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A MODEL OF ANALYSIS FOR THE EVALUATION OF TOURIST DESTINATION APPEAL: THE AMALFI COAST. A CASE STUDY

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ABSTRACT

Core resources and attractors have long been at the center of studies on the competitiveness of tourist destinations. However, such studies treat factors of appeal in a cumulative way without, or at least rarely, integrating the perspectives of both supply and demand. Our paper intends to verify whether the scale of importance of the attractors detains an absolute value or whether such value varies on the basis of type of destination. The study proposes a model of analysis of destination appeal which takes into account the perception that both hotel management and potential tourists have of such attractors.

KEY WORDS

Destination Management, Territorial Competitiveness, Hotel Management.

ECONLIT KEYS

L83, M10, M21, O10

1. INTRODUCTION

The studies on tourist destination competitiveness can be identified substantially by means of two approaches: one with a focus on the specifics (core resources and attractors) of the destination and the other that considers more general elements of competitiveness that can be applied not only to tourism enterprises but also to any other kind of enterprise. In the first approach numerous studies address attention to the image and appeal of a destination (Chon, Weaver, Kim, 1991, Hu, Ritchie, 1993, Gallarza, Saura, Garcia, 2002) linking the capacity to attract tourists by the presence of specific factors such as climate, scenery and accommodation.

Crouch and Ritchie's approach to destination competitiveness (1999) broaden previous studies that focus on destination image or appeal. Enright and Newton (2004) maintain that in order to analyze the competitive capacity of a destination besides the traditional factors of tourist appeal it is necessary to consider also factors that impact on corporate competitiveness in terms of available tourist product. A destination is competitive if it succeeds in attracting and satisfying the needs of potential tourists. Consequently, core resources, attractors and firm's competitiveness capacity are essential.

Our paper starts from the perspective of analysis based on *core resources and attractors* and attempts to examine the same in terms of matching supply and demand as suggested by Formica (2002), and Formica and Uysal (2006). In this context, the paper focuses on two objectives:

– Ascertain whether the scale of importance of the *attractors* has an absolute value. i.e. whether the *attractors* proposed for the analysis of the competitiveness of a tourist destination can be classified within a single scale.

– Assess whether the *attractors* are attributed the same degree of importance by potential tourists and enterprises alike.

In the first instance, the paper puts in place a comparative analysis between two tourist destinations: Hong Kong and the Amalfi Coast, in terms of the importance attributed to destination attractors by tourist firms. Subsequently, importance is measured in terms of demand (tourist potential) and of supply (tourist firms). The analysis is elaborated by means of an *attribute based perspective* (Enright, Newton, 2004; Crouch, Ritchie, 1999; Ritchie, Crouch, 2000; Ritchie, Crouch, 2003).

2. DESTINATION AND TERRITORY COMPETITIVENESS

One of the main issues in defining the concept of competitiveness of a destination or territory lies in the identifying of factors that decree its success. Currently, the literature on territorial competitiveness has begun to shift from a strictly micro-economic approach based on the results of individual firms, to a wider vision envisaging the territory as a 'source' of competitiveness.

The territory in other words, becomes a factor of competitiveness when it is able to offer the enterprises a favorable environment of 'intense' social and economic relations, open to cooperation and participation in the numerous networks external to the firms, fundamental in determining success[1]. The concept of territorial competitiveness proposed by Scott and Storper (2003)[2] encloses the concept of relational capital, albeit preserving competitive advantage in line with Porter's approach. The need to take into account a wider territorial dimension as concerns the study of destination competitiveness is evidenced by Keller (2000) who maintains that tourist service packages cannot be separated from the territory itself, for which tourist product and destination tend to overlap. Mannell and Iso-Ahola (1987) acknowledge the existence of many points of view in defining destinations but they evidence how from the client's point of view, the idea of destination is the sum of their experience, expectations, and degree of satisfaction. Consequently, the uniqueness of the tourist product resulting from a tourist's experience and the destination can be considered as Tamma (2000) observes, on a par with an 'ideal concept': it is a 'category of syntheses'. The same approach is evidenced in Buhalis (2000, p. 97-98) who goes beyond the traditional conceptions[3] remarking that a destination can also be "…a perceptual concept, which can be interpreted subjectively by consumers, depending on their travel itinerary, cultural background, purpose of visit, educational level and past experience … destinations are considered to be a defined geographical region which is understood by its

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1   Esposito De Falco (2012) analyzed a model for the study of the competitiveness of tourism firms based on the ability to influence of the territorial system. Cfr. Esposito De Falco S., 2012, p. 39-57.

2   "… theory that we shall attempt to elaborate here puts considerable emphasis on the role of the region as a source of critical developmental assets in the form of increasing returns effects and positive externalities" Scott e Storper (2003, pag. 193).

3   In particular the reference is to those who consider a destination as a well defined geographical area, such as a Nation, an Island, or a city (Davidson, Maitland, 1997).

visitors as a unique entity, with a political and legislative framework for tourism marketing and planning".

Murphy, Pritchard and Smith (2000) evidence that a tourist destination product includes both service infrastructure (hospitality, refreshment, transport, shops, leisure services, etc.) and environmental elements. The concept of competitiveness therefore, takes on a much wider and multidimensional perspective considering not only economic growth in the strictest sense but also the qualitative-quantitative enhancement of all the other dimensions of the territory including sustainability (Gemmiti, 2007; Kitson, Martin, Tayler, 2004). In this sense Ejarque (2003, p.7) maintains that "…destination is made up of a series of attractors and services " for which "… it is no longer sufficient just to have services in the same way that it is no longer sufficient to have only attractors".

The association between the competitiveness of the tourism sector and the territorial dimension is the object of research studies relative to Systems of Tourism Supply (Rispoli, Tamma, 1995; Della Corte, 2000) and destination management (Ritchie, 1993; Laws, 1995; Bieger, 2000; Buhalis, 2000; Franch, 2002). Such studies compared to sociological and industrial analysis introduce the element of the strategic-managerial approach, without neglecting the systems element which pivots on the capacity of the destination to offer integrated, coordinated and differentiated services proper to a specific territory (Della Lucia, Franch, Martini, Tamma, 2007, p. 5).

Returning to the issue of competitiveness it is quite evident that the concept cannot be considered from an absolute dimension but has to be seen from the perspective of competitors. Thus a further element of complexity has to be considered given that such comparison necessitates a multidimensional measuring, based on a plurality of elements (Scott and Lodge, 1985).

The success of a tourist destination depends on a variety of factors which can only in part be governed. The destination, besides possessing attractors equal or superior to those of competitors, has to offer excellent quality in terms of services. The attaining of such services requires cooperation and collaboration among the stakeholders (Edgell, Haenisch, 1995).

3. FACTORS OF COMPETITIVENESS

The success of tourist destinations being influenced by their competitiveness both in terms of structural elements of the territory and to its factors of competitiveness (Porter,

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1998; Enright, Newton, 2004) and to the dynamic aspect of strategic corporate behavior (Claver-Corte´s, Molina-Azorìn, Pereira-Moliner, 2007).

Enright, Scott e Dodwell (1997) proposed a model of analysis of tourist destination competitiveness wherein they divide factors of competitiveness into six categories: "inputs", "industrial and consumer demand", "inter-firm competition and cooperation", "industrial and regional clustering", "internal corporate organization and strategy", "institutions, social structures and agendas". For his part, Buhalis (2000) has proposed a model of the "six A" to define the factors of competitiveness of a destination. For Buhalis (2000, page 98) most destinations have numerous "attractions available (natural, man-made, artificial, purpose built, heritage, special events), accessibility (entire transportation system comprising of routes, terminals and vehicles), amenities (accommodation and catering facilities, retailing, other tourist services), available packages (pre-arranged packages by intermediaries and principals), activities (all activities available at the destinations and what consumers will do during their visit), ancillary services (services used by tourists such as banks, telecommunications, post, newsagents, hospitals, etc.)". On the other hand, De Holan and Phillips (1997, page. 781) using as reference Porter's "competitiveness diamond of nations" (1990), maintain that for "…countries like Cuba, the existence of world-class ''sun and sand'' provides a basis for competitiveness in tourism, but it does not guarantee development or success in the tourism industry. Other factor conditions, such as human resources, infrastructure and capital, and the other three determinants that make up the diamond stand as potential barriers to development". Consequently, the availability of *core resources* acknowledged on a worldwide scale in the case of the sun and sand in Cuba is no guarantee for success if other resources are not available.

Chon and Mayer (1995), for their part, taking inspiration from the general model of competitiveness elaborated by Porter (1990), develop a model of analysis of tourist destination competitiveness by defining five dimensions: appeal, management, organization, information and efficiency. Furthermore, they incorporate in their study also tourism specific issues (such as the intangibility of the tourism product). Crouch and Ritchie, (1993) too, using Porter's diamond paradigm (1990), proposed a model based on four components: "core resources and attractors", "supporting factors and resources", "destination management", "qualifying determinants". The model has been extended and updated several times (Crouch, Ritchie, 1999) becoming an effective point of reference in

the evaluation of the competitiveness of a destination and comprising besides the basic elements indicated, also destination policy, planning and development and the distinct concept of sustainability (Ritchie, Crouch, 2000; Ritchie, Crouch, 2003).

The model of Crouch and Ritchie (1999) has been adapted to a certain extent by Enright and Newton (2004) who have identified fifteen items defined "attractors" and thirty seven items defined "business-related factors" useful for measuring and comparing the competitiveness of a destination. The attractors include items that derive in substance, directly from the resources and from the fundamental factors of appeal included in Crouch e Ritchie's (1999) model and specific items deriving from studies on urban tourism. The business related factors on the other hand, mainly concern those deriving from Porter's (1990) diamond.

Core resources and attractors are primary elements which generate the capacity to attract tourists; consequently, they can be considered the structural factors of competitiveness. They do not however, guarantee the success of a destination but have to be integrated and enhanced through synergic action on the part of all the stakeholders involved in the successful realization of an excellent "tourism product".

In the literature, core resources and attractors are classified as any factor from a tourist viewpoint constituting the fundamental reason for their choice of a particular destination. Usually these factors are represented (Crouch & Ritchie, 1999, Ritchie & Crouch, 2000, Enright, Newton, 2004, Kim, 1998) by geo-morphological (climate, panorama, etc.), historical cultural elements, the presence of specific ties (between residents and the Regions of origin of the tourists), by particular events or tourist structures (hospitality services, catering, transport, appeal factors, etc.).

The models proposed by scholars in the literature consider core resources and attractors on the same plane[4]. In our paper, however, the focus is placed on the attractors in order to verify whether the importance attributed to them creates a stable hierarchical structure or whether such structure varies on the basis of type of destination and kind of tourism. At the same time, the paper attempts to develop the analytical perspective suggested by Formica (2002) and Formica and Uysal (2006) evaluating for the Amalfi Coast, the perception of importance attributed to the attractors by demand and supply.

In short, the paper intends to respond to the following research questions:

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[4] Vargas (2011, 93-110), in particular, highlights that the evolution in the tourism research is determined on active research groups, centers and networks concerned with tourism that exist in the country at the moment.

1. Does the importance attributed to the *attractors* by those who predispose supply (hotels in particular) result in a univocal hierarchical structure or does such structure vary on the basis of type of destination?

2. Is the perception of the importance attributed to the attractors by supply similar to that attributed by demand?

4. METHODOLOGY

To respond to the first question (verify whether the importance attributed by enterprises to the attractors is univocal) a comparison was carried out between the evaluations reported in the study by Enright and Newton (2004). For this reason an homogeneous analytical tool was constructed compared to the one used by the two researchers. Enright and Newton (2004), in effect evaluated the importance attributed to factors of appeal for destinations in Hong Kong. Enright and Newton's analysis was carried out by submitting a questionnaire to enterprises working in the tourism sector (hotels) that were part of the HKTA (Hong Kong Tourist Association). In the present study, a similar questionnaire was submitted relative to the tourist structures of the Amalfi Coast[5].

It emerges that the Amalfi Coast, on the basis of the classification of tourist destinations proposed by Buhalis (2000), fits adequately entrance criteria for the so-called seaside destinations and according to the model, numbers several characteristics that would collocate the such destination in a phase of maturity or even, decline[6].

The questionnaire was sent to all of the 108 hotel facilities classified as three, four and five star respectively. The period covering data collecting ranged from March to May 2012, with 52 questionaires returned. The uncompleted ones were discarded. This left a dataset of 38 units. The hospitality structure of the respondents is illustrateed in Table 1 where distribution by category is reported with respect to the composition of the area. The sample represents 35% of the total and the distribution frequency of the responses on the basis of

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[5] The choice of the Amalfi Coast was selected for analysis as it represents a context that goes beyond the territorial dimension issues of competitiveness. In paragraph 2 differing opinions as to whether competitiveness has to be evaluated at individual destination scale or territorial scale was highlighted. The Amalfi Coast acknowledged as a World Heritage Site by UNESCO, represents an example in which the image of the single destinations is equal to that of the entire territorial area. Consequently, its dimensions (single destination or territorial area as a whole) cannot be clearly distinguished either in terms of its geographic profile or from the perspective of potential client perceptions.

[6] In the Amalfi Coast area, hospitality capacity is high while that of the employment rate in the structures is low. Profits are on the decline and generally, with the exception of the exclusive destinations such as Positano and Ravello), the hospitality structures mainly cater for the mass market not necessarily characterized by the international segment.

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number of stars reflects to a satisfactory extent the hospitality structures as a whole; it follows that the result can thus be considered representative of the total.

Stars	Values in absolute		Values in percentage	
	Random sample	Valid questionnaires	Random sample	Valid questionnaires
5	16	3	15%	8%
4	38	10	35%	26%
3	54	25	50%	66%
Totale	108	38	100%	100%

Table 1: Distribution of frequency of the sample by number of stars
Source: OWN ELABORATION.

In order to respond to the first research question, the enterprises were asked to evaluate the importance and the presence of twelve *attractors*. Obviously, in order to carry out the comparison between the two destinations (clearly belonging to different categories) reference was made only to attractors that both Hong Kong and the Amalfi Coast have in common.

To respond to the second research question, the same question was submitted to the entire cohort of students registered for the 'Magistrale' Degree Courses of the Faculty of Economics, equal to 579 in number. 174 questionnaires were returned and selected: in particular, the ones where the respondents were familiar with or at least had been on holiday to the Amalfi Coast were selected. The comparison of this circumstance and how Italian families are structured with that of subjects who influence the choice of holiday destinations enabled us to match the opinions of the students with that of potential or effective clients of the structures[7].

As concerns the role of offspring in choosing holiday destinations, this has been widely underestimated in the past and little studied. Anyway, Ryan (1992) has evidenced that children play an important role in determining adult satisfaction in that a holiday is satisfactory for the family when all its members are happy and content. Gram (2005) also points out that opportune choices combining the needs of all the family are fundamental. According to Ryan (1992) children influence the behavior and decisions of the rest of the family both in terms of negotiating power and of the specific requests that they make. This capacity for influence is clearly greater in families with what Carlson and Grossberg (1988)

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[7]   With reference to the liking expressed by young tourist destination appeal, see also M. Viassone (2012, 96-116).

define as democratic and permissive parents. At International scale, Gram (2007) in a research carried out in Denmark and Germany, evidenced how in decisions relative to family purchases, children exert great influence directly and indirectly, consciously and unconsciously. In this context, Watne and Winchester (2011) studied the influence adolescent children have over their parents with regard to holiday decisions. The research shows that families in general do not see their adolescent children as more knowledgeable than the parents when it comes to holidays. However, the level of knowledge the family perceives the children to have is strongly related to how much influence the children then have over their parents. Generally daughters have a greater influence on their parents' holiday decision making than sons. Fontana e Maeran (2009) highlight how also in Italy the influence children have in the choice of holiday is significant.

Thus children generally speaking, have remarkable influence on the choice of tourist destinations and as they get older and acquire more knowledge so their influence grows. Consequently, the decision to interview a sample of university students derived from at least three considerations:

– they are mature enough to influence parental or family decision making;

– they could be potential clients;

– in Italy the cultural model rarely envisages children leaving the family before marriage (Inps, Ministero del Lavoro e delle Politiche Sociali, Istat, 2013, Kuijsten, 1996)[8].

Student responses indicated a perceptive framework relative to the importance of the *attractors* selected and their presence in the Amalfi Coast area. The subsequent comparison between the evaluations of enterprises and the students indicated a framework of the extent to which supply and eventual demand concur with regard to the importance attributed to factors of appeal as well as the extent to which the subjects themselves perceive the presence of such factors in the area.

This ulterior analysis enabled us to investigate the appeal of the the Amalfi Coast area by examining relations between supply and demand indicators. The importance has been underlined in the literature of proceeding by means of joint analyses of demand and supply

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[8] The latest Report on Social Cohesion (Inps, Ministero del Lavoro e delle Politiche Sociali, Istat, 2013) evidences that in Italy over 60% of unmarried men under 35 (6,964,000) still live with at least one parent , an increase of 2% compared to the previous year. Youngsters between the age of 18 and 24 living at home with their parents number 3,864,000; the number is not much lower as concerns the age group 25-34 (3,100,000). Consequently, unmarried young people aged between 20 and 30 in almost 50% of cases live at home with their parents. This is more accentuated in the South of Italy - where the Amalfi Coast is situated – arriving at a percentage of 68.3% of young people living at home.

also in the tourism sector (Formica, 2002). Also Formica and Uysal (2006) perceived destination attractiveness to be the relationship between the availability of attractions and their perceived importance to the tourist.

The questionnaire was submitted on-line. To evaluate importance and presence a Likert 5 point scale was used with 1= none and 5 =all.

A comparison was then made between means scores and in particular, between the mean score of importance and the acknowledged presence assigned to each group by the various groups of respondents. To evaluate whether the difference between the results reported in the two distributions were statistically significant a T-Test – typically formulated for independent samples –was carried out. This format resolved problems related to the varying dimensions of the sample. In order to transform the indications from the statistical analysis into pragmatic indications suggesting an eventual course of action and in order to evaluate jointly the perception of supply and demand, a grid was devised similar to that of the importance-performance tool elaborated by Martilla and James (1977).

4.1) THE IMPORTANCE PERFORMANCE ANALYSIS: A TOOL IN EVOLUTION FOR CONSIDERING BOTH SUPPLY AND DEMAND.

Martilla and James (1977) presented the IPA Grid (Importance-Performance Analysis) as a simple but useful tool for transforming the results obtained from research into actions. In particular, the tool proposed by the two Authors evaluates factors of success compared to the characteristics of importance and perfomance. The tool has often been used in studies on tourism (Evans & Chon, 1989; Go & Zhang, 1997; Guadagnolo, 1985; Hollenhorst, Olson, & Fortney, 1992; Enright & Newton, 2004). In our study a matrix by means of which the factors with regard to perceptions two categories of subjects have, i.e. the client of the destination (demand) and the hospitality structures themselves (supply), is proposed.

The result of the analysis is represented by two matrices in which the perceptions of potential clients are compared to those of hotel managers (see par. 6):

– one focuses on the importance attributed to theattractors;

– the other evidences the presence perceived of such attractors in the Amalfi Coast area.

The interpretation of the matrices is not so different from that proposed by Martilla and James (1977) since it enables a quick comparison of the coherence between the

expectations of hotel management with respect to the 'destination'in which they are placed compared to the expectations the tourists have with regard to the destination themselves.

In the same way as for the IPA Grid, also in this paper, the representation of the variables has been carried out using as the start axes, the mean score observed for all the indicators.

In the case of attributed "importance" we have:

− a quadrant characterized by the perception of '*very important'* both on the part of the tourists and of hotel management. All the attractors in this quadrant are considered important both by hotel management and by tourists. Destination Management Organization (DMO) will have to take this element into account when setting up tourism supply as it *cann*ot disregard its strong impact;

− a quadrant characterized by the perception of '*not very important'* on the part of hotel management and of '*very important'* on the part of tourists. The attractors of this quadrant are perceived differently from those of demand and supply. Potential tourists consider them important while hotel management doesn't. Evidently, hotel management will have to reassess its competitive strategies seeing as the attributes of supply to which they refer differ radically from those which interest potential tourists. This quadrant, as is the one that follows, results as rather problematic for the DMO since contrasting indications emerge on the part of two components of the system. In other words, two important stakeholders (hospitality structures and tourists) give different indications on the modality of composing the system of tourism supply;

− a quadrant characterized by a perception of '*very important'* by hotel manangement and'*not very important'* by tourists. The previous considerations apply also for this quadrant with the aggravating factor of the clientele considering the attractors of little relevance. The DMO, in this case could eventually agree to satisfy tourist needs in the event tourists could be considered a market segment for the destination. Should the DMO decide to put such a strategy in place, hotel management would also have to refocus their strageies;

− a quadrant characterized by a perception of attractors as '*not very important'* both by hotel management and by tourists does not create any problem given that both groups consider the attractors irrelevant and consequently, they can be classified among those of low priority attractors.

The matrix constructed on the basis of the perception of the presence of various attractors generate implications above all in relation to the needs of the DMO and in any event, should be read jointly with the previous matrix. In that case the result would be:

− a quadrant characterized by perceptions of '*high presence'* both on the part of the tourists and on the part of hotel management. In relation to such attractors the evaluations on the part of the hotels were coherent with those of the market thus not generating any implications. Also for DMO the attractors in this quadrant did not pose any problem given that the attractors were considered positively from a performance perspective both by demand and supply. In any event, a comparative analysis can be carried out using the matrix of presence. In particular the attributes of this quadrant could be compared with those of the first quadrant of the matrix discussed above. In the event of non-coherence between the attributes of the present quadrant and those detected in the first quadrant of the presence matrix, most likely the overall strategy put in place by DMO with regard to the destination suffers from an issue of incoherency;

− a quadrant characterized by perceptions of '*low presence'* by hotel management and '*high*' by tourists. In this case the implication for management is represented by the need to rethink perceptions of the 'destination system' in which it operates; i.e. management perceiving as negative the characteristics of a system which tourists viceversa perceive positively; DMO in this case, could decide not to take into account the expectations of hotel management and privilege on the contrary the expectations (in this case positive) of the clientele of the destination;

− a quadrant characterized by a '*high presence'* on the part of hotel management and '*low'* on the part of tourists. The same considerations apply in this instance to those relative to the previous quadrant, with in addition, the perception of negative performance on the part of potential tourists;

− a quadrant characterized by a percepion of '*low presence*' both on the part of hotel management and by the tourists. In this case DMO has a precise indication since both hotel manangement and tourists do not consider such characteristics present in the destination. In any event, before putting in place any strategies DMO should verify whether such attributes are considered important with respect to the generating of tourist flows. In the event the attribute is not considered relevant by either hotel management or the tourists, it is evidently a factor that no category of stakeholders analyzed through the two matrices considers worthy of intervention.

5. FINDINGS

In Table 2 the attractors are classified on the basis of importance assigned by Hong-Kong enterprises. Hong Kong is prevalently characterized by urban citizen tourism closely linked to the many opportunities for shopping. The Amalfi Coast on the contrary, is a destination considered mainly for its sun and beach tourism.

The table shows that the mean scores for each factor and for each destination were considered to be relevant (all mean scores are above the "neutral" 3). Therefore, it can be concluded that the view of respondents confirms the frameworks of tourism competitiveness proposed. The most important attractors in the case of Hong Kong, according to the Enright and Newton study (2004), are safety, cuisine, dedicatedtourism attractions, visual appeal, and well-known landmarks. In the case of the Amalfi Coast, according to respondents, the most important attractors are well-known landmarks, safety, visual appeal, climate, museum and galleries.

The T-test evidences a significant statistical difference between groups for museum and galleries, nightlife, well-known landmarks, climate, dedicatedtourism attractions.

Although the findings are more or less expected for climate, well-known landmarks and nightlife, they are surprising in other cases seeing as:

– Museum and galleries are at 14th place on the scale of importance of the attractors for Hong-Kong and at 5th place in the case of the Amalfi Coast. Perhaps less importance attributed to museums and galleries was expected in the case of sun and beach destination.

– Dedicated tourism attractions is at 3rd place on the scale of importance of attractors for Hong Kong and at 11th in the case of the Amalfi Coast; Perhaps not such a low degree of importance was expected relative to the factor dedicatedtourism attractions in the case of a sun and beach destination.

An initial result of the analysis therefore, is that the ranking of the factors relative to the Amalfi Coast does not exactly match that proposed by Enright and Newton (2004) for Hong Kong. On the basis of this result it can be hypothesised that the scale of the attractors varies on the basis of the type of destination, type of tourist or in other words, of segment of demand catered for .

Table 3 reports the comparison between attractors with reference to perception of importance for the Amalfi Coast, hospitality structures and potential clientele.

Attractors	Importance Hong Kong – N=183				Importance Amalfitana coast – N=38				T-test	p-value
	Rank	Mean	SD	SE	Rank	mean	SD	SE		
Museum and Galleries	14	3.42	0.77	0.06	5	4.24	1.283	0.208	3.80	**0.00**
Nightlife	6	4.06	0.67	0.05	12	3.5	0.952	0.154	3.45	**0.00**
Well-Known Landmarks	5	4.12	0.65	0.05	1	4,.8	0.962	0.156	3,43	**0,00**
Climate	12	3.71	0.8	0.06	4	4.32	1.042	0.169	3,41	**0,00**
Dedicated tourism attractions	3	4.33	0.73	0.05	11	3.74	1.032	0.167	3,35	**0.00**
Cuisine	2	4.36	0.63	0.05	6	4.05	1.064	0.173	1,73	0.09
Visual Appeal	4	4.2	0.67	0.05	3	4.47	1.033	0.168	1,55	0.13
Interesting architecture	11	3.72	0.74	0.05	7	4.03	1.241	0.201	1,49	0.14
Different Culture	7	3.98	0.74	0.05	10	3.76	1.324	0.215	0,99	0.33
Safety	1	4.64	0.55	0.04	2	4.5	1.007	0.163	0,83	0.41
Special Events	8	3.6	0.72	0.05	8	3.82	1.291	0.21	0,65	0.52
Local way of life	10	3.73	0.87	0.06	9	3.82	1.87	0.176	0,48	0.63

Table. 2: Distribution frequency of attractors (Hong Kong and Amalfi Coast) by mean score of importance

If an initial consistent finding of the analysis is the acknowledgement of a degree of variability in the ranking of the factors of attraction, the second relevant point of the analysis is represented by the evaluation of importance and presence of the factors taking into account the comparative interpretation put in place by hotel management and clientele. This second analysis was applied only with reference to the Amalfi Coast.

Table 3 shows that the mean scores for each factor and for each typology of respondent were considered to be relevant (all mean scores are above the "neutral" 3). The most important attractors, according to hotels manager, are well-known landmarks, safety, visual appeal, climate, museum and galleries while, according to tourist respondents, are well-known landmarks, climate, safety, nightlife, special events.

The T-test evidences a significative statistical difference between groups for visual appeal, nightlife, different culture, well-known landmarks, interesting architecture.

Attractors	Importance Hotel Management– N = 38				Importance stud - N=174				T-test	p-value
	Rank	mean	SD	SE	Rank	mean	SD	SE		
Visual Appeal	3	4.47	1.033	0.168	7	3.855	0.986	0.075	3.349	**0.002**
Nightlife	12	3.5	0.952	0.154	4	4.069	1.049	0.080	3.278	**0.002**
Different Culture	11	3.76	1.324	0.215	12	3.162	1.219	0.093	2.558	**0.014**
Well-Known Landmarks	1	4.68	0.962	0.156	1	4.277	0.898	0.068	2.364	**0.022**
Interesting architecture	7	4.03	1.241	0.201	11	3.520	1.060	0.081	2.352	**0.023**
Safety	2	4.5	1.007	0.163	3	4.179	0.957	0.073	1.795	0.078
Museum and Galleries	5	4.24	1.283	0.208	8	3.855	1.027	0.078	1.730	0.090
Cuisine	6	4.05	1.064	0.173	9	3.728	1.090	0.083	1.681	0.098
Dedicated tourism attractions	10	3.74	1.032	0.167	6	3.890	0.961	0.073	0.822	0.415
Special Events	8	3.82	1.291	0.21	5	3.977	0.940	0.071	0.709	0.482
Local way of life	8	3.82	1.087	0.176	10	3.688	0.974	0.074	0.691	0.493
Climate	4	4.32	1.042	0.169	2	4.243	0.970	0.074	0.419	0.677

Table. 3: Distribution frequency of attractors (Amalfi Coast) by mean score of importance attributed by Hotel Management and potential clients

In order to check that the differences in the rankings are not due to a simple sampling error, table 3 shows the standard error (Kline, 2000) at 95% confidence level for each result. The ranking of the importance of the factors in the perception of the enterprises is sufficiently stable, in fact by adding to or subtracting from the mean score standard error, the classification does not vary except for:

– different culture and well-known landmarks which in one case only (mean score + s.e.) change places;

– special events and local way of life which in one case only (mean score + s.e.) change places.

Also the ranking of importance of the factors in the perception of potential clients is sufficiently stable in that in a single case (mean score + s.e.) visual appeal and museum and galleries change places.

An initial observation is that nearly 50% of the factors are perceived differently in terms of impact on competitiveness, occurring also in the case in which the factors receive the same ranking by the two groups of respondents. For instance, the factor well known landmarks is placed at first place both by hotel management and tourists. However, the perception each group of respondents has to this factor differs significantly as evidenced by the t-test which presents a p-value <.05.

A further finding is that hotel management does not consider important offering or setting up leisureactivity services organized directly by the hotel; viceversa the potential

tourists consider fundamental a widespread presence in the territory of such activities. Hence it can be deduced that the market target of the hotels most likely does not correspond with that represented by the potential clients interviewed.

While the "importance" of attractors gives information about the theoretical relevance of each factor in destination competitiveness, it is necessary to address attention to the dimension of the "presence" of those attractors in the destination if an analysis of how a specific destination is performing is required. Table 4 explores this issue reporting the "presence" of each factor as it is perceived by potential tourists in the Amalfi Coast area. Here the mean scores ranged from a high of 4.45 to a low of 2.69, indicating a wide variation in Amalfi Coast performance.

Attractors	Presence Hotel – N = 38				Presence stud N=174				T-test	p-value
	Rank	mean	SD	SE	Rank	mean	SD	SE		
Museum and Galleries	12	2.69	0.8	0.06	7	3.710983	0.887737	0.067493	6.984	**0.000**
Climate	5	3.46	0.78	0.06	2	4.416185	0.869492	0.066106	6.702	**0.000**
Well-Known Landmarks	6	3.38	0.89	0.06	1	4.456647	0.852237	0.064794	6.807	**0.000**
Visual Appeal	4	3.73	0.75	0.06	3	4.381503	0.851882	0.064767	4.730	**0.000**
Different Culture	7	3.38	0.84	0.07	5	3.953757	0.975365	0.074156	3.701	**0.000**
Interesting architecture	10	3.29	0.88	0.07	6	3.82659	0.90476	0.068788	3.388	**0.001**
Safety	2	4.04	0.83	0.06	10	3.514451	1.076206	0.081822	3.338	**0.001**
Cuisine	1	4.34	0.74	0.06	4	3.99422	0.955383	0.072636	2.466	**0.016**
Nightlife	3	3.82	0.89	0.07	11	3.479769	1.128848	0.085825	2.027	**0.047**
Special Events	9	3.35	0.79	0.06	9	3.641618	0.963823	0.073278	1.977	0.052
Local way of life	8	3.36	0.84	0.06	8	3.647399	0.956895	0.072751	1.862	0.068
Dedicated tourism attractions	11	3.18	0.94	0.07	12	3.080925	1.053419	0.08009	0.576	0.567

Table. 4: Distribution frequency of attractors (Amalfi Coast) by mean score of presence pperceived by Hotel Management and potential clients

Also in this case, as for the characteristic of importance, table 4 shows standard error at 95% confidence level for each result in order to check whether the differences in the ranking are due merely to a sampling error. The ranking of presence of factors in the perception of enterprises and potential clients is extremely stable. By adding to or subtracting from the mean score, standard error, the classification never varies for potential clients while for the enterprises a single case is evidenced (mean score + s.e.) in which different culture and well-known landmarks change places.

The most present attractors, according to hotel management are cuisine, safety, nightlife and visual appeal, climate while according to tourist respondents they are well-known landmarks, climate, visual appeal, cuisine, and different culture.

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T-test evidences a significative statistical difference between groups for museum and galleries, climate, well-known landmarks, visual appeal, different culture, interesting architecture, safety, cuisine and nightlife.

In practice, the perception of the presence of 8 attractors out of 12 results statistically different in the two groups of respondents. This results is of remarkable significance for hotel management in that there is a substantial gap between the perception of destination competitiveness on the part of hotel management and the perception of such competitveness that the potential clients have.

6. MANAGERIAL IMPLICATIONS

Fig. 1 and Fig. 2 report the matrices for the evaluation of the attractors[9]. In particular Fig. 1 reports the matrix of the importance attributed to the attractors by the group represented by demand (tourists) and the group represented by supply (hotels).

Fundamental elements of competition are considered climate and well known landmarks and safety. Collocated as problematic issues in the two quadrants are nightlife, special events, dedicated tourism attractions, museum and galleries and visual appeal. The remaining attractors are collocated in the fourth quadrant (low importance for both categories of respondents) and consequently of scarce priority status.

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[9] Both matrices have been constructed measuring the distance between each attractor by the mean score of all the attractors. It follows that the coordinates of each attractor are given by x = value of the attractor in the distribution α – mean score of all the factors in the same distribution; y = value of the attractor in the distribution β – mean score of all the factors in the same distribution.
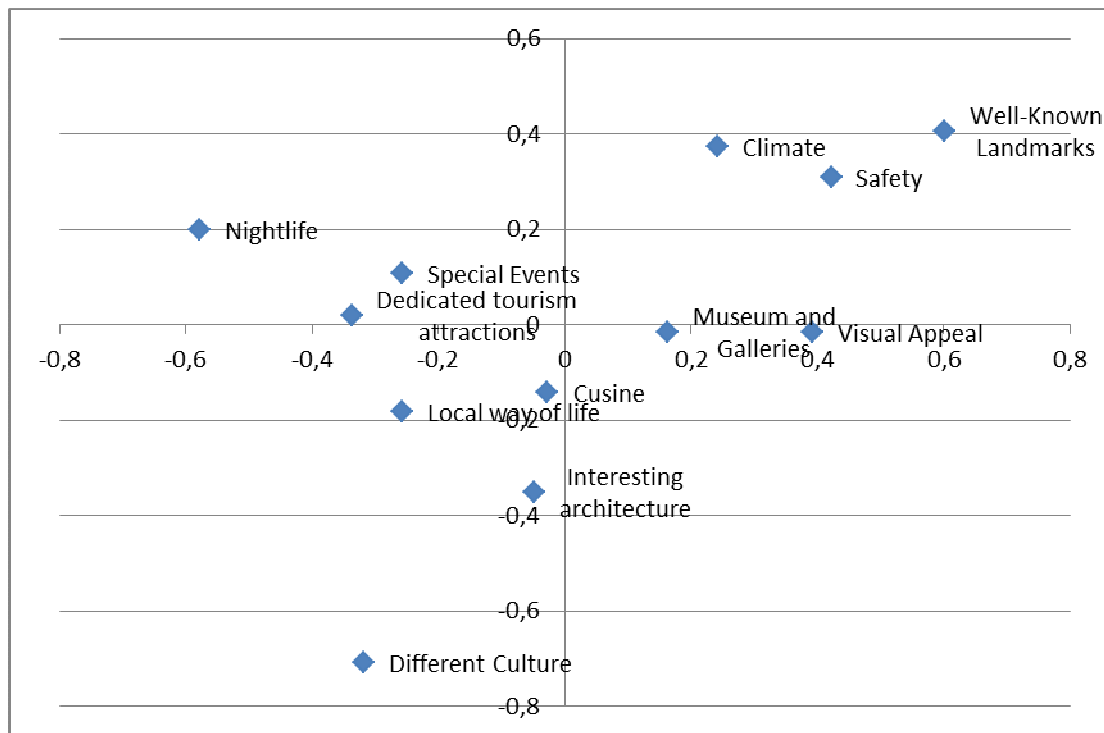
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Figure 1 – Matrix of 'Importance'of Attractors in the Amalfi Coast Area

The matrix reported in Fig 2 indicates two types of information:

– in the first place by describing perceptions on the part of both supply and demand relative to the tourism system, inferences can be made relative to the univocal nature of the interpretation of the supply system;

– in the second place, indications are offered to DMO relative to the modality of strategic management of the tourist territory.

As concerns the former element, the more the divergence existing between the perception of the presence of the various attributes the more it emerges that demand and supply are interpreting the tourist product system in a contrasting way. For instance, as represented in Fig 2 hotel management and potential tourists are in agreement on 7 factors relative to what is present and what is not present while they differ in agreement as concerns the remaining 5.

In relation to the latter element on the contrary, the fundamental quadrant to observe is that characterized by a perception of low presence on the part of both categories of interviewees.

Information can be deduced from the quadrant only by means of a comparative reading with respect to the information provided by the importance matrix. In particular two types of comparison are possible:

– the first with the quadrant of the importance matrix that identifies the attractors considered of scarce importance (both by hotel management and by potential tourists). If there are factors considered not present by both categories of respondents and such factors are considered also not important by both categories, the indication energing is that such factors are not considered relevant attractors for the destination. This for example is the case for the attribute 'local way of life', considered not present by both categories of respondents and at the same time, evalued as of little importance;

– the second with the quadrant of the importance matrix isolating the attractors detected as problematic (i.e. evaluated with differing indications on the part of demand and supply). This type of evaluation enables the isolating of factors the development of which meets the expectations of one category of subjects (demand or supply), while it does not produce any effects on the satisfaction of the other. DMO will therefore be called upon to select which factor to develop in coherence with the specific relation it intends to develop with the relevant stakeholder. For example, the factor 'special events' is reported as being important only by some of the tourists. It follows that if DMO decides to active support strategies for that factor, it will meet expectations on the part of demand but will not achieve any appreciation from hotel management or those who offer hospitality services in the territory.
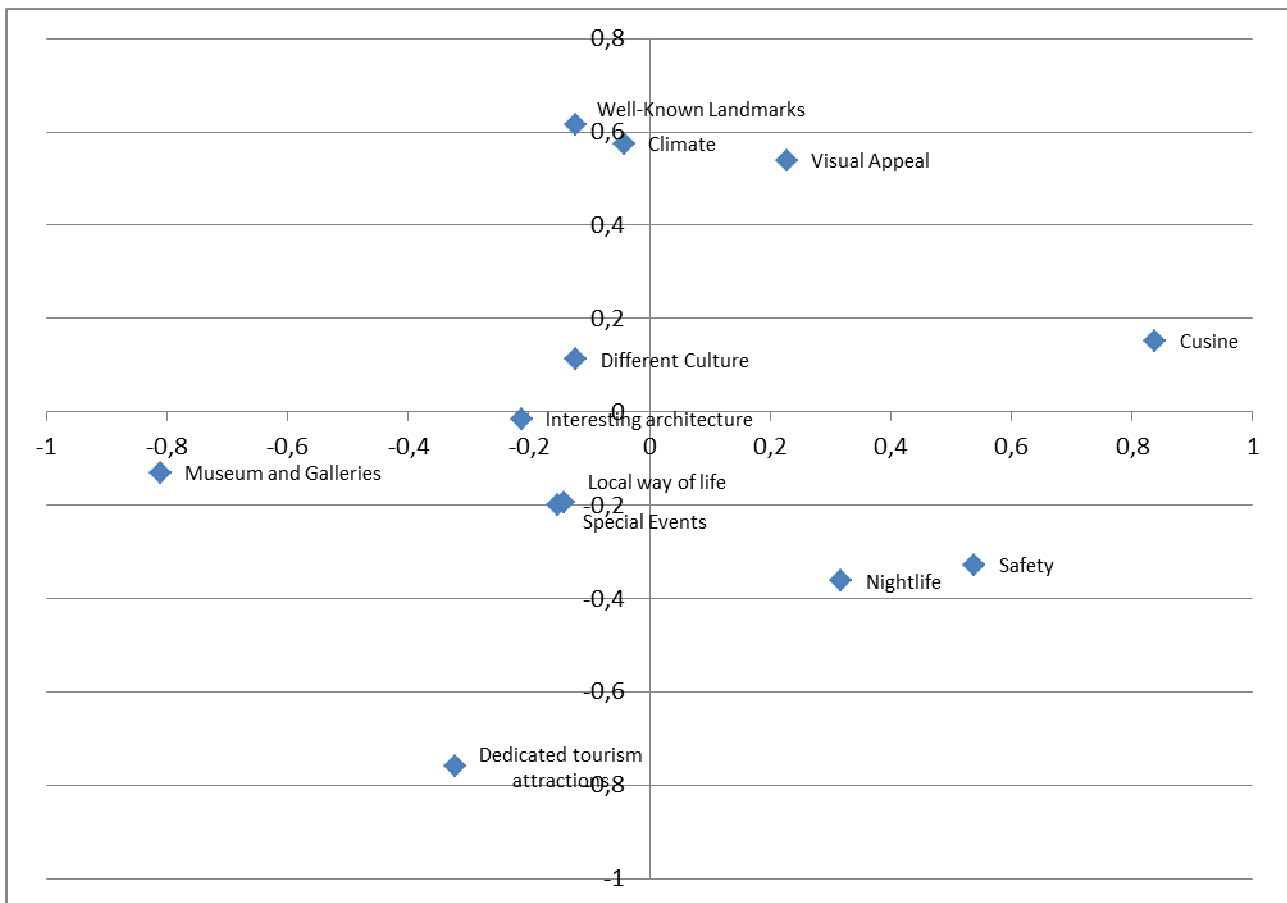
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Figure 2 – Matrix of 'Presence' of Attractors on the Amalfi Coast

7. CONCLUSION

The work analyzes the factors of appeal of a tourist destination evaluating two elements:

– The potential defining of a univocal hierarchical scale.

– The perception of the attractors in terms of demand and supply with respect to a specific territorial area. The perception of demand and supply is evaluated from a comparative perspective by means of matrices. This analytical tool enables the deducing of specific managerial implications both for the hospitality structures and for the Destination Management Organization.

The limit of the study consists in the fact that the research has been tested with reference to just one local area within the confines of one timescale. Furthermore the sample of respondents in the case of the hospitality structures is slightly above that considered the established threshold for the application of a t-test in the formulation for independent samples. It would be opportune to retest the value of the attractors with

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reference to a different spatial context and timescale. A further limit is represented by not taking into account a part of the clientele structure (that of international importance).

In relation to the first research question, the analysis starting from a systematic study of Enright and Newton (2004) evidences that no full correspondence can be achieved in the ranking of the factors of appeal. The test carried out on the sample of respondents showed that the hospitality structures of Hong Kong and those of the Amalfi Coast assign a differing degree of importance to the twelve factors selected. The analysis evidences that for the 5 attractors (museum and galleries, nightlife, well known landmarks, climate and dedicated tourism attractions) a statistically significant difference emerges in the score attributed by the respondents of the various destinations. It can be hypothesized therefore, that the importance of the attractors can depend on the type of destination and type of tourism segment catered for. It can also be argued that variability in the importance assigned to the attractors linked to the period or to the life cycle of the destination can exist. The research hypotheses formulated open the way for future research to broaden the scope of the numerous studies already in place (Iso-Ahloa, 1982; Pyo, Mihalik and Uysal, 1989; Yuan and Mc Donald, 1990; Buhalis, 2000; Konu and Laukkanen, 2010; Prayag and Ryan, 2011).

This initial conclusion however, is limited by the fact that only two types of destination have been considered in the study and consequently, two types of potential tourism segments. It would therefore be necessary to extend the analysis and to compare destinations catering for diverse segments of the tourism market. From this point of view, the work can be considered an explorative study with regard to the research questions proposed and only a more in-depth analysis could confirm a definitive generalization. In any event, it should be underlined that the hypothesis of linking the scale of importance to competitive decision making and to the type of segment catered for, albeit in some cases indirect or with reference to specific segments, has already been proposed by numerous authors (Gibson and Yiannakis, 2002; Buhalis, 2000; Konu and Laukkanen, 2010).

The need to respond to the second research question has enabled the devising and developing of a functional model for the joint evaluation of the perceptions of demand and supply. Two matrices were constructed in which the perceived importance and presence of attractors on the part of hotel management and potential tourists were measured. The methodology of analysis convinces us to consider jointly the perception of demand and supply in order that useful indications can emerge which are useful both for hotel

management and for Destination Management Organizations (Formica. Uysal. 2006). Furthermore, the matrices of the importance of attractors and that of perception of performance of the attractors lend themselves to an independent interpretation on the one hand and a comparative one on the other. In relation to the first case:

- the matrix of the importance of the attractors represents the expectations nurtured relative to the components of the supply system requested by two among the numerous stakeholders involved (e.g. the attractor 'different culture' has no relevance in the Amalfi Coast in that it is considered of little importance both by hotel management and by the potential clientele while 'nightlife' is a problematic factor in that it is not considered strategic by hotel management while it is considered important by potential clients);

- at the same time, the matrix of the perception of performance of the attractors describing the perception of demand and supply, enables inference in terms of a univocal interpretation of supply (e.g.'nightlife' is considered important, but lacking by potential clients, while hotel management consider it on average, less important than the other attractors, but on the whole, quite present. This consequently highlights an evident gap between demand and supply in the evaluation of the tourism product).

An evaluation of the factors of appeal from the perspective of demand and supply determines the possibility for enterprise to define linear competitive strategies, in other words, based on particular perceptions of appeal factors. If potential tourists evaluate appeal factors differently from enterprises this means there is a need to redefine competitive strategies. In other words enterprises have to reconsider the order of importance of the appeal factors and adapt their own competitive strategies to the new order[10].

In relation to the second element, the two matrices enable the obtaining of indications on the modality of strategic management of the tourist territory on the part of the DMO (returning to the discourse on 'nightlife' the circumstance that demand and supply evaluate differently the importance and presence of this factor renders problematic decision making on the part of the DMO: if the DMO decides to satisfy the expectations of demand and invest in these attractors, it risks not being supported in this choice by a large quota of the supply system, i.e. the hospitality structures. On the other hand, if it decides to neglect the request of potential clients. it risks losing them).

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[10] Cfr. Valls, J.F.; Parera A.; Andrade M.J., 2012, pp. 142-176.

In reference to both modalities of interpreting data, this does not mean we have devised a complete and definitive tool of analysis. On the contrary, the two matrices still require numerous studies above all in relation to the quadrant that classifies the attractors both in terms of importance/non importance (e.g. special events, nightlife, dedicated tourism attractions, museum and galleries) and in terms of results good performance/weak performance of the attractor (e.g. nightlife, safety, well known landmarks, climate and different culture). For all these quadrants, it would be more opportune to proceed with refining the tool to a greater degree i.e. a comparative interpretation by means of ulterior elements or critical factors of success that can impact on the competitive strategies for the destination.

At the same time undoubtedly the comparative interpretation of the two matrices proposed provides enormous support in terms of strategic indications for Destination Management Organizations inasmuch as in the case of quadrants that do not show elements of contradiction (i.e. that go in the direction of concordant variables of the type both positive or both negative).

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