Exploring Core Factors Influencing Tourism Destination Brand Competitiveness of Agra: A Domestic Tourist Perspective

Pankaj Chauhan, Prof. (Dr.) Tripurari Pandey
Dr. APJ Abdul Kalam Technical University, Lucknow
Ajay Kumar Garg Institute of Management, Ghaziabad

ABSTRACT

Purpose – The present research study aims to explore key factors that determine competitiveness of a tourism destination brand.

Design/ methodology/ approach – For this research different model of tourism destination competitiveness has been examined to subjectively select the most suitable variables. For this study, fifteen variables were selected to explore key factors contributing to the competitiveness of tourism destination. Principal Component Analysis was used to extract main factors by using these fifteen variables. Reliability test was conducted to ensure the consistency in the data. The analysis was carried out by using IBM SPSS-Var.-21.0. A sample of 182 domestic tourists was selected from different places of tourism activities in Agra, Uttar Pradesh, India. The data collection activity was performed between June 11th and 16th, 2024.

Findings – Specific four factors were identified with the help of principal component analysis. Each factor structure has been analyzed to evaluate the importance of the factor.

Research limitations/ implications – This research study focuses solely on the city of Agra. However, after analyzing and interpreting the data, it become clear that future studies should cover more locations with in Agra. Additionally, it was also realized that the sample size can be increased to included a wider range of tourist. From methodology point of view, this research could be expanded to develop a model using structural equation modeling.

Originality Value – The findings of this research study will be valuable for number of industries that contribute to tourism such as hospitality, travel & logistics and banking. The factors and their composition that are obtained as the outcome of this study can be useful for government institutions who are related to tourism activities in Agra.

Key Words – Agra Tourism, Tourism destination competitiveness, Tourism destination, Domestic tourism, Tourist behaviour

Introduction

Tourism industry plays important role in the economic development as well as in the promotion of socio-cultural aspect of a country. Tourism contribution to GDP (India) in year 2023 has crossed INR 19.00 TN which is approximately 10% more as compare to the data of 2019 (WTC, 2024). Tourism also contributes to the employability. According to published research on employability that has examined various datasets of employability and tourism found that tourism accounts for approximately 8% to 10% of the total employment in India (Kesavan, Dharmalingam, Thamarine, & Anuradha, 2020). Tourism industry is a shadow to many other allied industries such as telecom, insurance, banking, transport etc. Success of tourism industry is an indication of the success of other related allied industries. India has a range of tourism destinations such as heritage destinations, wild life destinations, religious destinations etc. (Guruprasad, 2015) All these different destinations compete against each other on various parameters. These competing parameters also affect the competitiveness of the destination and many a times act as major criteria for the selection of a destination by the tourist.

According to the report on Travel and Tourism Development Index (TTDI) published by World Economic Forum for the year 2024, Indian tourism industry ranked 39th out of total 119 countries that are the included in this index (Tiwari, 2024) . India has demographic dividend because the population of India resulted into sufficiently large domestic tourists. This research study attempts to explore the key determinants that affect the competitiveness of the tourism destinations with reference to the city of Agra, Uttar Pradesh, India. Tourism industry is a vibrant industry in terms of its size and

composition. (Accenture, 2019) Tourism contribute to the development of local residents. For Agra city, tourism can contribute to the development of this city. If policy backed efforts can be done for the promotion of the tourism at Agra then tourism can create sustainable development.

Literature Review

Tourism Destination

The geographically defined physical places that offers tourism services is termed as tourism destination. Tourism destination has to have some attraction that creates a center of attention for the tourist. Tourism destinations can be a monument, bird century (Cretu, 2011), Wild life century, heritage site, mega structures of ancient India etc. These entire destinations compete to attract more tourists at their sites. Agra is among prominent tourism destination. More than a dozen destinations have been visited by the tourist. Some of the famous tourism destination sites at Agra includes Taj Mahal, Fatehpr Sikri, Agra fort, Mehatab bagh, Tomb of Akbar, Jama Masjid, etc.

Tourism Destination Competitiveness

The potential of a tourism destination to attract tourists represent the tourism destination competitiveness. Competitiveness of the destination can also be defined in terms of its capacity to persuade visitors to spend more as compared to the other destinations. (Elizabeth & Barber, 2016)The ability of a destination to offer better experience, rewarding moments and above better level of satisfaction as compared to other are some of the measure of competitiveness.

Various location specific attributes and their uniqueness for the tourist are also used to measure the degree of competitiveness of a destination. Since tourism destinations by nature are highly differentiated from each other so competitiveness can be explored by detailed study of the multidimensional characteristics on comparative basis. (Kanupriya, Kaur, & Rita, 2016) Tourism destination competitiveness is about how well a destination can maintain the strong perception in its favour as compared to other destinations. The review of literature about the competitiveness of the tourism destinations suggest that the measurement of the competitiveness is subjective in nature and the effectiveness in the evaluation of the competitiveness largely depends upon the methodology adopted by the researcher. The competitiveness of a tourism destination is affected by the demographic, socio-cultural, political, legal, technological and environmental variables. Physical infrastructure and safety of tourist are among highly important variables in the measurement of the competitiveness of the tourism destination (Guruprasad, 2015). The quality of tourist services, degree of hygienic practices, affordable accommodations and overall expense on a tourism packages also play important role in the measurement of the competitiveness.

Various models and frameworks have been proposed to measure the competitiveness of the tourism destinations. Porter's diamond model is one such model that actually proposed to evaluate the advantage of a nation for the international business but the variables of this models have been used to compare the competitiveness of the tourism destinations (Porter, 1991) . This model explain primary factors secondary factors that affect the comparative position of one location against the other location. A model developed by De Keyser and Vanhove in 1994 described that the government policy on tourism, supply and demand side factors related to the destination, transport facilities and some other macroeconomic factors are highly important in the measurement of the competitiveness of the tourism destination (Keyser & Vanhoye, 1994) . Kim explained four source of tourism competitiveness. These include some primary sources such as tourism agents, resources of the destination, secondary sources such a tax and expenditure related to destination, government policies, tertiary sources like physical infrastructure that support the tourism activities at the destination, marketing and publicity, quaternary sources that cover economic aspect of the tourism like its contribution in the economic development and employment (Kim, 1998). Four factor based model was proposed by Hassan. His model focused on the comparative advantage of the tourism destination, environmental concern, structure of the industry and demand factors (Hassan, 2000).

Crouch and Ritchie explained destination competitiveness with the help of macroeconomic, microeconomic, complementary factors, management of destination and location specific factors. This model has derived the factors from

various theories of international business management including Porter's model, Absolute advantage of nation's theory and Comparative advantage theory (Ritchie & Crouch, 2001). This framework derived six factors of tourism destination competitiveness and these are 'Destination management', 'Qualifiers & Amplifiers' , 'Planning & Development', 'Destination Related Policy', 'Core resources & attractors', and 'supporting factors & resources'. Some of the other models developed to measure competitiveness of destination include 'Enright & Newton's model (Newman & Porter, 2005)', 'WEF travel and tourism competitiveness index (WEF, 2008)

Objective of the Study

The objective of the study is to explore the key factors of tourism destination competitiveness from the perspective of domestic tourist visiting to various tourism destination sites at the city of Agra, Uttar Pradesh, India.

Research Methodology

This research study is an empirical study and the results of the study are based on the analysis of data obtained from a sample of 182 domestic tourists who were selected from the tourism destinations situated in the city of Agra, Uttar Pradesh, India. Thus the population for this research includes the domestic tourist visiting to different destinations of Agra city. The sample was selected by using convenient sampling technique. Self administered questionnaire was used to collect data. The variables used in this research have been extracted from various models created for the purpose to measure competitiveness of the tourism destinations. All questions of the questionnaire were close ended. The tourists coming from different places of India were asked to rate what they feel about the competitiveness of the tourism destination on a five-point Likert rating scale. This scale ranges from highly competitive to not at all competitive. Principal component analysis was used to find factors. The description of sample profile has been presented by using demographic statistics.

Data Analysis

The primary data was obtained from the domestic tourists and analyzed by using SPSS and MS-Excel. The data analysis results have been presented under the following sections:

- Basic Demographic Profile
- Reliability Statistics of the scale
- Results of Principal component analysis
- Structure of Factors identified

Demographic Profile of survey participants

The survey participants during this research were the domestic tourist who came to Agra from different places of India including the state of Uttar Pradesh. Details of their gender, age and the state of their home town were analyzed and the results are presented in Table 1. Approximately one third of the survey participants were female and about 44% tourist were coming from Uttar Pradesh and Uttarakhand. The most common age of the sample was 26 to 45 years. About 55% of the sample participants fall in this range.

Table 1 Basic Demographic Profile of survey participants

Demographic Variable		Frequency	Percent
Gender	Male	121	66.5
	Female	61	33.5
	Total	**182**	**100.0**
Place	Delhi	15	8.2
	Uttar Pradesh	37	20.3

	Haryana	28	15.4
	Rajasthan	2	1.1
	Uttarakhand	44	24.2
	Bihar	29	15.9
	Madhyapradesh	9	4.9
	Others	18	9.9
	Total	**182**	**100.0**
Age	18-25	34	18.7
	26-35	64	35.2
	36-45	36	19.8
	46-55	31	17.0
	Above 55	17	9.3
	Total	**182**	**100.0**

Reliability Statistics of the scale

A Likert scale has been developed to collect the response data from the domestic tourist. The Likert items of the scale were obtained from various models and framework reviewed during literature review (Kim, 1998) (Hassan, 2000) (Ritchie & Crouch, 2001). The reliability of the scale was tested during the pilot test and also once the entire data was collected. For the thoroughness of the results the reliability statistics of the scale that was determined post data collection has been presented in Table -2. Reliability of the data was evaluated by using Cronbach's alpha coefficient. The value of Cronbach's alpha (0.708) has been well under the range of the values that are required to ensure reliability (Tavakol & Dennick, 2011).

Table 2 Reliability Statistics

Cronbach's Alpha	Cronbach's Alpha Based on Standardized Items	N of Items
.708	.734	15

Results of Principal component analysis

Principal component analysis (PCA) was conducted on the data obtained for 15 independent variables which were related to the perception of domestic tourist about how they rate tourism destination competitiveness of various tourist places at Agra. The objective of using PCA was to reduce the number of variables in to selected few factors so that effective evaluation of the competitiveness of the tourism destinations can be performed. Specifically, varimax rotation was applied on the 15 Likert items. The results of Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin statistics found to be 0.799 that indicate the adequacy of sample for the exploration of factors. The Bartlett's test of Sphericity expressed by the chi-square value and it was 789.318 and this value found to be significant (p< 0.001) (Datapott, 2023).

Table 3 KMO and Bartlett's Test

Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin Measure of Sampling Adequacy.		.799
Bartlett's Test of Sphericity	Approx. Chi-Square	789.318
	df	105
	Sig.	.000

A four factor solution was obtained in the output of SPSS. The selection of the four factors was done on the basis of minimum Eigen value of one. These four factors cumulatively able to explain 57.6% of the variance in the actual data obtained from the sample of 182 domestic tourists. Each of the factor structure found to be most relevant from the perspective of the evaluation of the competitiveness of the tourism destination.

Table 4 Total Variance Explained

Component	Initial Eigenvalues			Extraction Sums of Squared Loadings			Rotation Sums of Squared Loadings		
	Total	% of Variance	Cumulative %	Total	% of Variance	Cumulative %	Total	% of Variance	Cumulative %
1	4.773	31.821	31.821	4.773	31.821	31.821	2.739	18.259	18.259
2	1.471	9.805	41.627	1.471	9.805	41.627	2.627	17.513	35.772
3	1.242	8.283	49.910	1.242	8.283	49.910	1.793	11.951	47.724
4	1.154	7.693	57.603	1.154	7.693	57.603	1.482	9.879	**57.603**
Extraction Method: Principal Component Analysis.									

Structure of Factors identified

The rotated component matrix was used to explore the possible structure of the identified factors. Factor one named as "Strategic aspect of tourism destination" and it included four items that are related to the strategic aspect of the competitiveness of tourism destination. The factor loadings range from 0.743 to 0.533. Table 5 mentioned the details of factor structure. The first item "Accessibility of tourism destination" has the highest factor loading of 0.743, it means accessibility plays an important role in the competitiveness of a tourism destination. The second item is "Monuments Structure at tourism destination" with 0.720 factor loading, indicating that monuments structure at tourism destination significantly affect the attractiveness of a tourism destination. Importance of managing tourist is important for the competitiveness of a tourism destination and it is reflected by the third Likert item of this factor. The last item in this factor is "Facilitation offered at tourism destination" has the factor loading of 0.533 that suggest the importance of the role of services in tourist's experience. All and all, these four Likert items form the core strategic factor that affect the competitiveness of Agra as a tourism destination.

Table 5 Factor-1 Strategic aspect of tourism destination

Likert item	Factor Loading
Accessibility of tourism destination	.743
Monuments Structure at tourism destination	.720
Tourist Management	.674

Facilitation offered at tourism destination	.533

The second factor has been named as "Safety Quotient" and it also consider four items with the factor loading ranges from 0.810 to 0.460. Following table has listed the details of second factor.

Table 6 Factor-2 Safety Quotient

Likert Item	Factor Loading
Crisis Management arrangement at tourism destination	.810
Service Quality of tourism services at tourism destination	.747
Safety measures at tourism destination	.682
Tourism Infrastructure	.460

Five items composed the third factor. The composition of this factor reflects those items that attract tourist toward the tourism destination. Thus this factor is named as "Tourist's Attraction". The factor loadings of the items range from 0.697 to -.431. This is the only factor that contains one item "destination as brand of tourism" with negative factor loading.

The negative factor loading in this case shows that the other items of this factor have been rated very high by the tourists. However tourists have rated the negatively loaded item very low may be because this item is not strong enough to influence tourists. The details of third factor have been mentioned the following table.

Table 7 Factor-3 Tourists' Attraction

Likert Item	Factor Loading
Cost of Touring package at tourism destination	.697
Level of Entertainment tourist feel at tourism destination	.557
Cultural Aspect of the tourism destination	.486
Climate Conditions at tourism destination	.447
Destination as Brand of tourism	-.431

Factor four is named as "Tourism Destination Marketing" because of the nature of the items of this factor. Marketing efforts and awareness about the tourism destination are the two items of this factor with factor loading of 0.819 and 0.551 respectively. The details of this factor are listed in the following table.

Table 8 Factor-4 Tourism Destination Marketing

Component	Factor Loading
Marketing Efforts for the promotion of tourism destination	.819
Awareness about the tourism destination	.551

Discussion

The analysis of factors influencing Agra as a tourism destination provides valuable insights into the elements that enhance its competitiveness. The first factor, identified as the "Strategic Aspect of Tourism Destination," highlights the importance of accessibility, the condition of monuments, tourist management, and services offered. Accessibility plays a significant role in determining how attractive and convenient Agra is for tourists. The well-preserved historical monuments further strengthen the city's appeal, positioning Agra as a key cultural destination in India. Effective management of tourists and the availability of essential services at the destination also contribute to creating a positive visitor experience, ensuring that tourists feel well-catered for and their needs are met. The second factor, termed the "Safety Quotient," emphasizes the critical role of safety and infrastructure in shaping tourist perceptions. Crisis management arrangements, service quality, and the presence of safety measures are crucial in providing visitors with a sense of security. Agra's ability to deliver safe and reliable experiences through well-maintained infrastructure adds to its reputation as a dependable travel destination. "Tourist Attraction," the third factor, focuses on aspects that enhance a visitor's overall experience, such as the cost of touring, entertainment options, and cultural richness. Agra's cultural heritage and favorable climate conditions attract a broad range of tourists, although there appears to be room for improvement in strengthening the city's brand as a tourism destination. This suggests that while the city offers great cultural and entertainment value, more efforts could be made to enhance its identity and market appeal. Finally, the "Tourism Destination Marketing" factor underscores the importance of promotional efforts and awareness campaigns in drawing visitors to Agra. Effective marketing strategies are key to keeping Agra in the spotlight as a global tourist destination. Awareness about the city's unique offerings needs to be reinforced through targeted campaigns to ensure it remains competitive in an ever-evolving tourism market.

Conclusion

This research study has attempted to evaluate the variables that affect the competitiveness of the tourism destination from the perspective of domestic tourist. Total 15 variables were extracted from different models and framework proposed to measure the competitiveness of destination. During the data collection survey participants were asked to rate selected variables. This study reveals that 15 variables can be reduced to easy to manage four factors. The analysis reveals that Agra's competitiveness as a tourism destination is driven by key factors such as accessibility, safety, cultural attractions, and effective marketing efforts. While the city's rich heritage and well-preserved monuments make it an attractive destination, there is potential to enhance its brand identity and improve tourist management. By focusing on these strategic areas, Agra can strengthen its appeal and continue to thrive as a leading tourism destination, offering a safe, culturally enriching, and memorable experience for visitors.

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