

Analysis of destination competitiveness, tourist experience, and behavioral intention of tourists in MIMAROPA: Basis for destination competitiveness framework

Venus, Hazel T. ✉

Graduate School, Lyceum of the Philippines University - Batangas, Philippines (hazeltvenus@gmail.com)

Apritado, Jennie Margaret

Lyceum of the Philippines University - Batangas, Philippines (jmapritado@lpubatangas.edu.ph)

Borbon, Noelah Mae

Lyceum of the Philippines University - Batangas, Philippines (nmdborbon@gmail.com)



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Abstract

Tourist destinations continuously vie for tourist market share, thereby exploring ways on how to be competitive and be at par with other top destinations. Similarly, MIMAROPA Region aims to be a destination of choice for local and foreign tourists, but the tourist arrivals show otherwise, despite of having abundant tourism resources. With this, and the fact of having scant literature about this topic in this region, the researcher sought to determine the assessment of tourist on the destination competitiveness in terms of physiography and climate, culture, and history, mix of activities, special events, infrastructure, facilitating resources, spirit of hospitality, safety and security, awareness and image, and cost value. Moreover, the tourist experience in terms of learning, emotional, meaningful, and enjoyment was also determined, as well as the behavioral intention of tourists in this region as to their revisit intention, word of mouth, willingness to pay more, and loyalty. It also aimed to test the significant relationship of the said variables. This study utilized quantitative descriptive design and was voluntarily participated by 385 tourists from different tourist attractions in MIMAROPA. The study found that the region was rated as competitive in all the sub-variables except physiography and climate and spirit of hospitality which was assessed as highly competitive. Tourists gave higher assessment to the enjoyment part of their travel and expressed their strong agreement to positive word of mouth and revisit intention. The study found a significant relationship between destination competitiveness, tourist experience, and behavioral intention. The more competitive the destination is, the better experience that the tourists can get. Meanwhile, tourist experience has a significant and direct relationship with behavioral intention. The better experience the tourist had, the higher possibility that the tourist will revisit, recommend, pay more, and be loyal. Lastly, the study proposed a destination competitiveness framework.

Keywords: behavioral intention, destination competitiveness, MIMAROPA, tourist experience

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1. Introduction

For many nations and regions worldwide, tourism is proven to be a significant economic force. In fact, the economic contribution of tourism in 2021 from the reported 415 million international tourist arrivals (UNWTO, 2022). Different destinations are constantly vying for tourists' attention and patronage to be able to stay in the competition. Among the strategies that various Destination Management Organizations (DMOs) give utmost priority nowadays is providing a unique and memorable experience to the tourists which could generate repeat visits, and recommendation to others. According to Kim (2018) memorable tourism experiences are the most influential determinant of future behavioral intentions. In addition, tourist behavioral intentions positively correlate with the competitiveness of tourist destinations (Zheng et al., 2021).

In the global arena, the Travel and Tourism Development Index resulted to Japan, USA, Spain, France, and Germany as the top 5 of the worlds ranking in the development of travel and tourism (World Economic Forum, 2022) while, the Philippines ranked 75th out of 117 economies (Desiderio, 2022). Philippines is blessed with different tourism destinations usually clustered into regions. MIMAROPA is one of those. This region is composed of beautiful island provinces of Oriental Mindoro, Occidental Mindoro, Marinduque, Romblon, and Palawan. Despite its abundant tourist attractions, rich culture and heritage, as well as friendly people, MIMAROPA lags behind other regions in terms of tourist arrivals. According to the regional distribution of overnight travelers in the Philippines, MIMAROPA contributed only 4.16% (2.355 million) to the total of 56.615 million tourist arrivals in 2019 (DOT, 2020). From the total of MIMAROPA's tourist arrival, 78% was contributed by Palawan, making the other provinces' contribution relatively small despite having other tourism jewels.

This study evaluated the destination competitiveness of MIMAROPA, assessed the tourist experience, and the behavioral intention of tourists in MIMAROPA region. In Ritchie & Crouch's model, the determinants of destination competitiveness were the qualifying and amplifying determinants, destination policy, planning and development, destination management, core resources and attractors, and supporting factors and resources. It was adapted and modified by Marasigan & Borbon (2021) in their study entitled destination competitiveness in the view of resort managers using only the three determinants namely qualifying and amplifying determinants, core resources and attractors, and supporting factors and resources. As for the tourist experience, the theoretical basis was Yao (2013) entitled assessing tourist experience with a heritage destination which was adapted by Apritado (2019) entitled proposed management and innovation framework of historical attractions from tourists' motives, expectations and experiences. Lastly, for the behavioral intention, the theoretical bases were Cakici et al. (2019); Ing et al. (2019) which was adapted by Borbon et al. (2022) in their study entitled tourist behavioral intention in visiting tourist attractions in Batangas.

Destination competitiveness is a complex concept influenced by a variety of factors. Tourism researchers, destination managers, and international organizations have made numerous attempts over the past decades to understand the significance of destination competitiveness and figure out how to support cities, regions, or nations in maintaining and enhancing their competitive positions as tourist destinations (Ashna & Firoz, 2022). Numerous studies had been conducted in the context of tourism destination competitiveness. Some of which are Reisinger et al. (2018) which focused on destination competitiveness from a tourist perspective in the United Arab Emirates. Fernandez et al. (2020) studied about the determinants of tourism destination competitiveness in the countries most visited by international tourists. Roque (2021) studied about destination attributes in CALABARZON which was a basis for proposed sustainable tourism competitiveness framework, while Marasigan and Borbon (2021) studied about the destination competitiveness in the view of resort managers in

Batangas. Relatively, Mendaña and Apritado (2021) published a study about destination competitiveness and marketing strategies among resorts business in Occidental Mindoro. However, study on destination competitiveness hasn't been explored and applied in MIMAROPA region.

Since tourism is a service-oriented industry, the quality of tourists' experiences and their evaluations of the services and facilities offered to them have a significant impact (Gani et al., 2019). Moreover, tourists' behavioral intention is seen as a critical aspect in business growth and sustainability. Rather (2020) studied about customer experience and engagement in tourism destinations, while Abbasi et al. (2020) study was about understanding the intention to revisit a destination by expanding the theory of planned behavior. Based on this premise, the researcher thought of applying this study in MIMAROPA by analyzing the relationship of the three major variables: destination competitiveness, tourist experience, and behavioral intention. This study was done having the sole desire to help alleviate the tourism industry of MIMAROPA by assisting them in identifying its level of competitiveness, tourist experience, and behavioral intention of tourists especially to the provinces with low tourist arrivals. MIMAROPA is among the regions in the country vying for a bigger tourism market share. With this, the DOT MIMAROPA came up with its vision along with a tourism campaign "MIMAROPA Naturally: Destination of Choice in 2026". (DOT MIMAROPA Official Facebook, 2020). This study was also conducted to contribute to the scant research in this region. Therefore, the researcher deemed this study timely and relevant.

The results of this study are beneficial to the tourism industry of the five provinces in MIMAROPA. This can serve as a reference for the Provincial tourism offices on the indicators which are already competitive from the tourists' perspective and the areas that needs improvement. Meanwhile, the proposed destination competitiveness framework can be beneficial in identifying the region's major competitive strengths (top indicators) and areas for improvement (rated lower) in the destination competitiveness. It can also help to formulate better plans by the Destination Management Organizations (DMOs), tourism and hospitality business sectors, and other stakeholders involved in the improvement of the region's tourism industry for better tourist experience, thereby, improving the tourism competitiveness and realizing the vision of being a destination of choice. Lastly, it can provide managerial implications to the tourism planners particularly on the destination planning and management both from the public and private sector's perspective.

Objectives of the Study - This study analyzed the destination competitiveness, tourists' experience, and behavioral intentions of tourists in MIMAROPA region. Specifically, it sought determined the travel behavior characteristics of the tourists in terms of main reason of travel, frequency of travel, number of visit in the destination, length of stay, and travel companion; determined the destination's competitiveness in terms of its core resources and attractors such as physiography and climate, culture and history, mix of activities, special events; in terms of supporting factors and resources such as infrastructure, facilitating resources, spirit of hospitality; and in terms of its qualifying and amplifying determinants such as safety and security, awareness and image, and cost value. This study also determined the tourist experience in the destination in terms of learning experience, emotional experience, meaningful experience, and enjoyment; it also determined the behavioral intention of tourists in terms of revisit intention, word of mouth, willingness to pay more, and loyalty. Moreover, it tested the significant difference of respondent's responses on destination competitiveness, tourist experience, and behavioral intention when grouped according to travel behavior characteristics; tested the significant relationship of destination competitiveness, tourist experience, and behavioral intention; and proposed a destination competitiveness framework based on the results of the study.

2. Methods

Research Design - This study used quantitative research design which utilized descriptive analysis. Quantitative methods emphasize objective measurements and the statistical, mathematical, or numerical analysis of data collected through polls, questionnaires, and surveys, or by manipulating pre-existing statistical data using computational techniques (USC Libraries, 2020). Moreover, quantitative research focuses on gathering numerical data and generalizing it across groups of people or to explain a particular phenomenon. This study described the

tourist's assessment of the destination competitiveness, the level of their experience and their behavioral intention towards MIMAROPA as a destination. Moreover, this study described tourists' travel behavior characteristics and the tourist's difference in responses when grouped according to their travel behavior characteristics. It also described the relationship of destination competitiveness, tourists' experience, and behavioral intention.

Participants of the Study - The participants of the study were the 385 tourists in the MIMAROPA region. It was computed based on the total population of 2.5 million tourists in MIMAROPA in 2019 using Raosoft Sample Size Calculator with a margin of error of 5% and confidence level of 95%. The sample size was computed based on the Regional Distribution of Overnight Travelers in Accommodation Establishments (DOT, 2020). As the data suggests, majority of the tourists in MIMAROPA were contributed by Palawan. The data below presents the actual number of respondents per province upon completion of the data gathering.

REGION 4-B MIMAROPA	ACTUAL NUMBER OF RESPONDENTS	% of Actual Respondents
ORIENTAL MINDORO	80	20.8
OCCIDENTAL MINDORO	19	4.9
MARINDUQUE	14	3.6
ROMBLON	7	1.8
PALAWAN	265	68.8
TOTAL	385	100

Data Gathering Instrument - The data collection instrument used in this research is composed of four parts which was adapted and modified from various sources. The first part pertains to the respondent's travel behavior characteristics. The second part for the assessment of destination competitiveness was an adapted and modified survey questionnaire from the study of Marasigan & Borbon (2021) entitled destination competitiveness in the view of resort managers. The study was adapted from Ritchie and Crouch (2010) model of destination competitiveness/sustainability. The third part for the rating of tourists' experience was adapted from the study of Apritado (2019) entitled proposed management and innovation framework of historical attractions from tourists' motives, expectations and experiences. Apritado's tourist experience instrument was adapted from the study of Yao (2013) in Assessing Tourist Experience with a Heritage Destination. Meanwhile the fourth part was adapted from Borbon et al. (2022) entitled tourist behavioral intention in visiting tourist attraction in Batangas province which was adapted from various studies by Cakici, et al. (2019); Ing et al. (2019).

The adapted questionnaire was validated by tourism industry experts in MIMAROPA region composed of Supervising Tourism Operations Officer of Palawan Provincial Tourism Office, President of Marinduque Tourism Council, and the President of TEAM PH (Tourism Educators and Movers of the Philippines) MIMAROPA Chapter. The researcher conducted a pilot study to the 30 tourists who visited other region (CALABARZON). The result of reliability statistics showed that the computed Cronbach's alpha value for Destination Competitiveness (0.978), Tourist Experience (0.920) and Behavioral Intention in Visiting Tourist Attraction (0.938) signifies that the instrument has strong or excellent internal consistency in the rule of thumb. Thus, the set of questionnaires were considered valid and reliable for use.

Data Gathering Procedure - Once the data gathering instrument was validated and tested valid and reliable for use, the researcher sought the approval of her dissertation adviser to proceed with the data gathering. The gathering of responses for this study was done through the combination of an online survey using google form and face to face data gathering using a printed survey questionnaire. To ensure that the respondents were qualified to answer the survey, there were three sets of qualifier questions that the respondents needed to answer with a yes or a no. The first qualifier question was confirming if they visited tourist destination in MIMAROPA. The second question was if they are residing outside of the MIMAROPA region for at least a year. Lastly, asking if they are of legal age and willing to take part in the study. If they answered all the qualifier questions with a yes, they can proceed with the survey, otherwise, they will be directed to the end of the survey. The same sets of qualifiers were included in the printed survey forms.

Ethical Considerations - To ensure that the research was conducted ethically, various protocols were

carefully followed by the researcher. First, the researcher sought permission from the authors of the research from which the researcher adapted the survey questionnaire. Upon their approval, the researcher sought permission from the external validators to validate the survey instrument. Since this involved human as sample respondents (tourists specifically), the researcher first sought the consent of the respondents to participate in the study and guaranteed the participants of their anonymity and confidentiality in accordance with the Data Privacy Act of 2012. The respondents who willingly participated in the face-to-face survey and online survey when the researcher explained the purpose of the conduct of the study were the only ones counted and tallied. The respondents were also assured that the data gathered will be used only for the purpose of this study and not for any other purposes. Before distributing the questionnaire, researchers sought permission from the management of the tourist attractions and other establishments where the data gathering was conducted.

Data Analysis - Frequency and percentage distribution were used to present the travel behavior characteristics of the respondents in terms of main reason of travel, frequency of travel, number of visits in the destination, length of stay, and travel companion. Weighted mean and rank were used to assess the destination's competitiveness in terms of its core resources and attractors such as physiography and climate, culture and history, mix of activities, special events; in terms of supporting factors and resources such as infrastructure, facilitating resources, spirit of hospitality; and in terms of its qualifying and amplifying determinants such as safety and security, awareness and image, and cost value; weighted mean and rank were also used to determine the level of tourist experience in terms of learning experience, emotional experience, meaningful experience, and enjoyment. Likewise, weighted mean and rank were used to assess the behavioral intention of tourists visiting attractions in MIMAROPA in terms of revisit intention, word of mouth, willingness to pay more, and loyalty. While Scheffe tests for more than two groups were used as part of the non-parametric tests to determine the significant differences when grouped according to travel behavior characteristics. Meanwhile, Pearson correlation was used to test the significant relationship of destination competitiveness, tourists experience, and behavioral intention. All analyzes were performed using SPSS version 26.

3. Results and discussion

Table 1

Frequency Table for the Respondent's Travel Behavior Characteristics

	f	%
Main Reason for Travel		
Business related purposes	40	10.4
Leisure Purposes	251	65.2
Visit friends and relatives	79	20.5
Academic Engagement/Educational Tour	15	3.9
Frequency of Travel		
Once a Year	218	56.6
2 – 3 times a year	136	35.3
More than 3 times a year	31	8.1
Number of Visit in the Destination		
Once	118	30.6
2 times	186	48.3
3 times	55	14.3
More than 3 times	26	6.8
Length of Stay		
1 night	28	7.3
2 – 3 nights	235	61.0
4 – 5 nights	95	24.7
6 nights and above	27	7.0
Travel Companion		
Individual Traveler	19	4.9
Family	205	53.2
Friends	132	34.3
Workmates	18	4.7
Tour group	11	2.9

The table 1 indicates that majority of the respondents traveled to MIMAROPA for leisure purposes which

comprised of 251 tourists or 65.2 percent of the total number of respondents. This is a clear indication that MIMAROPA is popular for tourists who are looking for relaxing and enjoyable vacation. The table 1 indicates that majority of the respondents traveled to MIMAROPA for leisure purposes which comprised of 251 tourists or 65.2 percent of the total number of respondents. This is a clear indication that MIMAROPA is popular for tourists who are looking for relaxing and enjoyable vacation. MIMAROPA is also a destination of choice for leisure and recreation purposes because of the many tourism attractions and activities that can be done in these island destinations. Palawan is considered the top tourist destination in the region because of its inviting nature ideal for island hopping, kayaking, snorkeling, scuba diving, and other leisure activities. It is also known for its rich biodiversity and breathtaking rock formations. Meanwhile, among the commonly visited area in Oriental Mindoro is Puerto Galera which is famous for white beaches and water activities like banana boat riding, boating, and more. Same goes for Occidental Mindoro, Marinduque, Romblon - although with minimal number of respondents also had more leisure travelers.

Within the context of travel and tourism, leisure travel represents the leading and the most important market (Statista, 2022). This is supported by the survey conducted by the Philippine Statistics Office indicating that two fifths of the domestic travelers intended to go for pleasure or vacation (PSA, 2017). Meanwhile, 79 tourists constituting 20.5 percent of the total, were visiting friends and relatives, while 40 individuals, making up 10.4 percent, were primarily business travelers. Additionally, 15 respondents, comprising 3.9 percent of the total, were engaged in academic pursuits or educational tours. It's noteworthy to acknowledge that the pandemic presented a multitude of challenges to the tourism industry. This included academic institutions, which were compelled to suspend educational tours temporarily, consequently leading to the observed decline in the number of respondents engaging in this specific profile during the course of the study.

As for the frequency of travel, 218 individuals, accounting for 56.6 percent of the respondents, indicated that they embark on a single annual trip. This data underscores the growing popularity of MIMAROPA as a preferred destination, as even those with just one vacation opportunity per year opt for this region to unwind and bond with loved ones. Meanwhile, 136 respondents, constituting 35.3 percent, reported traveling two to three times a year. Additionally, there were 31 individuals, making up 8.1 percent of the total, who managed to travel more frequently, exceeding three trips annually. It can be gleaned from the number of visits to the destination that 186 or 48.3 percent of the respondents were repeat visitors who traveled to the destination twice. It implies that MIMAROPA still has a lot to offer to the tourists in terms of attractions, leisure activities, and the experience with local people, thereby making them come back to these island destinations. According to Rather (2020) compared to first-time visits, repeat customers have better behavioral intentions and identification with the destination. On the other hand, there were 118 tourists or 30.6 percent of the respondents who visited the destination for the first time. Meanwhile, 55 tourists or 14.3 percent of the respondents visited three times. Lastly, 26 tourists or 6.8 percent visited more than three times. According to some tourists, visiting an area for more than three times is connected to their business purposes in the region while for some is for visiting their friends and relatives.

In terms of the duration of stay, it's evident that 235 respondents, or 61 percent of the surveyed individuals, chose to spend 2 to 3 nights in the destination. This data indicates that a significant majority of tourists opt for an extended stay in the MIMAROPA region to savor the immersive experience it offers. This trend aligns with the findings of the Philippine Statistics Authority (2017) which reported that three in ten domestic travelers opted to stay overnight at their travel destinations, while roughly 40 percent staying for a duration of two to three nights. This choice of spending more time in the region reflects tourists' desire to fully enjoy the beauty and attractions of MIMAROPA. When it comes to traveling to Palawan, the preferred mode of transportation is by air, primarily through the Puerto Princesa International Airport, which ensures a quicker journey. However, given that Palawan is the largest province in the Philippines in terms of size (Philatlas, 2020), exploring its splendor would typically require several days.

Traveling to Oriental Mindoro, including destinations like Calapan City and Puerto Galera, involves a

journey of at least three hours when departing from Metro Manila. Travelers are drawn to the idea of relishing their time on this beautiful island and participating in various engaging activities. For those heading to Marinduque from Manila, the journey consumes a considerable amount of time, spanning at least 6 to 8 hours. Hence, tourists are advised to allocate ample time for travel and to fully immerse themselves in the province's leisurely offerings. The longest journey is for those traveling to Romblon. The trip from the Batangas port to Romblon alone usually done via a Roll-on/Roll-off (RoRo) vessel, extends for at least six hours. Meanwhile, 95 tourists, constituting 24.7 percent, chose to extend their stay in the destination, opting for a duration of 4 to 5 nights. A smaller fraction, comprising 28 people or 7.3 percent, stayed just one night, while an additional 27 respondents, accounting for 7 percent, indulged in a more extended visit of 6 nights or beyond. Interestingly, the lowest percentage was associated with those respondents who stayed in the destination to visit friends and relatives, which typically leads to longer stays.

Regarding travel companions, a significant 205 individuals, constituting 53.2 percent of the respondents, embarked on their MIMAROPA journey with their families. This statistic underscores MIMAROPA's reputation as a family-friendly destination, well-suited for enriching family vacations. Families go on holidays to enhance family interaction and cohesiveness (Yu, et al., 2018). In relation thereto, Yulita (2019) concluded that the biggest purpose for traveling on a family vacation is to spend quality time with family to help strengthen family relationships. Meanwhile, 132 respondents, accounting for 34.3 percent, chose to explore MIMAROPA in the company of their friends. An additional 19 individuals (4.9 percent) opted for solo travel, while 18 respondents (4.7 percent) ventured with their workmates. Lastly, 11 individuals (2.9 percent) joined tour groups for their MIMAROPA experience. The result is supporting the main reason for travel which can be explained by the pandemic that happened therefore limiting the tour groups. According to Nicola et al., (2020) the enormity of the COVID-19 pandemic has severely impacted all industries including tourism which is one of the hardest-hit.

Table 2
The Respondent's Assessment on Overall Destination Competitiveness

Sub Variables	Mean	Interpretation	Rank
Core Resources and Attractors	4.26	Competitive	2
Supporting Factors and Resources	4.30	Competitive	1
Qualifying and Amplifying Determinants	4.25	Competitive	3
<i>Overall Destination Competitiveness</i>	<i>4.27</i>	<i>Competitive</i>	

Table 2 presents the summary of the respondents' assessment on MIMAROPA's destination competitiveness. As implied by the overall rating / composite mean of 4.27, the respondents find the region competitive. MIMAROPA's competitiveness relies heavily on several factors such as location, diversity of attractions and tourism offerings. MIMAROPA's location in the heart of the Philippines gives it easy access to major tourism hubs like Manila and Boracay. This makes it a convenient stop for island-hopping itineraries and attracts tourists seeking alternative destinations closer to the main tourist trail. This region also boasts a wide range of natural attractions, from stunning beaches and coral reefs in Palawan, Romblon, and Marinduque to lush rainforests and mountains in Occidental and Oriental Mindoro. Aside from this, MIMAROPA enjoys a reputation for being safe and secure. This attracts tourists seeking a relaxing and worry-free vacation.

In the assessment of destination competitiveness, three key determinants were considered, each contributing to the overall competitiveness score. The results revealed that supporting factors and resources obtained the highest mean of 4.30. Following closely were core resources and attractors with a mean of 4.26, lastly the qualifying and amplifying determinants with a mean of 4.25 all verbally interpreted as competitive. These findings collectively point towards a compelling interpretation of MIMAROPA region's competitiveness, particularly when viewed from the perspective of the demand side, which primarily comprises tourists. Evidently, MIMAROPA is at par as a competitive destination, supported by its robust supporting factors and resources, attractive core resources, and compelling attractors. This underscores its potential to captivate and retain a significant share of the tourism market.

In MIMAROPA, supporting factors and resources are evident as attested by the results of the study. Similarly, Reisinger et al. (2018) found out that destination infrastructure and support services, followed by destination resources, had the highest significant effect on the UAE's tourism competitiveness as assessed by tourists. In addition, Ricafort (2021) found out that there is a high level of competitiveness in the core resources and attractors, supporting factors and resources and qualifying and amplifying determinants in CALABARZON. Core resources and attractors are also competitive as supported by the results of the study. Ching, et al. (2019) suggested that accessibility, natural resources, infrastructure and range of activities had a significant positive impact on ecotourism destination competitiveness, whereas no significant impact was found among accommodation, cultural heritage, entertainment, and special events.

Table 3
The Tourists' Assessment of their Experience

In terms of	Mean	Interpretation	Rank
Learning Experience	4.41	Experienced	3
Emotional Experience	4.36	Experienced	4
Meaningful Experience	4.45	Experienced	2
Enjoyment	4.51	Highly Experienced	1
Overall Tourist Experience	4.43	Experienced	

Table 3 provides the summary table for the tourists' experience during their travel in MIMAROPA Region. The table shows that the composite mean for the tourist experience is 4.43 implying that the tourists experienced those indicators. The result showed that enjoyment topped the respondent's experience (4.51) and verbally interpreted as highly experienced. This is followed by their meaningful experience (4.45), learning experience (4.41), and lastly, the emotional experience (4.36). All three of which got a verbal interpretation of being experienced by the tourists.

MIMAROPA region offers a diverse array of activities and stimuli for visitors to engage with. From thrilling adventures like diving and island hopping to cultural encounters at local festivals, the region provided a rich tapestry of experiences that stimulated the senses and generated lasting memories. These activities, along with the vibrant local culture and cuisine, contributed to the overall enjoyment of tourists. The combination of MIMAROPA's natural beauty, the genuine warmth of its people, and the diverse array of activities available all came together to create an atmosphere where enjoyment was not just a possibility but an almost inevitable outcome of a visit to this remarkable region. Zatori et al. (2018) found out that emotional experience-involvement evolves through emotions, and it is measured through indicators: excitement, enjoyment, inspiration, fascination, and surprise. The results indicated that positive emotions were experienced by tourists who visited destinations in MIMAROPA due to its natural beauty and enjoyable activities. Relatively, positive emotions and satisfaction are fostered by a destination's unique experiences and good perception, which increases the likelihood that travelers will return and suggest it to others (Quynh et al., 2021). Moreover, Padron-Avila et al. (2021) concluded that tourists' type and engagement in various tourism activities moderate the relationship between satisfaction, perceived image, and loyalty in a small island destination.

Table 4
Respondents Agreement on their Behavioral Intention in Visiting Tourist Attractions

In terms of	Mean	Interpretation	Rank
Revisit Intention	4.53	Strongly Agree	2
Word of Mouth	4.59	Strongly Agree	1
Willingness to Pay More	4.19	Agree	4
Loyalty	4.35	Agree	3
Overall Rating on Behavioral Intention	4.41	Agree	

Legend: 1.00 – 1.49 (Strongly Disagree), 1.50 – 2.49 (Disagree), 2.50 – 3.49 (Moderately Agree), 3.50 – 4.49 (Agree), 4.50 – 5.00 (Strongly Agree)

Table 4 summarizes the respondents' agreement on their behavioral intention in visiting tourist attractions. The table shows that the composite mean of behavioral intention is 4.41 which means that the respondents agreed or showed a positive behavioral intention in terms of revisit intention, word of mouth, willingness to pay more, and loyalty based on their travel to MIMAROPA. The respondents highly assessed in particular the word

of mouth (4.59) followed by revisit intention (4.53). These components both resulted in a verbal interpretation of strongly agree. The top result implied that the respondents conveyed strong agreement and willingness to tell other people their memorable experience in MIMAROPA. As final consumers, tourists are frequently swayed by recommendations from others, particularly from people they can trust, such as friends and family. Respondents concur that they should inform and persuade others, including their friends and family to visit the tourist attractions in the MIMAROPA region. This shows sincere excitement and a will to impart to others the good memories they had from their trip to MIMAROPA. Relative to this, Chen & Rahman (2018) stated that tourists with higher intentions to revisit are more likely to recommend friends, relatives, or other potential tourists to a cultural tourist destination via positive word-of-mouth while Madridano (2021) study findings revealed that Word of Mouth (WoM) was highly influential when tourists are making travel decisions in Quezon province. Similarly, Rizki & Nurani (2019) concluded that word of mouth positively and significantly influences tourist visiting decisions in Tahura Ir. H. Djuanda Bandung, Indonesia. Meanwhile, Gustiani (2019) study suggested a strong correlation between the quality of electronic word of mouth (eWOM) and the tourists' decisions to visit a particular destination.

Meanwhile, loyalty ranked third with a mean of 4.35 with a verbal interpretation of agree. The least assessed is willingness to pay more with a mean of 4.19 and a verbal interpretation of agree. The result shows that visitors feel that the region's tourism attractions are worth the extra money since the sites' natural beauty may even entice them to stay longer. Travelers are drawn to MIMAROPA and stay longer because of its alluring beauty and natural treasures. Yuan et al. (2021) emphasized the importance of including willingness to pay to reflect a visitor's loyalty in the destination as it is directly linked to the monetary values of the destination's products and services. Furthermore, tourists' willingness to pay for sustainability in tourism destinations is influenced by their environmental beliefs, ecotour attitudes, and sustainable consumption behavior, but not by their environmental beliefs themselves (Araujo et al., 2022).

Table 5

Difference on Respondents Assessment of Overall Destination Competitiveness when compared according to Travel Behavior Characteristics

	Main Reason for Travel		Frequency of Travel		Number of Visits		Length of Stay		Travel Companion	
	t/F	p-value	t/F	p-value	t/F	p-value	t/F	p-value	t/F	p-value
Overall Destination Competitiveness	5.719	.001	1.040	.354	4.885	.002	4.036	.008	2.815	.025

Table 5 presents the difference in the responses for overall destination competitiveness when compared according to travel behavior characteristics. It was observed that there was a significant difference in the main reason for travel (0.001) since the obtained p-values were less than 0.05 alpha level. The responses differ significantly and based on the post hoc test conducted, it was found out that those who traveled for academic engagement / educational tours assessed the overall destination competitiveness higher than those who traveled for business purposes. Business travelers value convenience, cultural experiences, and on-time arrivals, which differ from leisure tourists in motivation and behavior. Relatively, leisure is the top purpose of visitation in Calabarzon and destination competitiveness is significantly correlated to those who visit for educational purposes (Roque, 2021).

It was also observed that there was a significant difference in the number of visits (0.002) since the obtained p-values were less than 0.05 alpha level. This means that the responses differ significantly and based on the post hoc test conducted, it was found out that those who visited for two times assessed the overall destination competitiveness higher. Moreover, travelers who have made more trips may have experienced a greater variety of places and activities, both inside and beyond the particular study region. Relatively, social media and destination image significantly influence tourist expectations, with word-of-mouth communication and past experiences playing a key role in shaping these expectations (Lima et al., 2020).

There was also a significant difference in the length of stay in terms of overall destination competitiveness

(0.008) since the obtained p-values were less than 0.05 alpha level. This means that the responses differ significantly and based on the post hoc test conducted, it was found out that those who stayed in the destination for four to five nights assessed the overall destination competitiveness higher. Comparatively, the quality of vacation experience is the major predictor of perceived destination competitiveness in Caraga Region, affecting tourists' quality of vacation, satisfaction with travel/tourism services, and travel motivation (Malong & Malonzo, 2018).

On the other hand, travel companion was found to be insignificant because the p-value were higher than 0.05 alpha level (0.25). It means that the responses of different groups based on this travel behavior characteristics did not differ significantly in terms of the overall destination competitiveness. It means that regardless of the travel companion of the tourists, their assessment of the destination competitiveness in MIMAROPA did not differ significantly. MIMAROPA's inherent strengths and competitive advantages might be so prominent that they eclipse the influence of who visitors travel with. On the other hand, Su et al. (2021) stipulated that having a companion with greater relative ability positively impacts adventure tourists' satisfaction and subjective well-being, with a stronger positive effect for female tourists.

Table 6
Relationship of The Respondents Agreement on Destination Competitiveness to their Experience as a Tourist

	Learning Experience		Emotional Experience		Meaningful Experience		Enjoyment		Overall Tourist Experience	
	Rxy	p-value	Rxy	p-value	Rxy	p-value	Rxy	p-value	Rxy	p-value
<i>Destination Competitiveness</i>										
PnC	.463**	.000	.309**	.000	.313**	.000	.444**	.000	.466**	.000
CnH	.422**	.000	.518**	.000	.537**	.000	.473**	.000	.600**	.000
MA	.354**	.000	.436**	.000	.455**	.000	.432**	.000	.515**	.000
SE	.370**	.000	.441**	.000	.394**	.000	.370**	.000	.486**	.000
CRA	.507**	.000	.558**	.000	.553**	.000	.545**	.000	.664**	.000
Infra	.351**	.000	.393**	.000	.420**	.000	.357**	.000	.468**	.000
FR	.462**	.000	.513**	.000	.516**	.000	.456**	.000	.599**	.000
SH	.388**	.000	.550**	.000	.576**	.000	.460**	.000	.608**	.000
SFR	.478**	.000	.572**	.000	.594**	.000	.503**	.000	.661**	.000
SnS	.432**	.000	.526**	.000	.501**	.000	.420**	.000	.580**	.000
AnI	.432**	.000	.585**	.000	.597**	.000	.457**	.000	.639**	.000
CV	.445**	.000	.445**	.000	.414**	.000	.373**	.000	.516**	.000
QAD	.515**	.000	.609**	.000	.590**	.000	.490**	.000	.679**	.000
ODC	.553**	.000	.643**	.000	.642**	.000	.565**	.000	.739**	.000
<i>Behavioral Intention</i>										
RI	.491**	.000	.499**	.000	.538**	.000	.525**	.000	.629**	.000
WOM	.473**	.000	.418**	.000	.491**	.000	.526**	.000	.582**	.000
WPM	.504**	.000	.454**	.000	.398**	.000	.428**	.000	.548**	.000
L	.588**	.000	.453**	.000	.548**	.000	.468**	.000	.629**	.000
OBI	.628**	.000	.556**	.000	.594**	.000	.585**	.000	.724**	.000

Legend: Correlation is significant at 0.05 alpha level

PnC (Physiography and Climate), CnH (Culture and History), MA (Mix of Activities), SE (Special Events) CRA (Core Resources and Attraction), Infra (Infrastructure), FR (Facilitating Resources), SH (Spirit of Hospitality), SFR (Supporting Factors and Resources), SnS (Safety and Security), AnI (Awareness and Image), CV (Cost Value), QAD (Qualifying and Amplifying Determinants), ODC (Overall Destination Competitiveness), RI (Revisit Intention), WOM (Word of Mouth), WPM (Willingness to Pay More), L (Loyalty), OBI (Overall Behavioral Intention)

Table 6 shows the relationship between the respondents' assessment of the destination competitiveness and their behavioral intention to their ratings on their experiences as a tourist. Results indicate that all of the dimensions of destination competitiveness and behavioral intention to their experiences as a tourist is significantly correlated in a direct manner since the obtained p-values were less than 0.05 alpha level. It goes to show that there is a direct relationship between destination competitiveness, behavioral intention, and tourist experience. As posited by Yu et al (2019), memorable tourism experiences in forest recreation destinations, such as refreshment and involvement, positively influence word-of-mouth intentions and revisit intentions.

To sum up the three variables; Destination competitiveness refers to the destination's ability to attract and retain tourists compared to its competitors. Factors like unique attractions, efficient infrastructure, cultural richness, and affordability can contribute to competitiveness. Meanwhile, tourist experience encompasses the sum of all emotions, perceptions, and interactions a tourist has during their visit. Contrary to this result, Zheng,

et al., (2021) findings suggested that there was an indirect positive correlation between tourists' satisfaction and destination competitiveness.

All of these factors can contribute to a destination's competitiveness, and they can all lead to an increase in behavioral intention and tourist experience. For MIMAROPA, this means that they should focus on improving all of the areas of destination competitiveness if they want to make the destination more attractive to visitors. The findings of Haji et al. (2021) showed that the influence of the quality of the experience on behavioral intention can be partially mediated by the impression of value and enjoyment. Meanwhile, Neto et al. (2020) findings show that classification of tourists according to their travel experiences is appropriate in terms of destination competitiveness attributes.

Table 7 shows the relationship between the respondents' assessment of the destination competitiveness to their agreement on their behavioral intention. Results indicate that all of the dimensions of destination competitiveness to their behavioral intention is significantly correlated in a direct manner which means that there is a direct relationship between destination competitiveness and behavioral intention. This means that there is a clear causal relationship between the two variables. All of the dimensions of destination competitiveness; core resources and attractors, supporting factors and resources, and qualifying and amplifying determinants were significantly correlated with behavioral intention.

Table 7
Relationship of The Respondents Agreement on Destination Competitiveness to their Behavioral Intention

	Revisit Intention		Word of Mouth		Willingness to Pay More		Loyalty		Overall Behavioral Intention	
	Rxy	p-value	Rxy	p-value	Rxy	p-value	Rxy	p-value	Rxy	p-value
<i>Destination Competitiveness</i>										
PnC	.275**	.000	.329**	.000	.360**	.000	.334**	.000	.398**	.000
CnH	.327**	.000	.277**	.000	.416**	.000	.393**	.000	.439**	.000
MA	.317**	.000	.237**	.000	.341**	.000	.371**	.000	.392**	.000
SE	.282**	.000	.185**	.000	.349**	.000	.315**	.000	.354**	.000
CRA	.385**	.000	.318**	.000	.469**	.000	.451**	.000	.503**	.000
Infra	.244**	.000	.143**	.005	.314**	.000	.315**	.000	.320**	.000
FR	.284**	.000	.291**	.000	.325**	.000	.346**	.000	.382**	.000
SH	.304**	.000	.341**	.000	.282**	.000	.377**	.000	.393**	.000
SFR	.328**	.000	.300**	.000	.368**	.000	.410**	.000	.432**	.000
SnS	.269**	.000	.196**	.000	.345**	.000	.346**	.000	.361**	.000
AnI	.376**	.000	.320**	.000	.411**	.000	.469**	.000	.486**	.000
CV	.320**	.000	.218**	.000	.457**	.000	.433**	.000	.450**	.000
QAD	.376**	.000	.284**	.000	.476**	.000	.487**	.000	.506**	.000
ODC	.401**	.000	.332**	.000	.483**	.000	.497**	.000	.531**	.000

Legend: Correlation is significant at 0.05 alpha level

For tourists to visit MIMAROPA, it must have a lot to offer in terms of core resources and attractors such as beautiful scenery, interesting culture, variety of activities and exciting events. Finally, when someone is aware of a safe and secured destination with reasonable cost under the qualifying and amplifying determinants, it may contribute to increased tourist visit. This means that if the destination management organizations in MIMAROPA want to make the destination more attractive to visitors, they should focus on improving all of these areas. Similarly, the study of Zeng et al. (2021) suggested that there is a positive correlation between behavioral intention and destination competitiveness. However, there is an indirect positive correlation between tourist's satisfaction and destination competitiveness in the case of mountain – based health and wellness tourist destination. Furthermore, the findings of Mustafa et al. (2020) implied that visitors who have better evaluations of destination attributes in Kuala Selangor, Malaysia are more likely to have a favorable experience and have higher behavioral intentions to return. Likewise, Haji et al. (2021), study revealed that behavioral intention, perceived value, and enjoyment are all significantly and favorably impacted by experience quality. Then, the intention to behave was positively and significantly impacted by the feeling of value and satisfaction.

Venus' Proposed Destination Management Framework for MIMAROPA

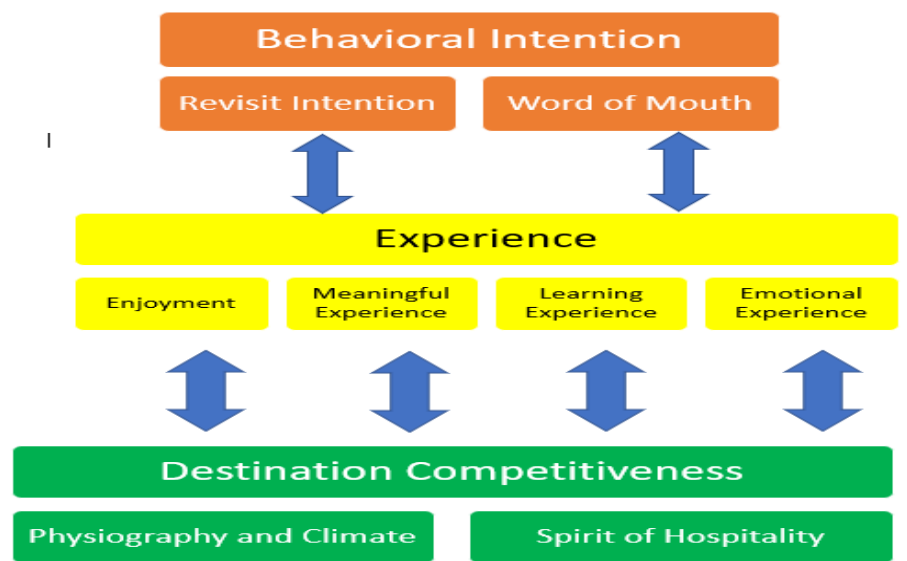


Figure 1. Venus' Proposed Destination Competitiveness Framework

Figure 1 presents the destination management framework which was based on the results signifying the relationship of the major variables under study. The framework shows the significant relationships of the variables under study. It means that the determinants of destination competitiveness affect the tourist's experience. The higher the competitiveness of a destination, the higher the level of tourist experience that the tourists can get. Meanwhile, the better experience that the tourists got, the higher ratings they will give to the destination competitiveness. Additionally, tourist experience shows a significant and direct correlation to behavioral intention. This means that the better experience that the tourist had during their travel to MIMAROPA, the higher intention there is to revisit, to recommend, to pay more, and to become loyal to the destination. Likewise, the behavioral intention was assessed higher because of the good experience they had during their visit.

In this framework, the sub-variables in destination competitiveness which topped the results was included as it could potentially remind the destination management organizations their strength which they should protect while the ones not mentioned are the aspects that they need to improve on. In the destination competitiveness, the destination managers and planners should ensure that the physiography and climate of the island destinations doesn't deteriorate because these are their strengths especially in natural attractions in this region. The beauty of the place observed in its physical geography and good climate were clearly an indicator of competitiveness of this region. In addition, the spirit of hospitality was also assessed highly. This is due to the good experience the tourists felt while interacting with the staff and service providers mainly composed of local people who are known to possess innate hospitable personality.

This framework could be beneficial to the destination planners and managers in these destinations in MIMAROPA because it highlighted the importance of destination competitiveness which could affect the tourist experience, which then influenced the tourists' behavioral intention. Moreover, it could aide in destination development and improvement. Understanding the link between competitiveness and experience allows stakeholders to focus on improving the key factors that contribute to positive experiences which eventually leads to a positive behavioral intention. This includes investing in infrastructure, enhancing cultural offerings, promoting responsible tourism practices, and ensuring visitor safety and security.

4. Conclusions and recommendations

Majority of the tourists who participated in the study traveled to MIMAROPA for leisure purposes, traveled once a year, and visited the region twice. Most of the respondents stayed in the destination for 2-3 nights and

traveled with family. All the indicators under the qualifying and amplifying determinants were rated as competitive. It is therefore concluded that MIMAROPA is a competitive destination and can compete with other destinations in the country due to its natural attractions, culture, people, and other supporting resources.

The results found a significant difference in the assessment of core resources and attractors when grouped according to travel behavior characteristics of the tourists such as main reason of travel, number of visits (for culture and history indicator only), length of stay, and travel companion except for the physiography and climate where the responses did not differ significantly in any of the travel behavior characteristics. There was also a significant difference in the assessment of supporting factors and resources when grouped according to main reason of travel, number of visits, and length of stay. Meanwhile, it was found out that there was a significant difference in the responses in qualifying and amplifying determinants when grouped according to main reason of travel, frequency of visit (for cost value indicator only), number of visits, length of stay, and travel companion (for safety and security indicator only). The study found a significant relationship between destination competitiveness, tourist experience, and behavioral intention. Destination competitiveness has a significant and direct relationship with tourist experience. The more competitive the destination is, the better experience that the tourists can get.

This study able to provide recommendations such as: The Destination Management Organizations (DMOs) such as Department of Tourism MIMAROPA, Provincial Tourism Offices, and other agencies involved in policy making may formulate policies and guidelines related to the improvement of the destination competitiveness like construction of clean public toilets and restrooms, improvement on the telecom and network coverage especially in remote areas of the provinces, promotion of historical, cultural and heritage image of the region, increased visibility of police and security personnel, and regulating tour operator's practices by removing hidden charges to make travel packages' costs more competitive.

For the tourism and hospitality enterprises, business owners, tour and travel operators, and other private sectors involved in the tourism and hospitality businesses may take immediate actions on the areas needing improvement as reflected from the results of this study. While the locals may continue being protective of their natural environment to maintain the beauty that can be seen in its physiography and good climate. Through this, MIMAROPA region will continue to possess the image that was reflected on the top results of this study; to keep up the good work in terms of spirit of hospitality, physiography and climate, thereby resulting in positive word of mouth.

MIMAROPA provinces may collaborate with more events to give way to regional progress in the tourism industry. In addition, since this study focused on the tourists as respondents, future researchers may also apply the destination competitiveness analysis from the supply side of the destination such as tourism and hospitality enterprises managers, tour and transport operators, attraction managers, and the like, but exploring other research designs such as qualitative and/or mixed method.

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