

# Stakeholders' Assessment of Tourism Competitiveness of Destination Bundelkhand

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## **Abstract**

Tourism has emerged as new engine of economic development across the world. It has the power to create prosperity at both national and regional level. This has led to renewed interest in the concept of destination competitiveness. Creating competitive advantage has emerged as the biggest challenge before tourism destinations. Bundelkhand, India has huge tourism potential which can be leveraged for accelerating growth. However, the extent to which it possesses competitive strength has not been well documented. Hence, this study makes an attempt to explore the competitiveness of destination Bundelkhand from stakeholders' perspective. The results indicated strong evidence that there is convergence in the perceptions of stakeholders regarding the competitiveness of Bundelkhand on all the indicators except culture and heritage. Thus, all stakeholders perceive that Bundelkhand has low competitiveness on created and supporting resources of tourism development. Unless the concerns of all stakeholders are addressed and they are actively engaged in the tourism development process, it is not possible to create competitive advantage for the brand Bundelkhand.

**Keywords:** Tourism Competitiveness, Destination Bundelkhand, Stakeholders, Tourism Development.

## **Introduction**

The tourism industry has become highly competitive, both at home and outside. Every destination outside the country, as well as within the country is competing to attract tourists. Further, tourists are now more experienced and knowledgeable. As a result, the concept of destination has undergone a sea change whereby, modern destinations are expected to infuse visitors with a sense of added value (Quinlan, 2008). Destinations therefore, are being forced to build a recognizable brand by constantly upgrading their tourism offerings as well as developing new ones.

The concept of destination competitiveness consequently, has generated a renewed interest among development actors and researchers. Even the focus of various previous studies on destination competitiveness has been mostly on the supply side of the destination from the tourist point of view (Crouch, 2011; Enright & Newton, 2004; Hudson, Ritchie, & Timur, 2004). Studies typically focused on the destination attraction, hospitality services, infrastructure and public entities, with and only few studying differences in stakeholder's perspectives.

From a stakeholder's perspective, a destination can be considered as an open-social system of interdependent and multiple stakeholders. Destination is considered as an open social system because each and every element (infrastructure, entertainment, hospitality transportation etc.) of the destination are interdependent, and integration of all the components make a destination competitive in a long term. As tourism has become more destination oriented (Poon, 1993), the relevance of destination competitiveness has become more important (Pechlaner & Tschurtschenthaler, 2003). The competitiveness of a destination is increasingly depending on service and attraction offering and their operating environment.

This study assesses the tourism competitiveness of a backward region called Bundelkhand. Bundelkhand is a poor and less developed region of the central India. It is a part of two states of India i.e. Uttar Pradesh and Madhya Pradesh. It is notorious for bandits, poverty, unemployment and migration. Lack of industrial activity and rickety agriculture adds to its woes. In such a scenario, tourism can certainly become a game changer for Bundelkhand.

Bundelkhand region has great tourism potential that needs to be explored as it has many famous and rich tourist sites, with the ability to attract large number of domestic as well as foreign tourists. The presence of rich and diversified tourism genres has rendered Bundelkhand, one of the most fascinating regions of the Indian Union. This study is primarily motivated by the poor state of tourism in the region and aims at Assessing the Tourism Competitiveness of Destination Bundelkhand from stakeholder's perspective. Additionally, a research gap relating to stakeholders and their assessment of destination competitiveness has been detected. The paper also contributes to literature by operationalizing and evaluating selected indicators of destination competitiveness.

The structure of the paper is as follows. Section 2 deals with the relevant literature review of the tourism destination competitiveness. Section 3 presents research methods and methodology adopted in this study. The next section deals with the data analysis and discussion related to the assessment of tourism competitiveness of destination Bundelkhand. The last section presents the conclusion and implication of the study.

## Review of Literature

### Stakeholder research in destinations

In the tourism literature, many researches have been involved and explored the diverse dimension of tourism topology (Lemetyinen & Go, 2005; Murphy, 1988) and especially the role of stakeholders in destination planning and management (Jamal & Getz, 1995; Keogh, 1990; Sautter & Leisen, 1999). The aforementioned contributions study the different kinds of stakeholders involved in destination management, planning and marketing (Sheehan & Ritchie,

2005); and the issue of collaboration as a key factor for destination competitiveness (Gill & Williams, 1994; Ritchie, 1993; Selin & Beason, 1991). Mainly, the tourism literature pays significant attention to the issue about stakeholders' collaboration of policy making and quantitative destination performance measurement (Dwyer, Forsyth, & Rao, 2000; Enright & Newton, 2004; Fuchs, 2004; Gooroochurn & Sugiyarto, 2005; Kozak & Rimmington, 1998). Definitions of the term, stakeholder' range from narrow views, where stakeholders are seen as actors of organizations (Cochran, 1994; Pfeffer & Salancik, 1978; Zammuto, 1984), to broad views that include virtually any actor (Shankman, 1999). Freeman (1984) broadly defines a stakeholder' as any group or individual who can affect, or is affected by, the achievement of a corporation's purpose. Furthermore, there has been work that differentiates stakeholders into strategic and moral stakeholders (Goodpaster, 1991), and primary and secondary stakeholders (Clarkson, 1995). This research acknowledges the importance of considering stakeholders in the broadest sense, as suggested by Freeman (1984), when applied in a destination setting. Sautter and Leisen (1999) claim that a proactive consideration of all stakeholders' interests results in significant returns of tourism as a whole in the long term (Formica & Kothari, 2008; Wang & Xiang, 2007).

In tourism, this theory can be applied to a destination, where many authors have identified different stakeholders (Sheehan & Ritchie, 2005). In tourism literature, stakeholder refers to those who have an interest in, or who are affected by tourism (Richardson & Flucker, 2008). Aas, Ladkin & Fletcher, (2005) consider tourism stakeholders as any individual or group which is in some way involved, interested in, or affected either positively or negatively by tourism activities.

Tourism has a large number of stakeholders as compared to any business organization as well as a large diversity in the type of stakeholders (Bhat & Gaur, 2012). The identification of stakeholders, their categorization, management, and prioritizing them has met with focus in the tourism literature (Timur & Getz, 2008; Sheehan & Ritchie, 2005; Ryan, 2002; Hall, 2000).

Morrison (2013) identified the various stakeholders in destination management. These are: (1) tourists; (2) tourism sector organization (DMOs, hospitality, attractions; transport; travel trade; media); (3) community (community organization, resident associations, business associations; special panels or task forces); (4) environment (NGOs; conservation societies; environmental agencies, etc.); (5) government (local, regional, state, etc.). These stakeholders influence destination development in many ways including tourism supply and demand, regulation, and management of tourism impacts, human resources and research (Waligo et.al, 2013).

### **Destination competitiveness:**

The notion of destination competitiveness as applied in tourism has its roots in the literature related to international economics. Originally, the term competitiveness was used to describe the relative strength of nations in international trade. Conventionally, the concept of competitiveness has been adapted from economic theory where it was applied to the general firm or country (Margarida Abreu-Novais et. al., 2015; WEF, 1995; Bordas, 1994; Porter, 1990). Hence, the theory of destination competitiveness should be consistent with the notion of 'competitiveness' in economics and international business literature.

Competitiveness "represents the fundamental external validation of a firm's ability to survive, compete and grow in markets subject to international competition" (Bristow, 2005). The creation of unique or improved approaches and introducing these improvements to market is how competitive advantage is created (Wang et. al., 2004; Budd & Hirmis, 1998). Barney (1991) considers tourism destinations as a set of specific physical, natural, cultural and human resources, which are rare, inimitable, and non-substitutable and can generate capabilities which become useful to create and develop competitive advantage.

TDC literature is quite extensive and definitional; conceptual and empirical studies have proliferated (Croes, 2011; Crouch, 2011; Crouch & Ritchie, 1999, 2006; Dwyer & Kim, 2003; Enright & Newton, 2004, 2005; Hassan, 2000; Mangion, Durbarry, & Sinclair, 2005; Ritchie & Crouch, 2000, 2003; Tsai, Song, & Wong, 2009). Thus, it is an extremely complex concept for a host of factors account for it. Competitiveness has two important characteristics. First, it is a relative concept i.e. compared to what. Second, it is multi-dimensional i.e. what the features of competitiveness are? (Dwyer & Kim, 2003; Spence & Hazard, 1988). This is the reason why competitiveness has been defined differently by different authors. Competitiveness is generally visualized as the level of superiority that has been accomplished in a certain province and is a multi-dimensional and dynamic construct as the level of competition can vary (Crouch & Ritchie, 1999; Ritchie & Crouch, 2003). Tourism Destination competitiveness is a complex term and also lacks a generally accepted definition in tourism (Crouch & Ritchie, 1999). Yet, the definition given by the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD) appears to be comprehensive: 'Tourism competitiveness for a destination is about the ability of the place to optimize its attractiveness for residents and non-residents, to deliver quality, innovative, and attractive tourism services to consumers and to gain market shares on the domestic and global market places, while ensuring that the available resources supporting tourism are used efficiently and in a sustainable way' (OECD, 2014).

Previous studies mostly focused on identifying and

exploring those attributes that characterize destination competitiveness (e.g. Crouch & Ritchie, 1999; Ritchie & Crouch, 2000) and proposed extensive lists of individual indicators (e.g. Dwyer & Kim, 2003). Consequently, there is a plethora of research has been attempted to identify, classify and use individual competitiveness indicators for various tourism destinations of the world.

However, a crisp and crystal insight of such a complex and dynamic phenomenon over time, can be visualized only through an explicative framework that should render meaningful and effective information to scholars, managers and policy makers (Assaker, Hallak, Esposito Vinzi, & O'Connor, 2014; Mazanec & Ring, 2011; Mazanec, Weeber, & Zins, 2007). Thus, recent research are recognizing the complex, latent, dynamic and holistic nature of tourism destination competitiveness propose composite indicators to measure its multifaceted aspects such as attractiveness and competitiveness (Blanke, Chiesa, & Crotti, 2013; Croes & Kubickova, 2013; Gooroochurn & Sugiyarto, 2005; Mazanec & Ring, 2011).

Destinations are a quite complex offering consisting of numerous products and services, and therefore, analyzing its competitiveness is a ticklish task. While there are models of destination competitiveness that have applied the concept of competitiveness to tourism, they are far from capturing all the dynamics and intricacies associated with destination competitiveness measurement. Furthermore, the influences on competitiveness can change quickly. This dynamic nature creates further challenges and a need for on-going research and development on indicators of competitiveness (OECD, 2013).

The challenges in the selections of relevant components/attributes for assessment of destination competitiveness are due to variety of destination types and markets (variety in size, location, economic and social development) have specific indicators. Lall (2001), Mazanec et al. (2007) and Croes (2011) explored how several available Competitiveness indicators of destination competitiveness ignore geographical, economical and market related differences among destinations. Recent studies acknowledge these limits and do investigate homogeneous destinations sets (Croes & Kubickova, 2013) or address these issues at an exploratory level (Ayikoru, 2015).

### **Research Methodology**

The study primarily aimed to assess the tourism competitiveness of destination Bundelkhand. Being an empirical study, it utilized primary data to achieve its objective. A convenience sample of 430 respondents was included in the study. All the important stakeholders of the tourism industry in Bundelkhand were covered in the survey. The composition of sample is mentioned in the table 1.

Serial No.	Stakeholders Segment	Size
1	International Tourists	82
2	Domestic Tourists	177
3	Local Residents	116
4	Tourism Experts	55
<b>Total</b>		<b>430</b>

**Source:** *Researcher's calculation based on survey data*

In order to collect the data, a survey instrument was designed after an extensive review of literature. The survey instrument consisted of two sections. The first part of the survey included questions regarding the respondents' demographic characteristics, including the nationality/state, gender, age, education level, marital status, household income and occupation etc. The second part asked questions about respondents' perception on destination attractiveness and competitiveness based on their general vacation experience. The destination attractiveness and competitiveness was examined based on eight constructs: Natural, Culture and Heritage, Tourism Infrastructure, Range of recreational Activities, Shopping, and Entertainment,

General Infrastructure and Hospitality. In this study ANOVA and Post-hoc test has been utilized for draw the inference from the data.

### **Data Analysis and Discussion**

#### **General Sample Descriptions of Tourism Stakeholders**

The demographic characteristics of tourism stakeholders in this study were measured by gender, age, education, marital status, profession, and family income. The summary of demographic characteristics of respondents is reported in the table 2

Variables	Frequency N=430	Percent (%)
<b>Gender</b>		
Male	244	56.7
Female	186	43.3
<b>Age</b>		
Upto20	22	5.1
21to40	297	69.1
41to60	83	19.3
61andAbove	28	6.5
<b>Education Level</b>		
Upto12 <sup>th</sup>	49	11.4
Graduate	208	48.4
PG and Above	173	40.2
<b>Marital Status</b>		
Married	215	50.0
Unmarried	198	46.0
Widowed/Widower	12	2.8
Divorced	5	1.2
<b>Profession</b>		
Retired	15	3.5
Self Employed	78	18.1
Government Employee	72	16.7
Student	88	20.5
Employed in Private Sectors	165	38.4
Other	12	2.8
<b>Annual Income of the Family</b>		
Upto1,00,000	78	18.1
1,00,001 to 3,00,000	111	25.8
3,00,001 to 5,00,000	98	22.8
5,00,001 and Above	143	33.3

The respondents comprised of males (56.7%) and the rest 43.3% were females. The results showed that 69.10% of respondents were aged between 21 to 40 years, followed by age ranges of 41-60 (19.30%), then 61 and above (6.50%), and 15 to 20 (5.10%). Accordingly, the results indicated that the majority of respondents (88.40%) were aged between 21 to 60 years. One of the important socio-demographic variables used in this study was the educational level of the stakeholders, which has impact on various travel related variables.

Education levels of tourism stakeholders showed that 48.40% of respondents held graduate degrees, 11.50% had education up to secondary level (12th), while 40.20% held postgraduate and higher degrees. Tourism is much affected by the marital status of individuals as the needs of tourists differ according to their marital status. As for instance, unmarried tourists prefer all their time to be filled with activities, whereas tourists who are married with families prefer to stay in places which are tranquil and comfortable. They want entertainment to be provided at the place of stay. From a marital status perspective, 50.0% of respondents were married, and 46.0% were single. There were very few (4.0%) respondents in widowed and divorced category. Hence, the sample was adequately represented by both married and singles tourists. In terms of respondent's profession, it was found that the majority of respondents, 38.40% were employed by private sector organisations and 18.10% were self-employed.

### Results of Hypotheses Testing

The study is based on the perception of various stakeholders regarding their assessment of tourism competitiveness of destination Bundelkhand. The difference among the various stakeholders regarding the competitive strength of Bundelkhand on various indicators of tourism competitiveness has been analyzed by testing several hypotheses.

The first hypothesis was Stakeholders vary significantly in their assessment of the competitiveness of Bundelkhand on the natural resources indicator. The calculated Welch F value was significant at 5% level with p value being 0.008. Hence, the hypothesis was accepted. It led to the conclusion that there is significant difference in the assessment of various stakeholders, regarding the competitiveness of destination Bundelkhand on natural resources indicator. The formal F-test shown in the table 3, gave the same result ( $F=3.822$ ,  $p=0.010$ ). In case of this hypothesis, by rejecting the null declared, it was concluded that at least one sample mean differed, but ANOVA did not specify how so. For example, it is difficult to say whether all four means differed, or if there was case of 'one odd man out'. Therefore, post hoc test was conducted to detect where those differences are. For this purpose, we used the Games-Howell post hoc test. This test

is more conservative and also does not require the normality assumption. The pair wise comparison revealed that the two categories which differed significantly (see table 5) were domestic tourists vs. tourism experts, and tourism experts vs. local residents.

The second hypothesis was Stakeholders vary significantly in their assessment of the competitiveness of Bundelkhand on the cultural & heritage resources indicator. The calculated Welch F value (see table 4) was not significant at 5% level with p value being 0.058, hence we did not accept this hypothesis that there is significant difference among the mean competitive scores of stakeholders on cultural & Heritage resources indicator. The formal F-test shown in the table 3, gave the same result ( $F=2.521$ ,  $p=0.056$ ).

Since the first hypothesis was accepted, and the second hypothesis was rejected, it can be best interpreted that while on the one indicator of Inherited Resources namely natural resources, stakeholders do not have the same assessment of the competitiveness level, but on the second indicator i.e. cultural and heritage resources, it was the same. The reason for this result can be attributed to the fact that, tangible tourist attractions are easy to assess and perception and attitude can be formed even with only one encounter. Contrary to it, the assessment of culture & heritage is a complex phenomenon; it needs relatively long time to get acquainted with the culture of any society or place. This is the reason why, the number of respondents except from the local residents category opting for neutral response was relatively higher in comparison to other indicators.

The third hypothesis was Stakeholders vary significantly in their assessment of the competitiveness of Bundelkhand on the tourism infrastructure indicator. The test results led to the acceptance of proposed hypothesis (Welch  $F=17.71$  and  $p=0.000$ ). Hence, it was concluded that there is significant difference in the assessment of stakeholders regarding the Tourism Infrastructure of Bundelkhand. Identical result was obtained by the use of the formal F-test as shown in the table 3 ( $F=17.237$ ,  $p=0.000$ ). The post hoc test (see table 5) revealed that the difference in the mean scores was due to the dissimilarities between the pairs—domestic tourists vs. tourism experts, international tourists vs. tourism experts, and local residents vs. tourism experts.

The fourth hypothesis was Stakeholders vary significantly in their assessment of the competitiveness of Bundelkhand on the range of recreational activities indicator. The Welch F test results provided evidence for the acceptance of the second hypothesis that there is significant difference in the mean competitive scores of stakeholders on the range of recreation activities indicator. The formal F-test shown in the table 3 yielded same results ( $F=9.597$ ,  $p=0.000$ ). Four pairs which were found to be significantly different in the post hoc analysis in their mean scores were, domestic

tourists vs. international tourists, domestic tourists vs. tourism experts, international tourists vs. local residents, and local residents vs. tourism experts.

The fifth hypothesis was, Stakeholders vary significantly in their assessment of the competitiveness of Bundelkhand on the shopping indicator. It was also accepted since the calculated Welch F value was significant at 5% level with p value being 0.000 (see table 4). Hence, it can be safely concluded that the various stakeholders differ in their assessment of the competitive strength of Bundelkhand on the shopping indicator. The result of the formal F-test shown in table 3 provided the same conclusion ( $F=12.951$ ,  $p=0.000$ ). The post hoc test (see table 5) identified significant differences in the mean scores of pairs—domestic tourists vs. international tourists, international tourists vs. tourism experts and international tourists vs. local residents.

The sixth hypothesis was Stakeholders vary significantly in their assessment of the competitiveness of Bundelkhand on the entertainment indicator. Based on the Welch test results (see table 4), the proposed hypothesis was accepted. The result was reinforced by the formal F-test ( $F=8.845$ ,  $p=0.000$ ) as shown in the table 3. Hence, it provided the conclusion that there is lack of unanimity in the assessment of stakeholders regarding the degree of competitiveness on entertainment facilities. Further, the post hoc analysis revealed that the two pairs which differed significantly were, domestic tourists vs. international tourists, and international tourists vs. local residents (see table 5)

Based on the results of third, fourth fifth and sixth hypotheses, it can be concluded that the quantity and quality of available created resources differ greatly across various tourism spots in Bundelkhand. For example, Khajurhoo and Gwalior have good connectivity, accommodation facilities, shopping facilities etc. But Banda, Mahooba, Chitrakoot and Tikamgarh have limited accessibility. Given the fact that the respondents have assessed the competitiveness based on their visit to limited tourism spots, there is possibility that whatever good and bad their experience was, it was generalised for the entire region.

The seventh hypothesis was Stakeholders vary significantly

in their assessment of the competitiveness of Bundelkhand on the general infrastructure indicator. The application of Welch test result led to the acceptance of the proposed hypothesis. The formal F-test ( $F=22.803$ ,  $p=0.000$ ) confirmed the finding. Hence, it was concluded that regarding the general infrastructure, there was dissimilarity in the assessment of various stakeholders. The post hoc analysis identified that the difference in the mean score was due to the difference between all the pairs involved.

The eighth hypothesis was Stakeholders vary significantly in their assessment of the competitiveness of Bundelkhand on the hospitality indicator. Significant test result was obtained on the application of Welch test. Hence, the proposed hypothesis that there is significant difference in the mean competitive scores of stakeholders on hospitality indicator was accepted. The formal F-test shown in table 3 gave the same result ( $F=30.324$ ,  $p=0.000$ ). The post hoc test showed that the difference in the mean score was due to the difference between domestic tourists vs. tourism experts, domestic tourists vs. local residents, international tourists vs. tourism experts, international tourists vs. local residents, and tourism experts vs. local residents.

Supporting resources are also very important to promote tourism. Given the fact that the supporting resources are unevenly distributed in Bundelkhand, the results were not surprising. Moreover, the quality of supporting resources is poor. Bundelkhand lacks a well develop network of facilities like medical, financial institution, local transport system and electricity supply. However, the local residents are quite receptive towards the tourists.

The acceptance of significant difference in the stakeholders' assessment of Tourism Competitiveness of Bundelkhand can be hailed as an important result of this study. It points towards the fact that, each stakeholder has its unique perspective, which is guided by a host of factors. Though there were significant differences in their assessments on myriad measures of tourism competitiveness, but it was also evident that no significant difference existed on few indicators. Also, factoring in the views of tourists, it can be conclusively argued that Bundelkhand has immense tourism potential, still waiting to be realized.

**Table 3: Differences in Stakeholders' Assessment of TCB—ANOVA Test Results**

S. No.	Hypothesises	Test Statistics	Results
1.	Stakeholders vary significantly in their assessment of the competitiveness of Bundelkhand on the natural resources indicator	$F=3.822$ ( $p=.010$ )*	Accepted
2.	Stakeholders vary significantly in their assessment of the competitiveness of Bundelkhand on the cultural & Heritage resources indicator	$F=2.521$ ( $p=.056$ )	Reject
3.	Stakeholders vary significantly in their assessment of the competitiveness of Bundelkhand on the tourism Infrastructure indicator	$F=17.237$ ( $p=.000$ )*	Accepted

4.	Stakeholders vary significantly in their assessment of the competitiveness of Bundelkhand on the Range of Recreational Activities indicator	F=9.597 (p=.000)*	Accepted
5.	Stakeholders vary significantly in their assessment of the competitiveness of Bundelkhand on the Shopping indicator	F=12.951 (p=.000)*	Accepted
6.	Stakeholders vary significantly in their assessment of the competitiveness of Bundelkhand on the Entertainment indicator	F=8.845 (p=.000)*	Accepted
7.	Stakeholders vary significantly in their assessment of the competitiveness of Bundelkhand on the General Infrastructure indicator	F=22.803 (p=.000)*	Accepted
8.	Stakeholders vary significantly in their assessment of the competitiveness of Bundelkhand on the Hospitality indicator	F=30.324 (p=.000)*	Accepted
*Significant at 1 percent			
Source: Researcher's calculation based on survey data			

### Conclusion, Implications and Limitations

This study has assessed the tourism competitiveness of destination Bundelkhand from stakeholders' perspectives. For the assessment of tourism competitiveness of Bundelkhand various tourism competitiveness related indicators such as natural resources, cultural & heritage resources, tourism infrastructure, range of recreational activities, entertainment, shopping, general infrastructure and hospitality were utilized. The stakeholders were asked to assess the competitiveness of destination Bundelkhand along each indicator. From the empirical results of the testing of various hypotheses, it can be concluded that the perception of stakeholders regarding tourism competitiveness of destination Bundelkhand varies on various indicators except cultural & heritage resources indicator. Thus, except for its cultural and heritage resources where all stakeholders had similar perception, it was judged differently by the different stakeholders. It means Bundelkhand has the power to influence stakeholders by its inherited resources like cultural and heritage resources.

The findings of the study have several important implications in the field of destination development, marketing and management. First, the result implies that tourist perception regarding competitiveness of a tourism destination is determined by many tourism and non tourism related factors ranging from purely inherited to supporting ones. The tourist choice of a destination is largely depends on the tourism core attractiveness and competitiveness of the destination. In terms of the core resources of tourism destination competitiveness, natural and cultural & heritage resources are the main attractions of the tourist who wish to visit Bundelkhand. Since the region scores high on the various indicators of this dimension, it suggests huge tourism potential for the region.

Second, the relatively low competitiveness as perceived by stakeholders on supporting and created resources dimensions can be generally attributed to the economic

backwardness of the region. Furthermore, there is intra-regional heterogeneity in the economic development. Thus, it is quite natural for the stakeholders to vary in their opinion. It is a signal to the policy makers and government that unless suitable strategies are devised to develop tourism infrastructure and general infrastructure in the region, it is very difficult to harness the tourism potential.

Third, another important implication pertains to the stakeholder engagement. Since the stakeholders have different opinion about the regions competitiveness, a detailed project should be undertaken by the government to explore and unravel the various reasons behind it. Further, steps should be taken to include all the stakeholders in the tourism projects that are formulated for the development of tourism in the region.

The findings also provide valuable insights to the Destination Management Organisation (DMOs) for the development of strategies related to promotion as well as the development of various tourist sites in the region. The findings pertaining to the stakeholders' views about the assessing the competitiveness of various tourism resources are of utmost importance, as they will help the managers in better serving the needs of visitors, and aligning their services with their expectations. From a managerial perspective, this study presents a direction for gaining competitive advantage by attracting tourists to a tourism destination through the attractiveness and competitiveness. Many destinations expend efforts to attract tourists because of the potential economic effect that these tourists bring (Santos & Cabral, 2014). How to design marketing and branding strategies and develop tourism products in a backward region can also be well understood in context of the findings of the study. This study is also beneficial to the academicians as it provides knowledge regarding the concept of regional tourism competitiveness. It's one of the most important contribution is to add to the little literature on stakeholders perspective to destination competitiveness.

Despite all the efforts to conduct a sound research, this study has several limitations that should be acknowledged. Further, several suggestions for future research are also proposed. The first limitation is related to the non-probability sampling method adopted in the study. The respondents were approached on the basis of their availability and/or accessibility. Although the convenience sampling method is the most feasible approach for an on-site tourist survey, this technique has been criticized for its bias. It makes the results of the study less reliable. Also, the sample size was small in relation to the area of the region. The study can be replicated by using a large sample.

The second important limitation of this study lies in the fact that it took selected tourist sites of destination Bundelkhand, at a specific time and with a low budget. It is possible that the assessment of the competitiveness and the magnitude of the relationships might be different, if tested in longitudinal studies or in other selected tourism spots within Bundelkhand, which are in different stages of tourism development. Therefore, generalizations of these results applied to other destinations, as well as tourism spots within Bundelkhand should be made with caution.

The study motivates the researchers to replicate the study using micro perspective and scrutinize its findings and methodology. Another area for future research could be adopting a customised and micro approach for measuring the tourism competitiveness of Bundelkhand. As for instance, tourism competitiveness can be assess by including respondents from all the tourism spots within Bundelkhand, instead of major ones. Further, it opens up new vistas for research in tourism competitiveness and related areas.

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### Appendix

**Table 4: Robust Tests of Equality of Means**

Variables	Welch S statistics <sup>a</sup>	df1	df2	Sig.
Natural Resources	4.062	3	174.010	0.008
Cultural & Heritage Resources	2.065	3	178.456	0.058
Tourism Infrastructure	17.714	3	174.835	0.000
Range of Recreational Activities	8.859	3	169.928	0.000
Shopping	20.105	3	183.506	0.000
Entertainment	9.150	3	174.159	0.000
General Infrastructure	27.700	3	180.893	0.000
Hospitality	36.990	3	180.626	0.000
BTCI	17.695	3	176.124	0.000

a. Asymptotically F distributed.

**Table 5: Games-Howell Post-hoc Test of Natural Resources**

(I) Stakeholders	(J) Stakeholders	Natural Resources Sig.	Tourism Infrastructure Sig.	Range of Recreational Activities Sig.	Shopping Sig.	Entertainment Sig.	General Infrastructure Sig.	Hospitality Sig.
Domestic Tourist	International Tourist	.187	.602	.001	.000	.002	.000	.942
	Tourism Experts	.019	.000	.004	.978	.795	.003	.000
	Local Residents	.992	.758	1.000	.158	.164	.005	.000
International Tourist	Domestic Tourist	.187	.602	.001	.000	.002	.000	.942
	Tourism Experts	.966	.000	.921	.000	.217	.000	.000
	Local Residents	.267	.967	.001	.000	.000	.030	.000
Tourism Experts	Domestic Tourist	.019	.000	.004	.978	.795	.003	.000
	International Tourist	.966	.000	.921	.000	.217	.000	.000
	Local Residents	.035	.000	.004	.584	.089	.000	.000
Local Residents	Domestic Tourist	.992	.758	1.000	.158	.164	.005	.000
	International Tourist	.267	.967	.001	.000	.000	.030	.000
	Tourism Experts	.035	.000	.004	.584	.089	.000	.000

\*The mean difference is significant at 0.05 level