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Improving the Competitiveness of Phu Quoc Tourist Destinations of Viet Nam in Attracting Foreign Tourists

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Abstract:

The study results aim at identifying and analyzing the factors affecting the competitiveness of Phu Quoc tourist destinations in attracting foreign tourists. This study is to accomplish three main goals as follows: First, identify the factors affecting the competitiveness of Phu Quoc tourist destinations in attracting foreign tourists; Secondly, determine priority order of the impact factors affecting the competitiveness of Phu Quoc tourist destinations in attracting foreign tourists; Third, propose solutions to enhance the competitiveness of Phu Quoc tourist destinations in attracting foreign tourists in the future. The research results have identified the factors affecting the competitiveness of Phu Quoc tourist destinations affected by 5 factors

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and the orders are as following: Risk of substitution, buyer Power, supply capacity, level of competition and Entry Barrier.

Key words: competitiveness, competitive strategy, service quality, quality management, destination image.

INTRODUCTION

Phu Quoc Island is a beautiful resort island of Kien Giang province in Vietnam, located on the Gulf of Thailand Sea with 120km long coastline, beautiful beaches, numerous islands, coral reefs, especially many beaches have been voted by many American and European magazines voted the beautiful and pristine beaches on the planet, with clear blue water, white and smooth sand. Besides that, the beautiful resort island also has an extremely rich and diverse ecosystem with mountains, rivers, streams and the historical, cultural and Vietnamese traditional and fresh cool climate all year round. From Phu Quoc it is easy to take train and road to the popular tourist destinations in Cambodia, Thailand, and flights can connect directly to Singapore and many countries around the world. Phu Quoc has become an ideal destination for travelers and other forms of marine ecotourism, especially for tourists from Europe and Russia. Even if the time that Russian economy was in trouble leading Russian tourist arrivals to Vietnam fell sharply, however, the number of Russian visitors to Phu Quoc were numerous and constantly increasing compared to previous years. By 2014, the number of tourists to Phu Quoc increased 21.5% compared to 2013 in 2015, up to 32.7% compared to 2014. Since 2003, Vietnam has wanted to turn Phu Quoc Island to a high class resort in Asean and the world. Although Phu Quoc tourism industry has been making strong progress, it is still not commensurate with its potential tourism. Phu Quoc has been facing the challenges of transport, infrastructure, tourism,

accommodation facilities, quality of human resources, especially foreign language skills of the tour guides, the environmental protection and biodiversity, tourism products, entertainment services, special entertainment services for tourists at night etc. If these limitations are overcome, Phu Quoc can become an ideal destination and is the competitor of many destinations in Asean and in the world**.**

LITERATURE REVIEW

There are many scholars working on competitiveness. According Bane & Delt (1982), competitiveness of enterprises depends on internal factors such as enterprise company resource, corporate strategy, capability, creativity and other brand values but for the competitiveness of the region's countries, it depends on many factors such as the micro-environment of the buyer power, supply capacity, entry Barrier, the level of competition, the risk of substitution. Michael Porter is a master of strategic research competition. The focus of the theory of Michael Porter is five competitiveness models. Many of his studies on five competitiveness model also focused on five elements. According to him, focusing on improving competitiveness strategy is focusing on issues such as satisfying customers' needs, unique product, supply capacity, development policy, sale promotion, and human resources. Park. D. B & Nunkoo. R. (2013), Cobalt. S. (2012), Lee. T. H. (2009) and Foster. D. (1999) also took this view when studying the appeal of visitors to a tourist destination. They said in order to improve the competitiveness of destinations, it is necessary to optimize the ability to deploy and develop resources better than other competitiveness destinations in the region. Tourists' needs is increasing and varied demanding destination to have a strategy to meet their requirements such as supply capacity, enhancing service quality, different products, attracting tourists policy and tourism environment to be ensured (Mohamad. M et al, 2012;

Oliani. L. G. N et al, 2011). Thailand, Singapore and Dubai have become an attractive destination due to meet all of these factors. Razi et al (2012), Zhang (2012) claimed that an attractive destination do not purely stop at the product and service quality and supply capacity but it needs breakthrough unique different products, along with policies to attract tourists as visa exemption, reward policies and preferential for visitors who have come there many times and friendly environmental tourism in other words, it is to build destination image. Gürsoy & Gavcar (2012), Iwasaki & Havitz (2011), Sherif & Sherif (2010), Poira et al (2010), Laurent & Kapferer (2009), Havitz & Dimanche (2007) also said, destination image affect recall, act and decision a suitable tourist destination. Hsu et al (2010), Brogowicz et al (1999) agreed with this statement and added that destination image is an important factor to determine its popularity with tourists and enhancing the value of destination image. When they love a destination, they will come back or inspire others. The percentage return is important for destinations, especially for destinations to attract visitors from the difficult markets like the US, EU and Japan (Cravens and David W, 2012; Kale. J. et al, 2011; Christian et al, 2010). If destination image is less competitive, it would be replaced by another destination.

Based on theory and competitiveness model of Michael Porter and the above analysis, it can be concluded that the factors affecting the competitiveness of Phu Quoc tourist destinations (Viet Nam) in attracting foreign tourists (Variable Y) focus on the following key points: Buyer Power, Supply Capacity, Entry Barrier, The level of competition and The risk of substitution (variable X). Research model includes 05 independent variables (X) and 01 dependent variable (Y).

Buyer Power and competitiveness

Today, Visitors have had more and more power because there are too many destinations, with many service providers;

therefore, there are many opportunities to choose, bargaining and decision for them. If tourist destinations want to attract tourists, they have to really understand customers and satisfy their maximum demands. This process is seen as a without stopping revolution. According to experts, if tourist destinations invest for the customer psychological research, the competitiveness will increase with a correlative rate.

Hypothesis H1: There is a close relationship between "Buyer Power" and the competitiveness of Phu Quoc tourist destinations.

Risk of substitution and competitiveness

Risk of substitution or excluding from the market can come to any time for any destinations. The existence and development of a destination associate with the development of new products or replacement products. The development, the change towards refresh uniqueness of this destination will create competitive pressures or remove other destinations. Tourism product is a united set of tangible and intangible elements. Competitiveness is governed by many intangible factors because tourism is the general service sector. It is proved that destinations always find and invest more for innovation, always have unique and different products, the competitiveness will increase with a correlative rate.

Hypothesis H2: There is a close relationship between "Risk of substitution" and the competitiveness of Phu Quoc tourist destinations**.**

The level of competition and competitiveness

The level of competition among destinations has been happening drastically on capital, products, prices, promotions, policies, advertising budget, human resources, etc. in order to win a competitive advantage in the market. This competition intensity depends on the level investment of destinations. According to experts, if destination invests much for these

factors, the competitiveness will increase with a correlative rate.

Hypothesis H3: There is a close relationship between "The level of competition" and the competitiveness of Phu Quoc tourist destinations

Supply capacity and competitiveness

Supply capacity is a system of organizations, people, activities, information and resources related to the supply chain of products and services from suppliers to final consumers (Brons. M and Pels. E, 2012). According Nijkamp. P. and Rietveld. P, (2011), supply chain activities relate to tourism transition of the value of tourism resources or part of the value of tourism products and services to the final consumers completely. Supply capacity is the links to the value chain. According to experts, if destination invests much for the value chain, the competitiveness will increase with a correlative rate.

Hypothesis H4: There is a close relationship between "Supply capacity" and the competitiveness of Phu Quoc tourist destinations.

Entry Barrier and competitiveness

New destinations participating in the market increase the competitive pressure growing on other destinations. Threats from new competitors entering the sector force the remaining destinations ally, link and create many barriers in the market in order to prevent the development of other destinations. Integration trends in the tourism sector must also integrate and cooperate with domestic and regional destinations to win. According to experts, if destination has developement policies and good alliance and cohesion, the competitiveness will increase with a correlative rate.

Hypothesis H5: There is a close relationship between "Entry Barrier" and the competitiveness of Phu Quoc tourist destinations.

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

The two major research methods, qualitative and quantitative research are focused, specifically, the research process has three stages.

Stage 1, Based on theory and the related results mentioned the above, qualitative research method was used for group discussing and leading experts consultating to select the variables and observed variable groups.

Stage 2, Based on the grouping of factors affecting the competitiveness of Phu Quoc tourist destinations in attracting foreign tourists, the researcher designed survey questionnaires to collect the opinions of 544 foreign tourists in Phu Quoc islands. The research model includes 05 scales, 31 observed variables (questionnaires), using 5- point Likert scale, Distance value = (Maximum - Minimum) / n = (5 - 1) / 5 = 0.8: 1. Completely disagree; 2. Disagree; 3. No opinion / Normal; 4. Agree; 5. Totally agree. Survey results were entered SPSS 20.0 and Cronbach's Alpha coefficient was used to test reliability of the scale. In this study, sampling and random method were used. According to Hair et al., (2006), the formula for calculating sample size is $n = \sum_{j=1}^{m} kPj$. In which m is the scale and Pj is the number of observed variables of the scale. The proportion of the sample compared to 1 analysis variable (k) is 5/1 or 10/1. Thus, the number of samples is larger than "total observed variables" of scale times "5" and less than "total observed variables" of the scale times "10". However, according to Lee Nguyen (2011), depending on the object of study and research goals, increasing sample size will increase the reliability of data.

Stage 3, after testing the reliability using Cronbach's alpha coefficient, Exploratory Factor Analysis - EFA was analyzed to shrink and summarize the data of the scale (Hoang Trong Chu and Nguyen Mong Ngoc, 2005 "Quantitative Research SPSS"). This method is based on extraction ratio

factor (Eigenvalue), under which only those factors having ration (Eigenvalue) greater than 1 will be kept, those smaller than one will not show information better than origin variable because after standardizing, each original variance is 1. The method of extracting the main components (Principal components) and original method of factor rotation (Varimax Procedure) were used to minimize the number of variables that have large coefficients for the same factor, which increases explaining the factors. The results then were used to analyze multiple linear regression to test the assumptions of the model, which consider the impact of factors affecting the competitiveness of Phu Quoc tourist destinations in attracting foreign tourists.

RESEARCH RESULTS AND DISCUSSIONS

Table 1. Testing the average value for the observed variables

CODE / OBSERVED VARIABLES	N	MEAN
BP1: I am satisfied with the quality products and services	544	3.58
BP2: I am pleased with the professionalism	544	3.41
BP3: I am satisfied with entertainment service, especially nightlife entertainment	544	**2.25**
BP4: I am satisfied with the sanitation quality of destination	544	4.02
BP5: I am satisfied about the safety - security of destination	544	4.30
BP6: I am pleased about language ability of the tour guide	544	**2.33**
RS1: There are many new products and services	544	3.09
RS2: There are many new types of tourism	544	3.00
RS3: Products and services are unique difference compared to destinations	544	**2.42**
RS4: Phu Quoc promotions are unique	544	3.00
RS5:PhuQuoc can become the alternative destination compared to Asean destinations	544	4.50
LC1: Phu Quoc tourism resources are more abundant than Asean destinations	544	4.41
LC2: Tourism infrastructure is better than Asean destinations	544	**2.71**
LC3: Transport infrastructure is better than Asean destinations	544	**2.51**
LC4: Competitive service price is higher than Asean destinations	544	**2.37**
LC5: The exploitation of tourism resources is more sustainable than Asean destinations	544	3.41
LC6: Geographical location easily connect to Asean destinations	544	4.35

LC7: The quality of human resources is better compared to Asean destinations	544	3.07
SC1: Exploitation of tourism resources capacity of destinations	544	4.12
SC2: Customer care activities of enterprises	544	4.01
SC3: Association and cooperation among enterprises in the sector	544	3.33
SC4: Service supply capacity of enterprises	544	3.64
SC5: Thinking about innovation and new product development of destinations	544	3.03
EB1: Free visa policy of the Government to Phu Quoc destination	544	4.55
EB2: Time procedures at airports, ports, hotels, attractions etc	544	3.66
EB3: Supplier's understanding about tourists (hotels, restaurants, travel company)	544	3.84
EB4: Local residents at destinations are friendly and hospitality	544	4.64
EB5: Demand thought local Government (receiving visitors comments)	544	3.04
CO1: I am very pleased about Phu Quoc destination	544	3.42
CO2: I'm going to go back to Phu Quoc destination	544	3.34
CO3: I will introduce Phu Quoc destination for everyone	544	3.67

(Source: The researcher's collecting data and SPSS)

The average results of inspection of the scale show that most of the scales are average values (2:25 to 4:55). In which "Buyer Power" (2:25 to 4:30) and "The level of competition" (2:37 to 4:41) are the lowest compared to the remaining scales. Research results partly reflect the real situation of tourism development of this beautiful pearl island such as products and entertainment services, especially nightlife entertainment which has almost nothing special (2:25), ability language skills of the tour guide are poor (2:33), service prices in Phu Quoc remain high compared to many other destinations in Asean (2:37), Phu Quoc Island has not had unique different service products compared to Asean destinations (2:42), poor transport infrastructure, especially transport to the sightseeings (2:51). However, visa exemption policies of Government for Phu Quoc destination receive the agreement of most visitors the last time (4:55). This has contributed to a sharp increase in visitors (28.2% - 30.7%) to this beautiful island for almost 3 years (Savills, 2015). It can be said, lack of unique tourism products, entertainment services, particularly nightlife entertainment are common for Phu Quoc tourism in particular and in Vietnam

in general. Besides, the foreign language skills of tour guide team are also urgent given to Phu Quoc. Current tour guide in Phu Quoc mostly are English instructors, lack of skilled staff in Chinese, Spanish, German, French, Japanese, and lack of skilled guides of other rare languages in Vietnam (Italy, Saudi Arabia, South Korea, Thailand, Malaysia, etc.). Therefore, to enhance competitiveness of beautiful Pearl Islands, it is necessary to invest more for these factors in the future.

Table 2- Cronbach's Alpha

Model	Code	Factors	Cronbach's Alpha
IDV	**BP**	**Buyer Power**	0.841
	RS	**Risk of Substitution**	0.851
	LC	**Level of Competition**	0.878
	SC	**Supply Capacity**	0.874
	EB	**Entry Barrier**	0.716
DV	**GT**	**Cmpetitiveness**	0.802

(Source: The researcher's collecting data and SPSS)

The test results scale shows that the scale has good accuracy with Cronbach's alpha coefficient > 0.7 and the correlation coefficients of the total variables of measurement variables meet the allowed standard (> 0.3), the scale will be accepted. The observed variables are used for factor analysis to discover in the next step.

Table 3. Exploratory Factor Analysis (EFA)

KMO and Bartlett's Test

Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin Measure of Sampling Adequacy.		,837
Bartlett's Test of Sphericity	Approx. Chi-Square	4581,468
	df	190
	Sig.	,000

	Initial Eigenvalues			***Extraction Sums of Squared Loadings***			***Rotation Sums of Squared Loadings***		
	Total	% of Variance	Cumulative %	Total	% of Variance	Cumulative %	Total	% of Variance	Cumulative %
1	9.92	39.544	41.544	9.92	1544	41.544	3.028	13.761	13.761
2	1.681	8.094	48.638	1.681	8.094	48.638	2.944	13.383	27.144
3	1.319	5.986	54.625	1.319	5.986	54.625	2.918	13.263	40.407
4	1.227	5.548	60.173	1.227	5.548	60.173	2.771	12.595	53.001
5	1.087	4.941	72.238	1.087	4.941	72.238	2.665	12.113	72.238

(Source: The researcher's collecting data and SPSS)

The study results show that the coefficient of KMO value = 0.837> 0.5, it can be concluded that EFA is suitable; factor analysis coefficient meets the demand. Also value sig. (Bartlett's test) = 0.000 <0.05 can conclude there is a correlation of variables in the overall. The results of EFA (Exploratory Factor Analysis) shows the total variance extracted is 72.238% greater than 50%. This means that the withdrawing factors would explain 72.238% for model, 27.762% is explained by other factors. Extraction ratio factor (Eigenvalue = 1.344) is greater than 01 that is kept.

Table 4. Analysis of multiple linear regressions
Model Summary[b]

Model	***R***	***R Square***	***Adjusted R Square***	***Std. Error of the Estimate***	***Durbin-Watson***
1	.717[a]	.516	***.509***	.550	***1.708***
a. Predictors: (Constant), X5, X4, X3, X1, X2					
b. Dependent Variable: GT					

(Source: The researcher's collecting data and SPSS)

The above result shows the correlation coefficient adjustment: R^2= 0.509 (verification F, sig. <0.05); which means 50.9 % of the

variable Y shift is explained by the five independent variables (Xi). Coefficient Durbin - Watson (d) = 1.708; some observers n = 544, parameter k = 5, the level of significance of 0.01 (99%), in the statistical tables Durbin - Watson, d_L (less statistical value) = 1.623 and d_U (statistical value over) = 1.725. So (d_L = 1.623) < (d = 1.708) < [4 - (d_U = 1.725) = 2.275] proved that the model has no autocorrelation.

Table 5. ANOVA

ANOVA[a]

Model		***Sum of Squares***	***df***	***Mean Square***	***F***	***Sig.***
1	Regression	57.083	3	21,417	55.840	.000b
	Residual	377.399	500	.255		
	Total	434.482	504			

a. Dependent Variable: DEP

b. Predictors: (Constant), X5, X2, X4, X1, X3

Accreditation ANOVA is to assess the relevance of the theoretical regression model. The test results F = 55.840 value and Sig. = 0.000 <0.05 shows the building model is consistent with the data set and the variables included in the model are related to the dependent variable. Generally, regression analysis is 99% reliability, corresponding to the selected variables with statistically significant at the P <0.01; the results also show that all variables satisfy the demand. Verification of conformity of the model show that multicollinearity phenomenon does not violate (VIF <10).

Table 6. Factors affecting the competitiveness of Phu Quoc tourist destinations

a

Model		Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients	t	Sig.	Collinearity Statistics	
		B	Std. Error	Beta			Tolerance	VIF
1	(Constant)	,473	,198		2,392	,017		
	X1	,020	,038	,030	,539	,040	,620	1,612
	X2	,086	,046	,090	1,843	,036	,803	1,246
	X3	,314	,058	,301	5,418	,000	,613	1,632
	X4	,299	,042	,340	7,159	,000	,838	1,193
	X5	,141	,050	,141	2,842	,005	,766	1,306

Dependent Variable: DEP

The results of regression analysis showed the factors affecting the competitiveness of Phu Quoc tourist destinations in attracting foreign tourists and expressed the following impact levels: (1) Risk of substitution: ß = 0.340; (2) Buyer Power: ß = 0.301; (3) Supply Capacity: ß = 0.141; (4) Level of Competition: ß = 0.090; (5) Entry Barrier: ß = 0.030. The regression equation is: ***Y = 0.030*X1 + 0.090*X2 + 0.301*X3 + 0.340*X4 + 0.141*X5***. This finding is the basis for proposing solutions to enhance the competitiveness of Phu Quoc tourist destinations in attracting foreign tourists in the future.

CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

This study shows that there are five factors affecting the competitiveness of Phu Quoc tourist destinations in attracting foreign tourists, each element is different. According to the analysis, five factors have impact positively correlated to the competitiveness of Phu Quoc tourist destinations in attracting foreign tourists in order respectively: Risk of substitution, buyer Power, supply capacity, level of competition and Entry Barrier. The study results also are true with development situation of Phu Quoc destination and many experts' and leading specialist reviews and comments in VN. This result is the basis for Vietnamese tourism industry and Phu Quoc to have strategies improving competitiveness for Phu Quoc tourism destination in the future. From the above analysis, the author proposes the following recommendations.

First, Vietnamese tourism industry and Phu Quoc in generally need much more effort to turn "scheme to build Phu Quoc Island into high class tourism island in the region and the world" into practice through the concretization of strategies and policies to make them come to life. Besides famous tourist destinations in Asean such as Phuket (Thailand), Bali (Indonesia) and Singapore, many other emerging destinations will appear in the future. If Phu Quoc destination is slow to

adapt and innovate vigorously and creatively, it is hard for this destination to exist and can be removed from the market in the coming years.

Secondly, it is necessary to enhance market needs motivations of visitor's research and research other competitive destinations to have strategies meeting needs of the visitors, building customers' loyalty, and customers will come back for 2nd, 3rd time. From Phu Quoc customers' loyalty, there will have more tourists to Phu Quoc.

Thirdly, tourism industry needs implementing a strategy of diversified investment and improving the products and services quality towards the unique differences and always innovative. Besides that, professional promotions for a growing number of tourists to know and come to this beautiful island need enhancing.

Fourthly, to obtain a competitive advantage compared with rivals, Phu Quoc tourism need alliances, links and cooperation with other destinations in the Asean, especially associated with the service provider in countries such as airlines, shipping lines, hotels, resorts, restaurants, destinations, shopping venues, the event companies in Ho Chi Minh City and the adjacent area to build sustainable chain supply in order to improve competitiveness.

Fifthly, the government should invest in the aviation sector as increasing more flights to Phu Quoc, develop more maintenance-free visa policy for tourists in Vietanese traditional markets and develop more visa exemption policies to other potential markets in Phu Quoc destinations to attract more tourists, to diversify markets, to avoid concentrating too much in some markets in the previous time, the protection strategy and raising awareness of the tourists, those who work in tourism and people on environmental sustainability in order to attract tourists.

LIMITATIONS OF THIS STUDY

The results of this study indicate the scope of focusing on the primary analysis of data, lack of analysis and comparison with secondary data. In fact, information on secondary data published in Vietnam is not transparent and honest. Besides, the sample is not large, the opinions of more than 544 guests in many countries, but it limits a few visitors, therefore, it can not be rated the overall development situation of Phu Quoc tourism. Consequently, it also has more or less impact on the study results./.

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