examination of planning practice. As it has been already mentioned in the introduction part, the national and regional governments implement the main goal of their tourism policy through the planning process of which results are formalized in the tourism development strategies (plans). The research is based on the qualitative case study approach focusing on the development strategies of the following Czech self-governing regions: South Bohemian Region, Olomouc Region, Pardubice Region, Central Bohemian Region, Ustecky Region, and Vysocina Region. It analyses an accordance between the long-time aiming of the strategies and the key factors of competitiveness defined by the general models of destination competitiveness. Respondents of the survey are selected from an open public database under these criteria: (a) responsibility for tourism development, (b) managerial experience, (c) seniority in tourism or/and regional management, and (d) active participation in tourism policy implementation. The survey has a form of two-rounds Delphi method with the average number of 3 experts per one self-governing region. The in-depth interviews

consist of three parts: (a) the introduction part, (b) the exploratory part focused on assessment of a link between the strategic aims and the factors of competitiveness (two rounds), (c) the final part devoted to comments, remarks and questions. As having the form of the face-to-face interview the survey response rate is 100 %.

The core of the survey lies in assessment of the accordance between the particular strategic priorities defined in tourism development strategies and the key factors of competitiveness defined by the general models of destination competitiveness. The assessment is based on 100-points allocation method in which respondents are asked to allocate 100 points across the items for consideration. It is a well-known and relatively simple method enabling respondents to prioritize items according to their weights / importance / intensity. We can find many applications of this method in various research papers focused on different topics (e.g. Gum, Roefs & Kimball, 1976; Xiang, 2003; Sukac, Vondrák & Kazda, 2016; Holota, Holienčinová, Kotus & Chrástina, 2017). Moreover, the method proves its suitability when interviewing destination stakeholders (e.g. Váchová, Zelená & Luštický, 2011; Luštický, Oberhel & Gunina, 2016).

In the survey respondents distribute 100 points for each strategic priority across all factors of competitiveness defined by Ritchie and Crouch's model and after that all factors defined by Dwyer and Kim's model according to the intensity of accordance between the priority and the factor of competitiveness. The results are presented in the comparative table (Table 3) containing the distribution of points in a relative form, and average distribution of points for each strategy in a relative form. The results are summarized in radar (spider) diagram (Figure 4). This procedure enables researchers to find the factors of competitiveness which are mostly targeted by the tourism development strategies (RQ3).

Finally, the results of the previous steps are compared and the gap between research and planning practice is identified (RQ4). Moreover, the paper reacts on the negative gap in a form of managerial recommendations enabling regional destination managers

to reduce the gap and enhance the destination’s competitive position by improvement of the strategic aiming of the tourism development strategies.

IV. Results & Discussion

A. Research Practice

The following table reflects the second research question (RQ2). It contains references to 18 papers which refer to the models of Ritchie and Crouch and Dwyer and Kim. The table quotes relative ratio

of the factors correlating with the factors that have been identified in Ritchie and Crouch’s and Dwyer and Kim’s models (shown as letters A-E, F-K). The additional factors beyond the scope of the models (shown as letter X) are mentioned in the last column. There is the average ratio calculated for all research papers in the last row of the table.

Although the analyzed research studies often use an extensive set of the factors of competitiveness, the analysis shows that almost all the factors have been adopted directly from the tourist destinations competitiveness models or derived from the original factors. The groups of core resources and attractions (B) / inherited resources (F) + created resources (G)

Table 2. Application of the Models in Research Practice

Research Papers	Factors of Competitiveness: Ritchie & Crouch’s Model					Factors of Competitiveness: Dwyer & Kim’s Model					X	
	A	B	C	D	E	F	G	H	I	J		K
Enright & Newton (2005)	0,25	0,56	0,12	0,04	0,02							0,02
Gomezelj (2006)						0,11	0,28	0,14	0,13	0,29	0,05	
Gomezelj & Mihalič (2008)						0,11	0,28	0,14	0,13	0,29	0,05	
Crouch (2010)	0,17	0,19	0,25	0,22	0,17							
Mechinda, Serirat, Popajjit, Lertwannawit & Anuwichanont (2010)						0,25	0,31	0,19	0,19	0,06	0,00	
Zhang, Gu, Gu & Zhang (2011)	0,50	0,33	0,17	0,00	0,00							
Bigovic (2012)						0,12	0,24	0,16	0,12	0,28	0,04	0,03
Armenski, Gomezelj, Djurdjev, Ćurčić & Dragin (2012)						0,11	0,28	0,14	0,11	0,29	0,05	0,02
Dragičević, Jovičić, Blešić, Stankov & Bošković (2012)	0,09	0,31	0,22	0,19	0,17							0,02
Vodeb (2012)	0,17	0,13	0,43	0,17	0,04							0,04
Bagarić & Žitinić (2013)						0,14	0,25	0,14	0,13	0,29	0,05	
Goffi (2013)	0,25	0,23	0,20	0,19	0,11							0,02
Štetić, Šimičević, Pavlović & Stanić (2014)	0,11	0,57	0,29	0,00	0,00							0,04
Dorta-Afonso & Hernández-Martín (2015)	0,00	0,00	0,75	0,00	0,25							
Chin, Lo, Nair & Songan (2016)	0,17	0,33	0,33	0,00	0,17							
Topolansky Barbe, Gonzalez Triay & Häufele (2016)						0,14	0,23	0,18	0,15	0,26	0,04	
Du Plessis, Saayman & van der Merwe (2017)	0,13	0,38	0,13	0,13	0,13							0,13
Kaleji, Hesam & Kazemi (2017)	0,00	0,36	0,11	0,42	0,08							0,03
Average ratio	0,17	0,31	0,27	0,12	0,10	0,14	0,27	0,16	0,14	0,25	0,04	0,04

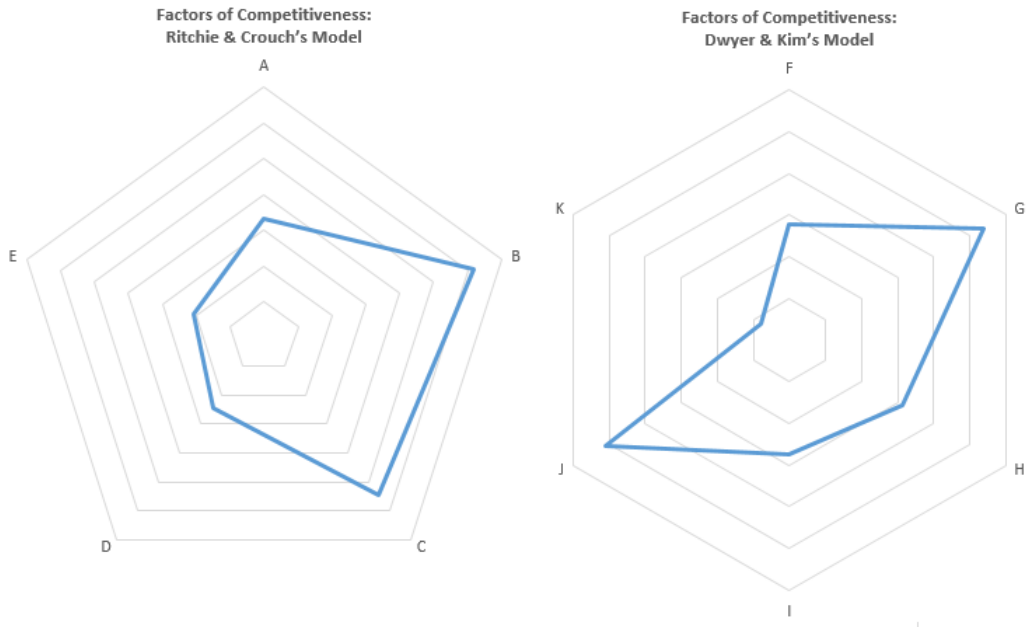


Figure 3. Application of the Models in Research Practice: Summary (Average)

dominate. Other frequently targeted groups consist of the factors somehow related to destination management (C / J). We can say that these groups create a predominant research basis and can be considered as the main subjects of research investigation.

Moreover, we can recognize an effort to strive for extending the original set of the competitiveness factors. The additional factors are mostly focused on two aspects: (a) development of information & communication technologies (ICT), and (b) destination authenticity & identity. These factors closely correlate with recent tourism market trends as identified by UNWTO (2017), OECD (2016), or ITB Academy (2016). This fact reflects the age of the models that were created in 2003.

The data assessment methods most frequently implemented by the questionnaire survey were used via the online system. The majority of researcher interviews used key destination stakeholders as the national and local authorities, travel agencies, restaurants, hotels, national and local tourism organizations, or higher education institutions. They almost exclusively use the 5-degree Likert scale for

assessing destination competitiveness via set of particular factors. In some cases, the results of the questionnaire survey are supplemented by official statistical data or so-called expert-based evaluation. The data are processed by various statistical methods of descriptive statistics (mean, median, range, standard deviation) and by using t-tests. Statistical testing is sometimes supplemented by the factor or regression analysis and by using the PCA (Principal Component Analysis) in some cases.

B. Planning Practice

The following table reflects the third research question (RQ3). It contains references to strategic priorities of six tourism development strategies of the Czech self-governing regions. All priorities are defined by their title and by set of correlating strategic themes. The table quotes relative form of allocation of 100 points between the factors that have been identified in Ritchie and Crouch's and Dwyer and Kim's models (shown as letters A-E, F-K) based

Table 3. Application of the Models in Planning Practice

Tourism Development Strategy	Factors of Competitiveness: Ritchie & Crouch's Model					Factors of Competitiveness: Dwyer & Kim's Model					
	A	B	C	D	E	F	G	H	I	J	K
Strategy for Tourism Development in the South Bohemian Region 2015 - 2020											
Effective Tourism Management communication, destination management, efficiency assessment	0,00	0,00	0,65	0,30	0,05	0,00	0,00	0,00	0,20	0,70	0,10
Development of Tourism Products active or family holiday, historical sights, culture, wellness, agro tourism, gastronomy, MICE tourism	0,05	0,75	0,15	0,00	0,05	0,30	0,45	0,05	0,00	0,10	0,10
Enhancement of Tourism Services Quality education, tourism services quality	0,40	0,00	0,40	0,00	0,20	0,00	0,00	0,40	0,20	0,20	0,20
Average ratio	0,15	0,25	0,40	0,10	0,10	0,10	0,15	0,15	0,13	0,33	0,13
Strategy for Tourism Development in the Olomouc Region 2014 - 2020											
Development of Tourism Infrastructure transport infrastructure and accessibility, tourist infrastructure, tourist attractions	0,70	0,20	0,05	0,05	0,00	0,10	0,10	0,70	0,10	0,00	0,00
Development of Competitive Tourism Products & Effective Marketing competitiveness enhancement, destination marketing, marketing concepts and strategies	0,00	0,50	0,50	0,00	0,00	0,20	0,30	0,00	0,00	0,20	0,30
Effective Tourism Management, Service Quality & Human Resources destination management, cooperation, networking, HR development, service quality & standardization	0,10	0,00	0,75	0,05	0,10	0,00	0,00	0,10	0,30	0,50	0,10
Public Relations & Safety PR, promotion, cooperation, tourism policy, safety	0,00	0,00	0,45	0,45	0,10	0,00	0,00	0,00	0,10	0,60	0,30
Average ratio	0,20	0,18	0,44	0,14	0,05	0,08	0,10	0,20	0,13	0,33	0,18
Strategy for Tourism Development in the Pardubice Region 2016 - 2020											
Development of Tourism Infrastructure & Services transport and tourism infrastructure, tourism attractions, tourism services quality, competitiveness enhancement	0,45	0,10	0,20	0,20	0,05	0,00	0,10	0,45	0,25	0,20	0,00
Effective Tourism Marketing branding, positive image, marketing mix, tourism products, marketing information system, marketing campaigns	0,00	0,30	0,60	0,10	0,00	0,15	0,15	0,00	0,05	0,30	0,35
Effective Tourism Management & Human Resources destination management, HR development, cooperation, networking, monitoring, marketing research, data collection	0,05	0,00	0,70	0,05	0,20	0,00	0,00	0,05	0,10	0,75	0,10
Average ratio	0,17	0,13	0,50	0,12	0,08	0,05	0,08	0,17	0,13	0,42	0,15
Strategy for Tourism Development in the Central Bohemian Region 2015 - 2020											
Effective Tourism Management destination management organization, networking, Tourism Financial Fund	0,05	0,00	0,75	0,20	0,00	0,00	0,00	0,05	0,25	0,60	0,10

Tourism Development Strategy	Factors of Competitiveness: Ritchie & Crouch's Model					Factors of Competitiveness: Dwyer & Kim's Model					
	A	B	C	D	E	F	G	H	I	J	K
Integrated Marketing Communication marketing communication, monitoring, cooperation with the CzechTourism Agency	0,00	0,10	0,80	0,10	0,00	0,00	0,10	0,00	0,00	0,30	0,60
Development of Tourism Products market & segmentation, product innovation, product development, product packages	0,05	0,75	0,10	0,05	0,05	0,25	0,50	0,05	0,05	0,05	0,10
Effective Monitoring of Implementation of the Strategy information resources, statistics, tourism development indicators, monitoring, updating	0,00	0,00	0,40	0,50	0,10	0,00	0,00	0,00	0,15	0,80	0,05
Average ratio	0,03	0,21	0,51	0,21	0,04	0,06	0,15	0,03	0,11	0,44	0,21
Strategy for Tourism Development in the Ustecky Region 2015 – 2020											
Establishment of Destination Management Organization destination management & development, tourism financial support, HR development, monitoring and data collection	0,00	0,00	0,80	0,20	0,00	0,00	0,00	0,00	0,20	0,80	0,00
Effective Tourism Marketing branding, coordination of marketing activities, key tourism products, specific regional tourism products	0,10	0,40	0,40	0,10	0,00	0,20	0,20	0,10	0,00	0,20	0,30
Development of Tourism Infrastructure transport infrastructure, cycle routes, hiking trails	0,50	0,15	0,25	0,10	0,00	0,05	0,10	0,50	0,30	0,05	0,00
Average ratio	0,20	0,18	0,48	0,13	0,00	0,08	0,10	0,20	0,17	0,35	0,10
Strategy for Tourism Development in the Vysocina Region 2017 – 2025											
Development of Tourism Products tourism infrastructure, tourism attractions, tourism services, tourist information services	0,20	0,70	0,10	0,00	0,00	0,40	0,30	0,20	0,00	0,00	0,10
Effective Tourism Management, Effective Partnership & Human Resources destination management, HR development	0,10	0,00	0,70	0,15	0,05	0,00	0,00	0,10	0,10	0,70	0,10
Effective Tourism Marketing branding, brand communication, marketing planning, marketing strategy realization	0,05	0,10	0,40	0,40	0,05	0,05	0,05	0,05	0,20	0,30	0,35
Average ratio	0,12	0,27	0,40	0,18	0,03	0,15	0,12	0,12	0,10	0,33	0,18

on their accordance with the strategic priorities.

The previous table and figure show the general factors of competitiveness which are mostly targeted by analyzed Czech tourism development strategies. It is evident that the factors related to destination management (C / J) clearly dominate. The next significant groups are comprised of closely correlating factors of destination policy, planning and development (D) and demand conditions (K). It means that almost all analyzed strategies are heavily concentrated on

reaching better competitive position via development of destination management & marketing.

On the other hand, the strategies are much less focused on the factors related to core resources and attractions (B) / inherited + created resources (F + G). This result creates a significant gap between predominant application of the models in research practice and planning practice. Such aiming of the strategies is a bit startling when taking into consideration the importance of these factors for tourism development

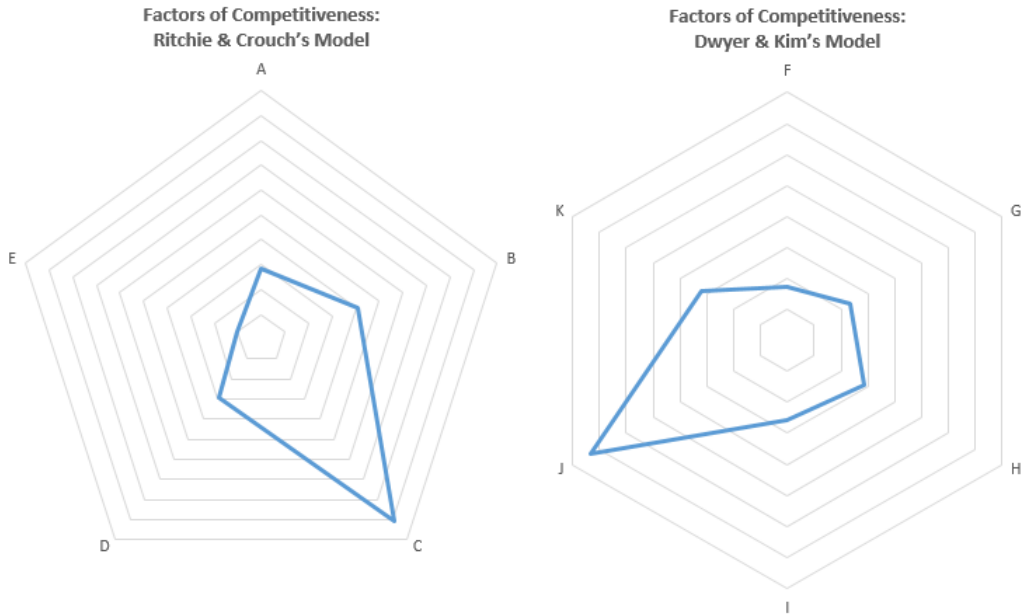


Figure 4. Application of the Models in Planning Practice: Summary (Average)

as declared by many authors (e.g. Buhalis, 2000; D’Hauteserre, 2000; Enright & Newton, 2004; Gomezelj, 2006; Crouch, 2010).

C. Gap between Research and Planning Practice

The following figure shows the gap between predominant aiming of research and planning practice and in such a way it reflects the last research questions (RQ4). The gap is calculated from the point of the tourism development strategies as a difference between the factors’ average ratio quoted in Table 2 (*FAR2*) and the factors’ average ratios quoted in Table 3 (*FAR3*). Based on the calculation, the gap can be considered as positive ($FAR2 < FAR3$), neutral ($FAR2 = FAR3$) or negative ($FAR2 > FAR3$). The figure highlights the significant positive gap (green color) and negative gap (red color). The letters A-E / F-K correlates with the factors of competitiveness defined in Ritchie & Crouch’s / Dwyer & Kim’s model.

The gap between research and planning practice can be distinguished into two forms: (a) positive

(the factors of destination management (C / J), destination policy & planning (D), demand conditions (K)), and (b) negative (the factors of core resources and attractions (B), inherited resource (F), created resources (G)). We can also mention the qualifying and amplifying determinants (E) as the factors showing the negative gap in some cases.

D. Destination Competitiveness: The Stakeholders Point of View

If we would like to interpret these findings, it is worth to incorporate all the factors of competitiveness into a generic scheme of destination competitiveness (Figure 6). This scheme is simplified version of Ritchie & Crouch’s model and Dwyer & Kim’s model showing the relations between the factors of competitiveness.

As we have already mentioned the Czech tourism development strategies are heavily focused on reaching better competitive position via development of destination management & marketing. It means that most of their strategic priorities are concentrated

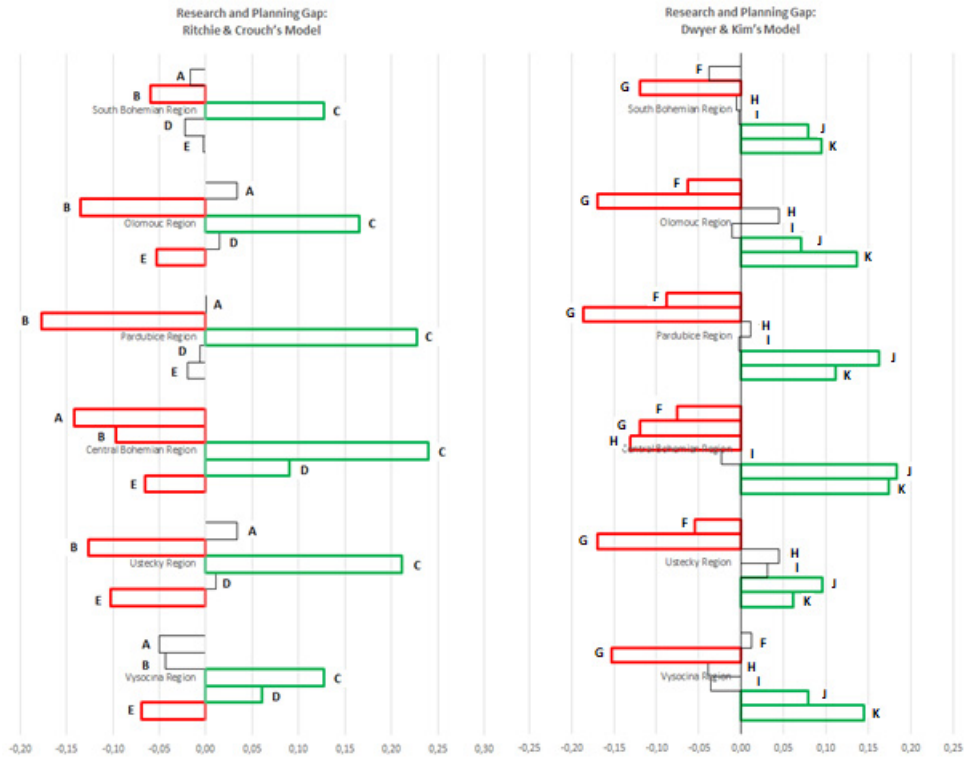


Figure 5. Research and Planning Gap: Summary (Average)

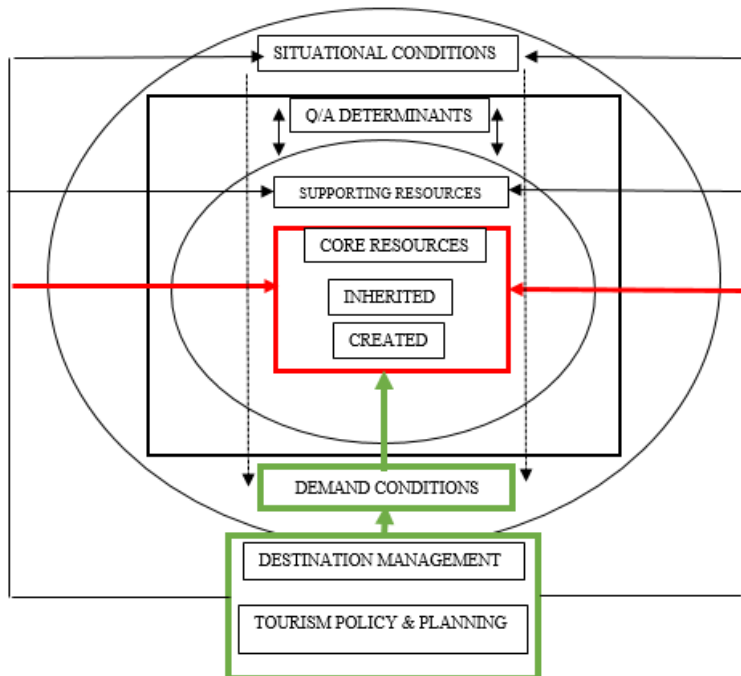


Figure 6. Generic Scheme of Tourism Destination Competitiveness Models

on realization of various management & marketing activities.

This predominant strategic orientation corresponds with the importance of correlating factors of competitiveness which has been proved by number of researchers. As Ritchie and Crouch (2003) note, an attractive, efficient and highly competitive destination cannot exist only by pure coincidence. This requires a well-planned environment that supports and enables the development of tourism. The key to this environment are factors of destination management and tourism development & planning. Crouch (2010) proves the important role of these factors in the concept of destination competitiveness in his further research. Destination management plays a similar role in Dwyer and Kim's model too. Its planning function affects the resources of destination according to both the demand conditions and the situational conditions surrounding the destination, in order to increase the competitiveness of destination and subsequent socio-economic prosperity of the region (Dwyer & Kim, 2003). Moreover, destination management increases the quality and effectiveness of supporting resources in order to support destination's attractiveness. The above mentioned planning function of destination management in relation to the competitiveness of destinations is confirmed by Gomezelj and Mihalič (2008), who applied Dwyer and Kim's model in the environment of Slovenian tourism. As many other authors note, the planning process enables the destination to enhance its competitiveness and maximizes the benefits of tourism at the same time (e.g. Evans, Campbell & Stonehouse, 2003; Edgell, DelMastro, Smith & Swanson, 2008; Goeldner & Ritchie, 2012).

However, the core resources and attractions are widely considered as the factors of competitiveness of the primary importance (e.g. Dwyer & Kim, 2003; Crouch, 2010; Goeldner & Ritchie, 2012). These factors have the tightest relations to destination attractiveness and in such heavily influence success of the destination in tourism market (Buhalis, 2000; Evans, Campbell & Stonehouse, 2003; Goeldner & Ritchie, 2012). Even though their support & development by destination management is a demanding activity,

destination managers must not resign to this task. They should find a way how to use public funds and other development tools to enhance quality and/or quantity of this crucial factor of competitiveness.

An effective way how to react to this demanding task is to activate destination stakeholders – owners of the majority of the core & supporting resources and attractions – and initiative process of collaboration between stakeholders and destination managers. Even though managing tourism with the involvement of regional stakeholders is an extremely difficult and challenging task, Buhalis (2000) and Ritchie and Crouch (2003) emphasize the importance of the involvement of destination stakeholders in tourism development process. Aas, Ladkin and Fletcher (2005) summarize a number of challenges such as increased costs of management processes, difficult identification of legitimate stakeholders, and the stakeholders' limited capacity to participate. In addition, tourism is an open, multi-dimensional industry with a fragmented nature. Quite a number of stakeholder groups with various interests, complex mutual relations and different willingness to co-operate on implementation of policy priorities occur in a given destination.

Nevertheless, destination managers should not resign from their key role of leading and coordinating stakeholders' efforts in which the destination management organization "is the focal organization for ensuring the appropriate use of all the elements of a destination (attractions, amenities, accessibility, human resources, image and price)" (Morrison 2013, p. 5). This is the only way how the DMO can effectively influence the sustainable development of tourism (Buhalis, 2000; Ritchie & Crouch, 2003) and fulfil the tourism policy priorities. Moreover, many authors consider stakeholders' involvement as one of the main principles for achieving sustainable tourism development and a long-term competitive advantage (e.g. Kozak, 2004; Byrd, Cárdenas & Greenwood, 2008).

Incorporation of the stakeholder management activities into the strategic priorities of the Czech regions should be a right effort how to more intensively target the factors of core & support resources and attractions. In addition, tourism policy heavily

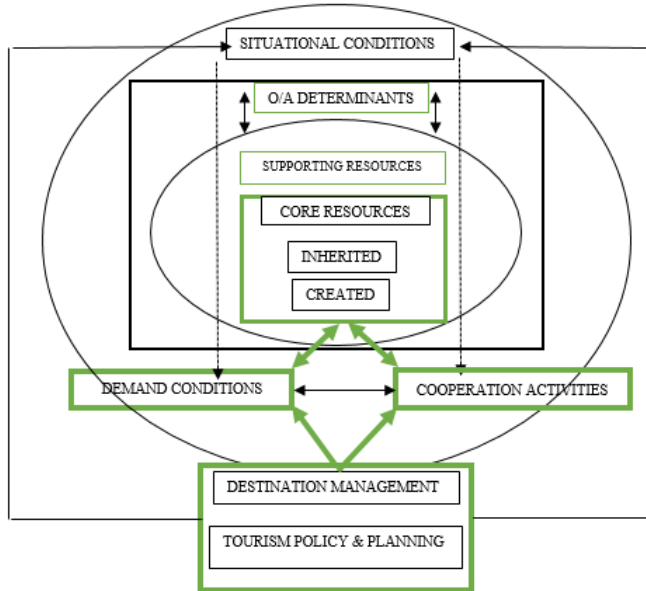


Figure 7. Generic Scheme of Tourism Destination Competitiveness Models (Modification)

supported by destination stakeholders could be a significant amplifying determinant. From the point of view of tourism destination competitiveness model, collaboration with destination stakeholders could play a role of a mediator between the factors of destination management and the factors of core & supporting resources, and the qualifying and amplifying determinants as well. This concept is depicted in the following figure (Figure 7) which modifies scheme in Figure 6.

V. Conclusion

The paper deals with the issue of tourism destination competitiveness and its assessment by the factors of competitiveness. It reflects the fifteen years' history of two most cited models of tourism destination competitiveness - the Conceptual Model of Destination Competitiveness developed by Ritchie and Crouch, and the Integrated Model of Destination Competitiveness developed by Dwyer and Kim. The paper tracks an

evolution of the models over the past years by comparing their application in research and planning practice.

The review-based part of the research proves persisting validity of the models. The analyzed research papers follow their structure and content including all main categories of the factors of competitiveness. As the analysis showed, the factors under the increased research concern are related to the core resources and attractions, respectively the inherited and created resources. These factors are considered to be a fundamental basis for destination competitiveness. Using the resource-based point of view, the majority of the research papers also closely examines the factors related to destination management & planning as the factors having power to influence a structure of the main attractors for visitors. When taking date of origin of the models into consideration, the research surprisingly finds just a small number of the models' modifications and relatively low effort to strive for extending the original set of the competitiveness factors beyond the original scope. Nevertheless, the factors concerning the information & communication

technologies, and destination authenticity & identity are becoming in researchers' spotlight. These factors - closely correlating with global tourism trends - have a potential to significantly influence destination's competitive position in near future.

The paper also explores the application of the models in planning practice. It uses the qualitative case study approach to analyze how the general factors of competitiveness are reflected in real-life tourism development planning of six Czech self-governing regions. The analysis reveals strong management & marketing orientation of the tourism development strategies. On the other hand, the strategies are much less focused on the factors related to destinations' resources and attractions. Despite the importance of management and marketing activities, proved by many authors, support & development of the main destination's resources must not be missed out. The resources have the tightest relations to destination attractiveness and in such they determine position on tourism market. Even the good-quality marketing activities cannot be fully sufficient when the resources suffer from insufficient support by destination managers.

Taking the difficulties in a direct support of destination's resources and attractions into consideration, the paper suggests incorporating the factor of stakeholder collaboration into a game. Concentration on this factor should significantly help destination managers to indirectly improve quality and/or quantity of the resources owned by destination stakeholders. In such a way, the intensive collaboration with destination stakeholders has a potential to play a role of a mediator between the factors of destination management and the factors of core & supporting resources, and the qualifying and amplifying determinants as well. As many authors declare, this is the right way how to reach a long-term competitive advantage and thus to improve a competitive position of tourism destination.

Despite the limitations correlating with the case study approach which has been applied, the research indicates rising need for updating the models of tourism destination competitiveness to adjust them to today's global tourism trends and planning practice

at the same time. Moreover, the rising importance of stakeholders' involvement in sustainable tourism development should be reflected by the models as well. This demanding task is a valid stimulus for future research resulting to redesign of the models for tourism environment of the second decade of 21st century.

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