

Destination competitiveness in the view of resort managers

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Abstract

The main objective of this study is to assess competitiveness of resort business in Batangas Province. More specifically, it determine the firmographic profile of the resorts establishment, in terms of Accreditation, number of years of operation and tourist arrivals; determined the level of competitiveness resort in terms of core resources and attractors, supporting factors and resources and qualifying and amplifying determinants as observed by the tourists; and proposed an action plan based on the results of the study. Majority of the resorts in Batangas province are not accredited by DOT, with 10,001 to 20,000 guest arrivals per year and operating for 5 to 10 years. Resorts are considered highly competitive in terms of Physiography and climate, spirit of hospitality, safety and security, awareness and image, and cost value. An action plan was proposed to resorts owners, local government and DOT to sustain destination competitiveness. As a recommendation, the resort owners in collaboration with the local government and DOT may do reconstruction, innovations and improvement of the infrastructures and facilitating resources such as: Road facilities, money changer, visitors and tourist information centers. And the resort owners may do reconstruction, innovations and improvement in the infrastructure and facilitating resources such as: signage, building/resort facilities including the facilities intended for person with disabilities.

Keywords: competitiveness; tourism; Philippines; resort; promotion; leisure management

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1. Introduction

In the tourism industry, destination is important factor for tourist's motivation and preferences. Its features and characteristics, forms and types are valuable for tourist decisions. Also, it creates character and personality both in local and international tourism industry, economy, social and environment. The tourism consumers have various needs, expectations and anticipate benefits from one destination to the next. In modern tourism industry, every destination strategized their development or improvement through positioning choices in order to be competitive. Tourism strategy ensures tourism development (UNWTO, 2019).

The practical implications on the destination competitiveness model were used as a springboard for the improvement of the destinations. It brings out the comparative advantage and the unique features of the place (Komšić & Dorčić, 2013). The comparative advantage of resorts refers to its economics' ability to produce products and services while, the unique features of the resorts are important motivating factor for tourists to visit the place. Moreover, the model intensifies the success factors or the relative strengths and weaknesses of destination's competitiveness. Also, Dwyer and Kim (2010) believe that the advantages and limitations of the model are presented conceptually through the given determinants of the model.

On the other hand, resorts are basically one of the tourist destinations. It is a commercial establishment and self-contained which provides necessary supplies like food and drinks, availability of lodging accommodations, while tourist activities are all set like water sports and entertainment events are on the premises. It has an appeal to families, couples and businesses. The success of resort business can be measured through the quality service being rendered (Ozdemir, 2016). Resorts are categorized as beach resorts which may be located in seashore or inland resort within the town proper or city, there is also an island resort, lakeside resort and mountain resort.

For purposes of accreditation, resorts classify the establishment as to Class AAA, Class AA, Class A and special interest resort. For Class AAA, the facilities and amenities are equivalent to First Class Hotel and the resort. It can offer at least 4 sports and recreational facilities while, Class AA resort have its rooms, facilities and amenities equivalent to those of a standard class hotel that offers at least 3 sports and recreational facilities. Whereas, the Class A resort the number of rooms is equivalent to those of an economy class hotel and shall offer at least 2 sports and recreational facilities. Lastly, the Special Interest Resort usually has at least 5 bedrooms (DOT, 2014).

The continuous development imposes relevant growth and improvement in the competitive position leading to advancement in the tourism market. The destination competitiveness model of Richie and Crouch (2010) provides better understanding to the destination management to fulfill the fundamental task to enhance and sustain the over-all aspect of the place. Therefore, Armenski et al. (2012) affirm that the model with its questionnaire proved to be useful.

The theoretical findings or reviews from using the destination competitiveness model of Richie and Crouch gives so much input as it is being used by many establishments. From the study conducted by Komšić and Dorčić (2016), revealed that the success of tourism destinations in global arena of business industry. Moreover, competitiveness of the destination increase the expenditures for improvement for there are acquisitions of resources needed for the improvement, however, it creates increasingly number of visitors. Development or improvement provides satisfying and memorable experiences. That is how a destination becomes competitive (Goffi, 2013).

However, this study is generally pointing out the three determinants: core resources and key attractors; supporting factors and resources, qualifying and amplifying determinants of which can be answered by the resort

management. The other two: planning and development; and destination management can only be assessed by the resort management alone as this refers to the internal management practices of the resort. Using Ritchie and Crouch (2010) model for assessing the destinations' competitiveness provides a consistent and reliable source for resort's development. This model offers theoretical and quantitative results. Thus, the result has been used as a basis of resort management to improve the services, policies and decision making.

Batangas province is known with its splendid natural sceneries, historical attractions or cultural heritage and native products: balisong, embroidered clothes, kapeng barako and other famous products. The place is easy to access by vacationers coming from Manila. Resorts in Batangas are its best to compete with neighboring provinces or even to other regions. Batangas has its beauty to take pride and honor, stand as one of the best places commonly visited by nature lovers; water sports players and swimmers/divers (Batangas. All Here. So Near, 2017).

1.1 Objectives of the study

The main objective of this study is to assess competitiveness of resort business in Batangas Province. More specifically, it determines the firmographic profile of the resorts establishment, in terms of Accreditation, number of years of operation and tourist arrivals; determined the level of competitiveness resort in terms of core resources and attractors, supporting factors and resources and qualifying and amplifying determinants as observed by the tourists; and proposed an action plan based on the results of the study.

2. Methodology

Descriptive research was used in this study the participants of the study were 10 managers based on the Top 10 most visited resorts in Batangas province and the tourist arrivals from each resort were taken from the PTCAO records of 2016 released recently. In this study, the modified instrument adapted from Ritchie and Crouch (2010) was distributed to resorts' owners and their guests for pilot testing to validate the given determinants and sub variables. It has undergone reliability test and got a score of .918. This implied significantly valid and reliable results. The researcher reassured that all gathered data were treated with utmost confidentiality and were used for academic purposes only. The researcher personally distributed the instrument to the respondents.

Table 1

Percentage distribution of the business profile

Business Profile	Frequency	Percentage (%)
DOT Accreditation		
With	3	30.00
Without	7	70.00
Range of Tourist Arrivals per year		
10,001 – 20,000	6	60.00
20,001 – 30,000	3	30.00
40,001 – 50,000	1	10.00
Years of Operation		
5 to 10 years	6	60.00
11 to 15 years	2	20.00
16 years and above	2	20.00

Table 1 presents the distribution of business profile in terms of DOT accreditation, number of tourist arrivals and number of years of operation. In terms of DOT accreditation, majority or 70 percent are without accreditation yet while 3 or 30 percent are accredited by DOT. This implies that there are few among the resorts which submitted themselves for accreditation or not updating their status as accredited resort by the DOT. More so, most of the resorts in the province of Batangas cannot comply with DOT requirements for accreditation as they need to make some improvement in their facilities, products and services and customer services. As to the

number of tourist arrivals, 6 or 60 percent of the resorts have 10,001 to 20,000 tourist arrivals followed by 20,001 to 30,000. Only 1 resort has 30,001 and above tourist arrivals per year. Since majority of the resorts are in the coastal area, the physical environment sets-off seasonal business operation among the resorts, especially when most their products and services concentrated more on in water activities.

Other resorts, which offer other services, turned their place a venue for conferences or ideal as reception venue for occasional events and celebrations. With regards to the number of years of operation, majority or 60 percent of the resorts have been operating for 5 to 10 years while 11 to 15 years and 16 years and above got both 2 and 20 percent.

Based on the result, the resorts in Batangas province are stable in the sense that they can live and maintain their business for a longer period. Despite that most of the time they are seasonal; resorts can uphold and sustain the services offered to the guests. Other resorts have other option during the time that when they are in off season. They offer indoor activities or facilities being used as a venue for conferences, meetings and seminar, and special celebrated events. The Resorts also come up with team building facilities as another option encourages the customers/guests to come.

Table 2

Level of competitiveness as to core resources and attractors (physiography and climate)

Indicators	WM	VI	R
1. Good Weather conditions	3.50	HC	5
2. Unspoiled nature/green areas	3.80	HC	2
3. Cleanliness of the destination	4.00	HC	1
4. Pleasant built environment	3.60	HC	3.5
5. Lively urban atmosphere	3.40	C	6
6. Quality of natural scenery and landscapes/environment	3.60	HC	3.5
Composite Mean	3.65	HC	

Legend: 3.50 – 4.00 = Highly Competitive (HC); 2.50 – 3.49 = Competitive (C); 1.50 – 2.49 = Less Competitive (LC); 1.00 – 1.49 = Not Competitive (NC).

Table 2 presents the level of competitiveness as to core resources and attractors (physiography and climate), with composite mean of 3.65 verbally interpreted as highly competitive. The managers assessed the indicators with the highest mean are the cleanliness of the destination (4.00), followed by unspoiled nature/green areas (3.80) and rank third, pleasant built environment and quality of natural scenery and landscapes/environment (3.60) are interpreted as highly competitive.

Everyone expects that resorts are clean and smells good. Therefore, this is being maintained all the time. Part of the expenditure of the resorts goes to the acquisition of materials or supplies for sanitation more so, by providing staff that used to supervise the cleanliness of the premise. Even the seashore or bay walk is observed to be clean and pleasant. Cleanliness is essential to all the ancillary service. It plays an important role in the reputation of the resorts. Cleanliness is also important for health and foremost also for wellbeing (Sheikh, 2016). It turned out to be the least since the place itself is a natural destination. Urban atmosphere is most likely quite to observe. However, it is still competitive because the modern design or structure of the place can be observed. Meanwhile, the local city exhibits urbanized atmosphere for there is stores present in the location. Resorts enable to maintain the cleanliness of the premise. Most of the time, this aspect is given so much attention by the management since the guests are very keen to this matter, especially the restrooms, lobby, and the dining area.

One feels comfortable only in the environment, which is clean and well-ordered, so cleanliness is important for health and foremost also for wellbeing (Sheikh, 2016). Meanwhile, the lowest mean are good weather conditions (3.50) as highly competitive, followed by lively urban atmosphere (3.40) rated competitive. Many resorts in Batangas take advantage the beauty of natural scenery, so most of them intend to maintain that pleasing environment. In their promotional marketing materials, the highlight of the content is what the guests could see around the place and that is the natural attraction of the place.

The lively urban atmosphere can only be experienced their modern facilities. The tension demonstrated by how history is organized, interpreted, and valued in tourism settings and how it can transform the cultural, historical life of host communities can be observed and the notion of place being affected by tourism development (Prideaux & Timothy, 2013).

Table 3

Level of competitiveness as to core resources and attractors (culture and history)

Indicators	WM	VI	R
1. Diversity of cultural/historical attractions	2.60	C	6
2. Opportunity to experience local life	3.20	C	1
3. Desire to learn about other cultures, their ways of life, and heritage	2.80	C	5
4. Opportunities to experience traditional ways of living	3.00	C	3.5
5. Promotion of cultural or religious events	3.10	C	2
6. Opportunities for learning and experiencing cultural attractions	3.00	C	3.5
Composite Mean	2.95	C	

Legend: 3.50 – 4.00 = Highly Competitive (HC); 2.50 – 3.49 = Competitive (C); 1.50 – 2.49 = Less Competitive (LC); 1.00 – 1.49 = Not Competitive (NC).

Table 3 presents the level of competitiveness as to core resources and attractors (Culture and History) garnered a composite mean 2.95 verbally interpreted as competitive. In Batangas, even in other places, resorts do not concentrate much on promoting religious events and slightly on culture by seeing their staff wearing the traditional clothes. However, Batangas is known for having many religious sites, this can be part of the itinerary but necessarily experience within the resort. It is a separate tourist activity. Travelling to sacred sites, holy places, pilgrimage destinations, and religious buildings have unique spiritual significance in hopes of experiencing elevation, transformation and attaining a new degree of wisdom among the travelers (The Huffington Post, 2015). The highest weighted mean is opportunity to experience local life (3.20), followed by promotion of cultural or religious events (3.10); ranked third, opportunities to experience traditional ways of living and opportunities for learning and experiencing cultural attractions (3.00), all are interpreted as competitive. Managers are the implementers; they knew that incorporating the culture-based experience for the tourists/guests are added highlights or attractions in the resorts. It heightens the interest and preferences guests or customer retention for it adds welcoming feeling to them.

The number of interactions that hotel employees have with guests positively influences their satisfaction, so it is crucial when the guest feels uncomfortable approaching the staff. The indicators with lowest mean are desire to learn about other cultures, their ways of life, and heritage (2.80) and diversity of cultural/historical attractions (2.60); both have verbal interpretation of competitive. Usually, the major features of resort are sun, sand, and sea. It is quite far from cultural or historical attractions. But this can be observed or experienced on transit route or a part of the tourism circuits of the destinations. The resort usually showcases the natural attractions like rock formations, caves, and marine diversity, something which is close to nature.

Table 4

Level of competitiveness as to core resources and attractors (mix of activities)

Indicators	WM	VI	R
1. Variety of adventurous, challenging, and exciting outdoor trips	3.30	C	5
2. Opportunity to be close to nature	3.40	C	4
3. Opportunity to join recreational activities	3.90	HC	1
4. Opportunity to participate in religious activities	3.10	C	6.5
5. Opportunities for nature adventure/cultural activities	3.10	C	6.5
6. Diversity of athletic or water sports activities	2.99	C	2
7. Offers leisure activities	2.97	C	3
Composite Mean	2.88	C	

Legend: 3.50 – 4.00 = Highly Competitive (HC); 2.50 – 3.49 = Competitive (C); 1.50 – 2.49 = Less Competitive (LC); 1.00 – 1.49 = Not Competitive (NC).

Table 4, presenting the level of competitiveness as to core resources and attractors (mix of activities) has a composite mean of 2.88 having the verbal interpretation of competitive. Managers agreed that staying in resort can join recreational activities. The resorts offer various indoor and outdoor activities where the guests can enjoy the whole time of their stay in the place. The resort offers various recreational activities such as exercise rooms, indoor/outdoor swimming pools, and even whirlpools and saunas. Some offer tennis and basketball courts. Resort activities are generally outdoor and take advantage of the favorable climate and natural desert or tropical setting. The beach front promises a lot of activities the water activities include kayaking, banana boat ride, jet ski to name a few.

On the view of the managers, with the highest weighted are opportunity to join recreational activities (3.90); followed by diversity of athletic or water sports activities and offers leisure activities (2.97) are verbally interpreted as highly competitive; rank third, opportunity to be close to nature (3.40) is competitive.

Part of the innovation in the resort is to come up with new and have variety of recreational activities. Other resort management carry-out researchers to re-invent or reengineered, design develop recreational activities. Many resorts maintain or sustain this area as it is also affecting the decision making of the customers. Therefore, it is used as a reference or basis of resorts' innovations. Naturally, the location and time of year will determine what the resort is capable of offering. These recreational facilities are upgraded to include appropriate landscaping, spacious layouts, attendants and food and beverage outlets to offer convenience and flexibility to their guests. There are other distinguishing characteristics of these resort activities.

The least weighted mean are variety of adventurous, challenging and exciting outdoor trips (like hiking, camping, wall climbing, etc.) (3.30) followed by opportunity to participate in religious activities and opportunities for nature adventure/cultural activities (3.10), all are competitive. It is very rare that resorts will conduct religious activities unless the place was being reserved by the customer/guest. However, in the context of having the opportunities for nature adventure or cultural activities, many chances to happen. Resorts in Batangas are commonly located in coastal area. Where the sea is the primary attraction, others would have swimming pool in the absence of sea, but it will guarantee that the place is over-looking other natural attractions. Culture will always be part of the attractions because that is observable within the place of the resorts. The environment is obviously important to tourism. Both the natural environment (such as beaches, forests, waterways) and the built environment (such as historic buildings and ruins) must be preserved for an area to be environmentally sustainable.

Table 5

Level of competitiveness as to core resources and attractors (special events)

Indicators	WM	VI	R
1. Organize more recreational offerings, concerts, and stage plays	2.60	C	3.5
2. Organize sports tournament	2.80	C	2
3. Availability of cultural and other events	3.00	C	1
4. Evening entertainment and nightlife	2.40	LC	5
5. Conduct cultural festivals	2.60	C	3.5
Composite Mean	2.68	C	

Legend: 3.50 – 4.00 = Highly Competitive (HC); 2.50 – 3.49 = Competitive (C); 1.50 – 2.49 = Less Competitive (LC); 1.00 – 1.49 = Not Competitive (NC).

Table 5 reveals the level of competitiveness as to core resources and attractors (special events), obtaining a composite mean of 2.68 verbally interpreted as competitive. Cultural events are not part of the agenda of many resorts. Resort is not the venue for conducting the cultural festivals. Cultural festival is being held in the street or town proper. Culture is a high-performance team that goes beyond and creates impact to the local tourism. Festival, native products and villages are the main attractions (Eagle Point Resort, 2015). Whereas, for managers, with the highest mean are availability of cultural and other events (3.00), followed by organizing sports tournament (2.80). Rank third is organizing more recreational offerings, concerts and stage plays and conduct cultural festivals (2.60). These indicators are competitive.

Manager and the management exert less effort on having cultural and other events in their resort. However, there are some instances when they have foreign visitors; they see to it that their guests can experience cultural events. Due to the fixed nature of events and festivals, they require a different approach to organization and funding compared to traditional visitor activities and attractions (Tourism, 2014). The least indicator is evening entertainment and nightlife (2.40) rated less competitive. Resorts in Batangas are not into evening entertainment and nightlife. It is organized by the guests or customers based on their purpose of stay. However, resorts conduct evening events occasionally during the celebration on “town fiesta”. The exclusive nature of resorts has been broadened to include more activities not only on the daytime but also at night. Thus, widening the scope of activities based on the demand of the tourism consumers (Shelton, n. d.).

Table 6

Level of competitiveness as to supporting factors and resources (infrastructure)

Indicators	WM	VI	R
1. Old/ historic but visually appealing	2.70	C	8
2. Modern and visually appealing	3.70	HC	3
3. Maintained sidewalks, pathways, and hallways	3.90	HC	1.5
4. Provide more amenities with campgrounds	2.90	C	7
5. Accessible/hi-speed communication system	3.30	C	5.5
6. Convenience and accessibility of local transportation	3.50	HC	4
7. Accessible road facilities and with proper signage	3.90	HC	1.5
8. Accessibility of facilities for disabled persons	3.30	C	5.5
Composite Mean	2.24	LC	

Legend: 3.50 – 4.00 = Highly Competitive (HC); 2.50 – 3.49 = Competitive (C); 1.50 – 2.49 = Less Competitive (LC); 1.00 – 1.49 = Not Competitive (NC).

Table 6 shows the level of competitiveness as to supporting factors and resources (infrastructure) with a composite mean of 2.24 interpreted as less competitive. These facilities are given so much attention by the resort management, but customers, since they have expectation on this, give focus of their observation on how the entire resort looks like, thus, the customers look at the place as a whole. Walkways can be created either by providing stabilized or paved surfaces separated from the roadway, or by widening paved shoulders. These treatments not only improve the safety. Sidewalks separated from the roadway are the preferred accommodation for pedestrians. Sidewalks provide many benefits including safety, mobility, and healthier communities (Redmon, 2013). In this case, majority of the respondents preferred modern structures, facilities, and other services. Others wanted old or historic inspired far away from the ambience they originally came from. Traditionally, people divide up attractions between cultural and natural. Cultural should, but does not always, include historical attractions as well. Public Use Planning effort of the World Heritage Center uses another categorization and perhaps more refined.

With the highest weighted for managers, maintained sidewalks, pathways and hallways and accessible road facilities and with proper signage (3.90), followed by modern and visually appealing (3.70) and rank third convenience and accessibility of local transportation (3.50) are all highly competitive. In the perspective of the managers or of the management, these facilities like sidewalks, pathways and hallways are important since this is the area where the guests can see before to reach their rooms or cottages. The observation on the facilities may start from there as they enter in the resort. As such, the management gives so much effort on this part, where they tour their guest in the resort. By developing an integrated network of sidewalks, bike lanes, shared-used paths, transit connections, and enhanced roadways, Jackson Hole will create a balanced approach that allows people the freedom to choose the mode of travel that is appropriate to their needs (Jackson Hole Mountain Resort, 2017). However, with the lowest weighted mean lies on these indicators: Accessible/hi-speed communication system and accessibility of facilities for disabled persons (3.30); followed by provide more amenities with campgrounds (2.90) and rank third old/ historic but visually appealing (2.70) are competitive.

Many resorts in Batangas are looking forward for modernization or elegance or sophistication of their facilities, fixture/furniture, building structure in respond to the preferences of their customers. However, others

preserved the old or Hispanic appearance but modernly architecture. The distinction of being an attraction, ultimately, the market and non-tourism experts or magazines decide on what is an attraction among its much wider resource class. If people spend time and money to experience a resource, then that resource is also an attraction.

Table 7

Level of competitiveness as to supporting factors and resources (facilitating resources)

Indicators	WM	VI	R
1. Visitor Information Center/Tourist Information Center	3.90	HC	1
2. Availability of money changer	2.00	LC	5
3. Pasalubong center and souvenir shop	3.20	C	3.5
4. Destination links with major origin markets	3.20	C	3.5
5. Accessibility of destination	3.60	HC	2
Composite Mean	3.18	C	

Legend: 3.50 – 4.00 = Highly Competitive (HC); 2.50 – 3.49 = Competitive (C); 1.50 – 2.49 = Less Competitive (LC); 1.00 – 1.49 = Not Competitive (NC).

Table 7 confirms the level of competitiveness as to supporting factors and resources (facilitating resources) have a composite mean of 3.18 verbally interpreted competitive. A front desk receptionist serves as the face of her employer. She is the first, and sometimes only, person whom the guests of the small business meet. Although this is an entry-level role, the receptionist needs a great deal of skill perform the many tasks. Visitors/tourist information center is a customer support in time of need; inquiries, clarification, concerns are directly interacted to this department or section. Therefore, it is important that the person to be placed in this department is customer oriented, friendly and warmth. Aside from he/she is knowledgeable and can easily express himself/herself during the conversation.

Based from managers' insight, with highest weighted mean visitor information center/tourist information center (3.90), followed by accessibility of destination (3.60) both are highly competitive and rank third pasalubong center and souvenir shop and destination links with major origin markets (3.20) are competitive. Managers make sure that their visitor/tourist information centers are practically functional. The person in-charge is properly oriented and trained on handling inquiries. A front desk receptionist serves as the face of her employer. The front desk officer is the first person whom the guests will communicate to. Although this is an entry-level role, the receptionist needs a great deal of skill perform the many tasks. A successful receptionist must be both an excellent communicator and strong administrator. She also must comfortably interact with individuals of all professional levels. Meanwhile, with lowest weighted mean is availability of money changer (2.48) as less competitive. Normally, resorts do not have in-house money changer. They would refer their guests to go to city proper to avail this service. In other cases, they do such transaction. In a larger hotel, there is a good change that it has a currency exchange desk. The problem: Once it is figure out the exchange rate is expensive. It is being advised that the guests may pay the fees through credit card or ATM that's part of your home bank's network (Parker, 2015).

Table 8

Level of competitiveness as to supporting factors and resources (spirit of hospitality)

Indicators	WM	VI	R
1. Friendly, high-spirited, and hospitable local people	4.00	HC	3.5
2. Can communicate well with the tourist	4.00	HC	3.5
3. Get people to stay longer	4.00	HC	3.5
4. Tourist oriented local people	4.00	HC	3.5
5. Delivers quality guest service	4.00	HC	3.5
6. Can provide pleasure and satisfaction	4.00	HC	3.5
Composite Mean	4.00	HC	3.5

Legend: 3.50 – 4.00 = Highly Competitive (HC); 2.50 – 3.49 = Competitive (C); 1.50 – 2.49 = Less Competitive (LC); 1.00 – 1.49 = Not Competitive (NC).

Table 8 shows the level of competitiveness as to supporting factors and resources (spirit of hospitality) gaining a composite mean of 4.00 that is highly competitive. Young people often spend less per day than older tourists; they often stay longer, spending more in total. They also tend to spend directly with local businesses and they often make repeat visits all of which means that they deliver as much or even more value than many other market segments (Richards, 2011). Furthermore, for the managers, all indicators are equally rated. Friendly, high-spirited and hospitable local people, can communicate well with the tourist, get people to stay longer; tourist oriented local people, deliver quality guest service and can provide pleasure and satisfaction as (4.00) which means they are highly competitive.

The managers perceived all these indicators equally important in the context of resorts operation. The staff should possess the right characteristics. The staffs are the frontliners; therefore, they trained their people to become skillful and act according to what is expected. The product is the quality of service provided by the resort, so good employees are essential. As hospitality businesses are customer facing, it must ensure that able to meet customers with the best foot forward. Improve the experience in a hotel, restaurant or on transportation. Focus on creating a dream team of polite and friendly staff and customers will be assured to recommend the business to others and come back again (Caan, 2014).

Table 9

Level of competitiveness as to qualifying and amplifying determinants (safety and security)

Indicators	WM	VI	R
1. Security personnel are visible and always available for assistance	3.90	HC	3
2. Security equipment are visible (CCTV camera, Fire extinguishers etc.)	3.90	HC	3
3. Helpful police services around the area	3.50	HC	5
4. Availability of fire extinguishers and other safety equipment	3.90	HC	3
5. Maintain or secure guest privacy	4.00	HC	1
Composite Mean	3.84	HC	

Legend: 3.50 – 4.00 = Highly Competitive (HC); 2.50 – 3.49 = Competitive (C); 1.50 – 2.49 = Less Competitive (LC); 1.00 – 1.49 = Not Competitive (NC).

Table 9 shows the level of competitiveness as to qualifying and amplifying determinants (safety and security) attaining the composite mean of 3.84 that is highly competitive. Everyone must be vigilant. Different people exhibit different levels of risk tolerance. Some are comfortable in (or give little thought to) quite risky situations; other see dragons around every corner. Thus, the establish secure the safety of each guest and have an organized safe planning measures. Strengthening the safety and security program through the security staff participation in security workshops, ensure that they are thoroughly trained to deal with emergencies of all types. The cross functional emergency response teams on site at each of our hotel's duty 24 hours a day, 7 days a week (Shangri-La International Hotel Management, 2017). The guests always expect that the place is safe to stay especially when they are with their loved ones. They checked if lifeguards are available and reachable. Security personnel are expected secure the place and ready to assist the guest and give warning if it is needed.

On the point of the managers, the indicators attained the highest weighted mean maintaining or securing guest privacy (4.00), followed by security personnel being visible and always available for assistance; security equipment are visible (CCTV camera, fire extinguishers etc.) and rank third, availability of fire extinguishers and other safety equipment (3.90). All these are highly competitive. On a manager's view, it is part of their responsibility to secure the privacy of their guests. Usually, they have some provisions to protect their guest. The safety facilities are maintained and highly modernized to capture each event. The resort secure equipment or machine that will contribute to the quality of the service.

Meanwhile, helpful police services around the area (3.50) got the lowest mean but still highly competitive. Police service is not only rendered for a few or to the establishment. There were some cases, when the resort seeks for these services when important event is being held and attended by a prominent people or personality in the society. In some occasions the government officials or diplomats or famous celebrities. The customers take particular care when in the vicinity of resorts. The security officers are hired staff of the resorts. Police

authorities are just being called when there are uncontrollable circumstances arises or it needs legal assistance.

Table 10

Level of competitiveness as to qualifying and amplifying determinants (awareness and image)

Indicators	WM	VI	R
1. Community is a destination point	3.60	HC	4
2. Maintained natural resources and physical environment	4.00	HC	1.5
3. Practice environmental friendliness (use biodegradable, recyclable materials)	3.80	HC	3
4. Reflect environmentalist characteristics (observe in their management system)	4.00	HC	1.5
5. Promote historical, cultural and heritage image	3.10	C	5
Composite Mean	3.70	HC	

Legend: 3.50 – 4.00 = Highly Competitive (HC); 2.50 – 3.49 = Competitive (C); 1.50 – 2.49 = Less Competitive (LC); 1.00 – 1.49 = Not Competitive (NC).

Table 10 expresses the level of competitiveness as to qualifying and amplifying determinants (awareness and image) attaining the composite mean of 3.70 interpreted as highly competitive. Most often, part of the marketing of many resorts is highlighting the natural attraction present in their place. It increases their tourist arrivals by promoting the natural beauty of the place. With the cooperation or collaboration, the local government and people, and private establishment, they go together protecting the natural resource of the place. The environment is extremely important to tourism destination. As these are the main attractions or part of the tourist activities, the natural environment (such as beaches, forests, waterways) are to be preserved. Moreover, for managers, with highest weighted mean, maintaining natural resources and physical environment and reflect environmentalist characteristics (observe in their management system such as: switch-off lights and air-conditioned units when not in use and saving water consumption) (4.00), followed by practicing environmental friendliness (use biodegradable products, recyclable materials) (3.80), and rank third, community being a destination point (3.60), are indicators rated highly competitive.

Managers perceived that natural resources and physical environment and reflect environmentalist characteristics (observing in their management system such as: switch-off lights and air-conditioned units when not in use and saving water consumption) have a market value to the guests. Therefore, the management included it in their provisions. Everybody shall have the opportunity to enjoy health-promoting, pleasurable and environmentally friendly outdoor pursuits in their local community and natural surroundings. Green lungs and outdoor recreation areas near cities/towns are important for outdoor pursuits. In addition, such areas are often valuable in terms of natural diversity and cultural heritage sites/monuments, and their preservation is therefore of extra importance (Bjørøgo, 2013).

Whereas, garnering the lowest mean is promoting historical, cultural and heritage image (3.10) assessed as competitive. Resorts promote historical, cultural and heritage image occasionally. Sometimes, it can be seen on an area of the resorts as added attractions. But, not as much as the natural attractions that commonly the main reason of the guests to choose the place for a stay. Centuries of active reindeer husbandry has created a special cultural landscape. As a source of income, culture and way of life, reindeer husbandry is unique in the national and international context and is a key bearer and developer of Sami culture. It is a major challenge to secure sufficient land for sustainable reindeer husbandry (Bjørøgo, 2013).

Table 11

Level of competitiveness as to qualifying and amplifying determinants (cost value)

Indicators	WM	VI	R
1. Reasonable fees (environmental fees, entrance fees, etc.)	3.60	HC	5
2. Value for money	4.00	HC	1.5
3. No hidden charges	3.80	HC	3.5
4. Appropriate prices for the services received	4.00	HC	1.5
5. Promotes energy consumption	3.80	HC	3.5
Composite Mean	3.84	HC	

Legend: 3.50 – 4.00 = Highly Competitive (HC).

Table 11 reveals the level of competitiveness as to qualifying and amplifying determinants (cost value), obtaining the composite mean of 3.84 as highly competitive. It is about playing the greatest strengths while remaining a competitive and attractive destination. Therefore, it is imperative that the company stay on track and maintain that winning balance of value and quality” (Fátharta, 2015). For protected area entrance fees, collected revenues shall cover, as much as possible, a proportionate amount of all costs incurred in protecting, maintaining, and enhancing the natural attractions of the protected areas (Lopez, 2016). In customers’ mind, practicality of the price is important. This is the primary reason or basis of their decision making. The prices are being determined by the management with many considerations. This is a fee charged to visitors to enter an ecotourism site.

On the side of the managers, with the highest weighted mean value for money and appropriate prices for the services received (4.00) followed by no hidden charges and promotes energy consumption (3.80) are all highly competitive. Managers are precise and careful in giving the appropriate pricing of their products and services. Effective pricing encourages the customers to purchase the products and services that relates to good business practice. Ultimately, the worth of any product or service can only be equal to the amount informed buyers are willing to pay for it. This is the power pricing. Effective pricing maintained successful business. Thus, differentiation among the competitors would mean in the important decision. The indicator with lowest weighted mean is reasonable fees (environmental fees, entrance fees, etc.) (3.60); though still is highly competitive. On manager’s point of view, environmental fees were implemented or part of the mandate by the local government while entrance fees are determined by the resorts’ management.

Table 12

Summary table on the level of competitiveness

Indicators	WM	VI	R
1. Physiography and Climate	3.65	HC	5
2. Culture and History	2.95	C	9
3. Mix of Activities	3.40	C	6.5
4. Special Events	2.68	C	10
5. Infrastructure	3.40	C	6.5
6. Facilitating Resources	3.18	C	8
7. Spirit of Hospitality	4.00	HC	1
8. Safety and Security	3.84	HC	2.5
9. Awareness and Image	3.70	HC	4
10. Cost Value	3.84	HC	2.5
Composite Mean	3.46	C	

Legend: 3.50 – 4.00 = Highly Competitive (HC); 2.50 – 3.49 = Competitive (C); 1.50 – 2.49 = Less Competitive (LC); 1.00 – 1.49 = Not Competitive (NC).

The managers have the highest mean among the indicators are spirit of hospitality (4.00) followed by safety and security and cost value (3.84). Rank third, awareness and image (2.92) all are verbally interpreted as highly competitive. They practice the spirit of hospitality in their place to make the customers feel that they are most welcome, important and this is one beautiful trait of many Filipinos regardless where they came from. Hospitality is a hallmark Filipino trait. Foreigners who have experienced the warmth and sincerity of Filipino hospitality can attest to this. Even to their countrymen who seem lost and in need of temporary shelter. Filipino hospitality, especially in the countryside, never fails to extend momentary relief (Silva, 2012). Whereas, the lowest weighted mean lies on these indicators’ safety and security (3.18), culture and history (2.95) and special events (2.68) all are competitive. Since all guests have reasons to celebrate and visit the place, the resort let them enjoy it on their special way unless they are being asked to prepare for the special events needed for their visits. Special events in resorts have become an advantage along with the competitors. Event with residents is great experience to the guests. This will serve as important factor to stay longer in the place or keep coming back again. It will contribute to the location’s overall attractiveness as an event tourism destination (Lill, 2015).

Table 13

Proposed action plan to improve destination competitiveness

Key results area/Objectives	Strategies	Outcome
Physiography and Climate To maintain cleanliness of destination.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Strategically place recycling and trash receptacles throughout the park. Provide ample signage about “green concept” and preserving the environment. Remain properly staffed and clean on a regular schedule. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Awareness on maintaining cleanliness. Awareness on proper disposal of trash. Promoted the green and advocacy and protecting the environment.
Culture and History To learn other cultures, their ways of life, and heritage.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Display of local cultural, historical, and natural heritage can be included in the marketing strategy. Support to existing groups for presentation of folk customs – purchasing costumes, musical instruments, and audio – visual equipment. Creating a permanent and travelling exhibition of the local ethnographical, natural, and cultural-historical heritage with application of audio. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Full awareness on local culture and natural heritage. Empowered local community and its culture. Provided more reason/option to visit the place aside from the resort.
Mix of Activities To give opportunity to join recreational activities.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Indoor waterparks. Recreational programs for parent-child activity e.g. inflatable water playground. Family entertainment center (including features like miniature golf, laser tag, an arcade, and virtual reality games and simulators). 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Occupancy levels at resorts, which has led to increased ancillary revenues in other departments such as food and beverage. Strengthen family’s quality time.
Special Events To provide evening entertainment and nightlife.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> A multi-purpose theater capable of showing movies and hosting comedians and various types of musical and theatrical groups. Place a bar, nightclub, and coffee shop. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Created a multi-functional resort.
Infrastructure To maintain sidewalks, pathways, and hallways.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Integrate designs and attractive layout. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Emphasized world class facilities. Provision of integral components of successful service delivery.
Facilitating Resources To provide money changer.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> In-house money changer service when it is needed. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Increased customer satisfaction.
Spirit of Hospitality To create a plan to encourage people stay longer	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Give them a valid reason to stay by providing several indoor and outdoor activities: waterpark, horseback riding, souvenir store, spa and massage parlor. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Added attractions for the resorts.
Safety and Security To provide police services around the area	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Reinforcement the staff awareness program that states, "All staff are part of the security team" and are responsible for looking after the safety and security. However, delegate Fire/Life/Safety Officers appointed at each property whose responsibility is to monitor vigilantly. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Strengthened fire/life/safety systems. Heightened awareness and sense of responsibility of the staff for the safety and security of the guests.
Awareness and Image To improve the community as a destination point	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Good marketing plan: creating social media accounts, broadcasting, and television. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Increased familiarity on resorts. Easy access to information.
Cost Value To collect reasonable fees (environmental fees, etc.).	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Include the environmental fee in the charges (add to mandated policies of the resort). 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Sustained waste management.

3. Conclusion

Majority of the resorts in Batangas province are not accredited by DOT, with 10,001 to 20,000 guest arrivals per year and operating for 5 to 10 years. Resorts are considered highly competitive in terms of Physiography and climate, spirit of hospitality, safety and security, awareness and image, and cost value. An action plan was

proposed to resorts owners, local government and DOT to sustain destination competitiveness. As a recommendation, the resort owners in collaboration with the local government and DOT may do reconstruction, innovations and improvement of the infrastructures and facilitating resources such as: Road facilities, money changer, visitors and tourist information centers. And the resort owners may do reconstruction, innovations and improvement in the infrastructure and facilitating resources such as: signage, building/resort facilities including the facilities intended for person with disabilities.

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