Business and Economics Research Journal
Volume 6 Number 4 2015
pp. 137-154
ISSN: 1309-2448
www.berjournal.com

Competitive Importance Performance Analysis (CIPA): An Illustration from Thermal Tourism Destinations*

Emre Erbaş[a] **Nilüfer Şahin Perçin**[b]

Abstract: *This paper introduces a syntheses of traditional Importance-Performance Analysis and Analytical Hierarchy Process under the name of Competitive Importance-Performance Analysis (CIPA), to empower managers to make better decisions in creating competitive advantage. A questionnaire of a Turkish thermal tourism destination is utilized to illustrate the execution of the proposed approach. The results of the current case study illustrate the practicability and supplementary insights of specifying the priorities of attributes through the proposed approach for gaining competitive advantage. The results suggested that, from the expert's perspective, plentiful natural hot springs, sound local transportation network, availability of sufficient accommodation, hygiene standards for hot springs spa equipment, public interest in health-leisure activities are important factors shaping the competitiveness of thermal tourism destinations. Therefore, thermal tourism destinations in Turkey might focus more on these attributes to gain competitive advantage. Moreover, increase in visitors seeking for health-oriented leisure time is increasing and hence the future of Turkish thermal tourism seems encouraging. Hence, the adapted undertakings will be required by augmenting the core thermal tourism product to reach the competitors.*

Keywords: Competitiveness, thermal tourism, competitive importance-performance analysis.

JEL Classification: L83, L52, D70

1. Introduction

Organizational decision makers are constantly surrounded by the pressure of ever-changing conditions that possibly could affect the stream of the current or future directions of their organizations. This is highly relevant for tourism industry and tourism destinations that are surrounded by mostly abstract and a fragile environment. A good track of global changes and their effects on the destination is so critical for all stakeholders in the destinations. For destinations to sustain their growth and vitality, the key determinants of market competitiveness should be treated with a global vision (Hassan, 2000). This reality is not exception for Kozaklı, a thermal tourism destination in Turkey, which is in a fast development phase with the growing accommodation investments. For Kozaklı to maneuver the important ingredients in gaining competitive advantage and to control its development process in a sustainable competitiveness manner, it is important for him to be conscious of competitiveness factors' relative weights especially within its competitive environment. Thermal tourism is an alternative tourism industry with a serious income potential especially for Turkey that gets stuck in 3s tourism but rich in spa resources. The worldwide spa industry

*This article is partly produced form the data collected for a PhD. thesis.

[a] Res. Assist., PhD., Erciyes University, Faculty of Tourism, Kayseri, Turkiye, emreerbas85@hotmail.com
[b] Assoc. Prof., Nevsehir Haci Bektas Veli University, Faculty of Tourism, Nevsehir, Turkiye, nilufer.percin@nevsehir.edu.tr

is worth of $40 billion and has grown at a outstanding rate in the past ten years (Haden, 2007). After the recent agreements and co-operations with European Insurance companies from Switzerland, Norway, Denmark, Germany, and Holland to send their patients to Turkey and cover their health expenditures, the expected number of visitors for health tourism has increased up to 1.000.000 people/year for the future (Aydın 2005).

With the potential to gain competitive advantage when making important decisions relating to competitiveness, it is vital to integrate decision support systems that enable decision makers to read into complex business environment and to build the strategies upon the reflections. Importance and performance analysis (IPA) is one of the widely known decision tool used by many researchers for determining the critical factors in the related topics and measurements especially in destination competitiveness analysis (Dwyer; Cvelbar; Edwards and Mihalic, 2012; Frauman and Banks, 2011; Ziegler, Dearden and Rollins, 2010; Lee and Lee, 2009; Tonge and Moore, 2007; Fallon and Schofield, 2006; O'Leary and Deegan, 2005; Enright and Newton, 2004; Oh, 2001; Chu and Choi, 2000). The wide acceptance of this framework in the tourism studies is that the IPA provides significant benefits in the analysis of destination competitiveness by specifying improvement opportunities as well as to guide strategic planning efforts (Dwyer et al., 2012).

However, recent studies develop this useful technique to get more advantage on it. One of the approaches that develop IPA is the employment of competitiveness analysis and relative importance measurement instead of just absolute importance measurement (Oh, 2001; Taplin, 2012; Chen, 2014; Tontini and Silveira, 2007; Tafesse, et al., 2010; Taplin, 2012; Chen, 2014; Esparon et. al., 2014). Because, without competitiveness dimension, the IPA results were lack of indicating competitive position of the unit of analysis, importance of attributes between the compared units of analysis and thus its results were potentially misleading. Considering these, Taplin (2012) and Chen (2014) proposed competitiveness analysis into IPA. By introducing Competitive Importance-Performance Analysis (CIPA), Taplin (2012) proposed improving IPA by considering importance between destinations (for the same attribute) in addition to comparing importance between attributes (at the same destination). He came up with the propositions gained through the CIPA results including attributes which Caversham Wildlife Park (CWP) lacks against its rivalry destinations. For example, CWP performed poorly on the attribute "value for money" with the third lowest performance of all attributes and relatively high importance leading to suggestion of reduction of entry costs. However the CIPA result suggested CWP performed favorably relative to its competitors which show that the conclusions based on IPA without CIPA could be misleading to management. Further, based on Taplin's approach, Chen (2014) introduced Competitive Zone of Tolerance Analysis based IPA (CZIPA). He further analyzed the CIPA by calibrating the difference in gaps making zero an appropriate benchmark beneath CZIPA (Chen, 2014). Their approach (2012) is already supported by Oh (2001) who stated that "evidently, consumer preferences for a product or brand are formed based upon not only a trade-off or comparison among attributes within the focal point, but also a comparison between the same attributes across competing products" which, in essence, was agreed by in a recent study of Dwyer and his colleagues (2012: 306) that "it is important to establish which destinations comprise the competitive set against which particular destination's performance is to be judged in a proper way." Furthermore, high importance ratings are another recurring problem emerging in scientific employments of IPA (Oh and Parks, 1998) which restricts the variation in importance scores (Dwyer et al., 2012). Dwyer et al. (2012: 313) said that "when employing data-centered approach, one should rather focus on relative, instead of absolute improvement priorities" as they did and Taplin (2012).

Based on the same approach but different from the these two studies, for the current study, CIPA is a technique that embody the combination of Analytical Hierarchy Process (AHP) and Importance-Performance Analysis to draw managerial implications for the decision makers based on the experts' opinions instead of the visitors. AHP is a technique that is widely used by decision makers that are experts of their areas. In the literature it is common and suggested that destination factors to be appraised by practitioners, recommending that their perspectives represent accurate measurements of the attractors and such experts are capable of speaking for the tourists, given the experience, and their views would be representative of a large group of tourists (Enright & Newton, 2005). It is suggested that rather than using visitors' perspectives, the use of tourism experts such as tourism stakeholders have potential benefits and advantages (Formica, 2000). Dwyer et al. (2012: 306) indicated that "it is meaningless to ask respondents (visitors) to give absolute ratings for any destination on any given attribute of competitiveness; the problem is that it assumes a degree of familiarity of respondents with each of the destinations." Most of the TDC studies based on visitors (consumers) responses are open to this type of criticism leveled towards other destination competitiveness research since they assume familiarity of respondents with the study's unit of analysis. Hence, in this study, Turkish thermal tourism experts were the respondents to appraise performance of destinations (that they are familiar with) on the attributes that are important and specific to thermal tourism destinations. Moreover the surveying of experts is considered one way of reducing social and awareness biases (Azzopardi and Nash, 2013).

The use of AHP in IPA introduces two main advantages in destination competitiveness analysis: i) relative importance of the attributes and relative performance of the rivalry destinations are reflected and ii) the importance of attributes varying among the destinations are provided which enables a deeper understanding of the market position of the destination under investigation. Besides, the approach is applicable considerably to the marketing and management of any product or service in the competitive market. Therefore this study has two main objectives; (i) to develop a new measurement method for destination competitiveness (ii) to add to the limited literature on thermal tourism destination competitiveness, especially in Turkish context. Furthermore there is no published paper that integrates these two approaches to explore the relative weights of destination competitiveness attributes and performance of competing destinations related to those attributes in a specific market.

To realize the purpose of introducing such a hybrid methodology in destination competitiveness, Kozaklı thermal tourism destination is compared with its two main competitors namely Kırşehir and Kızılcahamam thermal tourism destinations as an illustrative case study. Three destinations were compared, especially because for a valid destination competitiveness assessment, the destination should be compared with more than two destinations (Kozak, Baloglu and Bahar, 2010).

2. Literature Review

A diverse range of definitions of destination competitiveness have been provided by various researches (Hassan, 2000; Ritchie and Crouch, 2000; Dwyer and Kim, 2003). Organizations such as the World Economic Forum (WEF, 2010: 4) define it as "the set of institutions, policies, and factors that determine the level of productivity of a country." Hassan (2000: 239) defined it as its ability "to create and integrate value-added products that sustain its resources while maintaining market position relative to competitors" or in a similar

definition "to maintain its market position and share and/or to improve upon them through" (Dwyer and Kim, 2003). In a definition parallel with the purpose of the current study, Dwyer and Kim (2003) associates the destination competitiveness with "the capability of a destination to provide goods and services that perform better than other destinations on those aspects of the tourism experience considered to be important by tourists" (Dwyer and Kim, 2003: 374).

Numerous studies conducted in last decade have confirmed the vitality of the studies on competitiveness of tourism destinations. When approaching competitiveness of destinations, the authors developed different destination competitiveness theories, models and measurements. As Crouch (2010: 2) summarized, there are three main different approaches in the destination competitiveness studies; (a) diagnosing the competitive positions of specific destinations (i.e., Kozak and Rimmington, 1999; Kim, Crompton and Botha, 2000; Gursoy and Kendall, 2004) (b) particular aspects of destination competitiveness (positioning, management systems, marketing, price competitiveness, quality management, the environment, nature-based tourism, strategic management, and package tours) (i.e., Go and Govers, 2000; Dwyer, Forsyth and Rao, 2000; Hudson, Ritchie and Timur, 2004) and (c) developing general models and theories of destination competitiveness that are not specific to particular destinations or attributes (i.e., Crouch and Ritchie, 1999; Dwyer and Kim, 2003; Enright and Newton, 2005). The studies that develop models and theories were originated from the Porter's Diamond Model (Crouch and Ritchie, 1999; Hassan, 2000; Dwyer and Kim; 2003; Enright and Newton, 2005; Miller; Henthorne; George, 2008; Bobirca and Cristureanu, 2008). Drawing upon Crouch and Ritchie (1999) and Porter's Diamond model, Dwyer and Kim (2003) have proposed a model that gives specific notice to demand factors in determining destination competitiveness. Their integrated model approach includes endowed resources both natural and heritage resources, created resources, supporting resources, and destination management. These two core components interact with tourism demand and situational conditions which determines the competitiveness of destinations and economic prosperity.

However it is the researcher's view that these models are not yet capable of determining destination competitiveness in the context of a particular tourism sector such as hot springs tourism sector (Lee and King, 2010) and winter ski resorts (Hudson et al., 2004). Besides, the relativity (i.e. compared to what?) and multi-dimensionality (i.e. what are the salient attributes or qualities of competitiveness?) of competitiveness concept (Dwyer and Kim, 2003) are not given attention. It should not be forgotten that even though tourism destinations share a common, basic autonomy, they are not homogeneous (Howie, 2003). On this basis, in recent studies, the researchers share common vision on the need to determine the relative importance of the factors and orient their studies in this direction (Crouch, 2005; Crouch and Ritchie, 2005; Hong, 2009; Taplin, 2012; Chen, 2014; Lee, Huang and Yeh, 2010). Hence the utilization of these models to thermal tourism destinations and the relative importance of attributes and performance of destinations on these attributes can be seen as a useful strategy in regional and national competitiveness development.

3. Methodology

3.1. The Analytical Hierarchy Process (AHP)

The AHP, first proposed by Thomas L. Saaty in 1971, since its invention, has been a tool at the hands of decision makers and researchers; and it is one of the most widely used

multiple criteria decision-making tools (Vaidya and Kumar, 2006, 1). AHP is a theory of measurement including pairwise comparisons and depends on the opinions of experts to extract priority scales. The current research introduces an evaluation framework to measure the importance and competitiveness of Kozaklı comparing to its rivals. The indices naturally have different weights on this measurement. The AHP supplies a means of prioritizing the numerous attributes in the hierarchy, therefore enables governments and industry practitioners focus on the most important matters (Cheng and Li, 2001). The comparisons are made using a scale of absolute judgments which represents that to what extent one element dominates another with respect to a given attribute (Saaty, 2008, 83). Since managerial decisions' complexity which tourism decision makers encounter frequently involves variables which are demanding to calibrate directly, there is a need for powerful decision-support models that are capable of incorporating a wide range of environmental variables, many of which may be extremely difficult to quantify (Curry and Mouthino, 1992: 57). Synthesizing the results by reducing complex decisions to a series of simple comparisons and rankings, the AHP not only helps the analysts to arrive at the best decision, but also provides a clear rationale for the choices made (Bevilacqua and Braglia, 2000: 75).

The AHP systematically involves three basic steps (Lee et al., 2010; Zahedi, 1986: 97): (i) decomposition, or the hierarchy construction; in Figure 1, decision problem is structured as an illustration of hierarchy of destination competitiveness elements, (ii) comparative judgments, or defining and executing data collection to obtain pair-wise comparison data on elements of hierarchical structure and (iii) synthesizing the priorities, or building an overall priority rating. The first step is to decompose the decision problem into a hierarchy of mutual components. The ultimate goal of the decision problem is placed on the top of the hierarchical order. The most overall decision goal dwells at the roof of the hierarchy, such as the goal of producing the best decision (or choosing the best option). The following levels of the hierarchy hold attributes (goals) which promote the dignity of the decision. Building the hierarchy is followed by the pairwise comparison of subfactors at the same level against a parent attribute in the level directly above in an effort to calculate the relative weights of attributes and alternatives. Eventually, overall ranking of the alternatives is obtained.

In this study, Lee and King's (2010) model is utilized since it is a widely-spectrum model of previous destination competitiveness models modified for thermal tourism destination competitiveness. In their model, destination competitiveness is made up by attractions, transport, accommodation, safety and security, sociocultural change, market demand, capability of the authorities and capability of hot springs proprietors under the three themes of destination resources and attractors, destination environments and destination strategies. The model covers 38 subfactors under the eight main factors determining the competitiveness of thermal tourism destinations as can be seen from Figure 1. As shown in Figure 1, the entire object seizes the highest layer of the hierarchy: to measure the competitiveness of Kozaklı thermal tourism destination.

Below the entire object, the next level symbolizes the eight main aspects that improve the overall competitiveness of thermal tourism destinations. Based on specified factors and subfactors, a hierarchical construct might be constituted, as illustrated in Figure 1. Once factors/subfactors are specified and the hierarchical construct is established, the process continues by assessing the importance of each subfactor with reference to their leading factor, and then the weights of each factor corresponding with the decision goal.

Figure 1. The Hierarchy of Elements in Thermal Tourism Destination Competitiveness

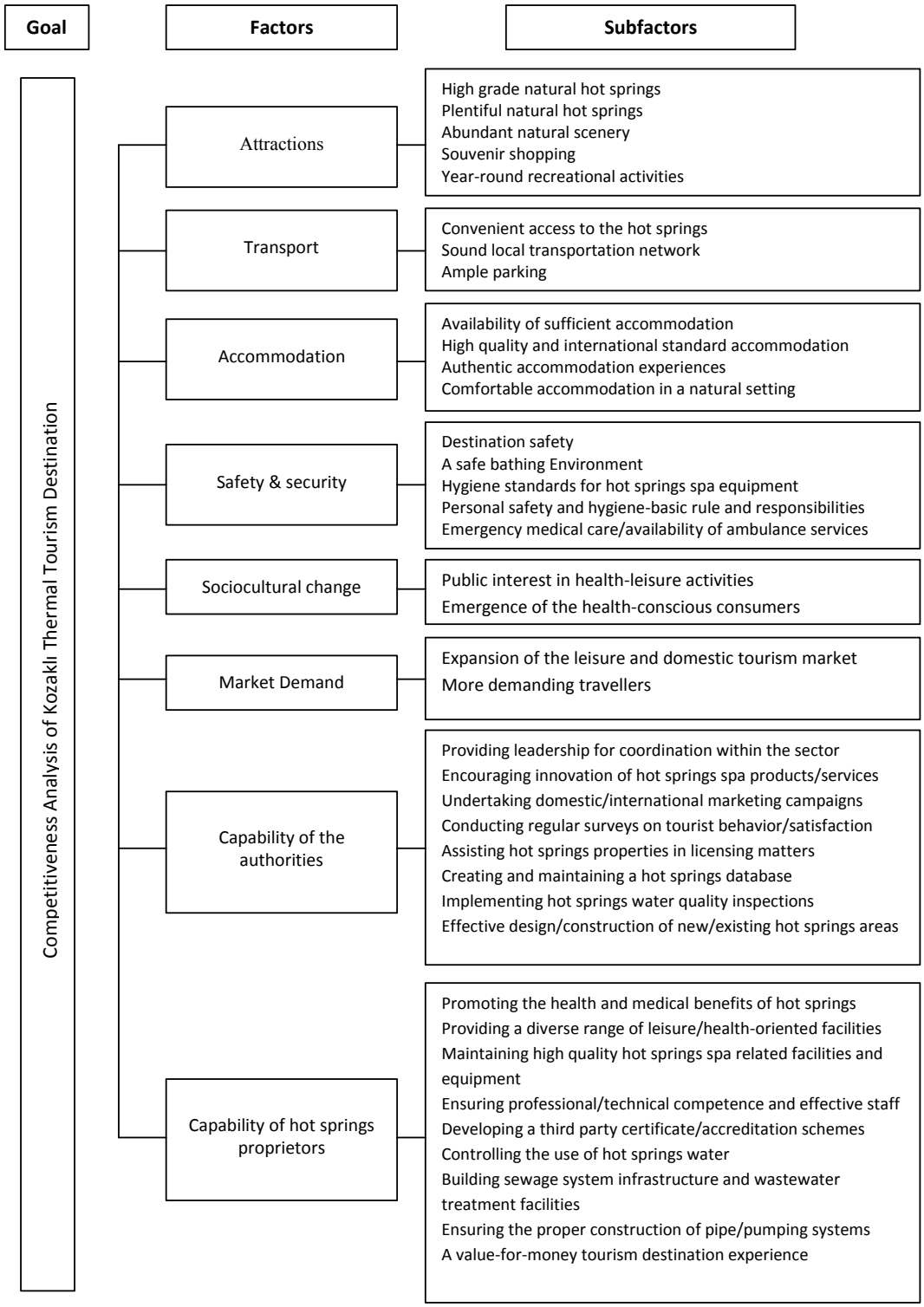


Table 1. Saaty's scale of measurement in pair-wise comparison

Intensity of importance	Definition	Explanation
1	Equal importance	Two activities contribute equally to the objective
3	Weak importance of one over another	The judgment is to favour one activity over another, but it is not conclusive
5	Essential or strong importance	The judgment as to the importance of one activity over another
7	Demonstrated importance	Conclusive judgment as to the importance of one activity over another
9	Absolute importance	The judgment in favour of one activity over another is of the highest possible order of affirmation
2, 4, 6, 8	Intermediate values between the two adjacent judgments	When compromise is needed
Reciprocals of above non-zero numbers	If activity *i* has one of the above non-zero numbers assigned to it when compared with activity *j*, then *j* has the reciprocal value when compared with *i*	

Source: Saaty, 1980.

The values of the pairwise comparisons in the AHP are determined according to the scale introduced by Saaty (1980) (Table 1). According to this scale, the available values for the pairwise comparisons are members of the discrete set (9, 8, 7, 6, 5, 4, 3, 2, 1, 1/2, 1/3, 1/4, 1/5, 1/6, 1/7, 1/8, 1/9). The detail of the formulas to calculate the relative measurements of the attributes and or factors that take place in the hierarchical order can be found in detail in the book of T.L. Saaty.

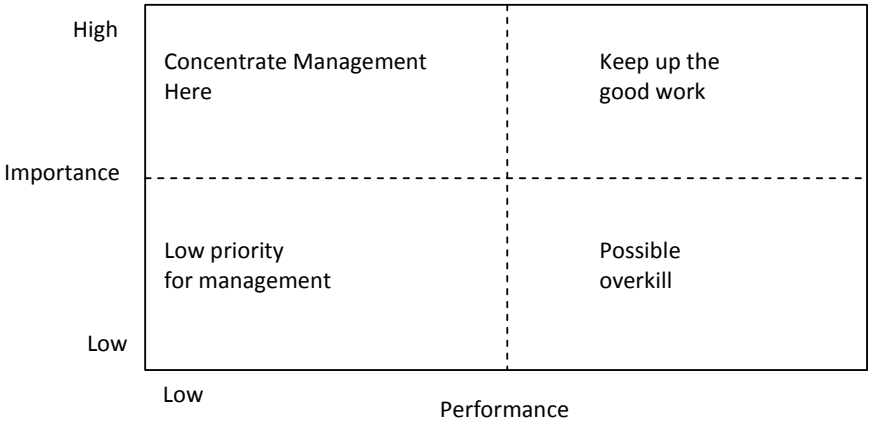
3.2. Importance-Performance Analysis (IPA)

Importance-Performance Analysis (IPA) was introduced by Martilla and James (1977) as a useful tool to provide management insights for concurrently identifying company's strengths and weaknesses when determining or defining a strategy for boosting company performance. It is a basic diagnostic tool that facilitates the identification of improvement prioritization, the mobilization and deployment of limited resources to where they are needed most, and the harmonization of strategic planning efforts to enhance relative competitiveness (Azzopardi and Nash, 2013: 222). Hence, the IPA provides a wide-spectrum snapshot of how well concerns important to customers are being met, and at the same time offers guidelines for the company's future resource allocation decisions (Oh, 2001: 618). The key objective of IPA is thus diagnostic in nature, guiding the orientations of managers and marketers to identify important attributes where the product or service is underperforms or overperforms (Abalo, Varela and Manzano, 2007). It is based on the mean performance and mean importance obtained from surveyed respondents for each of several attribute or characteristics of a service or product (Taplin, 2012).

Evaluations of attributes on these two dimensions then are combined into a grid (Fig. 2) that allows a firm to identify key drivers of satisfaction, to formulate improvement priorities, and to find areas of possible overkill and areas of ''acceptable'' disadvantages. Each attribute is then positioned in one of the four quadrants of the IPA grid with different directions for decision makers. For instance, by the time performance is high and importance

is low an attribute is in the "possible overkill" quadrant and may need management focus to orientate its resources to support attributes high in importance but low in performance (Matzler et.al., 2004: 271).

Figure 2. The Original IPA framework



3.3. Survey techniques

Face-to-face survey was applied to experts between the months of February and September in 2014. The participants were selected by predetermined criteria of minimum 5 years of professional experience in thermal tourism.

The participants were instructed at the beginning of the survey with a practice to illustrate how the AHP logic works to prevent prospective inconsistency. For example, assume that attribute 5 was rated higher than attribute 6 and that attribute 6 was rated higher than attribute 4. If the participant then rated attribute 4 higher than attribute 5, the rating evidently compromised inconsistency. To inspect the consistency and reliability of the judgments in AHP, the inconsistency ratio (IR) is applied. An inconsistency ratio of 0.1 or less is considered acceptable. If an inconsistency ratio exceeds 0.1, participants are asked to reconsider their judgments until an IR of less than 0.1 is achieved (Saaty, 1980). In a survey study, the participants were asked to make judgments concerning the eight main factors and 38 subfactors specified in Figure 1. The judgment included three type of mission. The first mission was to compare the five main attributes of competitiveness to evaluate the relative importance of each of the main attributes. The second mission was to reiterate this task for the set of subfactors that constitute each of these five main attributes. The last mission consisted of the relative performance of the three rivalry destinations with reference to each of the 38 subfactors in the model. In the pilot testing prior to final survey, the participants were acquired to indicate the competitors of Kozaklı. Two popular local destinations stood out as examples in the questionnaire: Kızılcahamam and Kırşehir. Thus the final survey enabled each participant to compare the Kozaklı with its two main competitors that the participants are familiar with. Three destinations were enough to provide meaningful results and duration of the survey process would not become deterrent to participation.

To exemplify, revealing importance of attractions versus transport, the subsequent expressions were given to each participators: when assessing the potential and competitiveness of the thermal tourism destinations attractions are i) equally as important

as, ii) moderately more important/moderately less important than, iii) considerably more important/considerably less important than, iv) definitely more important/definitely less important than, and v) extremely more important/extremely less important than transport. Responses on the right indicate a prioritization of the first dimension over the second while responses on the left assert the importance of the first dimension over the second. The five statements correspond respectively to importance weightings of 1, 3, 5, 7, and 9 as shown in Table 1.

3.4. Analysis and Discussion

A survey was administrated with 10 industry representatives and two academicians for the pairwise comparison data collection. The response rate was about 80% (12). Small samples are satisfactory from the AHP methodology perspective (Cheng et al., 2002). Because of the subjectivity of the AHP methodology, a large number of participating experts are not required. The judgment of a small group of key informants is generally sufficient to generate reliable and useful results, albeit only providing rough estimates (Lee and King, 2010). The response rate was found enough since most of the studies conducted with a sample of 10 to 20 (e.g. Lee and King, 2010; Hong, 2009; Lee et al., 2010). For example, to weight global competitiveness factors for the tourism sector, Hong (2009) surveyed 15 experts. Table 2 encapsulates the features of the surveyed participators. Since the research was administered in the Kozaklı, majority of the respondents lived in Kozaklı. Approximately 50% were property owners, 50% had at least 10 years of experience, 75% were above 35 years old, and 41% got bachelor's degree.

The judgments from the survey of experts, importance weights and destination performance weights were calculated for the hierarchy of attributes within the AHP form with the help of the AHP Excel Template developed by Goepel (2013). Inconsistency ratios for each matrix were calibrated. All inconsistency ratios varied between 0.02 and 0.05, hence in acceptable level of under 0.1 (Saaty, 1980).

Table 3 exhibits the AHP results for all local and global weights. Local weights mean subfactors' relative weights within their parent factor. Global weights mean subfactors' weight within all subfactors. The outcomes present that of the eight main thermal tourism destination competitiveness factors, attractions group take the center stage above the other eight with regards to importance of this class of attributes. Within each of the eight main factors, the subfactors having the highest local importance weights are plentiful natural hot springs, sound local transportation network, availability of sufficient accommodation, hygiene standards for hot springs spa equipment, public interest in health-leisure activities, expansion of the leisure and domestic tourism market, implementing hot springs water quality inspections, and controlling the use of hot springs water. Multiplying each local weight by its hierarchical superior (main factor) importance weight, the global weights of the 38 subfactors make the direct comparison possible among themselves.

Hereunder, the top five ranked thermal tourism destination competitiveness subfactors in descending order of importance are expansion of the leisure and domestic tourism market (0,0967), plentiful natural hot springs (0,0794), high grade natural hot springs (0,0767), sound local transportation network (0,0622), and public interest in health-leisure activities (0,0513). On the other hand, the top five lowest ranked subfactors are maintaining high quality hot springs spa related facilities and equipment (0,0044), building sewage system infrastructure and wastewater treatment facilities (0,0049), ensuring professional and

technical competence and effective staff (0,0052), authentic accommodation experiences (0,0067), and providing diverse range of leisure and health-oriented facilities (0,0083).

Table 2. Participants Characteristics

Characteristics	*N*	*%*
Field of work		
General manager	2	0.17
Property owner	6	0.50
Department head	2	0.17
Academician	2	0.17
Experience		
At least 5	5	0.41
6-10	1	0.08
11-15	2	0.17
16-20	3	0.25
25 and above	1	0.08
Age		
29-34	3	0.25
35-40	4	0.33
41-46	2	0.17
47-52	1	0.08
52 and above	2	0.17
Education		
High School	5	0.41
Bachelor's Degree	5	0.41
Postgraduate	2	0.17

The key findings could be expressed as follows. First, from the findings of the studies examining the important factors that influence thermal tourism destination choice of buyers and experts (İlban and Kaşlı, 2009; Akbulut, 2010; Lee and King, 2010; Çetin, 2011), the prominent attributes found in this study show parallelism with these factors. This means that the experts and users have little or no discrepancies in their evaluations. Second, attractors is the foremost factor with its four attributes in top ten in shaping the competitiveness of thermal tourism industry. This result clarifies that not all the indices are universal for all destinations but have different weights for the type of destination under investigation. For example, while the qualifying and amplifying determinants was the foremost factor in Hallman, Müller and Feiler's (2014) study of winter tourism destination competitiveness, the demand conditions took the lead for health tourism destination competitiveness in the study of Schalber and Peters (2012).

Finally, the recent growing interest in health-leisure activities for thermal tourism destinations in Turkey provides a ground for the strengthening of competitiveness of thermal tourism destinations.

Since the competitiveness relies on increasing domestic demand (Lee and King, 2010), the development undertakings dedicated to caring customer satisfaction will provide competitive advantage during the international expansion of Turkish thermal tourism industry as Porter (1990) indicated in his famous diamond model as demand conditions. Demand conditions in his model means that when sophisticated home market buyers pressures firms to innovate faster and to create more advanced products than those of competitors. Therefore, the future of Turkish thermal tourism seems bright.

Table 3. Local and Global Weights of Each Element for Determining Destination Competitiveness and Performances of Destinations

Factors/Subfactors	Local Weights	Global Weights	Global Ranking	Global Performances of Destinations		
				Kozaklı	Kırşehir	Kızılcahamam
Attractions	0,243	0,243	**1**	0,167	0,167	0,667
1 High grade natural hot springs	0,316	0,076	3	0,701	0,106	0,193
2 Plentiful natural hot springs	0,327	0,079	2	0,571	0,143	0,286
3 Abundant natural scenery	0,167	0,040	7	0,194	0,063	0,743
4 Souvenir shopping	0,056	0,013	26	0,194	0,063	0,743
5 Year-round recreational activities	0,135	0,032	8	0,311	0,196	0,493
Transport	0,109	0,109	**5**	0,094	0,167	0,740
6 Convenient access to the hot springs	0,286	0,031	10	0,311	0,196	0,493
7 Sound local transportation network	0,571	0,062	4	0,111	0,222	0,667
8 Ample parking	0,143	0,015	23	0,311	0,196	0,493
Accommodation	0,061	0,061	**8**	0,466	0,100	0,433
9 Availability of sufficient accommodation	0,362	0,022	14	0,644	0,085	0,271
10 High quality and international standard accommodation	0,272	0,016	20	0,667	0,111	0,222
11 Authentic accommodation experiences	0,111	0,006	33	0,333	0,333	0,333
12 Comfortable accommodation in a natural setting	0,255	0,015	23	0,183	0,075	0,742
Safety and Security	0,075	0,075	**7**	0,200	0,200	0,600
13 Destination safety	0,171	0,012	27	0,183	0,075	0,742
14 A safe bathing environment	0,225	0,016	19	0,183	0,075	0,742
15 Hygiene standards for hot springs spa equipment	0,259	0,019	17	0,327	0,260	0,413
16 Personal safety and hygiene-basic rule and responsibilities	0,149	0,011	29	0,333	0,333	0,333
17 Emergency medical care/availability of ambulance services	0,196	0,014	25	0,183	0,075	0,742
Sociocultural Change	0,077	0,077	**6**	0,163	0,297	0,540
18 Public interest in health-leisure activities	0,667	0,051	5	0,466	0,100	0,433
19 Emergence of the health-conscious consumers	0,333	0,025	13	0,625	0,136	0,238
Market Demand	0,145	0,145	**3**	0,297	0,163	0,540
20 Expansion of the leisure and domestic tourism market	0,667	0,096	1	0,311	0,196	0,493
21 More demanding travellers	0,333	0,048	6	0,250	0,250	0,500
Capability of the authorities	0,171	0,171	**2**	0,190	0,263	0,547
22 Providing leadership for coordination within the sector	0,183	0,031	9	0,667	0,111	0,222
23 Encouraging innovation of hot springs spa products/services	0,061	0,010	30	0,311	0,196	0,493
24 Undertaking domestic/international marketing campaigns	0,161	0,027	11	0,678	0,142	0,179
25 Conducting regular surveys on tourist behavior/satisfaction	0,073	0,012	28	0,311	0,196	0,493
26 Assisting hot springs properties in licensing matters	0,088	0,015	24	0,627	0,094	0,280
27 Creating and maintaining a hot springs database	0,094	0,016	21	0,240	0,210	0,550
28 Implementing hot springs water quality inspections	0,237	0,040	7	0,333	0,333	0,333
29 Effective design/construction of new/existing hot springs areas	0,103	0,017	18	0,297	0,163	0,540
Capability of the Hot Springs Proprietors	0,117	0,117	**4**	0,540	0,163	0,297
30 Promoting the health and medical benefits of hot springs	0,186	0,021	15	0,359	0,124	0,517
31 Providing a diverse range of leisure/health-oriented facilities	0,071	0,008	32	0,333	0,140	0,528
32 Maintaining high quality hot springs spa-related fac./equip.	0,038	0,004	36	0,540	0,163	0,297
33 Ensuring professional/technical competence and effective staff	0,045	0,005	34	0,194	0,063	0,743
34 Developing a third party certificate/accreditation schemes	0,136	0,015	22	0,466	0,100	0,433
35 Controlling the use of hot springs water	0,220	0,025	12	0,183	0,075	0,742
36 Building sewage system infrastructure/wastewater treatment	0,042	0,004	35	0,571	0,143	0,286
37 Ensuring the proper construction of pipe/pumping systems	0,077	0,009	31	0,297	0,163	0,540
38 A value-for-money tourism destination experience	0,183	0,021	16	0,333	0,140	0,528

The performances of three destinations can also be seen from Table 3. Considering the total global attribute performances of three destinations, Kızılcahamam (9,228) was the most competitive thermal destination comparing to Kozaklı (4,244) and Kırşehir (1,142). However, as far as the results concern, the dominance of destinations over attributes differs. For example, with regard to top five ranked attributes, while Kozaklı takes the lead in one of them (i.e., providing leadership for coordination within the sector -0,183-), Kızılcahamam in the rest of them. This information is valuable but limited. A closer glance at Table 3 uncovers

the roots of the destinations' competitiveness. According to this, even though the Kızılcahamam outperforms Kozaklı and Kırşehir in encouraging innovation of hot springs spa products and services attribute, this attribute has the lowest importance weight comparing to other attributes in the parent factor. Therefore, further evaluation of these results with proposed CIPA will clarify the competitive positions of destinations and reveals more accurate directions for them to orientate to gain competitive advantage.

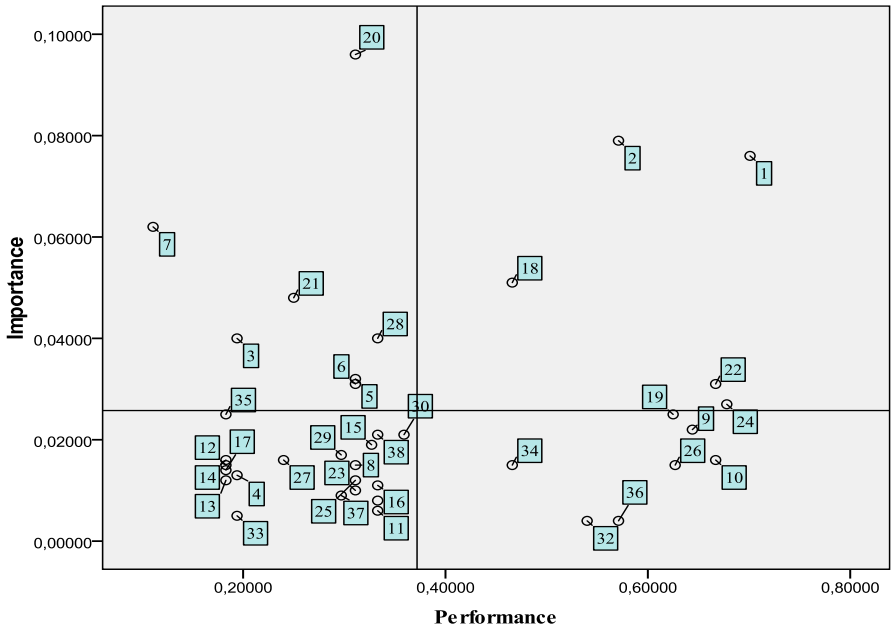
Since the focus of unit is Kozaklı for the current study, the IPA grid is drawn only for Kozaklı even though the IPA grids could be drawn for the other two destinations. The global performance and importance weights constitute the foundation of CIPA and are schemed in Fig. 3. The crosshairs in CIPA grid is placed based on the 38 subfactors' observed relative global mean importance (0,0262) and global mean performance of Kozaklı (0,1116) on these attributes. Naturally, all four quadrants in Fig.2 for standard IPA still apply.

The attributes falling in the "Concentrate management here" quadrant were abundant natural scenery, year-round recreational activities, convenient access to the hot springs, sound local transportation network, expansion of the leisure and domestic tourism market, more demanding travelers, and implementing hot springs water quality inspections. All of them take the top ten in importance. This might ascribe to the requirement of Kozaklı to support its core resources with sustainability principles and to provide accessibility to the site. Additionally, to be able to sustain the attributes in keep up the good work quadrant, it needs to strengthen the investments by making promotional activities to awaken consumers towards health-oriented leisure activities. On the other hand, attributes fallen in possible overkill quadrant reveal that Kozaklı is intensively focused on heavy investments especially accommodation facilities. Therefore Kozaklı should support the core resources with the services augmenting the core product. As Lovelock and Wirtz (2007) stated that augmenting the core product through the supplementary services enables the unit to gain competitive advantage. Besides, instead of sacrificing the sources for the attributes that fall in the "Possible Overkill" quadrant (availability of sufficient accommodation, high quality and international standard accommodation, assisting hot springs properties in licensing matters, maintaining high quality hot springs spa related facilities and equipment, developing a third party certificate/accreditation schemes, and building sewage system infrastructure and wastewater treatment facilities), they could be used to back up the attributes in concentrate management here quadrant. However, it should be noted that these attributes might fall in possible overkill quadrant since Kozaklı is in the development phase comparing to its rivals.

The subfactors located in "Keep up the good work" area of the grid were high grade natural hot springs, plentiful natural hot springs, public interest in health-leisure activities, and providing leadership for coordination within the sector, of which the first two had the highest performance rating from experts at the same time was not a directly controllable attribute by management since it depends on the natural conditions. Eighteen attributes were loaded in "Low priority" quadrant. These are the attributes that Kozaklı not to need to focus extra effort in gaining competitive advantage comparing to its rivals. Hence, the outputs of CIPA suggest that, while Kozaklı performs better than its competitors on most of the attributes, he should direct its resources to the visitors' needs rather than just the development issues. To be more precise, it is high time for him to be market oriented and invest in campaigns that raise awareness of its strength in thermal tourism product. Because, market orientation paradigm underlines that generating and reacting to information from the

product market provides the building blocks of sustainable competitive advantage and enhanced organizational performance (Line, 2013).

Figure 3. The CIPA Grid for Kozaklı



Note: The numbers on the grid represents the attributes as in Table 3.

On the other hand, the most important contribution such a hybrid approach could be summarized in two points. First, the relative importance of attributes enables decision makers from which attribute should be taken care first. Second, based upon whether the attribute is overperformed or underperformed comparing to the rivalry provides the second order of importance. For example, even though the abundant natural scenery attribute has the highest priority weight, the gap between Kozaklı and its rivalry is so large that may not be closed with the current resources thus the managers may give the priority to the attributes having smaller gaps such as year-round recreational activities.

4. Conclusion

Thermal tourism is a rising sector in Turkey and in this manner, it is substantially essential to build a guiding model that shed light the stakeholders in creating competitive advantages. The current study utilizes an attribute list recently developed for thermal tourism destinations by the work of Lee and King (2010). Considering the unique characteristics of thermal tourism destinations enables comparison appropriately. The employment of a comparative study within the framework of thermal tourism with the purpose of providing relative importance among the attributes contributes to the expansion of the limited literature on the relative competitiveness of tourism (Enright and Newton, 2004; Hong, 2009; Crouch, 2010). Therefore to test the applicability of CIPA approach, Kırşehir and Kızılcahamam thermal tourism destinations were chosen as rivalry of Kozaklı thermal tourism destination for comparison. The matter of which destinations are competing was determined by experts during the pilot study. The surveying of experts is considered one way of reducing social and awareness biases and clarifying which destinations are in competition enables correct assumptions and draws more explicit directions for decision makers. On the other hand, the current study offers an efficient utilization of the traditional IPA by including the

competitiveness analysis with the help of AHP. By doing so, destination managers are enabled to capture a deeper comprehension of performance and market position of the destination relative to its rivalry based on the relative importance and performance values.

According to the results, the most five important attributes forming the competitiveness of thermal tourism were expansion of the leisure and domestic tourism market, plentiful natural hot springs, high grade natural hot springs, sound local transportation network, and public interest in health-leisure activities. Thermal tourism destinations in Turkey might focus more on these attributes to gain competitive advantage. Overall, the CIPA results indicate that Kozaklı is either performing successfully or ponders on the attributes to be of low priority. To know which attributes that the Kozaklı must be better than that of its competitors empowers destination decision makers to improve their performance corresponding with important competitiveness attributes where they perform insufficiently, instead of improving the actions that they are already good at. For example, even though the "implementing hot springs water quality inspections" attribute is in the concentrate management here quadrant for Kozaklı, Kozaklı performs equally with its competitors on this attribute. Hence, based on in order of importance, Kozaklı might give the latest priority for this attribute in the concentrate management here quadrant to gain competitive advantage in a quick and efficient manner. Therefore, it was not the aim of this study to develop strategies for destination decision makers but to provide a new approach to destination competitiveness analysis that entitles the appraisal of the relative importance and performances of the thermal tourism destinations in terms of various attributes that shape thermal tourism destination competitiveness to draw a narrowed and more precise snapshot for decision makers in the efficient distribution of their limited resources.

Finally, there are some limitations to this study. First, the lack of literature on the thermal tourism destination competitiveness induced difficulties in diagnosing attributes during the initial stage of the study. Second, the destinations under investigation of this study are not at the same level of destination lifecycle that might be causing the misplacement of attributes in CIPA quadrants. However, from the benchmarking perspective, the results could be useful for Kozaklı to have a blueprint to develop. Third, given time and cost handicaps, the research findings in the current research are based on informants' responses to a survey in the Kozaklı thermal tourism destination. They may have tendency to overstate the competitiveness of their own destination comparing to others. The restricted knowledge and practical experience of participants about Kırşehir and Kızılcahamam as rivals may have compromised. Future studies should include more experts from different organizations and groups to a great extant before the research findings and conclusions could be generalized. The current research has taken the advantage of the experts' collective judgment and experience. In future studies, it would be valuable to compare the perceptions of visitors and experts to reach a deeper understanding. On the other hand, the appropriate assortment of the attributes is the essential criterion for the practicability of CIPA. Finally, the attributes employed in this study could have been further enlarged and/or applied in different local or international thermal tourism destinations with different levels of development in future studies.

References

Abalo, J., Varela, J. & Manzano, V. (2007). Importance values for Importance-Performance Analysis: A formula for spreading out values derived from preference rankings. Journal of Business Research, 60(2007), 115-121.

Akbulut, G. (2010). Türkiye'de Kaplıca Turizmi ve Sorunları, Gaziantep Üniversitesi Sosyal Bilimler Dergisi, 9(1), 35-54.

Aydın, D. (2005). "Care of old people" Research: 2005/4. Association of Improving Health Tourism.

Azzopardi, E. & Nash, R. (2013), A critical evaluation of Importance-Performance analysis. Tourism Management, 35, 222-233.

Bevilacqua, M. & Braglia, M. (2000). The analytic hierarchy process applied to maintenance strategy selection. Reliability Engineering and System Safety, 70, 71-83.

Bobirca, A., & Cristureanu, C. (2008). Analyzing Romania's competitiveness as a tourism destination. Advances in Hospitality and Leisure, 4, 75-99.

Chen, K. (2014). Improving importance-performance analysis: The role of the zone of tolerance and competitor performance. The case of Taiwan's hot spring hotels. Tourism Management, 40, 260-272.

Cheng, E. W. L., & Li, H. (2002). Analytic hierarchy process: An approach to determine measures for business performance. Measuring Business Excellence, 5(3), 30-36.

Chu, R. K. S. & Choi, T. (2000). An importance-performance analysis of hotel selection factors in the Hong Kong hotel industry: A comparison of business and leisure travellers. Tourism Management, 21, 363-377.

Crouch, G. I. (2010). Destination Competitiveness: An Analysis of Determinant Attributes. Journal of Travel Research, XX(X), 1-19.

Crouch, G. I. (2005). Modelling Destination Competitiveness: A Survey and Analysis of the Impact of Competitiveness Attributes, Australia: CRC.

Crouch, G.I. & J.R.B. Ritchie (1999). Tourism, competitiveness and societal prosperity. Journal of Business Research, 44(3), 137-152.

Crouch, G. I. & J. R. B. Ritchie (2005). Application of the analytic hierarchy process to tourism choice and decision making: A review and illustration applied to destination competitiveness. Tourism Analysis, 10(1), 17-25.

Curry, B. & L. Mouthino (1992). Environmental issue in tourism management: Computer modelling for judgemental decisions. International Journal of Service Industry Management, 3(1), 57-69.

Çetin, T. (2011). Termal turizm potansiyeli açısından Kozaklı (Nevşehir) kaplıcaları, Turkish Studies, 6/1(Winter), 899-924.

Dwyer, L., Forsyth, P. & Rao, P., (2000). The price competitiveness of travel and tourism: A comparison of 19 destinations. Tourism Management, 21(1), 9-22.

Dwyer, L. & C. Kim (2003). Destination competitiveness: Determinants and indicators. Current Issues in Tourism, 6(5), 369-414.

Dwyer, L., Cvelbar, L. K., Edwards, D. & Mihalic, T. (2012). Fashioning a destination tourism future: The case of Slovenia. Tourism Management, 33, 305-316.

Enright, M.J. & Newton, J. (2004). Tourism destination competitiveness: A quantitative approach. Tourism Management, 25(6), 777-788.

Enright, M.J. & Newton, J. (2005). Determinants of tourism destination competitiveness in Asia Pacific: Comprehensiveness and universality. Journal of Travel Research, 43(4), 339-350.

Esparon, E., Gyuris, E. & Stoeckl, N. (2014). Does ECO certification deliver benefits? An empirical investigation of visitors' perceptions of the importance of ECO certification's attributes and of operators' performance. Journal of Sustainable Tourism, 22(1), 148-169.

Fallon, P. & Schofield, P. (2006). The dynamics of destination attribute importance. Journal of Business Research, 59, 709-713.

Frauman, E. & Banks, S. (2011). Gateway community resident perceptions of tourism development: Incorporating importance-performance analysis into a limits of acceptable change framework.Tourism Management, 32, 128-140.

Formica, S. (2000). Destination attractiveness as a function of supply and demand interaction. Faculty of the Virginia Polytechnic Institute and State University, Unpublished Doctoral Dissertation, Virginia.

Go, F. M. & R. Govers (2000). Integrated Quality Management for Tourist Destinations: A European Perspective on Achieving Competitiveness. Tourism Management, 21(1), 79-88.

Goepel, K. D. (2013). Implementing the analytic hierarchy process as a standard method for multi-criteria decision making ın corporate enterprises – A new ahp excel template with multiple inputs, Proceedings of the International Symposium on the Analytic Hierarchy Process.

Gursoy, D. & Kendall, K. W. (2004). A competitive positioning of mediterranean destinations. In S. Baloglu and A. B. Collins (Eds.) Proceedings of the 2004 EuroCHRIE Conference: Global Issues and Trends in the Hospitality and Tourism Industries (CD). Ankara, Turkey.

Haden, L. (2007). Spa Tourism – International, Mintel International Group Limited.

Hallman, K., Müller, S. & Feiler, S. (2014). Destination competitiveness of winter sport resorts in the Alps: how sport tourists perceive destinations?. Current Issues in Tourism, 17(4), 327-349.

Hassan, S. S. (2000). Determinants of market competitiveness in an environmentally sustainable tourism industry. Journal of Travel Research, 38(3), 239-245.

Hong (2009). Global competitiveness measurement for the tourism sector. Current Issues in Tourism, 12(2), 105-132.

Howie, F. (2003). Managing the tourist destination. London: Continuum.

Hudson, S., Ritchie, B., & Timur, S. (2004). Measuring destination competitiveness: an empirical study of Canadian ski resorts. Tourism and Hospitality Planning & Development, 1(1): 79-94.

İlban, O. ve Kaşlı, M. (2009). Termal turizmin gelişmesini etkileyen sorunları belirlemeye yönelik gönen'de bir araştırma, Ege Akademik Bakış, 9(4), 1275-1293.

Kim, S.-S., Crompton, J. L., & Botha, C. (2000). Responding to competition: A strategy for Sun/ Lost City, South Africa. Tourism Management, 21(1), 33-41.

Kozak, M., Baloglu, S. & Bahar, O. (2010). Measuring destination competitiveness: Multiple destinations versus multiple nationalities. Journal of Hospitality Marketing & Management, 19(1), 56-71.

Kozak, M., & Rimmington, M. (1999). Measuring tourist destination competitiveness: conceptual considerations and empirical findings. International Journal of Hospitality Management, 18(3), 273-283.

Lee, C. & King, B. (2010). International competitiveness in hot springs tourism: An application of the analytical hierarchy process approach. Tourism Analysis, 15, 531-544.

Lee, G. & Lee, C. (2009). Cross-cultural comparison of the image of Guam perceived by Korean and Japanese leisure travelers: Importance–performance analysis. Tourism Management, 30, 922-931.

Lee, C., Huang, H. & Yeh, H. (2010). Developing an evaluation model for destination attractiveness: Sustainable forest recreation tourism in Taiwan. Journal of Sustainable Tourism, 18(6), 811-828.

Line, N. D. (2013). Multiple stakeholder market orientation: A conceptualization and application in the field of destination marketing. University of Tenesse, Phd Thesis.

Lovelock, C. & Wirtz, J. (2007). Services Marketing (6th Edition). New Jersey: Pearson Prentice Hall.

Martilla, J. A., & James, J. C. (1977). Importance–performance analysis. Journal of Marketing, 41(1), 77-79.

Matzler, K., Bailom, F., Hinterhuber, H. H., Renzl, B. & Pichler, J. (2004). The asymmetric relationship between attribute-level performance and overall customer satisfaction: A reconsideration of the importance–performance analysis. Industrial Marketing Management, 33, 271-277.

Miller, M. M., Henthorne, T. L., & George, B. P. (2008). The competitiveness of the Cuban tourism industry in the twenty-first century: A strategic re-evaluation. Journal of Travel Research, 46(3), 268-278.

Oh, H. (2001). Revisiting importance-performance analysis. Tourism Management, 22, 617-627.

O'Leary, S. & Deegan, J. (2005). Ireland's Image as a tourism destination in France: Attribute importance and performance. Journal of Travel Research, 43, 247-256.

Porter, M. E. (1990). The competitive advantage of nations. New York: Free Press.

Ritchie, J. R. B., & Crouch, G. I. (2000). The competitive destination: A sustainability perspective. Tourism Management, 21(1), 1-7.

Saaty, Thomas L. (1980). The Analytical Hierarchy Process. New York: McGraw-Hill.

Saaty, T. L. (2008). Decision Making with the Analytic Hierarchy Process. International Services Sciences, 1(1), 83-98.

Schalber, C. & Peters, M. (2012). Determinants of health tourism competitiveness: An Alpine case study. Tourism Review, 60(3), 307-323.

Tafesse, W., Korneliussen, T. & Skallerud, K. (2010). Importance performance Analysis as a trade show performance evaluation and benchmarking tool. Journal of Convention and Event Tourism, 11(4), 314-328.

Taplin, R. H. (2012). Competitive importance-performance analysis of Australian wildlife park. Tourism Management, 33, 29-37.

Tonge, J. & Moore, S. A. (2007). Importance-satisfaction analysis for Marine-Park hinterlands: A WESTERN Australian case study. Tourism Management, 28, 768-776.

Tontini, G & Silveria, A. (2007). Identification of satisfaction attributes using competitive analysis of the improvement gap. International journal of Operations and Production Management, 27(5), 482-500.

Vaidya, O. S. & Kumar, S. (2006). Analytic hierarchy process: An overview of applications. European Journal of Operational Research, 169, 1-29.

Zahedi, F. (1986). The analytic hierarchy process – A survey of the method and its applications. Interfaces, 16(4), 96-108.

Ziegler, J., Dearden, P. & Rollings, R. (2011). But are tourists satisfied? Importance-performance analysis of the Whale Shark tourism industry on Isla Holbox, Mexico. Tourism Management, XXX, 1-10.

World Economic Forum (2010). The Global Competitiveness Report 2010-2011, Geneva, Switzerland. http://www3.weforum.org/docs/WEF_GlobalCompetitivenessReport_2010-11.pdf (accessed March 10, 2014).