

## TOURISM ENTREPRENEURS AND DESTINATION COMPETITIVENESS: A LITERATURE REVIEW

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### ABSTRACT

*Destination competitiveness is a crucial issue for many stakeholders in the industry of tourism. In recent years tourism destinations have faced many challenges with respect to upholding the attractiveness. This illuminates the role of tourism entrepreneurs who by using their innovative, creative and dynamic approaches offer the package of attraction, accommodation, amenities and accessibility for enhancing the attractiveness of a particular destination. Much of past academic work on the role of tourism entrepreneurs is qualitative in nature, involving case studies and interviews. Yet there is a dearth of comprehensive review of the qualitative work on the role of tourism entrepreneurs and destination competitiveness. This review paper aims to fill that gap and identifies the advancements in this area which helps in establishing a foundation for further research. The paper found that tourism entrepreneurs have a catalytic, dynamic and long lasting influence at all stages of tourism destination life cycle. Although the role of tourism entrepreneurs has been subsumed in development of destination competitiveness, review of literature strongly reveals that even an individual tourism entrepreneur plays a major role in tourist destination development by creating a culture of tourism, influencing development policies and mobilising local resources.*

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**Keywords:** *Tourism, Entrepreneurship, Tourism Entrepreneur, Small and Medium-sized Enterprises (SMEs), Destination Competitiveness.*

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### Introduction

Tourism is considered as the modern vehicle for economic development. Genesis of the word tourism lies in the Greek word "Tornos" in 16<sup>th</sup> century and the latin word "Tornare" which symbolised and ancient tool having a shape of circle or wheel, this word later converted to 'Tourist'. In general parlance tourist is a person who travels to destinations outside his/her usual place of residence or workplace and stayed there for 24 hours or more for business leisure or recreation.

The word entrepreneur roots out from the French word "Entreprendre" which means to undertake for the one who bears the risk of new Enterprise. For the first time this word was used in 16<sup>th</sup> century in French language though the word was used for the first time by Richard Clantilon. Several researchers made efforts to study about entrepreneurs, types of entrepreneurs, characteristics of successful entrepreneurs, their life cycle and the functions performed by entrepreneurs. Various studies concluded that tourism creates a positive influence on entrepreneurship resulting in economic growth (Nissan, E. et.al 2010). With the growing importance of tourism in world economy it is certain that research in the domain of tourism is likely to see an upswing both in scope and depth which will be instrumental in supporting tourism industry (Baker et.al 1994). The confluence of various elements gives birth to tourism as a product. In order to possess the ability to satisfy the needs of tourists, the services offered by any destination should essentially be dynamic in nature. The biggest challenge faced by any tourist destination is maintaining its level of attractiveness. In recent years many destinations are

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struggling to uphold the attractiveness of the destination. Tourism entrepreneurs contribute significantly towards production and reproduction of tourism. This illuminates the role of tourism entrepreneurs who by using their innovative, creative and dynamic approach offer the package of attraction, accommodation, amenities and accessibility which consequently makes the destination more and more attractive for the tourists. It therefore becomes imperative to study the role of tourism entrepreneurs in building competitiveness of tourist destinations. The paper is divided in different sections. The first section states the objectives of the study. The second section consists of the review of literature which is further divided in 2 parts: the first one is tourism entrepreneurs and the second is destination competitiveness. The paper then follows the sections which entail discussion, gaps identified in available research and conclusion.

### **Objectives of the Research**

- To study the concept, definition and the models of Destination Competitiveness
- To study the role of Tourism Entrepreneurs in Destination Competitiveness
- To explore the scope for future research with respect to Tourism entrepreneurs and Destination Competitiveness.

### **Review of Literature**

#### **• Tourism Entrepreneur**

Many scholars have successfully defined the term Entrepreneur. Most of these definitions have focused on attributes of being a risk bearer, an innovator, a creator of an enterprise, gap filler in market, an opportunity seeker and a person who brings all the factors of production together by sewing them in a thread of economic profitability (Misra S, et.al 2000).

Tourism entrepreneur is a special case of entrepreneur. One most comprehensive definition of tourism entrepreneur was proposed wherein tourism entrepreneur was defined as "A creator of a touristic enterprise motivated by monetary and/or non-monetary reasons to pursue a perceived market opportunity legally, marginally, or illegally" (Khoon, Koh & Hatten 2002). Tourism entrepreneurs are different from general entrepreneurs. The major points of differences between these two categories are-

- Tourism entrepreneurs establish enterprises dedicated to serve tourism industry whereas general entrepreneurs built non-touristic ventures.
- Most touristic products are essentially intangible in nature. Therefore, it is an uphill task to prove their concept before (concept testing versus product testing). Difficulty in establishing proof of concept also results in difficulty in finding ready lenders/investors.
- Management skills and practices required to run a touristic organization successfully are vastly different from those required for managing product based.
- The impact of seasonality is far more severe on the demands of products offered by ventures in tourism industry as compared to goods-selling enterprises. Therefore, tourism entrepreneurs need to address this issue in a more comprehensive manner.
- As in most services customers have to come in physical contact with the service provider, similar is the case in tourism industry. The inseparability of tourism entrepreneurs and tourists cause specific issues which need to be addressed by the tourism entrepreneurs whereas goods selling entrepreneurs are free from the essential requirement of presence of consumer
- A considerable number of tourist attractions are owned and run by government agencies, like museums, religious places and historic sites. As a consequence, tourism entrepreneurs have less control over their operational environment as they operate in a restrictive environment in comparison to goods selling entrepreneurs.

On one hand efforts were made to differentiate an entrepreneur in general from a tourism entrepreneur while on other hands detailed classification of different types of tourism entrepreneurs was also done. The most comprehensive classification was given by Khoon, et.al (2002) which describes about nine types of tourism entrepreneurs : The inventive , The innovative , The imitative, The social, The lifestyle, The marginal, The closet tourism entrepreneur, The nascent and lastly the serial tourism entrepreneur.

### **Need of Tourism Entrepreneurs**

Touristic enterprises have both economic as well as social contribution towards community. These enterprises generate employment opportunities far above expectations, help in earning real income, generate revenues by way of taxes and also stimulates other areas of economy of the region.

Additionally touristic enterprises help in enhancing the attractiveness of community as a place to lead a good quality of life. The importance lies in the fact that these tourism enterprises come into existence through the efforts done by tourism entrepreneurs. It is all because of the presence and hard work of tourism entrepreneurs that the community's physical, natural, ethno cultural and historical value gets transformed into resources for tourism thus creating best of tourist attractions. The mountains, rivers, flora and fauna which are in general considered as attractions will be otherwise taken as just natural obstacles, natural dumpsites and natural food sources respectively. There are many examples like the development of Las Vegas, Colorado and Maryland where tourism entrepreneurship has worked miraculously (Khoon et.al 2002). Tourism entrepreneurs constantly engage in production and reproduction of tourism.

Tourism entrepreneurs are the architects of a local society's touristscape. This holds true if we believe that it is the vision, decision and implementation done by tourism entrepreneurs. They are the ones who actually decide upon as to where, how and when tourism enterprises will be created (Khoon et.al 2002). This illuminates the role of tourism entrepreneurs who use their innovative, creative and dynamic to offer the package of attraction, accommodation, amenities and accessibility. In totality this bundle of benefits consequently makes the destination more and more attractive for the tourists. Better the services offered at the tourist destination, more is its attractiveness and will consequently lead to a salutary effect on the competitiveness of the respective destination. Tourism entrepreneurs are the ones who make addition in the attractions available thereby saving the community against novelty decay. Darwin's theory which emphasises on "survival of the fittest" is applicable to tourism entrepreneurs also, as to stay in businesses they have to be innovative (Hatten 1997; Fry 1993; Holt 1992).

- **Tourism Entrepreneurs - How to Ensure their Presence?**

Once the importance of tourism entrepreneurs was established the next area of concern was regarding, regular stream of tourism entrepreneurs which is essential for any destination to flourish. As a result one important question arises that "how to assure a continuous supply of tourism entrepreneurs? Some scholars believe that all communities have a pool of entrepreneurial talent which if properly motivated can be turned into successful tourism entrepreneurs. In a study on tourism entrepreneurs in Northumberland it was found that the combination of migrants and locals is an effective combination that creates extra-local networks with local flavour. This resulted in positive gains for small tourism firms (STFs) and created conducive environment which provided stimulus to local entrepreneurs to initiate new start ups. This led the way ahead for competitive environment in the tourism economy of Northumberland. This heightened the business standards and expectations among small tourism firms (Gary Bosworth, et.al 2011).

- **Role of an Individual Tourism Entrepreneur**

An individual tourism entrepreneur can even mark a deep influence on the growth of any tourism destination. One of the most cited works in this regard is that of Ryan et.al (2012) who contributed in the understanding regarding how the efforts done by a single tourism entrepreneur named Browne transformed Killarney-a small place in Ireland into a tourism hotspot. They commented that tourism entrepreneurs play vital function at all phases in the destination development process. Contradicting earlier studies done by Butler (1980) which remarked that the role of tourism entrepreneur remains confined to early stages of destination development. They mentioned "Entrepreneurs have acted as triggers of change and development and have encouraged and facilitated the involvement and success of others in the industry. Their influence is not static but has continued to influence development long after the individual entrepreneur has ceased to exist" (p. 16).

In another study conducted by Rajja Komppula (2014) data of 6 case studies and 9 semi structures interviews was taken from rural backgrounds and it was concluded that out of all the stakeholders responsible for enhancing the level of competitiveness of the tourism destination the responsibility of tourism entrepreneurs is most crucial and their efforts decide the fate of any tourist destination. Golembki and Olszewski (2010) and Khoon, et.al (2002) also suggest that it is the public sector actors who should promote a positive entrepreneurial environment which will attract the investors.

### **Destinations Competitiveness**

Tourists visit different destinations and enrich their experience. These destinations compete with each other directly or indirectly. The reading made by tourists about the service quality and comprehensive performance plays a determining role in deciding about destination revisit, recall and positive recommendation (Laws,1995; Ritchie & Crouch, 2003). Tourists, often tend to compare the

facilities, attractiveness of destination, and service parameters of the destinations they visit (Laws, 1995). It is therefore competitiveness of the tourist destination that requires to be examined as per the characteristics of service sector and experiential nature of the product. It is most likely that consumers will compare the facilities, attractions and service standards of one destination with that of other.

The very foundation of tourism destination competitiveness model derives its roots from Porter's (1990) widely accepted structure of "Diamond of national competitiveness". Ritchie and Crouch, (2003) viewed a destination's competitiveness as "a country's ability to create added value and thus increase the national wealth by managing assets and processes, attractiveness, aggressiveness and proximity, and there by integrating these relationships within an economic and social model that takes into account a destination's natural capital and its preservation for future generations".

In the past few years, the body of research on tourism destination competitiveness has evolved considerably (Crouch, 2010). Various models of destination competitiveness were developed with exhaustive identification of determinants and attributes was done.

- **Models of Destination Competitiveness**

A lot of research scholars have studied the determinants which have a bearing on destination competitiveness. The paradigm of factors affecting destination competitiveness can be understood by going through the models proposed by different scholars in the field of tourism studies. Many models and composite indicators have been formulated.

The most popular model proposed by Ritchie and Crouch (2000, 2003) is renowned Conceptual model of destination competitiveness. It went under revision thrice and finally in 2003 researchers came up with a detailed model which later became the starting point for many researches. The model was founded on the Theory of Competitive Advantage which was put forth by Porter and Theory of Comparative Advantage given by Smith and Ricardo. The model incorporated many factors that are instrumental in measuring the competitiveness of any tourist spot. All the factors were divided into two groups- one as primary and the other as secondary based on their bearing. In all, the model recognises 36 destination competitiveness attributes in addition to over 250 factors. Factors affecting Macro environment are divided in six major groups pertaining to economy, ecology, political, technology and legal developments, socio-cultural issues, and the ever changing demography. Factors affecting the micro environment of destination comprises organizations, influences, and forces that are there inside the destination's direct purview of tourism competition along with activities. The core resources and attractors were identified as the key motivators which force any visitor to make his or her mind to visit any specific destination; other factors were found to be responsible for increasing profitability and success of the destination. Supporting factors were recognized to lay strong foundation on which tourism industry could rest. The next element of the model is "Destination policy, planning and development".

This factor works as a pointer for the direction, form and structure of tourism development. The destination management element of the model focused on activities which were implemented on a day to day basis, the policy and planning structure framed under destination policy, planning and development, enhancing the core resources and attractors, strengthening the quality and effectiveness of the supporting factors and resources. This component was basically introduced to fit into the best manner with the hurdles or prospects imposed or introduced by the qualifying and amplifying determinants. Lastly, the potential competitiveness of a destination was restricted by many factors which are beyond the scope of four groups of determinants. These factors help to moderate or magnify the effect on destination competitiveness by screening the effect of rest 3 groups, but it is noteworthy that these factors are generally outside the control of tourism segment alone.

Integrated Model for understanding destination competitiveness was proposed in 2003. This model was built on the model proposed by Ritchie and Crouch (2000). The basic change made by Dwyer & Kim (2003) was that they classified the resources into two categories one as Natural Resources and the other as Created Resources. They took 8 factors into consideration for determining destination competitiveness which were- core resources (endowed and created resources); supporting factors and resource (general infrastructure, quality of services, accessibility); destination management factors (activities and functions); demand conditions (awareness, perception, and preferences); situational conditions (economic, social, cultural, demographic, environmental, political, etc.), and market performance indicators. The integrated model clearly recognized demand conditions as a critical indicator of destination competitiveness.

In other models like that of Hassan (2000) a lot of stress was laid on environmental concern. This model laid focus on environment to measure tourism competitiveness in addition to the other three factors which were demand factors, industry structure and comparative advantage. Heath also came up with a model of destination competitiveness which was a mix of the models proposed earlier. Heath (2002) constructed a model that combined the major elements of destination competitiveness. He considered the indicators which were earlier suggested in the broader literature and also incorporated the key indicators of destination competitiveness put forth by renowned tourism scholars like Crouch and Dwyer. Various models of destination competitiveness were employed to analyze the competitiveness of specific destinations (Sirse & Mihalic, 1999; Dwyer, Livaic, Mellor, 2003; Enright & Newton, 2004; Omerzel Gomezelj & Mihalic, 2008).

- **Strategies for Developing Destination Competitiveness**

Few researchers attempted to devise strategies for development of destination competitiveness. Particularly, Poon (1993) linked marketing with product development for satisfying the consumer. He stressed that a comprehensive approach towards travel experiences shall be most suitable. This approach will encompass destination image, collaboration with the public sector, and controlling the service delivery system.

Furthermore, Ritchie and Crouch (1993) discussed upon ways in which tourism destinations could develop competitive strategies. They focussed on destination management approaches and activities, including marketing, service, information, organization, and resource stewardships. Their study recommended that "there are some activities which can enhance the appeal of the core tourism resources and attractions, strengthen the quality and effectiveness of the supporting resources, and best adapt to the constraints imposed by the qualifying determinants which were location, dependences, safety, and cost." But it was contemplated that as the task of marketing for any destination is concerned with promotional activities, it can be accomplished through product development, apt pricing policies, effective channels of distribution, and proper product packaging. The study considered service quality and experiences to be crucial elements for management activities.

While studying rural tourism destinations it was found that such destinations rely heavily on the presence of natural resources and appropriate environment to tempt tourists (Lokuhetty et. al 2013). Destinations demand can be stepped up by a favourable image for the destination and a good online reputation (Assaker et.al 2015). Undoubtedly, online reputation is expected to become a prime determinant in the medium term, to determine the competitiveness of destinations, as it is expected that the clients and younger tourists who employ ICTs regularly will be in a dominant position on the tourism demand side (José Francisco et.al 2019). Small enterprises dominated the tourism industry, which are considered as a hotbed of innovative practices having limited resources and therefore were specifically exposed to uncertainty and risk (Verreynne et al. 2019; Power, Di Domenico and Miller, 2019).

## **Discussion**

Many researchers laid their thoughts about tourism entrepreneurs and destination competitiveness separately, while few highlighted the role played by individual tourism entrepreneurs, yet existing studies do not provide a clear picture of the relationship between these two variables. The interaction of individual, firm, and destination is yet to be explored.

Literature though established the relationship between entrepreneurship and destination development, still there is a call for analysing the criterion-related validity through quantitative methods with entrepreneurship. Entrepreneurial motivations and the destination environment will also affect the entrepreneurship activities in any tourist destination. Many researchers have altered their attention towards developing areas, because of two reasons, first is due to increasing participation of developing countries and the second is due to unique characteristics of entrepreneurial activities in these countries. It is expected that quantitative research will be used extensively in the future, as it is comparatively easy to sum up and analyse the data as compared to theoretical work.

Tourism is basically an experience-based industry, because of this qualitative research is focussed a lot in this area. In times to come mixed method studies will gain ground as they combine both qualitative and quantitative research methods, these methods can present rich and comprehensive findings. In the domain of hospitality and tourism entrepreneurship is discussed often. Different models about destination competitiveness came up in last few years. A fresh theory needs to be proposed more consistently-models depicting the role of tourism entrepreneurs explicitly have to be brought forth.

Researchers across all disciplines have investigated issues regarding entrepreneurship by employing their own theories and methodologies. Scholars in this domain can also collaborate and undertake interdisciplinary research projects. To achieve an in depth along with unambiguous understanding about the complex nature of entrepreneurship in tourism, researchers can do multi-level research into individuals, firms, and destinations. In addition to it researchers can even seek for novel research methods and methodologies which can be used in entrepreneurship research in the Hospitality and Tourism industry to facilitate researchers in generating robust studies in this domain (McDonald et al., 2015).

#### **Gaps Identified in Available Literature**

Tourism entrepreneurs create the entrepreneurial environment which promotes entrepreneurship in the whole region. They take the responsibility to develop the competitiveness of any destination. Till date the most significant work which emphasized on the role played by any individual tourism entrepreneur in development of the tourist destination was conducted by Ryan(2012) and Koh and Hatten (2002). In other research papers although studies have been conducted to reveal the contribution done by various stakeholders in the area of tourism, but the role of entrepreneur was fairly overlooked. Finally, the pivotal role of tourism entrepreneurs is yet to be recognized and due importance has to be given as they are the ones whose impact lasts for generations together.

- The article clearly shows that tourism entrepreneurs play an instrumental role in developing destination competitiveness; however, their role remained subsumed till date. Researchers are suggested to reframe the present models of destination competitiveness by incorporating tourism entrepreneurs as an explicit component.
- The literature failed to establish clear linkages between tourism entrepreneurs and destination competitiveness. This work can also be taken ahead by studying the mediating effect of experience or quality of services offered by tourism entrepreneur.
- Internet is now an indispensable part of our lives and has significantly affected our day to day activities including our interactions with other people Researchers are suggested to recognize the opportunities brought in by the advancements of technology such as artificial intelligence, augmented reality and virtual reality for tourism entrepreneurs. Strategies to derive optimum benefit can be sought.
- The importance of tourism entrepreneurs in small business is well established. It is now needed to craft strategies to preserve and promote the role of tourism entrepreneurs in small business enterprises and family businesses.
- To develop an understanding about the interplay among variables such as risk, gender, affordability, awareness of tourists and attractiveness, accessibility, amenities, accommodation of tourist destination

#### **Conclusion**

To conclude from above study, we can say that during initial period scholars focused on issues such as entrepreneurship, innovation, how innovation stimulates entrepreneurship and how entrepreneurship becomes a driving force for further entrepreneurship. In tourism industry, support of tourism entrepreneurs is required constantly. It is not merely the introduction phase where these entrepreneurs become the driving agents but interestingly, they are the key to maintain the very existence of any tourist destination. The significance increases even more because of the established fact that tourism industry is the biggest in the service sector around the world. Tourism being a part of service industry draws many challenges towards itself. Many outcomes are a result of the co-creation done by service provider and consumer collectively. Tourism is greatly affected by seasonality, managing the variations in demand is a big challenge. In depth study can result in viable way out for the above critical issues and can also aid in strengthening the theoretical background of tourism entrepreneurship.

The scope of tourism entrepreneurs has grown manifold in the past decade. Even tourism entrepreneurship has changed its form and grown many subfields. An indepth study is required to understand the specific behaviours/ traits or characteristics of tourism entrepreneurs which help in developing destination competitiveness. The above literature failed to provide a workable solution on how to achieve a regular supply of tourism entrepreneurs. This question attracted various methods but all were severely criticized, thus left a room for further research.

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