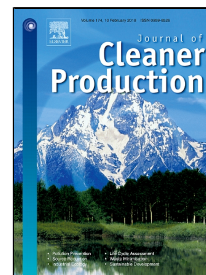


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Dimensions of destination competitiveness: Analyses of protected areas in Spain

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ABSTRACT

There is a large volume of literature focusing on the factors determining the competitiveness of tourist destinations. Nevertheless, research delving deep into the dimensions comprising tourist competitiveness is still scarce; even more so when it comes to the competitiveness of specific types of destinations. In this contribution we tackle the conceptualization and measurement of the tourist competitiveness of protected areas, a specific type of destinations enjoying not just intrinsic, but even exceptional, features. More precisely, the topics of our research are as follows: to comprehend the notion of tourist competitiveness in the aforementioned type of territories, to identify the appropriate measuring scales, to establish the dimensions of the construct, and to characterize the relations existing among the latter dimensions. In order to do so we analyze a sample of 102 protected areas in Spain (National Parks, Natural Parks, and Biosphere Reserves). The results obtained entitle us to assert that the tourist competitiveness of protected areas is comprised of five dimensions significantly and positively related, to wit: (1) their capability to attract visitors, (2) the social welfare of the local community, and, tourist sustainability related with (3) the preservation of nature, (4) the creation of a sense of community, (5) the economic welfare of the local community. Since we also assert that in protected areas the maximization of attractiveness is compatible with, and even requires, pursuing the community's welfare and cohesion together with environmental sustainability, our study impinges on the management of tourist destinations by highlighting the need to consider jointly all five competitiveness dimensions.

Keywords:

Destination attractiveness, destination competitiveness, protected area, quality of life, tourist sustainability.

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