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TOWARDS AN INTEGRATED CONCEPTUAL MODEL ON TOURISM COMPETITIVENESS: DOES CLUSTERING WAY FORWARD?

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ABSTRACT

The challenge to become, maintain and strengthen the competitive positions in an increasingly competitive global market is vital for every tourism destination. The multiplicity of stakeholders in portfolio providing "tourism experience", makes management more complex, further compounded each tourist expectations are unique. Decade of 90's, Crouch and Ritchie developed a conceptual model to tailored distinctive characteristics of destination competitiveness, combining the attributes in Porter's Diamond model, recognizes destinations' resource endowments and capacity to deploy resources, acknowledge the impact of global macro-environmental forces and competitive micro-environmental circumstances. Inspired by the idea of making more competitive, Dwyer and Kim (2003) introduced an integrated model combining main elements in Diamond and Crouch and Ritchie models, hence is an integrated approach combining endowed, created and supporting resources, destination management, government and industry specific attributes. Present stage of competitiveness theory in a basis upon to identify relevant attributes of tourism destination/ cluster competitiveness, as particular value in turning the focus of research move towards assessing relative importance of attributes on competitiveness. This literature review will shed more light and a useful tool for further studies on conceptual models integrating comparative and competitive advantage by combining innovation focus within clusters in macro-economic perspective.

KEYWORDS

cluster, destination competitiveness, Diamond model, integrated model, tourism.

INTRODUCTION

Tourism is one of the fastest growing service industries for many economies, main source of foreign income, specially for appreciable number of developing countries. As further, by the vast human potential, national materials and through multiple effects on areas of references, tourism acts as a stimulating factor for economic development. It truly bonded people with leisure activities, that allows to inspire nature, destinations, experiences, dreams they had in past and simply to inspire their own lives with traveling and culture of other nations.

According to Cunha and Cunha (2005), since the 1980's the opening of national economies globally and the quick globalization and internationalization had boosted tourism sector, to become the second most important global sector, only second to financial services. Tourism is a wide-spread phenomenon in present context, and a vital economic development factor, that include competitiveness among regions or particular destinations to win tourists. More discretionary income levels among people and free or leisure time, created a foundation for a new life style affiliated with travel and tourism. Tourism is an activity that consumer have to seek for tourism service, or he should come to the destination. (Miller and Gibson, 2005), (Kvist et al., 2006) In other economic activities, the product should reach customer to satisfy his needs and wants, as tourism customer should come to destination itself, resulting heavy impact on local and regional economic development. There can observe several reasons for the growing market share in tourism in global economy as; (a) ongoing internationalization that porous borders and create a transfers between destinations (b) demographic changes in market structure, as "greying" of large proportion from western country population and "experience hunting" on younger generation from tourism exposure (Kvist et al., 2006). Although, tourism is a sector that visible both positive as well as negative aspects in some economies as in one hand it pave way to millions of direct and indirect job openings, FDI, capital investments to a particular economies, but in other hand may lead to pollution, invasion of protected areas, violence, issues in cultural values, destroy cultural heritage in some scenarios. (Cunha and Cunha, 2005)

Bobirca (2007) explains tourism sector as the only industry in service sector that have potentiality to provide trading opportunities to nations regardless their level of development. Also as a sector that have uneven distribution of benefits depend on the ability of the country regarding performance, it way forward for competitiveness. Bobirca (2007) further explains that non-price factors also equally important as price related factors, as to gain competitiveness for a nation. Non-price factors are diverse, as it ranges in a wider area as on HR endowment, technical factors and innovativeness, managerial and organizational factors and other internal and external relationships with organizations, stakeholders and public sector. Global tourism arrivals grew by 6% in 2010, recovering from a 5% slump in 2009 as it shows a tremendous inspiration among travel and leisure activities of people around the world, as communication networks, transportation as well as Information technology plays a major role. Scholars have mentioned that tourism is in a situation as in "paradigm shift" (Iordache et al., 2010) as comparative advantages of tourism become less important than competitive advantage factors within destinations.

OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY

The tourism cluster development have been focused as one of the main development goals to achieved economic prosperity, the exploring the possibilities for tourism cluster development through value driven innovative strategies is utmost important. Also it's vital to explore possibilities tapping in to high-value generating tourism markets and niche markets, as in return, added value component is huge to the national economies. This literature review is a comprehensive analysis on scholarly contributions towards clustering and destination competitiveness in tourism, as the main objective is to modeling competitiveness conceptually.

Hence objective is to identify the elements of a new paradigm, towards a conceptual model for tourism cluster competitiveness, by addressing both comparative and competitive advantages with innovation focus.

DISCUSSION

DESTINATION COMPETITIVENESS IN TOURISM

As the century we living in, the effects of globalization and making world a global village, has coincided with tourism industry boom, also with many challenges and obstacles. The success of tourism destinations influenced by relative competitiveness, as competitive advantage achieved being a superior destination to potential tourists. Following the publication of "The Competitive Advantage of Nations" (Porter, 1990), Porter suggested in the international markets the companies are competing, not the country itself, success of the companies visible and measure by economic environment, institutions and government policies. Further explained link between clusters, competition and company strategy by fulfill following three broad ways as (a) increasing the productivity of constituent firms, (b) increasing capacity for innovation and productivity growth and (c) stimulating new business formation that supports innovation and expands the cluster. Porter (1990) pointed out that huge variety of definitions and perspectives existed with the concept of competitiveness, as cannot term which one is best. The Diamond model, is supposed to represent how an economy, firm or cluster can create competitive advantage, through its four facets as; (a) Firm strategy, structure and rivalry: reflects attitudes toward competition, market institutions, degree of competition in domestic market and other cultural and historical factors (b) Factor conditions reflects: human resources, specialized infrastructure (physical and administrative) and natural resources, capital

resources, (c) Demand conditions reflects: sophisticated and demanding local customers that push firms on innovation, unusual local demand in specialized segments that can serve globally and customer need that anticipate those elsewhere and (d) Related and supporting industries: presence of capable local based suppliers and competitive related industries, stimulate cooperation and rivalry and ultimately lead for competitiveness. Other than four facets, two other factors, government and chance plays a vital role while shape up the competitiveness. Porter has examined the role of industry clusters in cities, regions and states and developed "Diamond model" that offer insights on clusters and ultimately competitiveness of cluster. Also expressed competitive advantage of a particular cluster depends on the ability of its firm's thorough innovative focus that eventually brings competitiveness in local industry, as lead for cluster growth.

Emerging in 1990's, as Porter's "Competitive Advantage of Nations" (1990) became popular as well as the "Diamond model" that reflect competitive advantage of a nation, firm or a cluster, way forward tourism researchers on "tourism destination and/or cluster competitiveness". Over the past two decades, body of research has grown which has sought to develop a theoretical and conceptual basis for approaching the competitiveness issue. The present stage in the developing destination competitiveness theory and knowledge having achieved a good basis upon which to identify relevant attributes of tourism destination or cluster competitiveness, as particular value in turning the focus of research move towards assessing relative importance of attributes on competitiveness.

As in the decade of 90's, Crouch and Ritchie developed a conceptual model that to tailored distinctive characteristics of destination competitiveness, by combining the attributes in Porter's Diamond model. Their model recognizes that destination competitiveness based upon destinations' resource endowments (comparative advantages) and capacity to deploy resources (competitive advantage) and acknowledge the impact of global macro-environmental forces and competitive micro-environmental circumstances (Crouch and Ritchie (1995, 1999), Ritchie and Crouch (2000)). Nation or a regional competitiveness is built upon the success of how companies behave on the global market scenario. Crouch and Ritchie (1995, 1999) stressed the importance of competitive advantage in supplying goods and services to visitors, as to take touristic potentiality. They have developed a model for competitiveness measure in a tourism destination, as by combining 4 factors as, core appeal group: factors act to attract tourists, supporting factors: necessary foundations for the sector, qualifying determinants: constraints and/or influences governing competitive potentiality of a destination and destination management group: ability to shape and influence destination's competitive strength. As to compete in tourism market, the destination must have comparative and mostly competitive advantages specially in efficient management. (see figure 1)

Inspired by the idea of making more competitive towards tourism sector, Dwyer and Kim introduced an integrated model combining main elements in Diamond model and Crouch and Ritchie model. Hence Dwyer and Kim (2003), Kim and Dwyer (2003, 2004) model is an integrated approach combining endowed resources both natural (mountains, sea, water) and heritage (handicrafts, cuisines, customs and created resources (infrastructure, events and adventure, shopping) and supporting resources (general infrastructure, service quality, destination management and government and industry specific attributes). Thus many scholars have setup their analysis based on these models. Dwyer and Kim (2003) further stating the competition in tourism sector is very complex by mixing with several elements, thus it's not easy to measure. (see figure 2). Many scholars have used Crouch and Ritchie (1999) model and Kim and Dwyer (2003) integrated model to measure tourism destination competitiveness, as it covered overall portfolio of tourism destination competitiveness.

Modern tourism is "experience" oriented, based on competitiveness rather than comparative scenic beauty in a destination. Different scholars view competitiveness in different ways (Bobirca et al., 2006). Omerzel (2006) explains, in the paradox of tourism, globalization cause to form dramatic numbers of destinations all over the globe. Economists have emphasized on price and country specific economic characteristics, while management focused in firm-specific characteristics, and the focus of sociologists and politicians has covered vast area such as social, political and cultural characteristics underlying the notion of competitiveness. This is the reason that competitiveness could be measured in different perspectives, no special way as a rule of thumb. Competitiveness and clusters are both interconnected terms, as competition is a broad concept that is widely used in economics and business. The topic of destination competitiveness has received increasing attention in economics literature, as because tourism is becoming one of the prominent sectors in world. There can see a transition from mass tourism to a "new age of tourism" that called as tailor-made approach to specific attitudes, needs and wants of tourists (Cracolici et al., 2006). In strategic management context, the competitiveness deriving from the external environment of a firm, as Lee et al., (2006) taken industrial organization theory to find out the 'fit' between strategy and the external environment on performance. In their study on competitiveness on hot springs tourism sector in Taiwan, considered resource based view (RBV) theory. Competitiveness is a new challenge for the tourism sector, as competition for larger share in tourism pie, in globally emerging. As Omerzel (2006), comparative advantage and competitive advantage of tourism seems to be much more important to an economy. Comparative advantages include climate, scenery, forests, waterways and wild life as related with primary tourism supply. But competitive advantage means, infrastructure, management quality, workforce skills and knowhow, policies of government etc. They pave way for the competitiveness of a given destination. There is a clearly seen gap between destination products and tourist's preferences, as the priority should be given in life style changes, attitudes, morality and values of tourists, by directing future tourism directions. Dugar (2007) mentioned, competitiveness is a complex concept to measure in tourism sector, as because various aspects and complex structure it inherited with numerous challenges and limits the strategy implementations within the industry pointing out some important factors in India's tourism cluster, as it's a highly infectious with macro economic factors, high social cost and intermediary conflicts and specially power of positive word of mouth. Wares et al., (2008) further explains competitiveness in different levels, as in firm level and national level. In firm level, the firm is competitive if it can compete successfully with rivals and in national level, competitiveness reflects the ability of a country to use its resources in a way that increase the socio economic development of people. According to Ferreira and Esteveo, (2009), the touristic competitiveness is achieved with the touristic set as it competes with other touristic sets in national or international level. This summarizes the Diamond model of Porter, as competition is occur between clusters and industries, not by countries.

TOURISM CLUSTERING AND INNOVATION FOCUS

Industrial clusters are vital for economic development as it has emphasized by many eminent scholars. Clusters in particular regions enhances regional distinctive advantages that lead competing with other regions to create inputs and differentiate them and over time, specialization, training, Research and Development, physical infrastructure and specially providers of tourism inputs seed the clusters to growth. Porter (1990) mentioned clusters as, geographic concentrations of interconnected companies, specialized suppliers and service providers, firms in related industries, and associated Institutions (eg: universities, standards agencies, and trade associations) in particular fields that compete but also cooperate. Hence, tourism cluster simply, is a set of attractions, less differentiated and concentrated in one geographical area. Thus it provides political and social harmony by collective value chains and management network of organizations within clusters, lead for comparative and competitive advantage in sector. Porter (1990) simplified the definition for a cluster as, a given geographically proximate group of interconnected companies and associated institutions in a particular field, linked by commonalities and complementarities. Martin and Porter (2000), emphasis a commercializing of an innovation is more rapidly and efficient within a cluster, as because it is a resource base. (See figure 3)

Cluster theory suggests that industries grow in certain regions as opposed to others for other reasons than pure economical factors and highlights the importance of research in innovations, skilled workforce, knowledge management as well as investments (Nordin, 2003). Hence in a cluster, the focus is on the linkages between firms, for instance taking the form of buyer-supplier relationships, training or research initiatives, joint marketing and lobbying. However it is usually not a group of firms that deliberately join to reach common objectives, but rather a non-planned phenomenon. Tourism involves thematic clusters, combined with strategic segments, as heritage, sun and beach, adventure, sports etc. and this kind of clustering based on "themes" and they generally cross geographical and political boundaries (Nordin, 2003). Thematic tourism clusters are more functional than spatial phenomenon, although they may be found in a rather limited geographic area. Destinations like clusters generally arise naturally, but may need to be developing to reach their fullest potential. Their course of development maybe influenced by a number of factors such as strategy, plans, support given by public sector, investment in infrastructure and joint marketing efforts (Nordin, 2003). Decelle (2003) pointed out that tourism cluster, as having distinction as geographical clusters and activity based clusters, is also play key point on innovative approach. Innovation is a factor that facilitated by a cluster, as cluster participants often are able to more clearly and rapidly perceive new market needs. Decelle (2003) propose the importance of innovation dynamics as applying push strategy for proactive towards innovation attitude, improve

training of operators, staff, developing role of public and private enterprises, Research and Development towards national innovation system and specially linkage building with macroeconomic environment in long run. The geographic scope of a cluster can range from a single city or state to a country or even a group of neighboring countries. In present context, cities are acting as major tourism destinations or at least as having the potentiality to be. That explains why cities compete with each other to gain competitive advantage (Anttonen et al., 2004). Weiermair (2004) stressed the future challenges of tourism industry is based on either (a) innovation-driven cost reducing changes in tourism production or marketing process or (b) product changes, more varied tourism experiences for quality-conscious and saturated multi-option customers. Clusters have many definitions from scholars, as it simply refers; geographical concentrations of interconnected companies, with linkages to related organizations as government agencies, trade associations and Research and Development. Wares et al., (2008) express the related economic activity tends to agglomerate naturally for variety of reasons as presence of a unique natural resource, proximity to markets and reduced transaction costs. The important aspects in tourism cluster are co-opetition (mixture of competition), social capital and externalities. Tourism industry is less innovative than other industries and also lack of motivation, knowledge and resources' lead for less innovativeness (Bodil, 2009). According to Lordache et al., (2010), tourism cluster is a geographic concentration of interconnected companies and institutes through tourism activities, as including suppliers, services, government and institutions, education centers and competitors. Further stated that premises in tourism cluster development involve with following basic aspects as; (a) existence of competitive enterprises (b) favorable geographical location, natural potential, culture traditions, gastronomy, sincere hospitality (c) key partners are concentrated in the vicinity (d) greater diversity of partners and (e) existence of formal and informal links between cluster partners. Plaza et al., (2011) mentioned because of the unique structure of tourism industry, innovation is still lag behind and many consists with small type business, therefore the need of collaboration and knowledge sharing and cooperation is effective for a destination. When governments prioritize the sector and making steps for a robust destination-marketing campaign as a whole in tourism, it leads for innovations. But practically destination marketing campaigns made by governments lead to strength the demand side, while supply side in tourism remained as it was. In this scenario, innovation prioritization transfer conventional tourism to a much more strategically sector.

PRESENT CONTEXT OF TOURISM CLUSTER COMPETITIVENESS

In present scenario, tourism is a major economic service among world; so on destinations no longer take passive approaches to underutilize the resources. Crouch and Ritchie (1995), explains tourism development policies and plans, organizational structures and the marketing strategies drive destinations more to competition, but it should focus more on what that makes a tourism destination competitive. As a result of that, the destinations welcome tourists around, but doing little to intervene in the visitation process, being content to rely on the travel trade to attract and serve the tourists. The hospitality factor or simply person to person encounters between front-line employees also with local people is neglected but a most vital factor in tourism destination competitiveness. Yuksel et al., (2000) simply explain as if there is a shortcoming at a most critical interface such as tourist contact front-line employee in a given destination resort, all other factors are insignificant. Even if destination has a best strategic focus, best scenery or adventure experiences in resort, those things diminish just one second of first impression on hospitality, that highlight the importance on destination management in tourism competitiveness. It's evident that only few attentions made in past to analyze and understand the "experience provided by tourism", because more concerned on to attract tourists to the destination in high volumes, simply neglecting the core tourism product.

Inman et al., (2002) argued the abundance of natural resources of many nations move for develop their competitive skills, as a nation's prosperity depends on the level of productivity and competitiveness of business and industries, They also stress a continuous innovations made on products and services, way forward competitive advantage. Tourism and travel, an important part of the service economy and according to World Tourism Organization, the world's largest industry and it is predicted to be one of the few industries that will continue to generate job opportunities in future. But tourism clustering particularly is one of the least researched in world economy (Nordin, 2003). The boundaries of tourism and travel industry are fairly difficult and therefore its extent is hard to measure: it diversify many sectors as restaurants, hotels, airlines, travel agents, shopping complexes etc. Loss of competitiveness is a significant challenge nowadays for all tourism stakeholder groups including academics, researchers, policy makers and so on. Issues as how a company's ability to compete is affected by the place where it is located, why similar and related activities from geographical concentrations and how different types of related economic activities develop in relation to each other are central issues in debating (Nordin, 2003). Kim and Dwyer, 2003, highlight the importance of relative importance of different dimensions of competitiveness. As "how important the natural resources compared with destination image? How important the price competitiveness with destination management"? and so on, that relative importance of the factors in competitiveness can be answered by making hypothesis. Although Walsh et al., (2003) mentioned the importance on firm-level innovativeness in achieving superior competitive advantage as well as performance in small scale tourism firms through two integrative relationships between resources based view and dynamic capability view.

Tourism as even a vital sector in service economy, that have received little attention on cluster theory for economic development, only briefly mentioned in Porter's cluster approach (Miller et al., 2005). There is a "universal view" among comparing destinations in competitiveness with each other also its vital to compare several types of tourist destinations, like cities, resorts as a case sample (Enright et al., 2005). Cunha and Cunha, 2005, explains, it have seen very few attention in past scholars towards a model for evaluate impacts in tourism for local development. According to Miller and Gibson (2005), cluster research basically popularized with "clustering" concept of Porter, as clustering is a continuously evolving and dynamic process. The area on cluster research moreover operationalizing Porter's general concepts on "Clustering" and "Cluster Diamond", but research on practical applications are limited. More quantitative researches done by scholars on potential industry clusters in regional wise and qualitative researches basically focused on cluster mapping or graphical presentations on economic linkage within a cluster. (Miller and Gibson 2005). According to Enright et al., (2005), a case study based on Cuba, a world class sun and sand destination, reflects competitiveness in tourism, but it doesn't guarantee the development successfulness of tourism because of other factor conditions such as HR, capital investments, infrastructure and other 3 facets of the Diamond, cause as a barrier to destination development. There is lack of empirical analysis on practical use of empirical base on cluster diamond. Miller et al., (2005) mentioned, research on tourism clustering must expand to encompass scenario outside the classic Porter's cluster. As it's much deeper sense as go beyond from Porter's framework, by adding more strategic points to a model. As when it concerns tourism in developing countries here are some strategically obstacles in practically and there has not been sufficient research conducted to make the impact to the economy in developing countries, as the clusters also at in a weaker starting point (Wares et al., 2008, Ferreira et al., 2009). According to Balan et al., (2009), in 1950, top fifteen destinations' attracted 98% or almost all of the tourists to them, but sixty years later that became 57%, signifying the competitiveness as a key factor that tourism destinations should keen on. The focus on tourism industry has shifted from simply attracting more tourists to increase the competitiveness of the destinations. Ferreira et al., (2009), expressed that as tourism is a powerful instrument in national and regional level, but discussions made on tourism clustering is still in an embryonic phase. It is evident that very few number of researches explaining the tourism cluster competitiveness and impacts to regional and national economy. As innovations has been long recognized as a key factor in competitive advantage, Walsh et al., (2010) explain this is a necessary condition but not sufficient and highlights the importance of other aspects as in line with gaining competitiveness for tourism industry.

CONCLUSION

It could be discern from the above literatures that most of the scholars, have revealed application on cluster theory on tourism sector as it leads for new thematic tourism clusters based on new approaches. Tourism destinations can be refereed as clusters, as if they fulfill cluster requirements mentioned, thus tourism cluster is an important focal point that can enhance competitiveness in tourism. Many researchers, tourism specialists, economists and policy makers have sought a strategic way to maximize the development of tourism sector, as it ultimately lead for raise the national economy.

Competitiveness is characterized by dynamics involving a complex interactive process of social, political and institutional change, as Crouch and Ritchie (1995, 1999) build their model on four major components based on Porter's (1990) "Diamond of national competitiveness". Hence Kim and Dwyer (2003) further integrated that model that combine main elements of national and firm competitiveness of Porter's model with destination competitiveness with Crouch and Ritchie model. All these three models have used to assess tourism destination competitiveness by many scholars, and among them Kim and Dwyer (2003) model

is an integrated model that covers larger part of tourism portfolio. Many scholars given their contribution on tourism destination competitiveness as Crouch and Ritchie (1995, 1999), Alavi and Yasin (2000), Kim and Dwyer (2003), Omerzel (2004), Enright and Newton (2004), Crouch (2007), Omerzel and Mihalic (2008), Cracoloci and Nijkamp (2009), Poon (2010), Ritchie and Crouch (2010). As most comprehensive model developed by Crouch and Ritchie (1995, 1999) but integrated model developed by Dwyer and Km (2003) underlies the important of tourism demand factors that neglected, Armenski et al., (2011). The integrated model covers up the tourism portfolio as the model empirically tested by Korea and Australia in 2003, Slovenia in 2004 and 2008 and Serbia in 2009 and 2011.

Although competitiveness measured by taking tourist destination, not as a cluster or clusters in a particular destinations. Tourism consists of value driven clustering methods, such as “thematic clustering”, therefore the competitiveness measured in respective of clusters may lead for new innovative strategical knowhow. Innovation as a separate factor is also missing from previous models, such innovation focus way forward strategies based on tourist product and service innovations and specially experience innovations as a “package” driven for high margins of profits for an economy.

- A necessity of a conceptual model on cluster competitiveness in tourism that covers tourism thematic clusters, specially focus on developing country perspective is essential. The one of a significant but although neglected aspect as “innovation focus” should address as an attribute in accordance with comparative and competitive advantage in tourism clusters.
- Integrated conceptual model focused more on both comparative and competitive advantage as well as innovation focus as in driven by strategies is proposed for sustainable tourism development.

Hence a new conceptual model combining tourism clusters and innovation strategies that way forward competitiveness and national economic development is proposed, by combining main elements on macro-economic environment.

PRACTICAL IMPLICATIONS AND ORIGINALITY OF THE PAPER

This study is an attempt to build linkages between industrial clustering and innovativeness, by refereeing tourism destinations as clusters. Tourism clustering is a fairly new concept, thus focus for a conceptual model towards tourism clustering is most benefit for developing economies of world. The findings of this study broaden up the knowledge on tourism clustering, competitiveness and innovation focus as driving forces linking together to contribute to the economic growth of a nation in macro-economic perspectives by specially focusing on “cluster based competitiveness” than tourism destination as a one location for competitiveness.

FIGURES

FIGURE 1: THE DESTINATION COMPETITIVENESS MODEL OF CROUCH AND RITCHIE (1995, 1999)

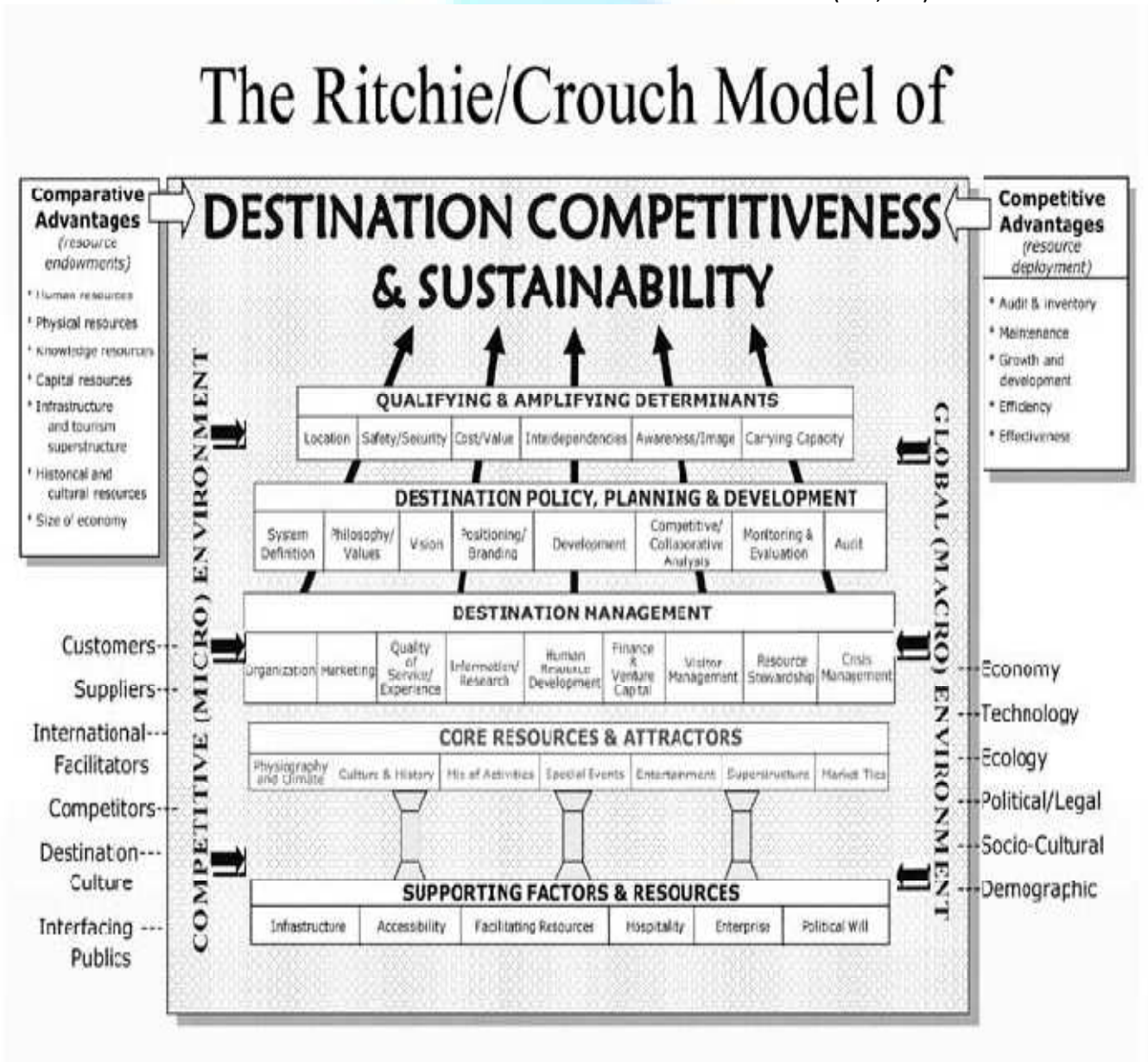


FIGURE 2: THE INTEGRATED MODEL OF DWYER AND KIM (2003)

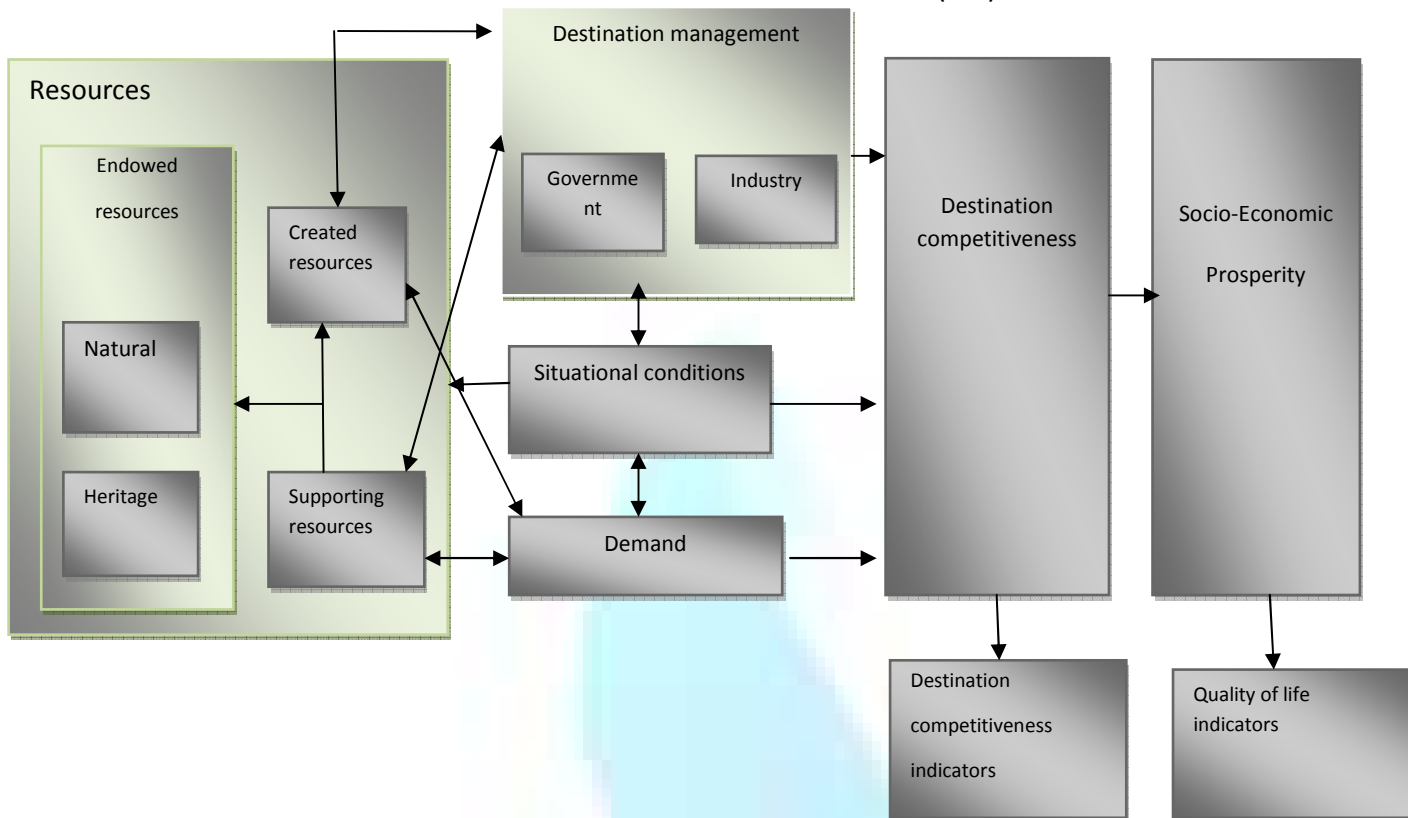
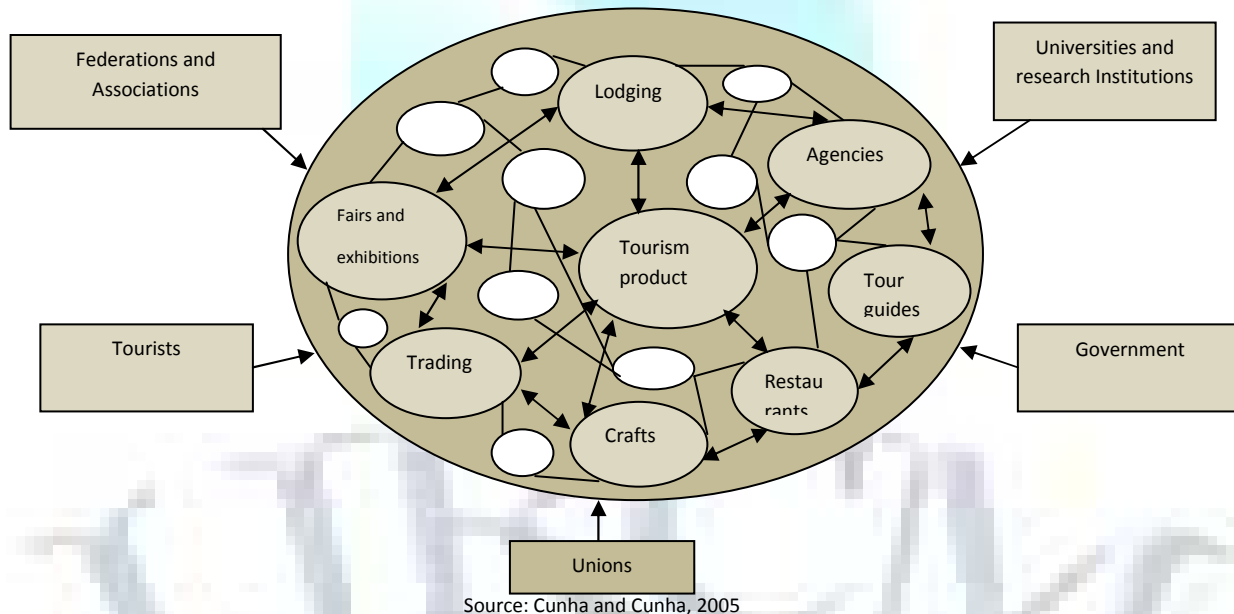


FIGURE 3: TOURISM CLUSTER REPRESENTATION



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