

Research Project

The analysis of interregional and international tourist behaviour and movement patterns in the view of coopetition of destinations

Abstract

Tourists often visit multiple destinations while on holiday, either by engaging in day trips from the main destination or by spending overnights at different destinations. The attractiveness of secondary destinations provides strength to primary destinations, helps the distribution of tourist flows and can motivate tourists to extend their length of stay in the region.

Local destination marketing organizations (DMOs) are interested in the movement patterns of tourists across the regions and elements of competition and cooperation might arise. The word coopetition in this context refers to the cooperation and rivalry of destinations at the same time for better achievements (Kylänen & Rusko, 2011). The topic was mainly analysed from the supply side among public or private tourism actors in destinations. In the context of Italy for example, Kylänen and Mariani (2012) analysed the coopetition of theme parks in the region of Emilia-Romagna. Moreover, Della Corte and Aria (2016) surveyed small and medium enterprises to link the concept to sustainable competitive advantage of tourist destinations in the area of Naples. Within administrative regions, DMOs are often the facilitators of planned or unintentional coopetition initiatives within their network of local tourism stakeholders (Chim-Miki & Batista-Canino, 2017). However, at a broader level, interregional or national coopetition requires more complex planning, agreements and budget allocations. Hence, the understanding of tourists' motivation and attitude towards engaging in multi-destination travel (interregional or international) is useful in defining the interaction among competing destinations.

The study of the demand allows a better support of the design of joint tourism products. Nevertheless, the concept of destination coopetition is under-researched from a demand perspective and has not yet been supported by spatial analysis of tourist movement patterns.

The research project also focuses on tourists' motivation and preferences in engaging in multi-destination travel and intends to explore measures that facilitate the planning of coopetition initiatives. The empirical study is based in Italy and the 20 administrative regions are used for the separations of territories for spatial analysis. Tourist inter-regional movement patterns are modelled with the Tri-component model of attitude towards the destinations. Cognitive, affective and conative elements of the model allow better understanding of tourists' perception, emotions and intentions to (re-)visit the destinations. Additionally, tourist response behaviour to current interregional cooperation initiatives can be investigated and potential new collaborations can be identified.

The research project also explores international competition with border regions of neighbouring countries of Italy (France, Austria, Slovenia and Switzerland). The motivation and the perceived constrain to travel across national borders can be investigated in different contexts as in e.g. Canally & Timothy (2007). The challenge associated with cross-border destination marketing is under-presented in literature (Kozak & Buhalis, 2019), which mainly concentrates on attracting long-haul markets with complimentary tourism products offers across borders. The importance of cultural

proximity and distance decay are the key geographical theories to add to the complexity of the research.

In terms of theoretical significance, the project aims to contribute to the research stream on co-competition at the destination level with demand analysis. The investigation of tourist behaviour in terms of movement patterns, attitude and response to existing co-competition initiatives is the primary objective of the research. The findings will then be used to assess different forms of co-competition initiatives. The research objectives can be then further developed in detail by the grant holder. Under the supervision of the principal researcher, the grant holder will help organizing the survey instrument, data collection and the analysis with statistical methods.

Research plan

The project will be realised in the following parts, each with a designated objective:

Part 1 (4 months duration): Literature review – identification of the most relevant sources and variables under investigation.

Part 2 (3 months duration): Planning phase: Designation of research questions, survey design and arrangements of the data collection.

Part 3 (1 month duration): Data collection.

Part 4 (4 months duration): Completion of empirical research and research outcomes (report, first paper).

References

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