Attributes of Destination Competitiveness of Sri Lanka: Tourism Service Provider Perspective

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Abstract.

The ability of the destination to attract possible tourists to its region and satisfy their needs is defined as destination competitiveness. It is the ability of a given destination to sustaining its market share and power, protecting, and developing it in time. However, the literature indicates that there are no commonly agreed attributes of destination competitiveness, which might differ from destination to destination, sometimes countries to countries. Thus, development of country specific attributes is important. In this context, the purpose of this paper is to review the main attributes of competitiveness highlighted in the general literature while confirming the special issues involved in exploring the notion of destination competitiveness as emphasized by scholars. The outcome of the study can empirically confirm set of attributes that can be used to measure the competitiveness of Sri Lanka as a tourist destination. The study identifies 121 competitiveness attributes through the literature survey and evaluated by "experts" judgment. The results of the expert judgment then statistically tested by 133 Tourism Service Providers selected via convenience sampling method to identify which attributes can create the highest determinant impact on the destination competitiveness of Sri Lanka. 46 attributes were found to have determinant measures statistically significantly greater than

average. This becomes a steppingstone to validate the policy, marketing, socio-economic decisions regarding the destination competitiveness of Sri Lanka.

Keywords: Tourism, Tourist destination, Destination competitiveness, Competitiveness attributes

Introduction

The World Tourism Organization confirmed that the number of international tourist arrivals worldwide in 2018 reached 1.4 billion. The year 2018 also marked the seventh year in a row where the growth in tourism exports (+4%) exceeded the growth in merchandise exports (+3%). Given this rapid pace of growth, the prediction that international arrivals will reach 1.8 billion by 2030 could also be conservative (Calderwood and Soshkin, 2019). Today, tourism has evolved to its highest level and is now recognized together as the world's most economically significant industry. Highly specialized market segments have developed for both leisure and business travel (SLTDA, 2020) and have become a major contribution to the GDP of the country (CBSL, 2019).

As the tourism industry has shifted from inter firm competitiveness to inter-destination competitiveness due to globalization, managers of destinations must be able to measure their competitiveness, to identify their strengths and weaknesses to develop their future strategies. Existing and potential visitation to any destination is directly linked to the destination's overall competitiveness, however, that is needed to be defined or measured. In this context, it is argued that any destination needs to ensure, its overall attractiveness, and the tourist experience must be superior to that of the many alternative destinations open to potential visitors to safeguard its competitive advantage. In other words, "Destination Competitiveness".

Destination competitiveness is that the ability of a destination to extend tourism expenditure increasingly attract visitors while providing them with satisfying, memorable experiences and to try 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 (Aziz et al. 2014). Emerging economies are contributing larger proportions of travelers to the present global trend and are getting increasingly desirable as destinations as they show greater competitiveness in Travel and Tourism (Calderwood and Soshkin, 2019).

Development of a destination competitiveness model ensures stakeholders of tourism, to identify key strengths and weaknesses of its destination from the visitor perspective. Further, it is noted that managing destination competitiveness has become an important discussion (Buhalis 2000; Dwyer and Kim 2004; Hassan 2000; and Kozak 1999). On the other hand, general models, frameworks, and processes on destination competitiveness are tested and available for schoolers and policymakers. In this context, managing destination competitiveness has become a major topic of interest (Ahmed and Krohn 1990; Buhalis 2000; Ritchie and Crouch 2010; Dwyer and Kim 2004; Hassan 2000; Kozak 1999). Theories, frameworks, models, or processes that can assist in guiding the approach to this challenge offer the potential to provide some clarity and rigor to a complex management task.

Though the competitiveness models have been discussed in the literature, it is not well addressing the destination competitiveness for a specific country. All the models in the tourist destination competitiveness focused only on the general model. Especially a tourist destination may identify as "an amalgam of individual products and experience opportunities that combine to form a total experience of the area visited" (Pritchard, and Smith, 2000). It is a total experience of a visitor that is relevant to a particular destination and it difficult to generalized for other destinations. As such, there is a lack of a model which describes the special consideration relevant to determine a country as a competitive destination.

Sri Lanka is a small country where traveler can experience the entire Sri Lanka within two-week times compared to countries like India, USA and Australia. Therefore, positioning strategy for the country as a competitive tourist destination should be consider as a single country in the international

tourism market like Singapore or Thailand. To do that it is important to identify the attributes which makes country more competitive than the other competitive countries. Thus, attributes for destination competitiveness of Sri Lanka are important. In this context, the study aims to review the literature on attributes of destination competitiveness of Sri Lanka and empirically confirm attributes of destination competitiveness of Sri Lanka. This insight is important to policymakers to ensure Sri Lanka tourism competitiveness in world tourism.

Literature Review

Tourism is a social, cultural, and economic phenomenon that entails the movement of people to countries or places outside their usual environment for personal or business/professional purposes (Hasan and Jobaid, 2014). The tourism industry is a global concept. In general, tourism is defined as a concept of people visiting a particular place for sightseeing, visiting relatives and friends, taking a vacation, or having a good time. They may spend their leisure time engaging in different activities like sporting, sunbathing, chatting, riding, touring, reading, or simply enjoying the environment.

This concept further expanded includes tourism as people who are participating in a convention, a business conference, or some other kind of business or professional activity, as well as those who are taking a study tour under an expert guide or performing some quiet research project or study. The United Nations World Tourism Organization (UNWTO) has defined the concept of tourism beyond the traditional image of "holiday-making". The officially accepted definition is "Tourism comprises the activities of persons traveling to and staying in places outside their usual environment for less than one consecutive year for leisure, business, and other purposes". (UNWTO,2019). The term usual environment is intended to exclude trips within the area of usual residence, frequent and regular trips between the residence and the workplace, and other community trips of a routine character.

Tourist destination

Mika (2012) defines tourist destinations in two perspectives: supply and demand. From a supply perspective, a tourist destination is an area with concentrated tourist-type offers. On the other hand, demand perspective its portraits, how tourist selects the destination as a place to visit. Existing research literature incorporates both meanings. The prevailing view remains that a tourist destination is either a spatial unit with administrative boundaries or a system associated with a specific geographic area. According to Mika (2012), the growth of a tourist destination is viewed primarily through the lens of quantitative characteristics such as the number of tourists, number of business entities, and tourist expenditures as well as purely economic benefits such as the rate of return on specific tourist offers. Other definitions describe a tourist destination as an actor in the marketplace offering well-defined products for sale or as a strategic business unit offering a well-defined chain of tourist services or products.

According to Mika (2012), two basic types of tourist destinations exist as (a) Areas, places, or localities that specialize in serving tourist traffic and that are dominated by tourist functions, such as coastal resorts, ski resorts towns that specialize in entertainment services and (b) Multifunctional areas, that incorporate tourist services into their general infrastructure, viz. metropolitan areas, historic cities as well as resort towns that develop thanks to tourism and other aspects of social and economic activity. Finally, it can be concluded that tourist destinations have a functional relationship with their immediate surroundings as well as regions.

Tourism destination competitiveness

To be competitive, any organization must provide products and services, which must satisfy the never-ending desires of the modern consumer. For such products and services, customers or clients are willing to pay a fair return or price (Hanafiah and Zulkifly, 2019). Destination competitiveness would seem to be linked to the power of a destination to deliver goods and services that perform better than other destinations on those aspects of the tourism experience considered to be important by tourists (Dwyer and Kim, 2010). In this context, various factors that are affected to being competitive

for a destination can be identified. Azizet et al. (2014), suggest that destinations must put the environment first, make tourism a leading sector, strengthen the distribution channels in the marketplace and build a dynamic private sector. Because of the complexity of tourism competitiveness, the conclusion is that what makes a tourism destination competitive is, its ability to extend tourism expenditure, to increasingly attract visitors while providing them with satisfying, memorable experiences, and to try 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 (Ritchie and Crouch, 2003, as cited in Azizet et al. 2014).

Hence the success of the tourism destination development depends on both the supply side and demand side. According to Dimoska et al. (2012) tourism destination competitiveness from the demand side (from the perspective of actual and potential tourists) is closely related to the quality of the whole tourism experience in that tourism destination and from the supply side (which present a connection of various elements such as attractions, cultural heritage, services, leisure activities, infrastructures) its competitiveness is more concerned with the economic benefits of the destination (revenues, employment, sustainable growth of the destination and the firms within this destination). According to Azizet et al. (2014), competitiveness is directly associated with the high number of tourists and high generated tourism revenue for a destination.

In Literature competitiveness of a tourism destination discussed two main concepts namely, the concept of "comparative" and "competitive advantage". As Omerzel, (2006) cited according to Ritchie and Crouch (1993), the comparative advantage seems to relate to things like climate, beautiful scenery, attractive beaches, wildlife, etc. Comparative factors close to prime tourism supply (natural, cultural, and social attractiveness). It can never reproduce them with an equivalent attractiveness.

Deliberating to Ritchie and Crouch (1993) as cited in Dwyer and Kim, (2010) for a tourism destination while competitive advantage would relate to skills of workers, tourism infrastructure, the quality of management, the

talents of the workforce, government policy, etc. competitive factors refer to subordinate tourism supply. These factors could be produced and improved by the tourist firms or by the respective governing organization. Both kinds of factors are co-dependent. Without subordinate tourism supply, the tourism destination is not able to sell attractions. As such primary tourism supplies on a tourist market, and without primary supply, the tourism infrastructure is not useful.

However, another view of destination competitiveness relates to the economic prosperity of the residents of the destination. Destinations can be competitive for attracting international visitors or investments, promoting the lifestyle of the place, generate peace and understanding, or for various other purposes at the end, the economic prosperity of residents of a destination is a goal of destination (Dwyer and Kim,2010). In this context, the competitiveness of the destination is an outcome of increasing the standard of living of its residents. This indirectly supported to maintenance and increase the real income of its citizens, usually reflected in the standard of living of the country.

The development of destinations indeed depends on foreign tourists and domestic tourists. The issues of competition and competitiveness are a key part of any development plan for a tourist destination. Chambers and Lagiewski, (2010) noted that tourist development may be defined as all quantitative and qualitative changes taking place within a tourist destination resulting from land management geared towards tourists, changes in incoming tourist migrations, changes in the types of tourists visiting, and changes in its social and economic characteristics caused by tourist flow and tourist expenditures.

Factors of the Destination Competitiveness
According to Popesku and Pavlovic (2012), the concept of the countries' competitiveness was introduced by Michael Porter. The model of competitiveness introduced by the same author is based on the national competitiveness diamond and it served as the basis for many tourism destinations competitiveness models. The four factors of Porter's

competitive diamond are (1) factor conditions, (2) demand conditions, (3) related and supporting industries, and (4) firm strategy, structure, and rivalry. Factor conditions include resources that will be endowed. This includes mineral resources, agricultural resources, forestry. fishery resources and environmental resources or created/community's contribution to production, such as skilled labor or infrastructure necessary to compete in the given industry. The utilization of Porter's diamond model in explaining destination competitiveness has much potential, this is particularly evidenced in Ritchie and Crouch's (1993) Calgary model, wherein they extend the model into a more comprehensive framework to define tourism destination competitiveness.

Researchers have agreed that Ritchie and Crouch's model of destination competitiveness (2003) is now arguably the foremost comprehensive and most rigorous of all models of this sort currently available. The most detailed work undertaken by tourism researchers on overall destination tourism competitiveness is that of Crouch and Ritchie (1995, 1999) and Ritchie and Crouch (2000, 2003), who significances that, in absolute terms, the foremost competitive destination brings about the best success which means, the best well-being for its residents on a sustainable basis. Crouch and Ritchie began to study the nature and structure of destination competitiveness in 1992 (Crouch and Ritchie 1994, 1995, 1999; Ritchie and Crouch 1993, 2000a, 2000b). Based on Ritchie and Crouch's (1993) Calgary model, it could be concluding that competition between tourist destinations is based on various comparative and competitive elements and a competitive destination contributes to the well-being of a destination and its residents. Following this, maximizing a destination's competitiveness in the tourism market depends on a destination's capability to organize its resources efficiently.

The Calgary model incorporated thirty-six (36) determinants of Tourism Destination Competitiveness, defined by five major components (1) supporting factors and resources (infrastructure, accessibility of the destination, facilitating resources, hospitality, enterprise, degree of political will), (2) core resources and attractors (physiography and climate, culture

and history, market ties, mix of activities, special events, entertainment, tourism superstructure) (3) destination management (resources stewardship, destination marketing, availability of finance and venture capital to tourism, organization, human resource development, quality of service, visitor management, information/research component), (4) destination policy, planning and development (planning and development of the destination with particular economic, social, and other societal goals) and; (5) qualifying determinants (location, interdependencies, safety, security, awareness, image, brand, and value).

However, Dwyer and Kim (2006) argued that Ritchie and Crouch's model was not sufficient in accounting for Tourism Destination Competitiveness, as only tourism supply factors were used while the demand factors were neglected. Consequently, Dwyer and Kim (2006) adopted Ritchie and Crouch Calgary model but proposed a different approach to identifying the determinants and indicators for Tourism Destination Competitiveness. According to Dwyer and Kim model, the tourist destination competitiveness is conceptualized as a function of six categories of attributes, which are as follows: endowed resources, created resources, supporting resources, destination management, demand factors, and situational factors. Each of the attributes' categories does include sub-attributes which in total summarize 85 elements, structured as a decision-making tree. Compared to Crouch and Ritchie model with the integrated model of Dwyer and Kim this model considers both the demand and supply sides. According to Hanafiah and Zulkifly (2019), Dwyer and Kim's model explicitly suggested more linkages between the numerous elements of Tourism Destination Competitiveness in comparison to Ritchie and Crouch's (1993) Calgary model.

In the meantime, Omerzel, (2006) proposed another model on destination competitiveness, and determinants are classified under six main factors. Those are "Created Resources", "Inherited Resources", "Supporting Factors", "Destination Management", "Demand Conditions" and "Situational Conditions". Inherited resources could be classified as "Natural and Cultural". The Natural Resources include physiography, climate, flora,

and fauna, etc. The culture and heritage, like the destinations' history, customs, architectural features, and traditions enhance the attractiveness of a tourism destination. The same idea has been identified by Armenski et al. (2012) and Azizet et al. (2014) as well.

The summary of the destination competitiveness concept matrix given in table 1 and the variable matrix given in table 2

Table 1 - Concept Matrix

No	Source	Source Scholar's identification of the Concept	Author's definition
01	Poter, (1990)	Factor conditions	**Endowed Resources** These are the fundamental reasons why visitors choose one particular destination over another. These factors are the key motivators for visitation to a destination. Endowed Resources, in turn, can be classified as Natural and Heritage or Cultural
	Ritchie and Crouch, (2003)	Core resources and attractors	
	Dwyer and Kim (2003)	Endowed resources	
	Omerzel, (2006)	Inherited resources	
	Armenski et.al (2012)	Inherited resources	
02	Dwyer and Kim (2004)	Created resource	**Created resource** Resources are made from the endowed resources of the destination. These factors are mainly used to generate an economic benefit to the destination Eg. – Natural resources beautiful beach areas in the coastal line created beautiful sceneries, surfing, Heritage of the destination created museums.
	Armenski et al. (2012)	Created resource	
03	Dwyer and Kim, (2004)	Supporting Resources	**Supporting Resources** Supporting factors and resources means these factors made support or provide a foundation upon which a successful tourism industry can be established.
	Ritchie and Crouch, (2010)	Supporting Factor	
	Omerzel, (2006)	Supporting Factor	
04	Ritchie and Crouch, (2010)	Destination Management	**Destination Management**

	Omerzel, (2006)	Destination Management	Activities that implement, daily, and adapt best to the constraints or opportunities imposed and presented.
	Azizet et. al, (2014).	Destination Management	
	Dwyer and Kim, (2004)	Destination Management	
05	Ritchie and Crouch, (2010)	Qualifying and amplifying determinants	**Situational conditions** Forces in the wider external environment that impact upon destination competitiveness. Situational conditions relate to economic, social, cultural, demographic, environmental, political, legal, governmental, regulatory, technological, and competitive trends and events that impact the way firms and other organizations in the destination do business and present both opportunities and threats to their operations.
	Omerzel, (2006)., Mazilu, and Popescu,(2010)	Situational conditions	
06	Dwyer et. al, (2004)	Demand	**Demand** As a tourist destination overall demand for the destination could be identified as a demand factor. If we want demand to be effective, tourists must be aware of what a destination has to offer.

Source: compiled by authors based on literature review 2020

Table 2 - Variable Matrix

Main factor	Sub factors	Literature source
Core Resources and Attractors	Comfortable climate for tourism., Natural landscape, wonderful scenery, Cultural and historical attractions, Artistic and architectural design, Traditional arts and crafts, Exotic and unique local custom, Unspoiled nature, National parks/Nature reserves, Historic/Heritage sites and museums, Artistic/Architectural features, Variety of cuisine, Cultural precincts and (folk) villages, Flora and fauna	Dwyer and Kim, (2003), Omerzel, (2006), Ritchie and Crouch, (2010)

Created Resources	The range of available activities, entertainment, Amusement/Theme parks, Community support for special events ,Nightlife (e. g. bars, discos, dancing) ,Airport efficiency/quality, Local tourism transportation efficiency/quality, Water-based activities (e. g. swimming, surfing, boating, fishing),Entertainment (e. g. theatre, galleries, cinemas) ,Diversity of shopping experience ,Special events/festivals, Tourist guidance and information ,Existence of tourism programs for visitors ,Winter based activities (skiing, skating) ,Adventure activities (e. g. rafting, skydiving, bungee jumping), Sports facilities (e. g. golf, tennis) ,Recreation facilities (e. g. parks, leisure facilities, horse riding) ,Congress tourism ,Foodservice facilities ,Accommodation (variety/quality) ,Nature-based activities (e. g. bushwalking, bird watching) ,Casino ,Variety of cuisine	Omerzel, (2006) Ritchie and Crouch, (2010)
Supporting Factors	Adequacy of infrastructure to meet visitor needs, Health/Medical facilities to serving tourists, Financial institutions and currency exchange facilities, Telecommunication system for tourists, Local transport systems, Waste disposal. Electricity supply, Distance/Flying time to the destination from key origins, Direct/Indirect flights to a destination, Ease/Cost of obtaining an entry visa, Ease of combining travel to a destination with travel to other destinations, Frequency/Capacity of access transport to the destination, Tourism/Hospitality firms that have well-defined performance standards in service delivery, Visitor satisfaction with the quality of service, Friendliness of residents towards tourists, Existence of resident hospitality development programs, Resident support for the tourism industry, Ease of communication between tourists and residents, Animation, Health/medical facilities to serve tourists , Attitudes of customs/immigration officials, The efficiency of customs/immigration , Visa requirements as an impediment to visitation , Destination links with major origin markets (e. g. business, trade, sporting), Financial institutions and currency exchange facilities , Quality of tourism	Dwyer and Kim, (2003), Omerzel, (2006), Ritchie and Crouch, (2010), Armenski, et. al, (2012)

	services , Telecommunication system for tourists , Accessibility of destination , Communication and trust between tourists and residents , The hospitality of residents towards tourists	
Destination Management	Cleanliness in the destination, Safety and security, Public bathrooms and restrooms, Multilingual signage, Easy access to get destination map/ leaflets, Favorable policies to tourists, Preservation of cultural heritage, Conservation of local tradition, Environmental conservation, Efficiencies of tourism and hospitality staff, The extent of foreign investment in the destination tourism industry , Government co-operation in the development of tourism policy, Public sector recognition of the importance of sustainable tourism development , Quality of research input to tourism policy, planning, development, The destination has clear policies in social tourism (e. g. disabled, aged), Public sector commitment to tourism/hospitality education and training, Private sector commitment to tourism/hospitality education and training, Level of co-operation (e. g. Strategic alliances) between firms in destination, Development of effective destination branding ,Tourism development integrated with overall industry development, Existence of adequacy tourism education programs, Developing and promoting new tourism products Destination vision reflecting resident values , Destination vision reflecting stakeholder values ,Educational structure/profile of employees in tourism ,Destination vision reflecting community values ,Quality in performing tourism services ,Destination vision reflecting tourist values, Entrepreneurial qualities of local tourism businesses ,The efficiency of tourism/hospitality firms ,Private sector recognition of sustainable tourism development importance, Tourism/hospitality training responsive to visitor needs ,Appreciation of service quality importance , Resident support for tourism development	Kim and Wicks, (2014), Omerzel, (2006), Ritchie and Crouch, (2010), Goffi, (2013).
Situational Conditions/	Co-operation between the public and private sector, Access to venture capital, Investment environment, Use of e-commerce, Manager capabilities, Value for	Omerzel, (2006), Ritchie and

Qualifying and Amplifying Determinants	money in shopping items, Value for money in accommodation, Value for money in destination tourism experiences, Political stability, Security/safety of visitors, Safety and security, Level of visitor safety in the destination, Incidence of crimes against tourists in the destination.	Crouch, (2010)
Demand Factors	Destination perception, Destination preferences, Destination awareness, International awareness of the destination, International awareness of destination products, 'Fit' between destination products and tourist preferences, Overall destination image	Dwyer and Kim, (2004), Omerzel, (2006)

Source: compiled by authors based on literature review 2020

Based on the above 02 matrixes authors designed the rest of the methodology of this study.

Research Methodology
Case study

The study focused on Sri Lanka as a tourist destination. Sri Lanka is a beautiful tropical island in the Indian Ocean, located between latitudes 5°55′ and 9°51′ N and longitudes 79°41′ and 81°53′ E. It is separated from India by the Palk Strait, which is 32 km wide at its narrowest. Strategically located at the crossroads of eastern and western sea routes, Sri Lanka continues to function as a simple point of entry to South Asia.

As a tourism destination, Sri Lanka can compete successfully with other destinations partly due to its pivotal geographical position. Tourism is one of Sri Lanka's oldest industries. For centuries, silk route merchants, traders, and sailors traveling between East Asia and Europe visited Sri Lanka because the island has always been a perfect destination to transit through and visit. The country's diversity is great albeit it's a comparatively small island, making these diverse experiences more accessible. There are several highly religious sites for the religious devotee and unbelievable historical tourist attractions for history buffs in Sri Lanka. Whether it be end-route to a perfect surf break, visiting a historical site, or on a pilgrimage, lush greenery and exotic animals are never far away. Thus, the country itself

owns several competitive factors as identified to utilize Sri Lanka as a competitive destination for tourism.

Population and Sample

A two-step analysis procedure was carried out in this study. The first step checklist was carried out among the tourism industry experts in both private and public sectors of the country including 121 attributes (Table 2) identified through the literature review. The aim of this preliminary study was to identity attributes/ variables related to the Sri Lankan context and get a clear vision to formulate the questionnaire of the study. Total of 42 experts' participated in the expert review process. These experts represent the executive staff of Sri Lankan Tourist Development Board, representatives of star class hotels of Sri Lanka, Management staff of the Urban Development Authority, Management staff of the Sri Lanka Museum, Tourist guides, Representative of Travel agency, and selected entrepreneurs of hotel industry of Sri Lanka. Out of 42 experts, the study returns cleaned suitable 27 valid responses.

The factor analysis on streamlined attributes on destination competitiveness was conducted among experts and practitioners and not among tourists, because it is considered that tourists are capable of evaluating those components of destination attractiveness based on the services they consume. According to Enright and Newton, (2004) tourist is less likely to know about, and hence not able to evaluate, those factors that underlie and influence the competitive production of those services, especially because of their status as visitors. Therefore, the research sample for factor analysis was made out of tourism stakeholders on the supply side, namely the tourism industry employees in both government and private sector like brand managers, event managers, hotel managers, directors, lecturers, planners, real estate managers, entrepreneurs, directors in museums, directors in a zoological garden, travel agents, bankers, tourist guides, immigration officers, air hostesses. Thus, the sample consists with all-rounders of the industry who has work experience which is able to represent population of the study. i.e., tourism service providers work in the most tourist attraction cities and places within the country such as Colombo,

Kandy, Galle, Ella, Trincomalee, Anuradhapura, Polonnaruwa, Arugambay, Nuwara-eliya, Sigiriya, Dambulla, Negombo, Pinnawala, Adam's peak and Passikuda. The use of tourism experts as tourism stakeholders has some benefits and advantages. Their knowledge about the entire portfolio of destination competitive resources can help to discover the tourist destination more appropriately. A convenience sampling technique was used to collect data from the sample. A total of 420 questionnaires were distributed using convenient sampling techniques and among them, 133 questionnaires were in completed status and suitable for analysis.

Process of Expert Review
According to Walte and Hetzer, (2012), expert opinions concentrate on driving back the boundaries of debates and controversies. It allows the audience or the readers to take a fresh look at key issues through the eyes of people who know the best, who are on the front line to promote ideas and guidelines based on best practices from experts in their relevant fields.

The researcher has distributed the checklist among the experts using google form/hard copies and had face-to-face interviews with experts. The aim was to get a balanced view on identified attributes. In this process the study revealed that some of the experts noted new attributes on destination competitiveness which were not covered in the literature review. To acomodate experts' view the study consider them to factor analysis. It is also noted that expert were in the doubt on level on adequacy of the some of identified factors to Sri Lankan context. This includes casino, spas, congress tourism, rural tourism as competitive attributes which contradict with Sri Lankan culture, legal framework and the infrastructure facilities. Further, experts were in the opinion that arrtibutes like telecommunication system for tourists, local transport systems, electricity supply, accessibility of destination should come under the main heading of "adequate infrastructure", but not as supporting factors. However, study adhere the principle of "supporting factor" and not "adequate infrastructure" which is defined based on comprehensivie literature review.

Results of the Expert Review

The results of the expert review confirmed that out of a total of 121 variables matrix 47 were identified as the most appropriate variables to the Sri Lankan context. Also, the same expert review proposed 03 new factors namely technology usage (Created Resources), good governance and destination ability for face ~~to~~ the pandemic situation (Situational Conditions). All these variables were considered for the factor analysis.

Process of Factor Analysis

The results of the factor analysis are techniques designed to discover common underlying dimensions or factors in a set of variables and used to summarization and data reduction techniques. Principal components analysis was applied with a varimax rotation using SPSS version 22. Principal axis factoring was also applied and gave fairly similar results.

The initial analysis of the study focused on reliability and validity. Once the reliability and validity are established, the study measures the strength of the factors by using KMO and Bartlett's test. The decision rule of the values which were greater than 0.5. and significance of the factors established at 5% error term. Thereafter, the researchers used the factor extraction techniques and selected variables that have factor loadings of more than 0.3 as the suitable factors to evaluate the destination competitiveness in the Sri Lankan context.

Findings and Discussion

The descriptive analysis of the respondents shows that the age and sector distribution of the respondents both equally distributed. Around 46% were the female and 54% were the male respondents while 49% were working in the private sector and the rest 51% presented the government sector. Therefore, the researchers' opinion was that the sample is not biased for any gender or sector. The majority of respondents were graduates (55%) and 16% are reading for postgraduate studies.

Reliability and Validity of the data

At the beginning of the study appropriateness of measurement, the scale has been checked for its reliability and validity. The reliability was tested using Cronbach's Alpha. The threshold value of Cronbach's was above 0.7 which confirms that the data is valid for further analysis. Under this study reliability of the data checked in 07 main factors including dependent variables and under that it measures 52 (total of independent and dependent sub factors). According to Table 3, Cronbach alpha for all independent variables overall values is exceeding the level of 0.7 and therefore it is confirmed that the data is valid for further analysis. Further, no sub-factors were excluded from the main factor.

Table 3 - Reliability of Independent Variables

Item No	Main Factor	Cronbach's Alpha value	Sub Factors	Cronbach's Alpha if Item Deleted
01	Endowed Resources	0.901	1. Comfortable Climate	0.883
			2. Wonderful Scenery	0.895
			3. Natural Landscape	0.880
			4. Exotic and Unique Local Custom	0.885
			5. Cultural and Historical Attractions	0.898
			6. Variety of Cuisine	0.882
			7. Traditional Arts and Crafts.	0.895
			8. Rich in Flora and Fauna	0.886
			9. Folk Villages	0.906
02	Created Resources	0.895	1. Recreational Facilities	0.877
			2. Night Life	0.905
			3. Entertainment Activities	0.873
			4. Water-Based Activities	0.873
			5. Special Events	0.872
			6. Diversity Shopping Experience	0.887
			7. Nature-Based Activities	0.881
			8. Variety of Museums	0.896
			9. Innovate Technology	0.886

03	Supporting Factors	0.889	1. Health /Medical Facilities	0.876
			2. Adequate Infrastructure	0.919
			3. Quality Tourism Service	0.877
			4. Performance Standards	0.863
			5. Links with Major Origin Markets	0.858
			6. Combining Travel with Other Destinations	0.849
			7. Financial Institution Currency Exchange Facilities	0.860
04	Destination Management	0.960	1. Cleanliness	0.969
			2. Favorable Policies to Tourists	0.955
			3. Conserve the Local Tradition	0.955
			4. Foreign Investments	0.954
			5. Research Input to Tourism Policy Planning Development	0.956
			6. Conserve the Environmental Aspects	0.955
			7. Develop and Promote the New Tourism Products	0.956
			8. Effective Destination Branding	0.958
			9. Countries Vision Reflecting the	0.954

				Tourism Stakeholders Value	
			10.	Private Sector Commitment	0.958
			11.	Government Cooperation	0.955
			12.	Private Sector Involvement for Sustainable Tourism Development	0.955
05	Situational Conditions/ Qualifying and Amplifying Determinants	0.832	1.	Cooperation Between Public and Private Sector	0.780
			2.	Visitor Safety	0.769
			3.	Value for Money	0.783
			4.	Investment Environment	0.819
			5.	Political Stability	0.816
			6.	Good Governance	0.840
			7.	Pandemic Situation	0.842
06	Demand	0.892	1.	Destination Awareness	0.862
			2.	Destination perception	0.813
			3.	Destination Preference	0.865

Source: Research data (2020)

Strength of the relationship

The Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin (KMO) Test is a measure of how suited your data is for Factor Analysis (Glen, 2016). The test measures sampling adequacy for each variable. KMO values between 0.8 and 1 indicate the sampling is adequate (Glen, 2016). To measure the strength of the relationship between Destination Competitiveness and its independent variables researchers had run the KMO and Bartlett's tests. The results are shown in below table 4.

Table 4 - KMO and Bartlett's Test of Sphericity Values

Factor	Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin Measure	Bartlett's Test of Sphericity
	KMO	Significance value
Endowed Resources	0.873	0.000
Created Resources	0.875	0.000
Supporting Factors	0.836	0.000
Destination Management	0.915	0.000
Situational Conditions/Qualifying and amplifying determinants	0.806	0.000
Demand	0.739	0.000
Competitiveness	0.873	0.000

Source: Research data (2020)

Factor analysis

Factor Extraction

Factor analysis is a technique used to compress all constructs and extract the fixed components. Accordingly, before extracting the factors, uni-dimensionality for each indicator was measured. The following tables shown the component matrix for each variable. The level of the coefficient used for factor loading is 0.50 (Hair et al. 2017). Factor loadings greater than 0.3 in the rotated component matrix were selected as the significant factors. Refer Table 5

Table 5 - Component Matrix

Main Factors	Sub factors	Component 1
Endowed Resources	Comfortable climate	0.842
	Wonderful scenery	0.697
	Unique natural landscape	0.873
	Unique local custom	0.809
	Cultural-historical attractions	0.659
	Variety of cuisine	0.836
	Traditional arts and crafts	0.677
	Flora fauna	0.805
	Folk villages	0.539
Created Resources	Recreational facilities	0.824

	Nightlife	0.450
	Entertainment activities	0.852
	Water-based activities	0.859
	Special events	0.868
	Diversity shopping experience	0.693
	Nature-based activities	0.795
	Variety of museums	0.568
	Innovate technology	0.704
Supporting Factors	Health medical facilities	0.754
	Adequate infrastructure	0.472
	Quality tourism service	0.754
	Performance standards	0.844
	Links with major origin markets	0.890
	Combining travel with other destinations	0.939
	Financial institution currency exchange facilities	0.872
Destination Management	Cleanliness	0.274
	Favorable policies to tourists	0.909
	Conserve the local tradition	0.916
	Foreign investments	0.926
	Research input to tourism policy planning development	0.866
	Conserve the environmental aspects	0.884
	Develop and promote the new tourism products	0.848
	Effective destination branding	0.798
	Countries vision reflecting the tourism stakeholders value	0.910
	Private sector commitment	0.811
	Government cooperation	0.902
	Private sector involvement for sustainable tourism development	0.880
Situational Conditions	Cooperation between the public and private sector	0.869
	Visitor safety	0.900
	Value for money	0.844
	Investment environment	0.682
	Political stability	0.653

	Good governance	0.470
	Pandemic situation	0.456
Demand	Destination awareness	0.899
	Destination perception	0.927
	Destination Preference	0.897
Competitiveness	Best tourist destination	0.733
	The first choice to visit	0.821
	Lifetime experience	0.809
	Unique to the world	0.891
	Repeat tourists	0.811
	Recommended for international tourists	0.758

Source: Research data (2020)

As per the above table 5 factor loadings that were greater than 0.3 were selected as the suitable factors to evaluate the destination competitiveness in Sri Lankan Context. Therefore, Cleanliness (0.275) under the Destination Management factor was not considered for factor analysis.

Folk villages (0.539), Nightlife (0.450), Adequate infrastructure (0.472), Good governance (0.470), Pandemic situation (0.456) were the effect of the least significant factors on the competitiveness of Sri Lanka. The policy markers or decision-makers should pay attention to enhance the significance of mentioned attributes when making future destination marketing policies and plans. The interesting factor is that in Sri Lankan context cleanliness is not a significant factor that makes the county more competitive than others.

On the other hand, combining travel with other destinations (0.939), favourable policies to tourists (0.909) conserve the local tradition (0.916), foreign investments (0.926), government cooperation (0.902), visitor safety (0.900), destination perception (0.927) attributes contribute the most significant effect to make Sri Lanka as a competitive destination. Since existing and potential tourism inflows to any destination are invisibly linked to the destination's overall competitiveness. Therefore, the destination should maintain the level of significance of said attributes to remain competitive in the market.

Finally, the development of a set of competitiveness indicators can serve as a valuable tool in identifying what indicators or factors influence tourists in their decision to visit the country.

Conclusion

International tourism conditions have changed significantly, and it has become necessary to address these challenges to remain competitive in the international tourism market. The competitiveness of a tourist destination is an important factor that positively influences the growth of the market share. Therefore, stakeholders of the industry have to identify and explore competitive advantages and analyse the actual competitive position of the destination in the tourism industry. There exist different approaches that model destination competitiveness. More research needs to be undertaken on the importance of different attributes of destination competitiveness (Omerzel 2006). There is a need for more detailed empirical studies of consumer preferences and the determinants of travel decisions (Omerzel 2006). Although the tourism industry is expected to continue to grow, poor planning and management of this growth and limited diversity of markets and products are contributing to a lack of value-adding opportunities and limiting per capita visitor expenditure to the economy.

This research provides guideline for destination marketers, destination policy makers, destination planners, and real estate developers in the tourism field to identify the factors affecting the competitiveness of a tourism destination.

According to the reliability test, the reliability of data was very high. To prove the relationship between subfactors and the main factors which determine the destination competitiveness a factor analysis was done and it confirmed that except one factor other 46 factors affected to make Sri Lanka a competitive destination. As policymakers or decision takers should concern about the identified factors from this research. Also, the researchers concluded that it is required to take necessary measures to enhance the

positive impact of these factors to make Sri Lanka more competitive in the industry.

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