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A holistic investigation into principal attributes contributing to the competitiveness of tourism destinations at varying stages of development

Simon John Wilde
*Southern Cross University*

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A Holistic Investigation into Principal Attributes Contributing to the Competitiveness of Tourism Destinations at Varying Stages of Development

Simon J. Wilde

BBus (Hons)

School of Tourism and Hospitality Management
Southern Cross University

A thesis submitted to Southern Cross University, in fulfilment of the requirements of the degree of the Doctor of Philosophy
Statement of original authorship

The work presented in this thesis is, to the best of the candidate’s knowledge and belief, original, except as acknowledged in the text. The material has not been submitted, either in whole or part, for a degree at this or any other university.

I acknowledge that I have read and understood the University's rules, requirements, procedures and policy relating to my higher degree research award and to my thesis. I certify that I have complied with the rules, requirements, procedures and policy of the University.

Simon John Wilde
Abstract

This thesis assesses the significance and importance of attributes of tourism destination competitiveness, contributing to the competitiveness of destinations at different stages of development. In examining principal attributes contributing to the competitiveness of tourism destinations, when the stage of development or evolution of a destination is considered; this thesis addresses an area of theory deemed to have ‘been totally neglected by tourism researchers to date’ (Dwyer & Kim 2003, p. 406).

Four research questions are attended to by means of both qualitative and quantitative methodologies. Research Question One asks: What critical attributes affect the competitiveness of tourism destinations?; Research Question Two: How do the critical destination attributes contribute to the competitiveness of developing and maturing destinations?; Research Question Three: To what extent is the importance of destination attributes, to consumers, affected by demographic subgroups?; and Research Question Four: Do developing and mature destinations perform differently in relation to the destination attributes from a consumer perspective?

Two case destinations on the East Coast of Australia, namely the Coffs Coast tourism region, and the Great Lakes tourism region, were selected to address this research agenda. These competing destinations were identified as being at differing stages of their development (mature/signs of stagnation versus developing/consolidating respectively). In order to identify a set of tourism-specific competiveness items recognised to apply to regional Australian destinations (such as the Coffs Coast and Great Lakes tourism regions), at least as a first step, a study based on the views of local tourism stakeholders was justified as a useful starting point in distinguishing critical attributes of destination competitiveness. According to the results of focus group
discussions, key destination stakeholders endorsed that those attributes believed to be most important to a destination at the mature stage of its life cycle (showing signs of stagnation), were quite different to those attributes regarded as being critically important to developing destinations. These findings declare that advantages do exist in adapting destination competitiveness strategies, whereby consideration is given to the life cycle experienced by a tourism destination.

The thesis also identified the importance of competitiveness elements from a consumer’s perspective. Tourism destination competitiveness literature rarely seeks to present empirical findings based on the views of consumers (Dwyer et al. 2003, Crouch 2007). This research established that consumers considered those attributes linked to the management of a destination to be the most important attributes of destination competitiveness.

Additionally, it is shown in this thesis that the performance of a destination can be tempered by a destination’s stage of development. The repercussion of a destination’s stage of development on the performance of a destination, whilst postulated within the extant literature, is not well supported empirically. In this thesis it was found that, in terms of those aspects of the tourism experience considered to be important by tourists, the mature Coffs Coast tourism region performed at a higher level across some determinants of competitiveness relative to a main developing competitor, the Great Lakes tourism region. The results indicate that in terms of attribute performance, relative destination immaturity may well constrain a developing destination’s ability to satisfy the needs of both principal and emerging markets.
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I’m not quite sure where this thesis will take me. I am hopeful, however, that enduring this journey puts me in good stead for whatever challenges await.


**Related Publications**

**Refereed Journal Articles**

Fuller, D, Hanlan, J & Wilde, S 2007, ‘The Identification and Implementation of Key Competitive Factors for Tourism Based Firms’, *International Journal of Hospitality & Tourism Administration*, vol. 8, no. 3, pp. 73–90.


**Refereed Conference Papers**


Structure of the Thesis

Thesis Introduction – Structure and content of the thesis

Chapter 1 – Introduction, outline of the thesis and justification for the research

Chapter 2 – Literature Review: Tourism Destination Competitiveness

Chapter 3 – Literature Review: Destination Development and Evolution

Chapter 4 – Qualitative Methodology

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CHAPTER I  INTRODUCTION

1.1  Introduction to the Research

Changing consumer tastes, the increasing involvement of host communities, safety and health concerns, technological innovation and broad environmental pressures are just a small number of elements impacting upon the modern tourism destination (Heath 2003). It is through these and other related challenges that research into the competitiveness of tourism destinations has developed.

Tourism destination competitiveness (TDC) has been defined as the ability of a destination to maintain its market position and share and/or improve upon them through time (d’Hauteserre 2000). It is a general concept that encompasses price differentials coupled with exchange rate movements, productivity levels of various components of the tourist industry and qualitative factors affecting the attractiveness or otherwise of a destination (Dwyer, Forsyth & Rao 2000). Competitiveness also refers to a destination’s ability to create and integrate value–added products that sustain its resources while maintaining market position relative to competitors (Hassan 2000). Moreover, destination competitiveness is viewed as the relative ability of a destination to meet visitor’ needs on various aspects of the tourism experience, or to deliver goods and services that perform better than other destinations on those aspects of the tourism experience considered to be important by tourists (Dwyer & Kim 2003).

It can be observed from the preceding definitions that a number of variables (or attributes) appear to be linked to the theory of destination competitiveness. Objectively measured indicators such as visitor numbers, as well as subjective measures such as
heritage, culture and quality of the tourism experience, have been identified as having the potential to affect the competitive standing of a destination (Dwyer & Kim 2003). Thus, studies investigating the competitiveness of tourism destinations must recognise a wide array of key success drivers and vital linkages involved in this complex notion.

Some tourism researchers (Dwyer & Kim 2003; Enright & Newton 2005) argue that the principal factors contributing to competitiveness will vary amongst destinations, and as such, destinations must take a more tailored approach to enhancing and developing tourism competitiveness, rather than adopting a single, universal policy or strategy. Of particular interest is the relevance, or importance, of key destination competitiveness indicators to destinations at different stages of development or evolution (Dwyer & Kim 2003). This study offers a holistic approach to understanding the competitiveness of tourism destinations at different stages of development, and endeavours to extend empirical evidence supporting this important research theme.

1.2 The Research Problem and Research Issues

The principal aim of this thesis is to assess the significance and importance of attributes of tourism destination competitiveness, contributing to the competitiveness of destinations at different stages of development. In doing so, this thesis incorporates two broad theories: tourism destination competitiveness, and destination development and evolution. In support of this aim, four research questions are postulated.
The research questions are:

**Research Question One:** What critical attributes affect the competitiveness of tourism destinations?

**RQ1a:** What critical attributes affect the competitiveness of tourism destinations from a destination stakeholder’s perspective?

**RQ1b:** What critical attributes affect the competitiveness of tourism destinations from a consumer perspective?

**Research Question Two:** How do the critical destination attributes contribute to the competitiveness of developing and maturing destinations?

**Research Question Three:** To what extent is the importance of destination attributes, to consumers, affected by demographic subgroups?

**Research Question Four:** Do developing and mature destinations perform differently in relation to the destination attributes from a consumer perspective?

Research Question One (RQ1a) initially draws upon the experience and knowledge of key tourism stakeholders. The collective experience, knowledge, and insights of tourism destination managers and industry stakeholders, who have spent time addressing the challenge of what makes a destination competitive, provides a useful starting point for an analysis such as this (Crouch 2007). The data and observations gained from the qualitative phase of this research are subsequently used in assessing Research Question Two. The qualitative phase of this research (in collaboration with key literature sources) acts as an important ‘trigger point’, leading to the design of a survey instrument administered to selected consumers (RQ1b), in particular Australian
domestic family holiday/leisure tourists. Consumer views are further addressed as part of Research Questions Three and Four.

1.3 Research Methodology

As this research addresses novel aspects of TDC, the choice of a research paradigm that supports this area of examination as an emergent field of enquiry is therefore required. In this thesis the view that both qualitative and quantitative methods have merit is accepted, as is the perspective that qualitative research is generally suited to theory generation and quantitative methods to theory testing (Parkhe 1993; Strauss & Corbin 1990). As highlighted in Sections 2.6 and 3.4, the need to identify principal destination attributes, and their relative importance, contributing to the competitiveness of destinations at different levels of development was justified. This is an area that has been ignored by tourism researchers to date (Dwyer & Kim 2003). As a consequence, it was deemed that a qualitative approach appears reasonable prior to further quantitative inquiries, a notion supported by Gable (1994). Two qualitative methodologies were chosen: the identification and justification of two case study destinations constitutes the first phase of the qualitative methodology, followed by industry stakeholder focus groups.

Two competing destinations on the East Coast of Australia, namely the Coffs Coast tourism region, and the Great Lakes tourism region, were selected to address this research agenda. These destinations were chosen based on a number of key criteria. Firstly, the selection of these destinations meets a ‘comparable–case’ sampling strategy (Miles & Huberman 1994). Second, data on visitor gender, age, and reason for visitation categories indicate a large share of visitors to each of the case regions fall within the group, categorised as domestic family holiday/leisure tourists (Coffs Coast
Marketing 2007; Council of Tourist Associations 2003). Thirdly, following an evaluation of indicators related to Butler’s (1980) Tourism Area Life Cycle (TALC), a useful descriptive tool for analysing the development of destinations and the evolution of their markets (Cooper & Jackson 1989; Weaver 1990; Agarwal 1994; Cooper 1989; Wall 1982; Prosser 1997; Berry 2001), it was found that whilst the Coffs Coast and Great Lakes tourism regions appear to have evolved through similar cycles of tourism over the last 100 years, the outcome of this development is different in relation to a number of important aspects (see Sections 4.4.1 through 4.4.2.4). In essence, this review concluded that the Coffs Coast is a mature destination showing signs of stagnation, as opposed to the Great Lakes, identified as being heavily positioned within Butler’s (1980) stages of development and consolidation. Tourism life cycle research highlights numerous theoretical and practical implications which are seen to affect the relationship between mature destinations and their less mature counterparts (Diedrich & Garcia–Buades 2009; Manente & Pechlaner 2006; Kozak 2004; Sheldon & Abenoja 2001; Upchurch & Teivane 2000). The identification of two competing case destinations, postulated as being at differing stages in their development/evolution (developing/consolidating versus mature/signs of stagnation), thus provides an appealing context from which to assess the research aim.

Following case destination identification, focus group discussions with key industry stakeholders (including representatives from chambers of commerce, local government bodies, local tourism agencies, tourism associations, and tourism operators) were held in each region to explore the relationship between key destination competitiveness attributes and a tourism destination’s stage of development. According to the results reported in these discussions, key stakeholders in the tourism industry confirmed that the attributes they believe most important to a destination considered to be at the
mature stage of its life cycle, are quite distinct to those factors of importance for destinations at other stages of the destination life cycle.

These qualitative methodologies are described in further detail in Chapter Four of this thesis.

Next, the importance of critical competitiveness indicators (identified by local tourism stakeholders, in addition to key literature sources) were tested with consumers via a web survey. It is argued within the literature that components of TDC should be measured by direct consumer surveys, rather than indirect measures (Hudson, Ritchie & Timur 2004). However, few studies seek to address aspects of TDC with actual consumers, an undertaking clearly recognised as an important building block in the further practical advancement of this important topic (Dwyer et al. 2003; Crouch 2007). As a result, theories are built and generalisations made as to the significance and importance of attributes of tourism destination competitiveness, as viewed by consumers (visitors). Joined to this quantitative enquiry are measures of destination performance, again as viewed by consumers. Assessing the performance (from a consumers perspective) of these two destinations (identified as being at differing stages of development) across a series of destination competitiveness attributes provides a useful tool in further investigating the competitiveness of tourism destinations.

1.4 Research Justification

This research is justified from both theoretical and practical perspectives. At the outset, this research reacts in general to the need to explore the theory of TDC in greater detail, whilst attending to a number of specific gaps identified through a review of related literature, the first of which is to explore the significance and importance of TDC
attributes in different tourism contexts. In particular, the examination of principal attributes contributing to the competitiveness of tourism destinations, when the stage of development or evolution of a destination is considered, appears to have ‘been totally neglected by tourism researchers to date’ (Dwyer & Kim 2003, p. 406). This is therefore the overarching focus of this thesis.

Underpinning this focal point is a number of interrelated enquiries, through which this thesis makes a significant contribution to the TDC literature. As witnessed in Sections 2.5 through 2.6, since the early 1990s, numerous researchers (see for example Chon & Mayer 1995; Evans, Fox & Johnson 1995; Faulkner, Oppermann, & Fredline 1999; d’Hauteserre 2000; Hassan 2000) have endeavoured to highlight how TDC is to be considered, conceptualised and ultimately measured. At this stage in the development of TDC theory and knowledge, there is particular value in turning the focus of research more towards assessing, empirically, the relative importance of individual attributes of TDC (Crouch 2007). Thus, for example, how important are natural resources compared to destination image? How important is climate compared to pristine environments? How important is service quality compared to price competitiveness? (Dwyer et al. 2004). Such questions are unable to be answered in the absence of a specific destination being studied and for specific visitor market segments to that destination being considered (Dwyer et al. 2004; March 2004).

Whilst a study based on an analysis of expert judgement (e.g. tourism industry stakeholders) is a sensible starting point in estimating the relative importance of a large number of attributes involved in the study of TDC (Crouch 2007); this thesis also incorporates consumer input and perceptions into the study of TDC. As noted in the previous section, few studies seek to address aspects of TDC with actual consumers (Dwyer et al. 2003; Crouch 2007). In contributing to this gap, a sample of Australian–
based domestic tourists were surveyed to 1) evaluate both the importance of numerous TDC attributes, and, 2) rate the performance of the two competing case destinations across those attributes. As stated by Dwyer and Kim (2003), TDC is intrinsically linked to the relative ability of a destination to perform better than other destinations on those aspects of the tourism experience considered to be important by tourists (Dwyer & Kim 2003). The use of an importance performance analysis (Martilla & James 1977; Evans & Chon 1989; Uysal, Howard & Jamrozy 1991), which essentially weighs attribute importance against attribute performance, assists this thesis in generating TDC findings across a much broader spectrum. When combined with initial qualitative findings (provided by tourism industry stakeholders) of this study, this consumer–based, quantitative research will aid in providing a comprehensive review of TDC, offering valuable additional insights for both practitioners and researchers.

1.5 Outline of the Thesis

This thesis is comprised of seven chapters. Chapter One is introductory by nature, providing the reader with an understanding of the field of research for which the study is being undertaken. Research questions and methods employed are provided.

Chapters Two and Three review literature related to the research topic. In Chapter Two, an overview of the theory of competitiveness is undertaken. The concept of competitiveness within the social sciences is discussed, with a view to developing a structure for the research of destination competitiveness within the field of tourism. This chapter then reviews literature concerning the theory of TDC. Different approaches for defining, measuring and evaluating competitiveness of tourist destinations are considered, with seminal frameworks and broad indicators identified. At the conclusion of Chapter Two, it is highlighted that by integrating a destination’s
development cycle with the concept of destination competitiveness, there is potential to assist destination marketing and management organisations to better devise appropriate management strategies for their destinations as they reach various stages of the life cycle.

Chapter Three provides a theoretical overview of evolutionary themes, and assesses the significance of descriptive frameworks utilised within tourism evolution research. The theoretical foundation of Butler’s (1980) Tourism Area Life Cycle (TALC) is then reviewed, with advantages and limitations of using the model to study the evolution of tourism destination areas identified. Findings of existing TALC research, both internationally and within an Australian regional context (in respect to the regional locality of the two case destinations), are then considered, as a further examination as to the usefulness of Butler’s (1980) TALC framework.

In Chapter Four, the rationale and methods associated with the qualitative phase of this research are discussed. This chapter provides justification for the use of the interpretive paradigm in social science research, in particular the application of a case study methodology (involving focus group discussions). An in–depth evolutionary review of the case destinations is provided.

Following qualitative assessments, Chapter Five provides validation for the quantitative methods employed (exploratory factor analysis, MANOVA, importance–performance analysis, and paired–sample t tests); details about how the questionnaire was designed; outlines data collection methods (web–based survey); and data preparation and screening systems.
Chapter Six provides an analysis of the data generated by both qualitative and quantitative phases of the research.

Chapter Seven offers discussion of the wider qualitative/quantitative analysis and conclusions for the identified research questions. This chapter concludes by generating a number of important observations on future research possibilities resulting from this study.

1.6 Research Contribution

Table 1.1 provides as a summary of the theoretical findings under the headings, ‘knowledge confirmed by the research’, ‘knowledge extended by the research’ and ‘new contributions made by the research’.

1.7 Definitions

Definitions adopted by researchers are often inconsistent. In order to overcome confusion, and given their importance in the research, key concepts are initially defined in this section. Other terms are defined in the body of the thesis.

**Competitiveness**: refers to combining both assets and processes where assets are inherited (e.g. natural resources) or created (e.g. infrastructures) and processes transform assets into economic results (Crouch & Ritchie 1999).

**Tourism destination competitiveness**: is concerned with the relative ability of a destination to meet visitor’ needs on various aspects of the tourism experience, or to
deliver goods and services that perform better than other destinations on those aspects of the tourism experience considered to be important by tourists (Dwyer & Kim 2003).

**Tourism stakeholders:** Persons or groups who can affect, or be affected by, the tourism business within a particular market or community and who have interests in the planning process in the delivery and/or outcomes of the tourism business (Donaldson & Preston 1995; Sautter & Leisen 1999).

### 1.8 Contributions to the Literature

Table 1.1 provides as a summary of the theoretical findings of this research under the headings, ‘knowledge confirmed by the research’, ‘knowledge extended by the research’ and ‘new contributions made by the research’.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Knowledge confirmed by the research</th>
<th></th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Research validates the multidimensional nature of destination competitiveness.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Reinforces the view that general frameworks of competitiveness appearing in the wider literature, whilst useful, do not address the special considerations relevant to determining destination competitiveness.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Confirms that understanding the sequence of events that mark the development of a destination can assist in bringing a destination’s inherent potential and its impediments into sharper focus.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Demonstrates the veracity of claims that destination competitiveness and performance are linked.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Affords justification to research suggesting that stakeholders views can constitute accurate measures of competitiveness.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Adds further support to the TALC framework’s applicably in destination life cycle research.</td>
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<table>
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<tr>
<th>Knowledge extended by the research</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>The use of exploratory factor analysis (EFA) linked individual TDC attributes into five factors.</td>
<td></td>
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*Table 1.1: Summary of main theoretical findings.*
New contributions of the research

- Adds to theory by identifying the importance of TDC attributes as viewed by actual consumers.
- Established that consumers considered those attributes linked to the management of a destination to be the most important attributes of destination competitiveness.
- Provides evidence regarding the types of capabilities, competencies and resources that can assist developing and maturing destinations respectively, in their pursuit of competitiveness.
- Advances the argument that relative ‘destination immaturity’ may constrain the capacity of developing destination’s in seeking to meet the core needs of visitors.

Table 1.1: Summary of main theoretical findings (continuation).

1.8 Delimitations of Scope and Key Assumptions, and their Justifications

This study contains a number of delimitations. Firstly, the research seeks to assess the significance and importance of attributes of tourism destination competitiveness, contributing to the competitiveness of destinations at different stages of development. The selection of two, regionally–based, Australian tourism destinations, in itself, has the potential to limit the generalisation of results across a range of destinations. Clearly findings from this research cannot be extrapolated across all destinations, as a whole.

A second delimitation surrounds construct and measurement scales. Despite the growing body of TDC literature, it is recognised that no universal set of items, attributes or indicators (used to measure the competitiveness of tourism destinations) exists (Dwyer, Livaic & Mellor 2003). The variety of attributes or indicators adopted by TDC researchers in the field are testament to this. Other attributes or indicators not discussed or measured as part of this study may exist. However, despite such a limitation, awareness of the role (importance) certain attributes play within two competing destinations (identified by both tourism industry stakeholders and
consumers as being at differing stages of development) makes an important, original contribution to knowledge.

A third delimitation of this research relates to sampling. The degree of fit between a sample and the target population about which generalisations can be made is a common challenge in many studies, but this shortcoming does not restrict the chosen medium as a data-gathering device or the respondents to Internet methodologies as any more or less useful as any other sample (Walther 2002).

It is recognised that those industry stakeholders invited to contribute in the qualitative phase of this research do not constitute the entire population of industry stakeholders. Future research could be strengthened with the input of other interest groups, such as State and Federal Government representatives, other related industry bodies, or consumer advocate groups.

1.9 Chapter Summary

In this chapter, the foundations for the thesis were outlined. The background to the research aim and individual research questions were introduced. The research was justified on both theoretical and practical grounds. The use of a mixed method design, involving both qualitative and quantitative methodologies was also initially raised. Finally, key definitions related to this thesis were identified, and a number of research delimitations acknowledged. In the following chapter, an overview of the theory of competitiveness is undertaken, in an effort to developing a rigorous structure for which the study of tourism destination competitiveness (TDC) can occur.
CHAPTER II  LITERATURE REVIEW

Tourism Destination Competitiveness

2.1  Introduction

Based on the outline of the thesis provided in Chapter One, this chapter contains the review of the literature related to the study of tourism destination competitiveness. This chapter is divided into five main sections.

This chapter commences with a review of relevant concepts (Section 2.2). Section 2.3 then presents an introduction to the theory of competitiveness. The concept of competitiveness within the social sciences (notably economics and business literature) is discussed, with a view to developing a structure for the research of destination competitiveness within the field of tourism. Next, in Section 2.5, the body of knowledge associated with the theory of tourism destination competitiveness is then undertaken. Different approaches for defining, measuring and evaluating competitiveness of tourist destinations are then considered in Section 2.5.1 to 2.6.

2.2  Review of Relevant Concepts

The following sections will introduce the concept of tourism, its systematic approaches (whereby tourism is viewed as a system) and its key components (including the tourism destination, and travel decision making processes). The purpose of these sections is to trace the development of the concept of tourism, thus providing a conceptual framework from which the current study is developed.
2.2.1 What is ‘tourism’?

Williams and Shaw (1988, p. 2) observe that whilst seeking a definition of tourism is ‘a particularly arid pursuit’, it is nonetheless an important first step in understanding the nature, scope and composition of ‘what is tourism?’ Many overlapping meanings have been constructed to characterise the term ‘tourism’ (Leiper 1990).

One of the first examples of a definition of tourism was provided by Austrian economist Hermann Von Schullard in 1910 (cited in Williams 2004, p. 49), in that tourism is the sum total of operators, mainly of an economic nature, which directly relate to the entry, stay and movement of foreigners inside and outside a certain country, city or a region. Through a broad and amorphous theme, Hunziker and Krapf (1941; cited in Khan, Olsen & Var 1993, p. 544) postulated that ‘tourism is the sum of the phenomena and relationships arising from the travel and stay of non–residents, in so far as they do not lead to any permanent residence and are not connected with any earning activity’. The World Tourism Organisation (1995, p. 1) defines tourism as ‘the activities of persons travelling to and staying in places outside their usual environment for not more than one consecutive year for leisure, business and other purposes’.

Other writers, such as Kaul (1985), and Jefferson and Lickorish (1988), sought to further define tourism as a market, rather than as a phenomena, as tourism is usually associated with buyers. The merit of these opinions was twofold: it highlights the defects in the notion of tourism being ‘an industry’, and that it emphasises the sensible alternative that, fundamentally, tourism is something to do with tourists themselves (Kaul 1985, Jefferson & Lickorish 1988). However, Leiper (2004) argues that Kaul, Jefferson and Lickorish go too far when defining tourism as a market, as not all
tourists help form markets, and in some instances, experiences and transactions within tourism are ‘non–market’.

2.2.2 Tourism as a System

Cuervo (1967), Gunn (1972), Mill and Morrison (1985), and Leiper (1990) have proposed models of tourism systems. Systems thinking has been employed in many disciplines in the physical, social and business sciences over the past 50 years. One of the core benefits of systems theory is that it can clarify and thus simplify what would otherwise seem complex (Leiper 1990). A system, in this formal context, is defined as a set of elements standing in interrelation among themselves and with the environments (von Bertalanffy 1968), or more straightforward, ‘a set of elements interacting with one another’ (Khan, Olsen & Var 1993, p. 546).

Getz (cited in Leiper 1985, p. 52) was the first to use the expression ‘whole tourism system’, which he observed as a useful concept in tourism planning. Models of whole tourism systems ‘provide a way of seeing the big picture, the entire scope of tourism’ (Leiper 2004, p. 52). Leiper’s (1979, cited in Khan, Olsen & Var 1993) model of whole tourism systems depicts, in its simplest form, a system of tourism within a single destination region (Figure 2.1).
Leiper’s model begins with a simple suggestion that tourists are elementary; without at least one person in that role, a tourism system has no empirical basis. The tourist is the interactive factor, the one distinguishing principle that connects the elements of the system (Jordan 1981). Next, Leiper identifies elements which form part of the general pattern of tourists’ itineraries. The first is the ‘traveller generating region’; the person’s home region, where the trip begins. Importantly, this is where travel motivation is formed, and where substantial resources are spent on trip preparation. As such, the traveller generating region is often viewed, in this context, as the primary marketplace.

The next phase of the system informs the ‘transit routes’, the path along which each traveller must pass in order to reach the focus of each trip. The third key element of the model, and often portrayed as the most dramatic, is the ‘tourist destination region’. In every tourist trip, one or more destinations are identified, and subsequently visited. The travel and tourism industry remains the focal point of Leiper’s model. It comprises organisations in the business and industry of tourism located along the tourist itinerary, in all three geographical elements (traveller generating region, transit routes and tourist destination region). Firms considered being critical to this element
include travel agents (or other traveller retailers, particularly those utilised in pre-trip planning), airlines and other transport carriers, accommodation properties, local tour operators, restaurants, and entertainment providers (Khan, Olsen & Var 1993).

Tourism systems are open systems. That is, they interact with broader environments such as economic, socio-cultural, technological, political, legal and physical environments. First, environmental factors can influence the structure and performance of the tourism system (e.g. where a country’s economy is flourishing, such wealth tends to generate large amounts of outbound travellers). At the opposite end of the spectrum, destinations with pleasant physical environments have an effect on the tourist destination. Such interactions may be beneficial or detrimental, depending on circumstances (Leiper 1990).

2.2.3 The Tourism Destination

Destinations are often seen by the tourist as the outwardly facing element of the tourism service or product, being the place where the tourist’s consumption occurs. At a general level, the concept of the destination can be developed to represent geographically defined entities such as groups of countries, individual countries, regions in a country, a city, rural area, a resort or a wide range of experiences created by tourism marketers (Page & Connell 2006). Leiper (2004) explains that destinations are places towards which people travel and where they choose to stay for a while in order to experience certain features or characteristics – a perceived attraction of some sort. He goes further to comment, that ‘tourism destinations are a category of traveller destinations, in a literal sense that they are places that travellers head towards, including destinations to visit and the final destination, home’ (Leiper 2004, p. 128). Cooper, Fletcher, Gilbert and Wanhill (1993, p. 81) view destinations as ‘the focus of
facilities and services designed to meet the needs of the tourist’. Similarly, Gunn (1994) defines the destination as a geographic area containing a critical mass of development that satisfies traveller’s objectives, implying that the destination should offer a large number and a diversity of attractions, facilities and services to meet the tourists’ needs. Buhalis (2000, p. 98) considers a destination to be ‘a geographical region which is understood by its visitors as a unique entity, with a political and legislative framework for tourism marketing and planning’, where the definition enables Destination Management Organisations (DMOs) to be accountable for the planning and marketing of the region, and to have the power and resources to undertake action towards achieving its strategic objective.

Most destinations can be classified by identifying their common features. Smith (1995) identified, among others, the following criteria that a destination should comprise:

- A set of cultural, physical and social characteristics that create a sense of regional identity.
- An adequate tourism infrastructure to support tourism development. Infrastructure includes utilities, roads, business services and other services necessary to support tourism business and to cater to tourists’ needs.
- Be larger than just one community or one attraction.
- Existing attractions, or the potential to support the development of sufficient attractions, to draw tourists.
- Be capable of supporting a tourism planning agency and marketing initiatives to guide and encourage future development.
- Be accessible to a large population base.
Pearce (2005) identifies six systems or approaches to viewing a ‘destination’, three of which emphasise physical dimensions while a further three have a more human and social face. The first of the organising systems can be labelled an *activities* approach. In response to the question, ‘what is the destination like?’, listings of available activities in an area are frequently drawn up, and thus defining both commercial and public opportunities available to tourists in the region. A different way of describing tourism destinations stands in the natural environment management literature (Pearce 2005, p. 88). The term *setting* is frequently used in this approach and a popular distinction is to define different parts of the space/destination as ‘zones’.

A more finely grained approach to describing destinations combines the notion of *facilities* in a setting and the immediate micro environment of the visitor. This approach, described and studied by Britner (1990), is sometimes referred to as servicescapes. This approach pays particular attention to the physical comfort of the visitor and presses that landscape architecture be considered in tourism destination design (Britner 1990). Another approach detailed in the tourism management literature is to characterise destinations by describing a number of *service* encounter situations. Such an approach taps into a number of key service dimensions such as reliability, assurance, tangible, empathy and responsiveness (Noe 1999).

A further social and cultural aspect identified by Pearce (2005) looks at the way in which the *host community* views tourism e.g. how much they welcome tourists, and what perception they hold of tourists and tourism impacts. Any attempt to characterise a tourism destination by the attitudes of its community needs to consider the multiple voices and representations of many segments of the community. The final term identified by Pearce (2005), in characterising destinations, is an emphasis on the ways in which selective accounts of the destination attributes are accentuated on each
system. As such, the final system reviewed is that of the marketing and management of the destination.

Cooper et al. (1993), whilst denoting the diversity of tourism destinations, likewise identify ‘common features’ of the tourism destination. Visitors have to consider a destination to be attractive and worth the investment of time and money to visit. As such, we can think of destination as cultural appraisals. It is therefore vital to maintain the difference between the destination in the home environment through good design and management, and therefore to avoid the development of uniform tourism landscapes. As tourism is consumed where it is produced, visitors have to be physically present at the destination to experience tourism. Like all services, the destination is perishable, and in that sense, if not used it is lost (Zeithaml & Bitner 2000). Destinations are therefore vulnerable to inseparability as related to tourism pressures (Zeithaml & Bitner 2000). Destination amenities serve both residents and workers throughout the year, but at some, or all, times of the year there are temporary use of these amenities e.g. day visitors or tourists. The multiple use of destinations means it is possible to classify enterprises according to whether they depend upon tourism only, residents only, or a mix of the two (Cooper et al. 1993). As a final point, Cooper et al. (1993) observe that as destinations are an amalgam, there are a number of important implications which are common across all destinations. In particular, it is important that the quality of each component of the destination and the delivery of the tourism service at these components is reasonably uniform, that is a poor restaurant or hotel bedroom can detract from an otherwise satisfactory vacation. This complementarity of destination components is difficult to control, given the fragmented nature of enterprises within the tourism industry (Cooper et al. 1993).
2.2.4 Destination Choice

The choice, consumption and later evaluation of destination experiences, is a complex and significant area. Consumers are often highly involved in the purchase of the tourism product (Swarbrooke & Horner 2007). The tourism experience involves both products and services requiring a relatively high level of expenditure. With this relatively high level of expenditure often comes a degree of risk within a relatively unfamiliar environment. Researchers (see for example Chon 1990, Woodside & Lysonski 1989, Gunn 1989) have endeavoured to reveal those factors that consumers consider important, and the processes undertaken when choosing a destination amongst a group of like alternatives. Furthermore, studies have begun to investigate satisfaction levels relating to the quality of the destination experience (Moyle & Croy 2009; Yoon & Uysal 2005; Kozak & Rimmington 2000; Baker & Crompton 2000). Such studies aim to better enable destination management organisations to implement strategies aimed at enhancing destination competitiveness.

Effective destination marketing and management requires a detailed understanding of the complex processes involved in the traveller destination decision–making process. The travel destination decision process has received considerable attention within tourism literature, resulting in a range of theoretical models (Chon 1990; Woodside & Lysonski 1989; Gunn 1989; Clawson & Knetch 1966). Since existing and potential tourism flows to any destination are inextricably linked to that destination’s overall competitiveness (Dwyer & Kim 2003), the psychology and behaviour of tourists when choosing, consuming and later evaluating their destination experiences provides an important linkage with the wider notion of TDC. As tourists gain experience of other destinations, which are directly or indirectly in competition, their perceptions of quality and overall performance play a significant role in determining repeat business
or positive word-of-mouth recommendations (Aktaş, Aksu & Çizel 2007). The following discussion examines the evolution of traveller decision-making models.

2.2.5 Classic Consumer Decision Making Process

Scholars from a variety of social science disciplines focus on how individuals go about making decisions. It has been widely suggested among researchers in the buyer behaviour field, that the tourism consumer’s decision to purchase is a multi-staged process (Chon 1990; Woodside & Lyonski 1989; Mayo & Jarvis 1981; Hunt 1975; Gunn 1972; Clawson & Knetch 1966). The classic decision making process, drawn from the consumer behaviour literature, as outlined by Schiffman et al. (2005), identified that consumers typically transit five stages:

1. Need recognition
2. Information search
3. Evaluation of alternatives
4. Choice of product or service, and
5. Post-purchase evaluation

This model outlines the steps involved in purchases that are new and/or complex. It should be noted that not every purchase goes through each step of the model. Baker (1995) notes that in many cases, the pre-purchase stages of information search and evaluation of alternatives may not be present. This is typical in routine re-purchase situations such as purchasing low involvement household items, like milk and bread, where the consumer may go straight from need recognition to purchase. However, this model also recognises that the buying decision process may start long before actual purchase and continue long after (Kotler 1998).
Need recognition is the first stage in the buyer decision process. The recognition of a need is likely to occur when a consumer is faced with a problem. Following on from need recognition, information search begins when a consumer perceives a need that might be satisfied by the purchase and consumption of a product. This active search for information may heighten their attention to the relevant buyer decision (Kotler 1998). The recollection of past experiences might provide the consumer with adequate information to make an informed choice. Past experience is considered an internal source of information (Schiffman et al. 2005). Alternatively, a need may also be triggered by external stimuli, such as exposure to a new product or advertising message (Kotler 1998).

Once sufficient information is gathered, the consumer moves into the evaluation of alternatives phase where they evaluate alternative solutions to their needs. Making a selection from a sample of all possible brands is a human characteristic that helps simplify the decision making process (Schiffman et al. 2005). In general terms, the consumer will examine the attributes of the product, and determine the likely level of overall satisfaction with each alternative and derive an attitude toward the different solutions/brands (Kotler 1998). In the evaluation stage, consumers rank the brands and form their purchase intentions (Kotler 1998). Generally the consumer’s purchase decision will be to buy the preferred brand/solution. However, the decision process is not complete when the sale has been made. An important component of post-purchase evaluation is the reduction of any uncertainty or doubt that the consumer might have had about their selection. As part of the post-purchase analysis, consumers typically try to reassure themselves that their choice was a wise one; that is, they attempt to reduce post-purchase cognitive dissonance (Schiffman et al. 2005). The relationship between consumer expectations and their perception of product performance will determine their satisfaction level. Creating delighted, or at least
satisfied customers, is essential as this both assists in customer retention and can lead to new business through satisfied customers becoming advocates for the product and promoting it via word–of–mouth. Marketers therefore must monitor both customer expectations and their satisfaction levels (Lovelock, Patterson & Walker 2001).

2.2.6 The Travel Destination Decision Process

As mentioned in the previous section, the psychology and behaviour of tourists when choosing, consuming and evaluating destination experiences, provides an important linkage with the overall competitiveness of tourism destinations (Dwyer & Kim 2003, Aktaş, Aksu & Çizel 2007). Researchers in the tourism and recreation area concerned with the travel purchase decision have made similar observations to researchers investigating typical consumption decisions. The decision to travel is recognised as a multi–phased rather than a single stage process (see Chon 1990; Gunn 1989; Clawson & Knetch 1966). Clawson and Knetch (1966) proposed a five–phase outdoor recreation experience model to describe vacation experiences and the decisions involved:

1. Anticipation: planning and thinking about the trip
2. Travel to the site: getting to the destination
3. On–site behaviour: behaviour at the site or destination region
4. Return travel: travelling home
5. Recollection: recall, reflection and memory of the trip

The anticipation stage is where a person prepares for a trip by thinking about it, which in travel terms includes planning (Malhotra 1997). ‘Pleasurable anticipation is almost a necessity’ (Clawson & Knetch 1966, p. 33). The second phase, travelling to the site,
may involve a range of experiences and service encounters depending on the mode of transport selected. In some travel situations, travel to and from the site may be a major part of the travel experience. On–site behaviour, incorporating the actual travel experience, certainly ranks as a high priority for both the tourist and the destination (Malhotra 1997). On–site behaviour may also include interaction with other travellers or tourists. As a final stage, recollection and recall of the trip includes the post–purchase evaluation phase of the decision model, and may have a significant impact on the next travel purchase decision (Clawson & Knetch 1966).

Gunn (1989) identified a seven stage process in the leisure travel experience:

1. Accumulation of mental images about vacation experiences
2. Modification of those images by further information
3. Decision to take a vacation trip
4. Travel to the destination
5. Participation at the destination
6. Return travel
7. New accumulation of images based on the experience

Gunn (1989) made explicit reference to changes in destination image as the consumer moves through the seven stages of the leisure travel experience. Gunn’s process begins with the accumulation of mental images (or destination images) about a variety of vacation experiences. These images are characteristically altered during the post–purchase evaluation of the travel experience, implying the concept of a continually evolving destination image. This observation supports the work of Hunt (1975) and Mayo and Jarvis (1981), who argue that a traveller’s choice of destination is both
subjective and multi–faceted. Thus, these images have the ability to ultimately influence the tourist’ buying behaviour (Govers 2005).

Woodside and Lysonski (1989) provide another complex model to explain the destination awareness and choice processes of leisure travellers. The model (illustrated in Figure 2.2) identifies eight variables, and a variety of relationships. Destination awareness includes four key categories: 1) the consideration set, 2) the inert set, 3) the unavailable/aware set and 4) the inept set. Woodside and Lysonski (1989) maintain that all destinations of which a consumer is aware will fall into one of these groupings. According to Woodside and Lysonski (1989), the consideration set is made up of the destinations that are taken seriously by the consumer in his or her purchase decision. The consumer will consider purchasing these brands based on the likelihood that they believe the brand will satisfy their needs. The inept set or reject set, is defined as all destinations of which the consumer is aware but will not consider buying (Narayana & Marking 1975). Despite thinking poorly about certain destinations, the traveller may use their inept set as an additional source of information. Destination alternatives toward which the consumer is basically indifferent are known as the inert set (Pizam & Mansfeld 1999). Finally, the unavailable/aware set are those destinations of which the consumer is aware but is unable to purchase due to any number of constraints, such as financial, geographic, legal or other limitations (Woodside & Lysonski 1989). As highlighted previously, as tourists gain experience at other destinations, which are directly or indirectly in competition, their perceptions of quality and overall performance play a significant role in determining repeat business or positive word–of–mouth recommendations (Aktaş, Aksu & Çizel 2007).
Hanlan, Fuller and Wilde (2006) adapt and build on the work of Woodside and Lyonski (1989) in three main areas. First, their model includes the process of strategic planning and management as a central means by which the competitiveness of a destination may be enhanced. Importantly, Figure 2.3 also recognises the need to extend the marketing mix variables as acknowledged in the services marketing literature. In these circumstances, people management becomes a key aspect of service provision, an element often highlighted in destination competitiveness studies.
This section has demonstrated that the choice of a destination experience is a complex area, involving a number of important influences. This chapter will now review the broad array of theories surrounding the notion of competitiveness.

Figure 2.3: A model of traveller leisure destination awareness and choice (Hanlan, Fuller & Wilde 2006, adapted from Woodside & Lysonski 1989).

This section has demonstrated that the choice of a destination experience is a complex area, involving a number of important influences. This chapter will now review the broad array of theories surrounding the notion of competitiveness.
2.3  The Concept of Competitiveness: A Long History of Theory Development

The subject of competitiveness has consumed the attention of researchers, organisations, and policy makers for as long as there have been social, economic, and political units (Porter 1990). There have been persistent efforts to understand the forces that explain the questions presented by the progress of some entities and the decline of others (Porter 1990). When Adam Smith introduced economics as a broad science in the eightieth century, he explained:

...when the quantity of any commodity which is brought to market falls short of the effectual demand, all those who are willing to pay the whole value of the rent, wages, and profit, which must be paid in order to bring it thither, cannot be supplied with the quantity which they want. Rather than want it altogether, some of them will be willing to give more. A competition will immediately begin among them (Smith 1776).

In all forms of economic theory, ‘competition’ is a fundamental concept (Eatwell, Milgate & Newman 1987). There has been no shortage of explanations for why some nations, regions or firms are competitive and others are not. Yet these explanations are often conflicting, with such research failing to reach a consensus as to a universally acceptable definition of competitiveness (Feurer & Chaharbaghi 1994). A number of main elements of competition have been advanced in the literature. Scott and Lodge (1985) classify competitiveness as a country’s ability to create, produce and distribute, products and services, both domestically and internationally, while earning rising returns on its resources. Similarly, competitiveness is about producing more and better quality goods and services that are marketed successfully to consumers at home and abroad (Newall 1992).
Feurer and Chaharbaghi (1994, p. 58) argue that:

...competitiveness is relative and not absolute. It depends on shareholder and customer values, [and] financial strength which determines the ability to act and react within the competitive environment and...can only be sustained if an appropriate balance is maintained between these factors.

The European Commission’s Sixth Periodic Report on the Regions (1999, p. 3) defines competitiveness as:

...the ability to produce goods and services which meet the test of international markets, while at the same time maintaining high and sustainable levels of income or, more generally, the ability of (regions) to generate, while being exposed to external competition, relatively high income and employment levels.

In other words, for a region to be competitive, it is important to ensure both quality and quantity of jobs. Such definitions offered in the literature provide both a micro and a macro perspective of competitiveness. From a macro viewpoint, competitiveness is a national concern, by which the ultimate goal is to improve the real income of the community. From this perspective, Dwyer and Kim (2003), whose paper seeks to develop a model of destination competitiveness that will enable comparisons between countries and between tourism sector industries; characterise general competitiveness as a very broad construct encompassing all social, cultural, and economic variables affecting the performance of a nation in international markets. In contrast, the micro–dimension of competitiveness is viewed at the firm level. Firm level competitiveness can be defined as the ability of the firm to design, produce and/or market products superior to those offered by competitors, considering the price and non–price qualities.
Other firm theorists highlight firm resources and the distinctive competencies resulting from these resources as being central to obtaining a sustainable competitive advantage (see Barney 1991; Grant 1991; Prahalad & Hamel 1990). These definitions suggest that competitiveness is a multi-faceted concept. While macro-economists tend to emphasise the national characteristics of competitiveness; micro-economists, management and strategy researchers are often inclined to focus on firm-level factors.

The concept of competitiveness is the result of a long history of thoughts, which has helped to define the various aspects of this more modern and complex concept. Those who have made a decisive contribution to the field of knowledge include early economic theorists Adam Smith, David Ricardo, Joseph Schumpeter and Max Weber, through to contemporary theorists such as Peter Drucker and Michael Porter. The aforementioned provide central arguments in the effort to best depict the underpinnings of economic prosperity for nations, regions or firms, as a means of further developing and conceptualising the notion of ‘competitiveness’. A detailed assessment of competitiveness theories can be found in Appendix One.

2.4 Section Summary

In the previous section (in addition to general reading found in Appendix One), literature concerned with the general notion of competitiveness was investigated. As such, it was established that competitiveness is a multi-faceted concept, drawing its foundation from a wide range of perspectives. A review of business and economic literature on ‘competitiveness’ revealed that no clear definition or model has yet been developed. Further, although frameworks of competitiveness appearing in the wider literature are useful, they do not address the special considerations relevant to
determining ‘destination’ competitiveness (Dwyer & Kim 2003). Accordingly, further investigations (such as this thesis) into the special nature of TDC are required. In the next section, literature pertaining to tourism destination competitiveness is therefore examined.

2.5 Tourism Destination Competitiveness

The discussion of competitiveness in the general economics and business literature has tended to stress competitive advantage, while de-emphasising comparative advantage as a source of international competitiveness. When viewed in a tourism destination context, comparative advantage relates to inherited resources such as climate, scenery, flora, fauna, etc., while competitive advantage relates to created items such as tourism superstructure (that being additional created assets which rest upon general infrastructure and which serve visitor-oriented needs and desires such as hotels, attractions, transport network etc); the quality of management; skills of workers; and government policy (Dwyer & Kim 2003). The extant literature clearly appreciates the importance of both comparative advantage and competitive advantage within the tourism industry, and as such, the importance of understanding the factors that determine the ability of a tourism destination to compete is being increasingly recognised from both a theoretical and managerial perspective (Chon & Mayer 1995; Evans, Fox & Johnson 1995; Faulkner, Oppermann, & Fredline 1999; d’Hauteserre 2000; Hassan 2000; Ritchie, Crouch & Hudson 2001). It is suggested that there is a need for a clearer understanding of the ability of tourism destinations to participate and succeed in an increasingly competitive market (Pearce 1997; Evans, Fox & Johnson 1995; Ritchie, Crouch & Hudson 2001).
The importance, within academic circles, of the concept of destination competitiveness is no more apparent than in two international tourism journals devoting entire issues to the theme of destination competitiveness. The journal ‘Turizam’, in its special issue, Competitiveness in Tourism and Hospitality (Volume 47, Issue 4, 1999), and ‘Tourism Management’ (Volume 21, Issue 1, February 2000) addressed a variety of related concepts including price competitiveness, the role of public administration in destination competitiveness, destination policy, transport and the environment (Dwyer & Kim 2003). Yet, despite this concentration, tourism researchers (see for example Crouch 2007; Dwyer & Kim 2003) observe that we are still some distance from achieving an in–depth level of understanding in respect to destination competitiveness. One of the most pressing research needs is to understand better the relative importance of the attributes of competitiveness (Crouch 2007). Of considerable value is the need to explore the relative importance of these attributes relevant to different tourism contexts. Additional research investigating the relevance or importance of key destination competitiveness indicators to destinations at different stages of development or evolution is therefore warranted, as this area has been totally neglected by tourism researchers to date (Dwyer & Kim 2003).

2.5.1 Concepts and Definitions of Destination Competitiveness

A number of alternative definitions have been presented in the literature. Destination competitiveness has been defined as the ability of a destination to maintain its market position and share and/or improve upon them through time (d’Hauteserre 2000). It has also been defined as a general concept that encompasses price differentials coupled with exchange rate movements, productivity levels of various components of the tourist industry, and qualitative factors affecting the attractiveness or otherwise of a destination (Dwyer, Forsyth & Rao 2001). Destination competitiveness can be viewed
as a destination’s ability to create and integrate value-added products that sustain its resources while maintaining market position relative to competitors (Hassan 2000). Crouch & Ritchie (1999) observed destination competitiveness to be the ability of a destination to provide a high standard of living for its residents – in economic, environmental and quality of life. Tourism destination competitiveness also appears to be linked to the relative ability of a destination to meet visitor needs on various aspects of the tourism experience, or to deliver goods and services that perform better than other destinations on those aspects of the tourism experience considered to be important by tourists (Dwyer & Kim 2003).

2.5.2 Nature and Framework of Destination Competitiveness

Despite numerous definitions (Section 2.5.1), few frameworks have been developed to assess the competitiveness of a destination. Poon (1993) suggests four key principles which destinations must follow if they are to be competitive: put the environment first; make tourism a leading sector; strengthen the distribution channels in the market place; and build a dynamic private sector. While such principles have merit, clearly these principles are too broad and general to be meaningful to tourism stakeholders and policymakers (Dwyer & Kim 2003; Ritchie & Crouch 2003).

Some tourism researchers have affirmed that generic competitiveness models derived by theorists such as Porter may be utilised in a tourism context. For example, Fabricius (2001) applied Porter’s National Advantage Diamond (discussed in detail in Appendix One) to a tourism destination, arguing that various qualities of the tourism industry need to be considered when seeking to understand competitive aspects of a destination. In addition, Porter’s (1979) Framework for Industry Analysis, containing five basic forces – the bargaining power of suppliers, the bargaining power of buyers, the threat
of new entrants to the market, the threat of substitute products or services and the
nature of rivalry among existing firms; has also been utilised (by Ritchie & Crouch
1993) as a foundation for researching destination competitiveness. In 1993, Ritchie
and Crouch developed the Calgary Model of Tourism Competitiveness, arguing that
the nature of economic competitiveness models, such as those advanced by Porter,
appeared to be just as applicable at the destination level (Table 2.1).

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Destination Appeal</th>
<th>Destination Management</th>
<th>Destination Organisation</th>
<th>Destination Information</th>
<th>Destination Efficiency</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>ATTRACT Destination Attractiveness</td>
<td>MANAGER Managerial Efforts</td>
<td>DMO Management organisation capabilities</td>
<td>MIS Internal management information system</td>
<td>IOE Integrity of experience</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>DETER Destination deterrents</td>
<td>MKGT Marketing efforts</td>
<td>ALLIANCE Strategic alliances</td>
<td>RESEARCH Research capabilities</td>
<td>PROD Productivity</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Table 2.1: The Calgary Model of Competitiveness in Tourism – factors of destination competitiveness (Ritchie & Crouch 1993, p. 48).*

Ritchie and Crouch’s (1993) Calgary model recognised 5 key constructs of destination
competitiveness. These constructs are underpinned by a number of destination related
factors. At the outset, Ritchie and Crouch identify a destination’s appeal to be a factor
of tourism destination competitiveness, referring to the destination attractors and
deterrents. Attractors include eleven elements: natural features, climate, cultural and
social characteristics, general infrastructure, basic services infrastructure, tourism
superstructure, access and transportation facilities, attitudes towards tourists, cost/price
levels, economic and social ties, and uniqueness. Among destination deterrents are
security and safety (e.g. political instability, health and medical concerns, poor quality
of sanitation; laws and regulations such as visa requirements). These factors can act as
a barrier to visiting a particular destination.
The Calgary model further emphasises that a carefully selected and well executed program of destination management can serve to improve the tourism competitiveness of a destination. In particular, marketing efforts have the potential to enhance the perceived appeal (e.g. image) of a destination, whilst managerial initiatives can strengthen the competitive position of a destination (Ritchie & Crouch 1993). The model also argues that destination competitiveness can be enhanced through management organisation capabilities and strategic alliances (Mihalic 2000). Additionally, the use of detailed information systems is advanced as a basis for decision making, where internal management information provides the ability to better manage the performance of destination's product. This aspect of the model is closely linked to a research function, as research enables a destination to adapt to changing market conditions (Ritchie & Crouch 1993). The final construct in the model is Destination Efficiency, which draws on the integrity of experience, relating to the ability of the destination to provide an appropriate (expected and promised) experience.

The second set of efficiency factors are termed by Ritchie and Crouch as ‘productivity’ variables. These include variables which are hypothesised to develop skills and/or conditions which can increase the quantity and quality of the output of tourism experiences for a given level of resource input, such as training staff (Ritchie & Crouch 1993).

Chon and Mayer (1995) suggested enhancements to the five constructs in the Calgary model. They proposed the inclusion of sub factors ‘substitutes’ for the appeal dimension, ‘entry/exit barriers’ for the management dimension, ‘organisational design’ for the organisation dimension, ‘technology’ for the information dimension, and ‘value’ for the efficiency dimension. Additional frameworks have also been developed, such as Faulkner, Oppermann and Fredline (1999); and Murphy, Pritchard and Smith (2000), whose simplified model (Figure 2.4) highlights the visitor’s intention to return.
to a region. Murphy et al. (2000) argued that the perception of quality and value, and the effects of the environment, in addition to products and infrastructure; are surmised to have a direct affect on repeat purchase intention of tourists.

![Figure 2.4: Murphy, Pritchard and Smith (2000) Model of Destination Competitiveness.](image)

Hassan (2000) introduced another model, providing a framework of environmentally sustainable competitiveness factors. In doing so, Hassan examined the relationships among stakeholders involved in creating and integrating value-added products to sustain resources while maintaining market position relative to other competitors. He criticised traditional competitiveness models as providing limited analysis in the context of tourism. He argued that the indicators that most competitiveness models include are necessary, but not sufficient, to measure the competitiveness of tourism destinations because of the diverse nature of the tourism industry. ‘In the tourism context, the multiplicity of industries involved in creating and sustaining destinations requires the development of a competitiveness model that examines the extent of cooperation needed for the future of competitiveness’ (Hassan 2000, p. 239).

Dwyer, Livaic and Mellor (2003) in their model of destination competitiveness (illustrated in Figure 2.5), brought together the main elements of the wider competitiveness literature (Porter 1990; Moon & Peery 1995; Narashima 2000;
 Waheeduzzan & Ryans 1996), whilst incorporating elements of destination competitiveness as defined by other researchers (Buhalis 2000; Hassan 2000; Mihalic 2000). Their research aimed firstly to develop a model of destination competitiveness; and second, to set out the results of a survey (with tourism industry stakeholders), based on indicators associated with the model, to determine the competitiveness of Australia as a tourist destination. The model contains many of the variables and category headings identified by Ritchie and Crouch in their seminal competitiveness research, but do differ in a number of aspects. In particular, the present model explicitly recognises demand conditions as an important determinant of destination competitiveness. It also explicitly recognises that destination competitiveness is not an ultimate end of policy making but is an intermediate goal towards the objective of regional or national economic prosperity (Dwyer & Kim 2003).

![Figure 2.5: Dwyer, Livaic and Mellor’s (2003) Integrated Model of Destination Competitiveness.](image)

Through a backdrop of persistent discussion, debate and research, Ritchie and Crouch continued to examine the notion of destination competitiveness. Over a number of years, they further refined the concepts and propositions underlying the Calgary model, to a point where it has developed to its current form (Ritchie & Crouch 2003). This more complex model has some 36 elements divided into five categories with relatively complex interrelationships.
It is clear throughout the literature that the most detailed work undertaken by tourism researchers on overall tourism competitiveness is that of Crouch and Ritchie (1995; 1999) and Ritchie and Crouch (1993; 2000; 2003). They examined the applicability to tourism destinations of competitiveness research and models in other contexts spanning companies and products, national industries, and national economies, as well as competitiveness related to service industries. Claiming that, in absolute terms, the most competitive destination is one which brings about the greatest success; that is, the greatest well-being for its residents on a sustainable basis, Ritchie and Crouch’s evolved model incorporated substantial updates from its first public presentation in 1993. The model (Figure 2.6) has five main components: Core Resources & Attractions, Supporting Factors & Resources, Destination Management, Destination Policy, Planning & Development and Qualifying Determinants. Each is further broken down into subcategories.

A survey and analysis of the impact of broad elements identified in Ritchie and Crouch’s (2003) model, undertaken by Crouch (2007), found the ten most important attributes to be physiography and climate, market ties, culture and history, tourism superstructure, safety and security, cost/value, accessibility, awareness/image, location and infrastructure. The scope of this project, the first major assessment of this comprehensive model; however, did not enable consumers to be directly surveyed. A convenience sample of 83 individuals participated in the project. In broad terms, two groups of ‘experts’ were involved; namely, managers within some form of destination management organisation (DMO) (such as national tourism administrations, state or provincial tourism offices, regional tourism organisations, convention and visitor bureau, and similar types of bodies) and tourism researchers (Crouch 2007). As identified in Chapter One, it is argued within the TDC literature (see for example Hudson, Ritchie & Timur 2004; Dwyer & Kim 2003) that components of TDC should
be measured by direct consumer surveys, rather than indirect measures. However, few studies seek to address aspects of TDC with actual consumers, an undertaking clearly recognised as an important building block in the further practical advancement of this important topic (Dwyer et al. 2003).
Figure 2.10: Ritchie and Crouch (2003) Model of Destination Competitiveness and Sustainability.
2.5.3 Attributes of Destination Competitiveness

Underpinning TDC models and frameworks (as depicted in the previous section) are numerous indicators that can be used to measure the competitiveness of any given destination. Due to the multidimensional nature of such competitiveness models, researchers highlight the importance of identifying those individual attributes or indicators that determine the competitiveness of tourist destinations. Attributes related to price competitiveness are usually regarded as one of the most important factors for a given destination. Most empirical studies on tourism demand (see for example Durbarry & Sinclair 2003; Lim 1997; Song et al. 2000) find that price has a significant impact on tourism demand. Dwyer et al. (2000; 2001; 2003) have provided the most detailed studies of tourism price competitiveness published to date, highlighting that the changing costs in particular destinations relative to others, are regarded as some of the most important economic influences on destination shares of total travel. It is therefore important to pay particular attention to the price competitiveness of a destination, as compared to that of its competitors, if that tourist destination is to prosper (Dwyer et al. 2000). Nonetheless, whilst the economic performance of a destination is an important dimension of tourism competitiveness, it should only be viewed as one dimension.

Other authors consider environmental attributes to be important in determining the competitiveness of tourist destinations, arguing that maintaining the integrity of a destination’s environment is vital for the development of the tourism sector (Pizam 1991; Inskeep 1991; Middleton 1997; Mieczkowski 1995). In its broadest sense, the term environment refers to the physical (that includes natural and manmade components), social and cultural environment of the destination (Mihalic 2000). Whilst relatively new on the scene, the importance of environmental attributes of
destination competitiveness is slowly growing (Ritchie & Crouch 2003). As highlighted in Section 2.5.2, Hassan (2000) introduced a new model of competitiveness that focuses on environmental sustainability factors associated with travel destinations. Hassan identifies four key determinants of market competitiveness, being: comparative advantage (includes those attributes associated with both the macro and micro environments that are critical to market competitiveness); demand orientation (the destination’s ability to respond to the changing nature of the market demand); industry structure (existence or absence of an organised tourism–related industry); and environmental commitment (the destination’s commitment to the environment). Underlying his model, Hassan (2000, p. 239) stated that ‘a global perspective to understand key determinants of market competitiveness is critical for the tourism industry to sustain its growth and vitality’. It is therefore no surprise that it is becoming increasingly important to acknowledge the full cost of tourist visitations in practical terms, as destinations who practice wise resource stewardship should rise in the formal evaluation of their competitiveness (Ritchie & Crouch 2003).

Another aspect of destination competitiveness considered by tourism researchers relates to quality. Go and Govers (2000) reviewed quality management for tourist destinations as a means of achieving competitiveness. Their study discovered that in order for destinations, which are becoming increasingly reliant on the delivery of quality products and services, to meet the challenge of competitors and to increase market share, they must maintain a high quality supply structure in order to sustain market position. The notion of quality has also been developed in other areas. Newall (1992) identifies that the development of tourism destinations also appears to be centred on human development, growth and improved quality of life (Newall 1992). Accordingly, destination competitiveness is seen by some as being associated with the economic prosperity, or quality of life of residents of a destination (Buhalis 2000;
Crouch & Ritchie 1999). That is, destinations compete in the tourism market primarily to foster the economic prosperity of residents. Further, the service dimension of quality has been identified as a vital component of the overall tourism experience. Efforts must be made to ensure quality of service and there is now recognition of the need to take a total quality of service approach to visitor satisfaction (Dwyer & Kim 2003). Initiatives to enhance the quality of the experience provided by a tourism destination include: establishment of standards for tourism facilities and performance of personnel; programmes to objectively and subjectively monitor the quality of experiences provided; and monitoring of resident attitudes towards visitors and towards development of the tourism sector (Dwyer & Kim 2003).

It can be seen from the preceding discussion that a number of individual variables (or attributes) appear to be linked to the theory of destination competitiveness. Other objectively measured variables such as visitor numbers, as well as subjectively measured variables such as culture and heritage, and value for money in destination tourism experiences, have been identified as having the potential to affect the competitive standing of a destination. In developing a set of tourism–specific items, it is recognised that there is no single set of competitiveness indicators that applies to all destinations at all times (Dwyer, Livaic & Mellor 2003). A selected summary of previous research into TDC (Table 2.2) indicates clearly the variety of individual attributes that have been adopted by researchers in the field, although some items are common to many studies (Enright & Newton 2004).
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Author &amp; Date</th>
<th>Region of Study</th>
<th>Results</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Kozak &amp; Rimmington</td>
<td>Turkey</td>
<td>Friendliness of local people, value for money, attitude of staff, safety and security, local transport services, natural environment. Quality of restaurants and bars, responsiveness to customer complaints, food, facilities on beaches, variety of tourist attractions, quality of tourism information, shopping facilities, cleanliness of beaches, nightlife and entertainment, facilities for children, accommodation, hygiene and sanitation, sporting facilities and activities.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dwyer, Forsyth &amp; Rao</td>
<td>19 competing destinations across four continents</td>
<td>Various attributes of price competitiveness, including food and drink, accommodation, shopping, entertainment, airfares, taxis, public transport, organised tours etc.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Yuksel &amp; Yuksel</td>
<td>Turkey</td>
<td>67 indicators based above food, service quality, hygiene and accommodation, hospitality, tourism facilities, beach and environment, price and value, entertainment, quietness, convenience, communication, security, water sports, transportation, airport services, weather.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dwyer, Mistilis, Forsyth &amp; Rao</td>
<td>Australia (MICE segment)</td>
<td>Various attributes of price competitiveness.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dwyer, Livaic &amp; Mellor</td>
<td>Australia and Korea</td>
<td>83 competitiveness indicators across 6 categories of Inherited resources, created resources, demand conditions, supporting factors, situational conditions, and destination management.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Baloglu, Pekcan, Chen &amp; Santos</td>
<td>USA</td>
<td>Shopping facilities, entertainment, sightseeing opportunities, quality of restaurants, spectator events, quality of gaming facilities, standard hygiene and cleanliness, quality of lodging, safety and security, reliable weather, resort atmosphere, variety of natural attraction, affordable room rates, value for money, suitability for different types of vacations.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Saayman &amp; Du Plessis</td>
<td>South Africa</td>
<td>Location, dependencies on support services, safety, value for money, international marketing, availability of information, quality of service, geographical features, marketing connections, accessibility, infra- and superstructure, historical &amp; cultural resources, climate, availability/quality of accommodation, sports/recreational opportunities, scenery, food, entertainment, uniqueness of local people’s life, historical attractions, museums, cultural attractions, ability to communicate, festivals, shopping, attitude towards tourists, public transportation, foreign exchange, friends and family, African branding.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 2.2: Attributes listed or utilised in selected works on destination competitiveness.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Study</th>
<th>Country/Region</th>
<th>Attributes</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Global Insight 2004</td>
<td>Canada</td>
<td>Arts and culture, museums, historic sites, visual arts, art galleries, environment and built form, physical setting, waterfronts &amp; beaches, urban amenities, parks and green spaces, shopping areas, business districts, general building architecture, specific structures of interest, entertainment, amusement and theme parks, accommodation and food.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Enright &amp; Newton 2005</td>
<td>Asia Pacific</td>
<td>Safety, cuisine, tourism attractions, visual appeal, well known landmarks, nightlife, different culture, special events, interesting architecture, festivals, climate, local way of life, notable history, museums and galleries, music and performances.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lee &amp; King 2006</td>
<td>Taiwan</td>
<td>69 indicators derived from existing TDC literature.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Garau–Taberner 2007</td>
<td>Canaries, Mainland Spain, France, the Balearics and Italy.</td>
<td>Accommodation, cultural activities, festivals, exhibitions, nightlife, atmosphere; leisure parks, climate; local cuisine, a less expensive destination; getting back to nature (hiking etc.), the local lifestyle, easy access from your country to the destination, facilities for children and/or older people, easy access to information about the destination, cleanliness and hygiene, scenery; beaches; sports and sporting activities, the presence of friends and/or relatives, interesting towns and villages/cities, safety and security, tranquillity.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bahar &amp; Kozak 2007</td>
<td>Mediterranean basin</td>
<td>23 attributes based primarily on previous research by the authors (see Kozak &amp; Rimmington 1999; Kozak 2003; Kozak 2004).</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 2.2: Attributes listed or utilised in selected works on destination competitiveness (continuation).

### 2.5.4 Tourism Destination Competitiveness in Regional Destinations

As acknowledged by Dwyer, Livaic and Mellor (2003, p. 62), and evidenced in Table 2.2, ‘for any given element of destination competitiveness, any number of indicators may be employed as measures. And for any given destination, different indicators of competitiveness will be relevant’. Whilst this study does not seek to talk specifically to competitiveness challenges faced by regional destinations in Australia, regionally based destinations (such as the Coffs Coast and Great Lakes tourism regions) are often
seen to face specific challenges when viewed against other destinations (particularly those destinations considered urban). Regional communities are often disadvantaged in their attempts to harness tourism for its economic, social, and environmental value (Carson, Richards & Jacobsen 2004). Problems commonly faced by regional destinations relate to accessibility, infrastructure; inter– and intra–organisation relationships and representation; training, communications technology, investment, product development and quality, and environmental sustainability (Kelly 2005).

The most frequently cited issue of accessibility in regional Australian tourism destinations is the rising cost of petrol and the impacts, direct and indirect, on involvement in leisure travel (Kelly 2005). The dependence on the drive market is generally higher in regional, and especially in remote, tourism destinations, and that the propensity to take holidays is diminished by the reduction in disposable income associated with increased travel costs in daily life (Kelly 2005). Second, the relatively new presence of reduced cost airfares to regional destinations (e.g. since the early 2000s, the advent of low cost carriers Virgin Blue, Jetstar and Tiger Airways has brought fierce price competition to regional Australian cities and other regional destinations), has lead to a greater regional dispersion of domestic and international tourists (Koo, Wu & Dwyer 2009). For those regions in the vicinity of low cost gateways, benefits are recognised. However, the consequences of substitution toward air travel can be detrimental to peripheral destinations. Substitution away from ground modes implies bypassing smaller destinations located between major origin markets and popular domestic leisure destinations. A destination such as Port Macquarie, a seaside town located between Sydney and Coffs Harbour, in New South Wales, is one example provided by Koo et al. (2009).
Another key challenge facing tourism development in regional Australia is the lack of critical mass, with a particular focus on suppliers (Carson, Richards & Jacobsen 2004). Attendees to the 2005 Australian Regional Tourism Convention identified a lack of professionalism among those involved in tourism operations (Kelly 2005). Examples such as repetitive and unimaginative product development, and an oversupply of bed and breakfast and guesthouse accommodation are attributed by some to the presence of ‘backyard operators’ and those choosing involvement in tourism as part of a lifestyle change (Kelly 2005). The need for training and education is therefore recognised.

Service levels and products within regional destinations also need to mirror the promise made by such locations. Difficulties in recruiting and retaining staff are affected by a range of factors which are prevalent across the regional economies of Australia (Tourism Victoria 2007). Increasingly it is evident that the rapid turnover of professional and experienced staff can lead to a loss of knowledge of conditions, people, opportunities, needs, challenges and cultural differences in regional locations (Haslam McKenzie 2007). Many businesses and public–sector organisations throughout Australia find it difficult to attract, let alone retain, staff. This problem is exacerbated in regional Australian locations which are commonly removed from the attractions of the cities as well as the comprehensive infrastructure and services that are available in high population centres (Haslam McKenzie 2007; Brennan–Horley, Connell & Gibson 2007). Somewhat predictably, the need for product development and infrastructure in regional areas was listed as a ‘top 5’ priority by stakeholders attending the 2005 Tourism Futures Conference (Roy Morgan Research 2005).

In summing up, whilst often portrayed as one of only a few effective development options to respond to the transformation of regional and rural areas in Australia, as
observed in this section, a number of specific issues and concerns affect the tourism sector in these areas (Pforr 2007).

2.6 Chapter Summary and Theoretical Research Issues

This chapter provided an overview of the theory of competitiveness. First, the concept of competitiveness within the social sciences was discussed, with a view to developing a structure for the research of competitiveness within the field of tourism. Moreover, this chapter reviewed literature discussing the theory of tourism destination competitiveness. Numerous approaches for defining, measuring and evaluating competitiveness of tourist destinations were considered, with relevant models, frameworks and broad indicators identified. This chapter clearly identified that only limited empirical work (encompassing the views of both tourism stakeholders and consumers) has occurred within the TDC literature.

Many practical stakeholder–based TDC studies (see for example Omerzel 2005; Enright & Newton 2004, 2005; Hudson et al. 2004; Dwyer et al. 2003) highlight the need to also incorporate consumer input and perceptions, in addition to findings and feedback from industry stakeholders, in future TDC research undertakings.

In order to identify a set of tourism–specific items recognised to apply to regional Australian destinations (such as the Coffs Coast and Great Lakes tourism regions), at least as a first step, a study based on the views of local tourism stakeholders (who are acutely aware of the competitive challenges faced by specific destinations) seems to be a sensible starting point in distinguishing critical attributes of destination competitiveness (Crouch 2007). In addressing this feature of the research, the following research question is posited:
Research Question 1a: What critical attributes affect the competitiveness of tourism destinations from a destination stakeholder’s perspective?

Such practitioners are viewed within the literature as an appropriate population to respond to the initial stage of this research (Crouch 2007). ‘The collective experience, knowledge, and insights of tourism destination managers, researchers and others who have spent time addressing the challenge of what makes a destination competitive, can provide a useful starting point for an analysis such as this’ (Crouch 2007, p. 7). Enright and Newton (2005) also draw attention to the fact that it is not uncommon for destination factors to be evaluated by practitioners (see for example Evans & Chon 1989; Faulkner, Oppermann & Fredline 1999; Yoon 2002; March 2004), with their research suggesting that their views do constitute accurate measures of competitiveness. In addition, Gearing, Swart and Var (1974) in particular argued the case for using respondents who were widely experienced in dealing with tourists rather than tourists themselves. They suggested that such ‘experts’ would be able to speak for the tourists, given their experience, and that each expert opinion would be representative of a large group of tourists.

Nonetheless, in making a substantial contribution to the TDC literature, this research also reacts to the call (Omerzel 2005; Enright & Newton 2004, 2005; Hudson et al. 2004; Dwyer et al. 2003) to consider the views of actual consumers. The inclusion of consumer views, which are first considered in the following research question, can be expected to provide a richer interpretation of the notion of tourism destination competitiveness.
Research Question 1b: What critical attributes affect the competitiveness of tourism destinations from a consumer perspective?

However, for any strategic or competitive plan for a destination to succeed, it is vital to understand the dynamics of change and development within a destination (Cooper 2002). Clearly, destinations need to take into consideration the phase of development they are in, as well as the patterns of destination life cycle experienced in competing destinations, and adopt their strategic marketing accordingly (Buhalis 2000). Yet research seeking to identify attributes, and their relative importance, contributing to the competitiveness of destinations at different levels of development is an area that has been ignored by tourism researchers to date (Dwyer & Kim 2003; Cooper 2002). By integrating a destination’s development cycle with the concept of destination competitiveness, this has the potential to assist destination marketing and management organisations to better devise appropriate management strategies for their destinations as they reach various stages of the life cycle. For example, given that infrastructure development of tourism destination areas has implications for the types of tourists that will be attracted (Ryan 1991), it is critical, therefore, to understand both the stage and roots of tourism development when developing a competitive strategy for a destination (Buhalis 2000). Thus the next chapter explores the second broad theory of destination development and evolution, where further research questions are proposed.
CHAPTER III LITERATURE REVIEW

Destination Development and Evolution

3.1 The Development and Evolution of Tourism Destinations

The evolution of tourism areas is of critical importance to destination planners, managers and tourism stakeholders. The main purpose of this chapter is to provide a theoretical overview of evolutionary themes, and to assess the significance of descriptive frameworks utilised within tourism evolution research. This chapter is divided into three main sections. Discussion will initially centre on the early writings of Christaller (1963), Cohen (1972) and Plog (1974), all of whom play a critical role in the establishment of contemporary life cycle theory. The theoretical foundation of Butler’s (1980) Tourism Area Life Cycle (TALC) is then reviewed, with advantages and limitations of using the model, and indicators attached to the model identified. Findings of existing TALC research, both internationally and within an Australian regional context, are then assessed as a further examination as to the usefulness of Butler’s (1980) TALC framework in the context of destination competitiveness research.

3.2 Tourism Destination Evolution: Early Writings

Some of the earliest writings on modern tourism highlighted elements of tourism destination evolution. Likorish and Kershaw (1958, cited in Choy 1992, p. 26) described how the growth of seaside resorts in Britain was affected when wealthy visitors were replaced by middle income and eventually low income visitors. Christaller (1963) observed that sites of tourism and locations follow a relatively consistent process of evolution – from discovery to growth to decline, a concept
closely aligned with the contemporary tourism evolution life cycle. Christaller speculated that painters were the first people to discover a future resort area in that they seek out untouched unusual places to paint and the place then slowly develops into an artist colony. As the colony would grow, this would see existing buildings transformed into accommodation dwellings for tourists. At this point, the artists leave the area and seek other locations (Berry 2001).

Plog (1974), in a study relating to airline marketing, suggested that we can visualise a destination moving across the spectrum, however gradually or slowly, but far too often toward the potential of its own demise. This scenario is based on the observation that, as a destination evolves, it becomes more accessible to a wider market, facilities for servicing tourists expand and, eventually, it attracts visitors who are both different and more numerous. According to Plog, therefore, destinations contain the ‘seeds of their own destruction’ (cited in Russell & Faulkner 1998, p. 96), in that ‘most destinations follow a predictable but uncontrolled development pattern for birth to maturity and finally to old age and decline’ (Plog 2001, p. 18).

Plog further sought to investigate how personality influenced travel preferences. Based on a 1967 study involving 16 travel industry clients, Plog labelled a number of personality profiles. Those he categorised ‘psychocentrics’ (or dependables) were seen to be cautious and conservative in their daily lives, restrictive in spending discretionary income, preferring popular brand name products, and liking structure and routine. At the other end of the spectrum are those individuals curious about wanting to explore the world, tending to make decisions quickly and easily, are likely to spend discretionary income more freely, and look to their own judgement when making decisions. These individuals were termed ‘allocentric’ (or venturers) (Plog 2001). Plog’s psychographic personality types are illustrated in Figure 3.1.
Just as venturers are most interested in new products and services, they also like to seek out new, undiscovered destinations to visit. They require few support services, and seek new experiences which may be primitive or unrefined. Such travellers are therefore linked to a discovery phase of a destination’s evolution. As one moves through the scale, the personality traits of the individual tourist become more conservative, where eventually, tourists are deemed to be set in their travel habits, leading to mass tourism (Plog 2001).

In a similar vein to Plog, Cohen’s (1972) review of the sociology of international tourism also categorised tourists into character types. Four character types: drifter, explorer, individual mass tourist, and organised mass tourist; were distinguished by Cohen. A ‘drifter’ ventures furthest away from the beaten track and from the accustomed ways of life in their home country. They shun any kind of connection with the tourist establishment, and consider the ordinary tourist experience as phony. Furthermore, the drifter has no fixed itinerary, nor do they possess well-defined goals of travel (Cohen 1972). Cohen’s ‘explorer’ is comparable to a drifter in several ways,
in that they too try to get off the beaten track, but do seek comfortable accommodation and reliable transportation. Explorers arrange their trips alone, and try to associate with the people they visit, and endeavour to speak the local language. Much like the drifter, this type of tourist dares to leave their ‘environmental bubble’ (Cohen 1972).

The organised mass tourist and the individual mass tourist complete Cohen’s categorisation. The organised mass tourist is the least adventurous of the four types. They remain largely within their ‘environmental bubble’ throughout their trip, and tend to buy package-tours, or elect to plan their itinerary in great detail prior to departing. Familiarity is at its maximum, novelty at a minimum. Similar to the previous role, the individual mass tourist have a propensity to travel but not in an entirely pre-planned fashion. They retain a certain amount of control over his or her time, and are not bound by formal groups. Their experiences will be similar to the organised mass tourist, yet they do seek more novelty in their travels (Cohen 1972).

Although the work of Plog (1974, 2001) and Cohen (1972) has more to do with psychology than tourism life cycles, it is relevant here because Butler (1980) used these works, especially Cohen’s, in formulating his well-known tourism area life cycle, sometimes referred to as the resort life cycle theory (Berry 2001).

Another approach to theorising tourism regions taken by Doxey (1975, cited in Berry 2001, p. 34) revolved around two regional studies on Barbados and Niagara-on-the-lake (Ontario). Both studies concluded that there were ‘reciprocating impacts’ between tourists and host residents which could be measured as varying degrees of ‘irritations’ (Berry 2001). Doxey’s study is viewed as an early contribution to life cycle theory development in that it attempted to demonstrate a cycle involving tourist-host relations. Quite a number of publications deal with relations between locals and tourists (for
example Smith 1977; Pearce 1982; Sharpley 1994; Brunt & Courtney 1999; Pizam, Uriely & Reichel 2000). The concept of this changing relationship was subsequently utilised by Butler as one of the stage criteria in TALC identification (Berry 2001).

3.3 Tourist Area Life Cycle (TALC) of Evolution

The concept of a life cycle found its origins in biology. For example, the human life cycle includes birth, adolescence, middle age or maturity and death (Ayers & Steger 1985). The concept of a product life cycle (PLC), seen as a means of explaining the growth process of a product, first appeared in the marketing literature in the late 1960s (see Arndt 1967; Cox Jr. 1967). Since that time, the concept of a product life cycle has been widely discussed. Polli and Cook (1969) note that several early writers used the PLC as a basis for recommendations about the content of marketing programs at different stages of the life cycle, in that is was considered to be an important planning and policy formulation tool. ‘For example, the identification of a stage in the life cycle is thought useful because it permits evaluation of a series of tactical and strategic considerations bearing on product policy’ (Polli & Cook 1969, p. 386).

The PLC is a quantitative expression of unit sales of a specific product item, category or class; from introduction to market demise (Harrell & Taylor 1981). As viewed by Polli and Cook (1969), the PLC is a time dependent model, which hypothesises that sales of a product follow a consistent sequence of stages, beginning with introduction and proceeding to growth, then to maturity, and eventually into decline. The principal components of the model are 1) changes in sales, 2) stage identification, and 3) sequential sales behaviour. Numerous forces have been proposed to influence both the sequence and duration of the PLC, such as environmental uncertainty (Anderson & Paine 1975), market share (Buzzell, Gale & Sultan 1975), price (Wind 1981), access to
distribution channels (Rumelt 1979), buyer needs and product quality (Hofer 1975). The identification of a commonly hypothesied product life cycle (and subsequent stages) is illustrated in Figure 3.2.

![Figure 3.2: A commonly hypothesised Product Life Cycle (Polli & Cook 1969, p. 340).](image)

In 1980, Richard Butler proposed that the change in visitor arrivals to tourism destinations appeared consistent with the curve of the PLC. Here, the numbers of visitors replaces sales of the product. Butler’s model, arguably the most famous attempt to model the tourism development process, is commonly referred to as the Tourism Area Life Cycle, or TALC. The TALC model signified a fundamental turning point in resort cycle research, showing the development of a destination in terms of the series of life stages defined by infrastructures and number of visitors (Toh, Khan & Koh 2001). The stages through which Butler suggested tourism destinations pass, are illustrated in Figure 3.3.

The *exploration* stage is commonly characterised by small numbers of tourists, particular those visitors who follow irregular travel patterns. Butler specifically
Chapter III – Destination Development and Evolution

highlights Plog’s ‘allocentrics’ and Cohen’s ‘explorers’ as featuring predominantly within this stage. During this time, there are generally no specific facilities provided for tourists at the destination. Therefore, the use of local, existing facilities by tourists is typically high in this circumstance (Butler 1980).

As numbers of visitors increase, local residents will enter Butler’s involvement stage and begin to provide facilities primarily for visitors. Advertising specifically to attract tourists is instigated, and a tourist season can be expected to emerge. Furthermore, pressures put upon governments and public agencies to provide or improve transport and other facilities for visitors start to intensify. Next, the development stage reflects a well-defined tourist market area, shaped in part by heavy advertising in tourist-generating areas (Butler 1980). As the development stage proceeds, local involvement and control of development tend to decline. Some locally provided facilities may have disappeared, being superseded by larger, more elaborate facilities, particularly visitor accommodation. Natural and cultural attractions are consistently being developed and

**Figure 3.3**: Hypothetical evolution of a tourist area (Butler 2006, p. 5).
marketed, with changes in the physical appearance of the area very noticeable. Butler again refers to the work of Plog and Cohen, in that the type of tourist found within this stage of the life cycle representing the ‘mid–centrics’ of Plog's classification, or Cohen's ‘institutionalised’ tourist.

Fourthly, as the consolidation stage is entered, the rate of increase in numbers of visitors beings to decline, although the total numbers of tourists will still increase. Tourism now forms a major part of the area's economy. Wide–reaching marketing and advertising will continue to extend the visitor season. The large numbers of visitors and the facilities provided for them may arouse some opposition and discontent among permanent residents, particularly those not involved in the tourist industry in any way, resulting in some deprivation and restrictions upon their, residents, activities (Butler 1980).

As the tourism area enters the stagnation stage the peak numbers of visitors will have been achieved, with capacity levels typically reached (or exceeded). The area in question will have a well–established image, but it will no longer be in fashion. There will be a heavy reliance on repeat visitation and on conventions and similar forms of traffic. The type of visitor can also be expected to change towards the ‘organised mass tourist’ identified by Cohen and the ‘psychocentric’ described by Plog (Butler 1980). Following the stagnation stage, a destination may enter a decline stage, where the destination will not be able to compete with newer attractions and so will face a declining market. Tourist facilities disappear as the area becomes less attractive to tourists and the viability of other tourist facilities becomes more questionable. Ultimately, the area may become a veritable tourist slum or lose its tourist function completely. On the other hand, rejuvenation of the destination may occur, although it
is almost certain that this stage will never be reached without a complete change in the attractions on which tourism is based (Butler 1980).

Butler’s seminal paper sparked off much research work in relation to the TALC concept (Cooper 1994). Indeed, Butler’s (1980) TALC is potentially one of the most discussed paradigms in the tourism literature, with Oppermann (1998) noting that Butler’s original paper is a serious contender of the most cited tourism article to date.

Understanding the sequence of events or phases that mark the history of the destination can also assist in bringing a destination’s inherent potential and its impediments into sharper focus (Faulkner & Tideswell 2005). There is little doubt that Butler's TALC has proven to be a useful descriptive tool for analysing the development of destinations and the evolution of their markets (see for example Cooper & Jackson 1989; Haywood 1986; Morgan 1991; Weaver 1990; Agarwal 1994; Cooper 1990; Wall 1982). Attempts by researchers to review and test Butler’s model have been a long–standing feature of the tourism literature over a period of more than 30 years. The following section highlights this research effort.

3.3.1 TALC as an Evolution Framework

3.3.1.1 The Application of TALC: An Overview of Existing Research

Existing TALC research has focused on two distinct positions: 1) seeking to assess the applicability of the TALC model; or 2) looking to redevelop the TALC model to incorporate different issues (Argwal 1997). Berry (2001) highlights that those researchers attempting to validate the model (in its original form) are seen to take a long–term perspective, and consider the whole TALC from the inception of the resort area to the present time. Within the latter stream of inquiry, researchers have tended to
use a cross-sectional technique, where a number of resort regions (or destinations) have been compared with each other.

Hovinen’s (1981) work on Lancaster County, Pennsylvania is likely the first use and examination of Butler's TALC model. Hovinen concluded that Lancaster County departed significantly from the TALC in the later stages, however, the model remained useful. Hovinen raised two critical conclusions within his work. The first and most recognised conclusion is that his case site was categorised by the co-existence of growth, stagnation, decline, and rejuvenation stages. Thus, the resort cycle model is clearly destination specific, a view heavily supported in the TALC literature. Hovinen, in recognising this feature, substituted the consolidation and stagnation phase with a stage termed ‘maturity’.

The second outcome of Hovinen’s application of Butler's model concerned the decline stage of Butler’s (1980) TALC model. While carrying capacity is central to Butler's premise for decline, Hovinen poses three additional ‘interrelated factors’: relative location, diversity of the tourist base, and effectiveness of planning to alleviate problems that arise. The first two factors point to why the decline stage may be less significant at the time of Hovinen's first work on Lancaster County. In 2002, Hovinen revisited the issue of TALC in the Lancaster County, where he conceptually proposed that chaos and complexity theory, which considers the role of entrepreneurs in creating conditions for change in the evolutionary cycle, may provide useful insights to complement Butler’s model (Lagiewski 2006). Haywood (1986), on noting the high degree of acceptance of Butler’s life cycle concept at this time, sought to review the potential use of the model as a tool for the planning and management of tourist areas. ‘If the tourist–area life cycle is to be used as a management or planning tool, however,
it must first be made operational’ (Haywood 1986, p. 155). Haywood considered the following as operationally important to the usefulness of Butler's model:

1. **Unit of analysis**: Haywood’s first issue revolves around defining the tourist area under question. He states that defining the unit of analysis is a critical step in using Butler’s (1980) life cycle model. Agarwal’s (1994, 1997) emphasis on the importance of the unit of analysis, or geographical scale, supports this principle.

2. **Relevant market**: The next point addressed by Haywood (1986) is the issue of the number of tourists used as the Y variable in the life cycle curve. The concern presented was that the total number of tourists over time may represent different markets, and it may be more helpful to consider them by different market segments. For example, Lundtorp and Wanhill (2001) examine the TALC theory, with the key consideration of various segments or tourist markets, and conclude that the life cycle curve can only be representative of the destination if all visitors to the destination are repeaters. Lundtorp and Wanhill (2001) concluded that once non-repeaters are included in the market, the lifecycle model could diverge from the original curve generated by Butler (1980). France (1991), in his study of Barbados, clearly revealed that the island was split into different market segments, and was subsequently at different stages of the TALC as a result.

3. **Pattern and stages of the TALC**: The third operational requirement posed by Haywood (1986) questioned whether the pattern of the S–shaped logistic curve is the only useful curve, and suggested looking at other evolutionary curves. Whilst the traditional S–shaped curve, first popularised by Pearl (1925), is frequently considered the most applicable to describing the tourism product life cycle (Choy 1992), some authors have modified and challenged the shape of the cycle. For example, Hart,
Casserly and Lawless (1984) demonstrated eight product life cycles in the hospitality industry which do not conform to the conventional S–shaped curve. Hovinen (1981) and Stansfield (1978) also identified life cycle curves dissimilar to Butler’s original depiction.

4. **Identification of the areas shape in the life cycle**: The fourth operational requirement is determining the stage of a tourist area and when an area has moved from one state to another. Identifying the length of time of each stage and the exact point at which a tourist area shifts from one stage to another is closely related to the use of the TALC concept for forecasting purposes (Haywood 1986).

5. **Determination of the unit of measurement**: Haywood questioned whether using the change in the number of tourists to determine changes in the life cycle would provide the most appropriate answers. For example, Strapp’s (1988) study of Sauble Beach, Ontario, Canada proposed that instead of measuring pure numbers of visitors over time, the use of a ‘person–day’ concept be used, which takes into consideration the visitors length of stay. Strapp proposed that in the early stages of Butler's (1980) cycle, the length of stay is at its greatest and declines toward the stagnation stage over time (Lagiewski 2006).

6. **Determination of the relevant time unit**: The last operational question raised by Haywood (1986) is whether the traditional use of annual data to track tourists over time is necessarily the best relevant time unit. Haywood highlights that many tourist–area cycles are based on annual data. In some instances, due to seasonal fluctuations, Haywood notes it may be appropriate to develop tourist–area cycles based on quarterly or monthly data. This does not, however, deny the need for longitudinal data (Haywood 1986).
Haywood argued that tourist–area planners had to broaden their thinking about tourist–area evolution, in that the tourist–area life cycle (based upon the product life cycle) ‘can be misleading and may force marketers and planners to discontinue their products prematurely when they enter a decline stage’ (Haywood 1986, p. 167). Only a small number of empirical investigations had been carried out on Butler’s model by the late 80s. Meyer–Arendt’s (1985) study of the Grand Isle resort of Louisiana appeared to confirm the model’s applicability, whilst an examination of a number of Caribbean destinations by Wilkinson (1987) further endorsed the model. Cooper, through a number of TALC–related studies in 1990, 1992, and 1994 (and with Jackson in 1989); established that the use of TALC as a forecasting tool was limited by the difficulties of operationalising the life cycle in terms of identifying stages, the lack of longitudinal data, and the difficulties surrounding aggregation; a view commonly supported in the literature. Weaver (1990, 1992) empirically applied the model to Grand Cayman Island. Whilst the development of tourism in the Cayman’s largely conformed to the Butler (1980) framework, whereas Butler’s (1980) development stage is characterised by the rapid decline of local involvement and control (by stakeholders), Weaver (1990) found a significant deviation with respect to local versus non–local control, in that the opportunity for local participation by stakeholders appeared higher in the Caymans. Much of this local stakeholder participation, however, appeared to centre on poorer areas within the region.

A summary of major TALC studies, following Butler’s (1980) model, are shown in Table 3.1 (this table continues across a number of pages). Included within this review is the region of study, aspects or statements tested, and the results of the investigation.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Author &amp; Date</th>
<th>Region of Study</th>
<th>Aspects Tested, Method or Statement</th>
<th>Results</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Oglethorpe 1984</td>
<td>Malta</td>
<td>Used visitor numbers, number of beds, hotels and % foreign ownership.</td>
<td>Accepts relevance of TALC and makes the point that dependency has led to rapid decline in the tourism industry.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Meyer–Arendt 1985</td>
<td>Grand Island, Louisiana</td>
<td>Emphasis on cultural processes and environmental degradation. Used building activity, maps at different stages, visitor–days and capacity.</td>
<td>Strong support for TALC which indicates onset of “decline” stage.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Butler 1985</td>
<td>Scottish Highlands</td>
<td>Historical account from early 1700s to early 1800s. Emphasis on fashion, tastes and transportation improvements. Used maps and historical evidence.</td>
<td>Complies with TALC model.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Keys 1985</td>
<td>Some Queensland Resorts compared, mainly Noosa</td>
<td>Comparative, cross–sectional study of a number of Queensland resorts using TALC as an analyse framework and a time series study of Noosa. Used travel data, press reports, interviews and observation.</td>
<td>The Noosa case substantially complies with Butler’s model with some outstanding differences. The comparative study of the other resorts showed that they are at different stages of development.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Haywood 1986</td>
<td>N/A</td>
<td>Emphasis on making Butler’s model useable by suggesting more rigid criteria &amp; a method involving the use of standard deviation for stage identification.</td>
<td>Concluded the TALC model was not sufficient on its own to use for planning and marketing purposes even with the proposed changes.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Richardson 1986</td>
<td>Galveston &amp; other urban water fronts</td>
<td>Emphasis on revitalisation of historic buildings and the use of product life cycle models as a tools for managing resort evolution. Used tax receipts, employment, population and dollars spent on works.</td>
<td>Using TALC theory, Galveston is in “decline” stage but it may be possible to rejuvenate using historic buildings as an attraction.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Wilkinson 1987</td>
<td>Caribbean Islands of Antigua, Aruba, St Lucia &amp; US Virgin Isles</td>
<td>Focused on the later stages of Butler’s model and Lundberg’s (1980) model.</td>
<td>Essentially a comparative analysis which found a high level of compliance with both models.</td>
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<td>Keller 1987</td>
<td>Canada’s NW Territories</td>
<td>Used arrival types (business, fishing, sightseeing, education</td>
<td>Does not question the applicability of TALC</td>
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<td>etc) and where from. Also used staff turnover in tourism. and concludes that no further development possible within region without large injection of outside capital.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Strapp 1988</td>
<td>Sauble Beach, Ontario</td>
<td>Emphasis on the transition from a tourism resort to retirement centre as previous holiday makers buy holiday homes and then retire there. Used visitor numbers. Proposes using “average length of stay” to calculate “total person–days” rather than visitor numbers to overcome the change of status of tourists who eventually become retirees.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Cooper &amp; Jackson 1989</td>
<td>Isle of Man</td>
<td>Butler’s theory in total. Used visitor numbers and other tourist statistics going back 100 years. Exemplifies the utility of Butler’s model, emphasising dependence on management decisions and resort quality. Also introduces some suggestions for rejuvenation of region.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Cooper 1990</td>
<td>Isle of Man European “cold water resorts”</td>
<td>Used passenger arrivals etc. Most resorts in this category are in serious decline.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Debbage 1990</td>
<td>Paradise Island, Bahamas</td>
<td>Combines the use of TALC with Markusen’s (1985) “profit cycle” and the influence of oligopolistic tourist suppliers. Concludes that Butler’s model does not take into account organisational behaviour as the cycle matures (e.g. Mergers and acquisitions).</td>
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<tr>
<td>France 1991</td>
<td>Barbados</td>
<td>Mainly a perceptual approach. Used visitor numbers, number of establishments, number of rooms, etc. The Island is split into different market segments which are at different stages in TALC.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Weaver 1988, 1990, 1992</td>
<td>Grand Cayman And Antigua</td>
<td>All aspects of TALC but emphasis on outside ownership and control, particularly in Antigua. Grand Cayman has little outside ownership and control. Used arrivals, cruise ship statistics. Emphasis also on planning. Also used arrival numbers, building, bed numbers and Tourist Board Budget. Found substantial compliance with Butler’s model. Concluded outside ownership &amp; control affected stability of cycle.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Ioannides 1992</td>
<td>Cyprus</td>
<td>All aspects but emphasised the role of government and dependence on foreign tour operators. Used visitor numbers, number of beds, type of accommodation, tourism receipts, tourist type, TALC used to make the point that govt is steering towards “consolidation” (intentionally) and that destinations follow a predictable cycle</td>
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<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Study</th>
<th>Location</th>
<th>Methodology</th>
<th>Findings/Implications</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Getz 1992</td>
<td>Niagra Falls</td>
<td>Examined carrying capacity and planning aspects. Used historical data, existing statistical data, interviews, field observations, maps and questionnaires.</td>
<td>“Exploration” and “involvement” stages correspond partly with Butler’s model but there are many points of divergence and no dating of stages is possible.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Johnson &amp; Snepenger 1993</td>
<td>Greater Yellowstone region</td>
<td>Variables used were visitation trends, the growth of the service economy, host resident’s perception of current tourism development and current biological indicators of the ecosystem.</td>
<td>Tourism in the region is more intricate than the TALC theory suggests and the region is at no specific stage of the cycle. The TALC concept incorporates alternatives for future directions within the Yellowstone region.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>O’Hare and Barrett 1993</td>
<td>Sri Lanka</td>
<td>Considered the effect of the civil war on tourism using tourism numbers. Also discussed the effect of cheap airfares based on stop-overs in Sri Lanka.</td>
<td>Accepts relevance of TALC and concludes that there have been two distinct cycles in the country, one before the civil war and one after.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Choy 1993</td>
<td>Pacific Island Destinations</td>
<td>All aspects of Butler’s model, but only with reference to visitor numbers.</td>
<td>Very little compliance with Butler’s model reported. “At best the model can be used after the fact as a diagnostic tool”.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Williams 1993</td>
<td>Minorca, Spain</td>
<td>An “expanded” model of 8 stages was suggested. Used tourist numbers, employment, number of hotel rooms.</td>
<td>High level of external ownership and control. Existing industries declined as tourism expanded.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Wang and Godbey 1994</td>
<td>Lancaster, Poconos, America’s Ind. Heritage Project</td>
<td>Emphasis on measuring growth in tourism activity and what is the ideal rate of growth to year 2000 using surveys and expert perceptions of future growth.</td>
<td>AIHP is in the early stages of TALC. Lancaster is in the mature stages and Poconos is in decline.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cooper 1994</td>
<td>N/A</td>
<td>Overall review of the TALC body of knowledge to date.</td>
<td>Found Butler’s model to be a useful framework for analysis and stated that with every study the body of knowledge increases. He suggested some more criteria.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bianchi 1994</td>
<td>N/A</td>
<td>Compares TALC and a number of other theories and models.</td>
<td>TALC fails on many grounds and what is needed is a concept of tourism development</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Author</td>
<td>Location</td>
<td>Methodology</td>
<td>Findings</td>
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<tr>
<td>Agarwal 1994</td>
<td>UK generally. The Resort Cycle revisited</td>
<td>Discusses the usefulness of TALC for analysis and planning using anecdotal and perceptual methods.</td>
<td>Suggests that TALC be modified to include a “re–orientation” stage before “decline/rejuvenate”. States that as it stands, TALC cannot be usefully applied.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Prosser 1995</td>
<td>N/A</td>
<td>TALC in general. Progress and prospects as well as some suggestions for future research.</td>
<td>Finds that TALC is a handy framework for analysis.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Oppermann 1995</td>
<td>N/A</td>
<td>Life cycle concept used to analyse the travel life cycle of individuals.</td>
<td>Successful application of general life cycle theory to individual’s life–time travel patterns.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Harrison 1995</td>
<td>Swaziland</td>
<td>Used Butler’s TALC as an “ideal” or “expected” model and analysed the difference between it and the situation in Swaziland.</td>
<td>The cycle in Swaziland consisted of “exploration”, “inactivity”, “transition”, truncated development” and “decline &amp; attempted rejuvenation”.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Braunlich 1996</td>
<td>Atlantic City</td>
<td>Success of rejuvenation program using casinos. Used amounts invested, tax receipts, social services for the elderly, urban redevelopment.</td>
<td>TALC accepted as an appropriate framework for analysis. Atlantic City has successfully entered the “rejuvenation” stage.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Russell 1995</td>
<td>Coolangatta</td>
<td>All aspects of Butler’s model. Used visitor numbers &amp; a perceptual/historical approach for the period of the resort’s existence.</td>
<td>Found substantial compliance with the model. The region was found to be in the “decline” stage.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Meyer 1996</td>
<td>Waikiki</td>
<td>Emphasis on rejuvenation plans. Used reports etc.</td>
<td>Concludes that the area is entering the “decline” stage and suggests rejuvenation.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Agarwal 1997</td>
<td>Torbay region. (Torquay, Paignton and Brixham)</td>
<td>Tested the validity and applicability of TALC. Justified this work by stating that the universal applicability of TALC is not yet proven. Among other things, the author stresses the importance of the “unit of analysis”.</td>
<td>The application of TALC is reasonably consistent with Butler’s (1980) model except for the post “stagnation” stage which requires more research. The author assumes that the original model specifies that “decline” is inevitable.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Author (Year)</td>
<td>Region/Destination</td>
<td>Methodology</td>
<td>Finding</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>-----------------------</td>
<td>-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------</td>
<td>---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------</td>
<td>---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Prosser 1997</td>
<td>Gold Coast, Coffs Harbour</td>
<td>Used time series (census) population figures, employment in tourism, unemployment etc.</td>
<td>Both regions are at different stages in TALC. Finds that TALC is a handy framework for analysis.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Douglas 1997</td>
<td>Melanesia, (PNG, Solomons &amp; Vanuatu)</td>
<td>Historical picture using Butler’s model as a framework. Used largely perceptual methods.</td>
<td>Each country is at a different stage. A major influence is the colonial past of each country.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tooman 1997</td>
<td>3 regions in the Greater Smoky Mountains</td>
<td>Emphasis on the long–term, from 1900 to present and socioeconomic effects using unemployment and food stamp figures etc. Also looked at the number of “Mom &amp; Dad” hotels and motels verses chain companies as an indicator.</td>
<td>Concluded that TALC can be used to avoid the negative impacts of tourism.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Da Conceição Gonçalves, Águas 1997</td>
<td>Algave, Portugal</td>
<td>Analysis using TALC with demand, supply, distribution and competitors within each stage. Fits a 3rd degree polynomial to overnight data.</td>
<td>Identifies stages and links them to regional strategies (cause and affect). Concluded area should plan for a long period of stagnation and stabilization.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Russell &amp; Faulkner 1998</td>
<td>Coolangatta</td>
<td>All aspects of Butler’s model. Used visitor numbers and a perceptual/historical approach.</td>
<td>Found substantial compliance with the model.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Priestley &amp; Mundet 1998</td>
<td>Catalan Coast, Spain (3 resort towns)</td>
<td>Assumes away the early stages of TALC and concentrates on the Post–stagnation stages in response to Agarwal’s (1994) challenge that there is not enough work in this area.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Oppermann 1998</td>
<td>N/A</td>
<td>Main thrust is to attack Agarwal’s (1997) article on Torbay. Says there has been too much testing of TALC.</td>
<td>Finds Butler’s model good but suggests that there should be more testing of other models and theories.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Agarwal 1998</td>
<td>N/A</td>
<td>Defends her 1997 article against Oppermann’s 1998 attack.</td>
<td>States there is a need to apply TALC to different tourism products in a variety of contexts.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Knowles &amp; Curtis 1999</td>
<td>European mass tourist destinations</td>
<td>Study of second generation (Mediterranean but mainly Spanish) resorts. Ultimately, there is no avoiding decline for these resorts.</td>
<td>The authors generally find that the TALC model is a good fit up to the post “stagnation” stages after which they postulate three new</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Author</td>
<td>Location</td>
<td>Description</td>
<td>Notes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>-------------------</td>
<td>-------------------------</td>
<td>-----------------------------------------------------------------------------</td>
<td>----------------------------------------------------------------------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Johnston 2001</td>
<td>N/A</td>
<td>Integrates ontological and epistemological elements to the TALC debate.</td>
<td>That “we have not learned everything” there is to know about the TALC.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Berry 2001</td>
<td>Cairns, Australia</td>
<td>Tourism Area Life Cycle (TALC) model is applied to the Cairns Region of North Queensland, Australia.</td>
<td>Butler’s TALC theory was found to be an excellent framework for analysis which, in conjunction with leading indicators, could be used for forecasting and strategic planning.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lundtorp &amp; Wanhill 2001</td>
<td>Isle of Man and the island of Bornholm, Denmark</td>
<td>Used mathematical process to form the “ideal” TALC.</td>
<td>The TALC curve can only be representative if all tourist arrivals are repeat tourists.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Agarwal 2002</td>
<td>Three coastal resorts: Minehead, Weymouth and Scarborough</td>
<td>Integrates the theory of TALC and the restructuring thesis.</td>
<td>Relating the two concepts provided insights into destination decline and a more in–depth understanding is needed of resort restructuring.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hovinen 2002</td>
<td>Lancaster County, Pennsylvania</td>
<td>Revisited his early work and also considers chaos and complexity theory as a complement to the TALC.</td>
<td>TALC would be more useful by recognising a “maturity” stage. Also the model has value by its premise that without appropriate planning, management and development; destinations will see decline.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Andriotis 2005</td>
<td>Crete</td>
<td>General application of TALC to case region.</td>
<td>Main stages identified, however, full TALC application in case region was constrained by data availability.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bao &amp; Zhang 2006</td>
<td>Danxia Mountain, China</td>
<td>Reviewed the application of TALC (in 1993) in order to rejuvenate tourism at Danxia Mountain.</td>
<td>Successful application of TALC if admission/ticket count utilised as research data.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Boyd 2006</td>
<td>Canadian national parks</td>
<td>Discusses how TALC may be applied in this specific context.</td>
<td>TALC model is applicable in broad terms as a descriptor of how entire park systems have developed.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Corak 2006</td>
<td>Opatija Riviera, Croatia</td>
<td>TALC applied to analyse the market position of the Opatija Riviera.</td>
<td>Concluded several phases existed simultaneously, as a result of tourism activities being halted.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Table 3.1: A summary of major tourism life cycle studies (based on Berry 2001, with modifications from Lagiewski 2006, p. 27; and additions by the current researcher).

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Study</th>
<th>Destination</th>
<th>Findings</th>
<th>Notes</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Zhong, Deng &amp; Xiang 2006</td>
<td>Zhangjiajie National Forest Park, China</td>
<td>Identified that the TALC concept had not been applied to China’s protected areas.</td>
<td>The identification of TALC stages was confirmed when comparing tourist numbers and revenues.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Schuckert, Moller &amp; Weiermair 2007</td>
<td>European alpine destinations</td>
<td>All aspects of Butler’s model.</td>
<td>TALC patterns found in selected alpine destinations. Like Haywood (1986), postulates several different development patterns can be observed.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Brooker &amp; Burgess 2008</td>
<td>Niagara region, Canada</td>
<td>Addressed reasons why destinations stagnate and lose visitor numbers and offered a series of methods (including TALC) which stakeholders can employ to assist with rejuvenation efforts.</td>
<td>Found that TALC may be a better platform to use to explain downturns.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Each study listed in Table 3.1, if anything, highlights the need for some flexibility in the interpretation of development patterns by recognising the uniqueness of each destination’s development cycle and the variety of factors that modify the sequence of changes, or obstruct or accelerate progress through the cycle (Russell & Faulkner 1998).

### 3.3.1.2 Australian TALC Research

As noted in Table 3.1, there has been very little TALC research undertaken in relation to Australian tourism regions.

The first study, a Masters thesis by Keys (1985, cited in Berry 2001, p. 84), involved a comparison of several locations in Queensland, with an emphasis shown towards
Noosa. Russell’s (1995) review on the Gold Coast community of Coolangatta, has been seen by some to be the most comprehensive Australian TALC study’s to date (Berry 2001). Reported in a paper by Russell and Faulkner (1998), the authors discussed the story of tourism in Coolangatta, located about 25 kilometres south of Surfer’s Paradise (Gold Coast, based in the State of Queensland) and adjacent to Tweed Heads (located in the State of New South Wales). Russell utilised Butler’s (1980) model in conjunction with an historical analysis approach to explore both the dynamics of tourism development in the region, and to provide insights into issues affecting the rejuvenation of a tourist destination. The authors identified that whilst the life cycle model served as a framework for structuring their analysis, the blending of an historical perspective highlighted the relevance of memories to the consideration of rejuvenation strategies for destinations such as Coolangatta.

With the extension of the railway to Coolangatta in 1903, the flow of visitors increased and local involvement intensified through the provision of a range of accommodation options. Even though tourism continued to prosper through to 1960, the destination catered for the low end of the market (Russell & Faulkner 1998). During the 1970s, with an increasing but minor resentment against tourists, and a resistance to change through a general fear of Coolangatta becoming ‘the new Surfers Paradise’, tourism in Coolangatta started to stagnate. Developments at Coolangatta followed the stages suggested by Butler (1980), although there were significant variations. The ‘discovery’ and ‘involvement’ stages were shortened by the arrival of the railway, which in turn allowed for the entrance of mass tourism. Another variation from Butler’s (1980) model is that the ‘development’ and ‘consolidation’ stages did not initiate an influx of investment capital from outside, even though approaches were made to the local council by entrepreneurs willing to invest in the tourism industry. Finally, the onset of stagnation and decline (at a time where Australia was experiencing a substantial
increase in international visitors), not only reflected the traditional mechanisms identified by Butler (1980) and Plog (1974), but their effects were heightened by Coolangatta’s proximity to the rapidly expanding Surfers Paradise (Russell & Faulkner 1998).

A 1997 study by Prosser utilised a combination of statistics (including population growth rates, employment structures, visitor numbers, resident population numbers and the type of tourism development) to compare the TALC of Coffs Harbour (located mid–distance between Sydney and Brisbane on the North Coast of NSW, and now part of the tourism region identified in this thesis as the Coffs Coast) and the Gold Coast in southern Queensland. Prosser concluded that both Coffs Harbour and the Gold Coast have evolved through remarkably similar phases of development which bear a close resemblance to the stages of Butler’s (1980) model. The timing of the ‘exploration’, ‘involvement’, ‘development’, ‘consolidation’, ‘stagnation’ and ‘rejuvenation’ stages for both regions corresponded with each location becoming a significant urban centre (Prosser 1997).

Despite both destinations appearing to have evolved through similar cycles of development, the overall outcome differed in a number of important aspects. At the time of the study, the Gold Coast had three times the number of visitors and five times the population of Coffs Harbour. Prosser (1997) attributes the differences to four possible explanations: 1) it may be that the destination life cycle for each destination was the same at each location, but that Coffs Harbour was developing at a slower rate, and as such found itself at a different point of the cycle; 2) whilst the basic ‘S’ shape of the cycle was the same for each location, location–specific factors determined the level at which a destination ‘matures’, 3) that it may have been misleading to think in terms of a single life cycle, when each destination could have a number of different cycles
simultaneously for different elements of the tourism product, and 4) a final explanation for the different outcomes is that the life cycle concept may simply be a distraction from the specific factors influencing the rate and nature of tourism development in any given location (Prosser 1997). Although not specifically noted by Prosser (1997), an additional factor that may have influenced destination growth on the Gold Coast is its closeness to a city hub (being Brisbane, the state capital of Queensland).

The TALC model was also applied to the Cairns region of North Queensland by Berry (2001). The study covered development through the years 1876–1998, with the major emphasis on 1976–1998, a period of rapid expansion within the localised tourism industry. Berry (2001), in contributing significantly to the body of TALC knowledge in Australia, found Butler’s (1980) theory to be an excellent framework for analysis.

However, as with any theoretical model, Butler’s (1980) original TALC model is not without criticism, which is detailed in the following section.

3.3.2 Criticisms of Butler’s Model and Suggestions for Improvements

Criticism has been directed at the tourism area life cycle on both conceptual and empirical grounds. The first broadly defined criticism relates to skepticism about the feasibility of a single model of tourism development. Cohen (1979) provided an early rejection of the notion of a single model of tourism development, arguing that rather than search for a model of transformation of tourist destination areas, one should try to discover different types of basic dynamics. Support for this notion has also been provided by Bianchi (1994) and Choy (1992). Bianchi (1994) suggested that attempts to formulate a single model of tourist development simplifies complex processes and fails to account for the range and diversity of tourist developments, whereas Choy
(1992) argued that variations in growth patterns of tourist destinations defy any attempt to generalise. Agarwal (1994) found that the TALC model assumes that a destination has a single product rather than being comprised of different elements (hotels, theme parks etc). Each of these distinct elements, she maintains, exhibits its own lifecycle, and at a given point in time some may show growth and others may display signs of decline.

Another common criticism of Butler’s (1980) model relates to the shape and length of the life cycle curve. It has been argued that the shape of the curve will vary depending upon supply factors such as the rate of development, access, government policy, competing destinations, and factors on the demand side such as the changing nature of clientele as the destination’s market evolves hand-in-hand with supply-side developments. Whilst researchers, such as Choy (1992), suggest that the S-shaped curve is the most applicable to describing the tourism product life cycle, a number of studies identified in the TALC literature conclude that there is poor empirical validation for the shape or length of the curve. For example, as mentioned in Section 3.3.1; Hart, Casserly and Lawless (1984) challenged the general S-shaped product lifecycle curve for some products. Hart et al. (1984) also demonstrated eight product life cycles in the hospitality industry which do not conform to the conventional S-shape. Hovinen (1981) also recognises this, when substituting the consolidation and stagnation phase of Butler’s model into a single stage called ‘maturity’. One can observe through such inquires that the life-cycle approach is destination specific, with each stage being variable in length and shape (Cooper & Jackson 1989; Agarwal 1997; Hovinen 1981).

A third area of criticism of a life cycle concept is the methodological limitations of studies which have purported to evaluate the model. Prosser (1997, p. 312) states that
‘the numerous attempts to refine or embellish the life cycle concept…bear testimony to the limitations of the original model in different settings’. He identifies a significant limitation of some of the studies is that they have attempted to test the destination life cycle, empirically, utilising an overly simplistic research design, based on little more than a descriptive analysis of patterns of visitor arrivals for whatever period data happened to be available.

In responding to such criticisms, a number of alternative models have been put forward. Wilkinson (1996), in comparing six destinations across the Caribbean, proposes a new version of Butler's (1980) model, containing three general stages of tourism growth: emergence or initial discovery, transition to rapid expansion, and maturity. Other researchers, such as Chou (1993) – healthy growth, stagnation, and rebound – have also identified additional development stages. Whilst the destination life cycle should be seen as one of the suite of explanatory models explaining tourism development (Cooper 1994), Butler’s (1980) TALC continues to be the most referenced and discussed approach (Agarwal 1994, 1997; Cooper & Jackson 1989; Di Benedetto & Bojanic 1993; Douglas 1997; Getz 1992; Ioannides 1992; Oppermann 1995; Priestly & Mundet 1998; Tooman 1997; Twining–Ward & Baum 1998; Zimmermann 1982). This does not, however, diminish the fact that tourism researchers need to be wary about pushing the model beyond its intended purpose. For example, the model is no more a crystal ball than is general history and, in this sense, its value as a forecasting tool is limited (Russell & Faulkner 1998).

3.4 Chapter Summary and Theoretical Research Issues

In this chapter, theories of destination development and evolution were highlighted. The early writings of Christaller (1963), Cohen (1972) and Plog (1974) played a
critical role in the establishment of contemporary life cycle theory, namely Butler’s (1980) Tourism Area Life Cycle (TALC). Advantages and limitations of using Butler’s (1980) TALC, and indicators attached to the model; to study the evolution of tourism destination areas were identified. Findings of existing TALC research, both internationally and within an Australian regional context, were then assessed, as a further examination as to the usefulness of the TALC framework (Butler 1980).

Major criticisms and operational issues identified by researchers, in using Butler’s (1980) TALC framework, were seen to revolve around three main features:

1. The use of simplistic TALC research designs, based on little more than a descriptive analysis of patterns of visitor arrivals, are discouraged (Prosser 1997, Russell & Faulkner 1998).

2. In utilising Butler’s (1980) TALC framework, it may be more helpful to consider the number of tourists to a destination by different market segments (Lundtorp & Wanhill 2001; France 1991; Haywood 1986) e.g. each destination could have a number of different cycles simultaneously, depending on market segments; and finally

3. Tourism researchers should be wary about pushing the TALC model beyond its intended purpose e.g. the use of the TALC framework as a forecasting tool presents numerous problems (Cooper 1994). There is little doubt, however, as to the usefulness of the framework for examining and analysing (historically) the evolution of a destination. As found by Russell and Faulkner (1998), and evidenced in Table 3.1, even the harshest critics of the model do not reject it outright and generally concede the utility of the model as a heuristic device.
In addressing such TALC shortcomings, the current research will consider multiple sources of data (this is also an important tactic is addressing construct validity, as discussed in Section 4.3.1). Such data sources assist in the identification of key market segments to both case destinations. The following chapter (where an in–depth evolutionary review of the case destinations is provided) reports that families (chiefly domestic family holiday/leisure tourists) are seen historically as a strong market for both case destinations, and continue to contribute heavily to visitations in the respective regions.

Overall, issues raised in Chapters Two and Three point to the lack of empirical research that assesses the significance and importance of attributes of tourism destination competitiveness, contributing to the competitiveness of destinations at different stages of development. Thus the value and worth of TDC attributes to destinations as they evolve are yet to be explored within the literature. At the conclusion of Chapter Two, the first of four research questions was postulated:

**Research Question One: What critical attributes affect the competitiveness of tourism destinations?**

**RQ1a:** What critical attributes affect the competitiveness of tourism destinations from a destination stakeholder’s perspective?

**RQ1b:** What critical attributes affect the competitiveness of tourism destinations from a consumer perspective?

As gleaned from this chapter, understanding the sequence of events or phases that mark the history of the destination can assist in bringing a destination’s inherent
potential and its impediments into sharper focus (Faulkner & Tideswell 2005). Destinations therefore need to take into consideration the phase of development they are in, as well as the patterns of destination life cycle experienced in competing destinations, and adopt their strategic marketing accordingly (Buhalis 2000). Tourism life cycle research highlights numerous theoretical and practical implications which are seen to affect the relationship between mature destinations and their less mature counterparts (Diedrich & Garcia–Buades 2009; Manente & Pechlaner 2006; Kozak 2004; Sheldon & Abenoja 2001; Upchurch & Teivane 2000). The identification of two competing case destinations, proposed as being at differing stages in their development/evolution (developing/consolidating versus mature/signs of stagnation), consequently provides a solid context from which to assess the broader research aim. Therefore, this under–researched association is investigated via the following research question:

**Research Question Two: How do the critical destination attributes contribute to the competitiveness of developing and maturing destinations?**

As discussed previously in this section, a number of TALC researchers (see for example Lundtorp & Wanhill 2001; France 1991; Haywood 1986) assert that in utilising Butler’s (1980) TALC framework, it may be more helpful to consider the number of tourists to a destination by different market segments. Destination marketing practitioners and academics have viewed the practice of segmenting tourism markets as a vital step in the destination marketing process (Kotler et al. 2001). The benefits have been seen to include an ability to gain a fuller understanding of a particular market, improved techniques to predict consumer behaviour, and an improved ability to identify and exploit new market opportunities (Heok, Gendall & Esslemont 1996). Three key groupings are utilised in this study – travel party
composition, home region/state (geographic), and household income. These groupings are recognised as some of the more common approaches to market segmentation within the marketing and consumer behaviour literature (Hanlan, Fuller & Wilde 2006; Kelly & Nankervis 2001; Kotler et al. 2001).

In support of this notion, the following segmentation–related research question is posited:

**Research Question Three: To what extent is the importance of destination attributes, to consumers, affected by demographic subgroups?**

As a final point, competitiveness is no guarantee of performance (Ritchie & Crouch 2003). Destination competitiveness and performance are linked in several ways. As discussed in Chapter Two, destination competitiveness combines comparative advantages and competitive advantages. Comparative advantage relates to inherited resources such as climate, scenery, flora, fauna, etc., while competitive advantage relates to created items such as tourism superstructure (that being additional created assets which rest upon general infrastructure and which serve visitor–oriented needs and desires such as hotels, attractions, transport network etc); the quality of management; skills of workers; and government policy (Dwyer & Kim 2003). The implementation of strategies surrounding these advantages, and their concurrence with destination goals, will be judged by stakeholders and visitors alike as to the ‘success’ of the destination (Ritchie & Crouch 2003). These strategies, like so many aspects of a destination, however, can be tempered by a destination’s stage of development. This research points to the remarks of Haywood (1986), who notes that destination decision–makers need to know what strategic moves are appropriate given each TALC stage situation. The repercussion of a destination’s stage of development on the
performance of each case destination is therefore examined in the last of four research questions:

**Research Question Four: Do developing and mature destinations perform differently in relation to the destination attributes from a consumer perspective?**
4.1 Introduction

Chapter Two reviewed literature pertaining to the theory of tourism destination competitiveness. Chapter Three examined the body of knowledge associated with the development and evolution of tourism destinations. From this assessment, it was identified that research seeking to identify the significance and importance of key TDC indicators to destinations at different stages of development or evolution is limited, and that further inquiry was needed to examine the association between key destination competitiveness variables and the stage of development for a tourism destination. In support of this research proposal, four research questions were established.

In addressing Research Question One (RQ1a relates to attribute identification, before moving to a consumer–based assessment of critical attributes affecting the competitiveness of tourism destinations, stated as RQ2b) and Research Question Two, a case study methodology (including historical analysis, focus group discussions with local industry stakeholders, and consumer surveys) was adopted. This allowed for an exploration of the conceptual nature of the relationship between key destination competitiveness variables and a tourism destination’s stage of development. The data and insights gained from this phase of the research were then synthesised to form the basis and design of a survey instrument (discussed in Chapter Five) that was administered to selected consumers, focused primarily on domestic family holiday/leisure tourists.
Chapter Four begins with an outline of the rationale, method and results associated with the qualitative research undertaken as part of this thesis. This will initially provide justification for the use of the interpretive paradigm in social science research, in particular the application of a case study methodology and focus group discussions. The subsequent sections detail issues and processes relating to validity, reliability and triangulation of qualitative research (Section 4.3.1), credibility of the researcher (Section 4.3.2), and defining and justifying the case selections (Section 4.4).

4.2 Discussion of Research Paradigms and Method Selection

The aim of this research is to assess the significance and importance of attributes of TDC, contributing to the competitiveness of destinations at different stages of development. As discussed in Section 3.4, this topic has been under-researched. The choice of a research paradigm that supports this area of examination as an emergent field of enquiry is therefore required.

Social researchers are familiar with the concepts of qualitative and quantitative research, and whilst both methods are generally regarded as useful and legitimate, significant attention has been paid to identifying the differences between qualitative (interpretivist) and quantitative (positivist) research paradigms (Reichardt & Cook 1979). A research paradigm serves as a guide to the professionals in a discipline for it 1) indicates what are the important problems and issues confronting the discipline; 2) goes about developing an exploratory scheme (e.g. models and theories) which can place these issues and problems in a framework which will allow practitioners to try to solve them; 3) establishes the criteria for appropriate ‘tools’ (e.g. methodologies, instruments, and types and forms of data collection), and 4) provides an epistemology
in which the preceding tasks can be viewed as organising principles for carrying out
the ‘normal work’ in a discipline (Filstead 1979).

Qualitative research has most often been presented in contrast to the ‘traditional’ or
‘scientific’ paradigm, which depends upon a very different view of the world.
Traditional, quantitative research is based on the assumption that there is a single,
objective reality – the world out there – that we can observe, know and measure
(Merriman 1988). From a research perspective, this view holds the nature of reality to
be constant. In contrast, qualitative research assumes that there are multiple realities –
that the world is not an objective thing out there (Merriman 1988). For example,
Reichhardt and Cook (1979), cited in Deshpande (1983, p. 9–10) explained that:

...the quantitative paradigm is said to have a positivistic, hypothetico–
deductive, particularistic, objective, outcome oriented and natural science
world view. In contrast, the qualitative paradigm is said to prescribe to a
phenomenological, inductive, holistic, subjective, process oriented and
social anthropological world view.

In addition, Denzin and Lincoln (1994, p. 7), on paraphrasing Nelson, Treichler and
Grossberg (1992) see qualitative research as:

...an interdisciplinary, transdisciplinary, and sometimes
counterdisciplinary field. It crosscuts the humanities and the social and
physical sciences. Qualitative research is many things at the same time. It
is multiparadigmatic in focus. Its practitioners are sensitive to the values
of the multimethod approach. They are committed to the naturalistic
perspective, and to the interpretive understanding of human experience.
Further characteristics of quantitative and qualitative paradigms are evidenced in Table 4.1.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Qualitative Paradigm</th>
<th>Quantitative Paradigm</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. qualitative methods preferred</td>
<td>1. quantitative methods preferred</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. concerned with underlying human behaviour</td>
<td>2. seeks the facts or causes of social phenomena</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>from the ‘actor’s frame of reference</td>
<td>without advocating subjective interpretation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. phenomenological approach</td>
<td>3. logical – positivistic approach</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4. uncontrolled, naturalistic observational measurement</td>
<td>4. intrusive, controlled measurement</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5. subjective; ‘insider’s’ perspective; close to the data</td>
<td>5. objective; ‘outsider’s’ perspective; distanced from the data</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6. grounded, discovery oriented, exploratory expansionist</td>
<td>6. ungrounded, verification oriented, confirmatory,</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>descriptive, inductive</td>
<td>reductionist, inferential hypothetico–deductive</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7. process oriented</td>
<td>7. outcome oriented</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8. validity is critical; real, rich and deep data</td>
<td>8. reliability is critical; hard and replicable data</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9. holistic – attempts to synthesise</td>
<td>9. particularistic – attempts to analyse</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 4.1: Characteristics of quantitative and qualitative paradigms (Deshpande 1983, p. 103).

A major distinction between the qualitative and quantitative paradigms is provided by Perry (1998), who notes that the difference between the two approaches can often be viewed in terms of theory development, with the deductive approach representing the positivist paradigm and the inductive approach representing the qualitative paradigm. Parkhe (1993) demonstrates the perceived roles of qualitative and quantitative research in generating and testing theory as shown in Figure 4.1. This figure illustrates the argument that inductive, ideographic research characterised by the interpretivist paradigm is generally suited to theory generation, while deductive nomothetic research characterised by the positivist paradigm is generally suited to theory testing. Merriman (1988) supports this view, asserting that qualitative research is about building and developing theory, while Strauss and Corbin (1990) claim that qualitative methods can be used to better understand any phenomenon about which little is yet known. Thus, qualitative methods are appropriate in situations where one needs to first identify the key variables that might later be tested quantitatively, or where the researcher has determined that quantitative measures cannot adequately describe or interpret a situation (Hoepfl 1997).
In this thesis the view that both qualitative and quantitative methods have merit is accepted, as is the perspective that qualitative research is generally suited to theory generation and quantitative methods to theory testing (Parkhe 1993; Strauss & Corbin 1990). As highlighted in Section 3.4, the need to assess the significance and importance of attributes of tourism destination competitiveness, contributing to the competitiveness of destinations at different stages of development, was justified. This is an area that has been ignored by tourism researchers to date (Dwyer & Kim 2003).

Mixed methods researchers need to be acquainted with the major types of mixed method designs and the common variants amongst these designs. Major types of mixed method designs discussed in the literature include the Triangulation Design (Morse 1991), the Embedded Design (Caracelli & Greene 1997), the Explanatory Design and the Exploratory Design (Creswell & Plano Clark 2007). The intent of the Exploratory Design is that the results of the first method (qualitative) can help develop or inform the second method (quantitative) (Greene et al. 1989). This design is based on the premise that an exploration is needed for several reasons: measures or instruments are not available, the variables are unknown, or there is no guiding framework or theory (Creswell & Plano Clark 2007). Despite a growing body of TDC research knowledge,
which includes the development of a number of conceptual models and frameworks, there is no identifiable research that explicitly 1) links the broad concept of tourism destination competitiveness with the development and evolution of tourism destinations, 2) nor suggests the significance or importance of key competitiveness attributes to destinations at different levels of development. As a consequence, an exploratory mixed method design incorporating qualitative methodologies appears reasonable (in accordance with Research Question One – RQ1a – and Research Question Two) prior to further quantitative inquiries (Research Question One – RQ1b – and Research Questions Three and Four). A case study methodology has been chosen to explore and refine the research issues in this thesis, a notion supported by Gable (1994), who suggests the use of case study research to first define constructs and develop theory which can subsequently be tested using survey research methods.

When selecting a suitable mixed methods approach, the researcher must also consider the timing of each component within the study. Timing within a mixed methods design is classified in two ways: concurrent or sequential (Morse 1991). Concurrent timing occurs when the researcher implements both qualitative and quantitative methods during a single phase of research. Conversely, sequential timing involves collecting data in an iterative process whereby the data collected (and analysed) in one phase contributes to the data collected in the next (Morse 1991). In order to identify a set of tourism–specific items recognised to apply to regional Australian destinations (such as the Coffs Coast and Great Lakes tourism regions), focus group discussions with local tourism stakeholders were justified as a sensible starting point in distinguishing critical attributes of destination competitiveness (see Section 2.6), before importance and performance ratings for these attributes are provided by actual consumers. Therefore, a sequential design (Morse 1991) was employed in this study, in an effort to providing important information on emergent or unexpected themes.
4.3 Justification of Case Study Methodology

Case study research, which incorporates ‘an empirical enquiry that investigates a contemporary phenomenon within its real–life context, especially when the boundaries between phenomenon and context are not clearly evident’ and ‘relies on multiple sources of evidence’ (Yin 1994, p. 13), is considered to be particularly useful where ‘research and theory are at their early, formative stages’ (Darke, Shanks & Broadbent 1998, p. 279). Section 4.3.1 provides further details on those multiple sources of evidence utilised in this research. By extension, a case study methodology is not appropriate where a phenomenon is well understood and mature, where constructs exist already and are well developed, where understanding of how and why the particular phenomenon occurs is not of interest, and where understanding of the contexts of action and the experiences of individuals in single settings is not relevant (Darke et al. 1998).

According to Yin (1994), there are three key conditions a researcher should consider when determining which type of research strategy is to be utilised within an evaluation, those conditions being: a) the type of research question posed, b) the extent of control an investigator has over the actual behavioural events, and c) the degree of focus on contemporary as opposed to historical events. Yin (1994) highlights five differing strategies for academic inquiry within the social sciences: experiments, surveys, archival analysis, histories, and case studies. The importance of each condition, in distinguishing among the five strategies, is shown in Table 4.2.
Table 4.2: Relevant situations for different research strategies (Yin 1994, p. 6).

As defined by Yin (1994), ‘how’ and ‘why’ questions are likely to lend themselves to the use of case studies. This is because such questions deal with operational links needing to be traced over time (Yin 1994). Other research strategies were considered by the researcher for this study. For example, experiments and surveys can similarly be utilised in exploratory inquiries, however both were rejected for the qualitative phase of the research as it was decided that they did not allow for a sufficiently open–ended examination of the phenomenon under review. Moreover, Yin (1994) asserts that a case study methodology is preferred in examining contemporary issues. In particular, the case study's unique strength is its ability to deal with a full variety of evidence – documents, artefacts, interviews and observations.

In order to further validate this methodology as appropriate, the advantages and disadvantages of case studies (identified by Booth 1998) were considered. First, a case study methodology permits a researcher the freedom to apply a variety of research methods such as analysis, interviews and to also study documents (a stance supported previously by Yin 1994). Accordingly, this allows the researcher to examine all characteristics of the complex interrelationships under investigation. Second, the phenomenon being examined in this thesis is theoretically or academically significant.
because little is known about the subject at this time. The literature review (Chapters Two and Three), established that whilst the study of destination competitiveness continues to gain momentum amongst academics (Chon & Mayer 1995; Evans, Fox & Johnson 1995; Faulkner, Oppermann, & Fredline 1999; d’Hauteserre 2000; Hassan 2000), additional research is warranted in identifying the importance of critical attributes, contributing to the competitiveness of destinations at different levels of development. A case study methodology will therefore allow the researcher to study and analyse this issue within specific destination study areas. Third, the case study methodology involves a detailed examination of the phenomenon within a real life context and experience (Booth 1998). Anchored in real–life situations, the case study results provide a rich and holistic account of the phenomenon. It offers insights and illuminates meanings that expand its readers’ experiences. These insights can be constructed as tentative hypotheses that help structure future research; hence, case studies play an important role in advancing a field’s knowledge base (Merriman 1988).

The special features of case study research that provide the rationale for its selection also present certain limitations in its usage. Although rich, thick description and analysis of a phenomenon may be desired, as seen by Guba and Lincoln (in Merriman 1988, p. 42), ‘case studies can oversimplify or exaggerate a situation, leading the reader to erroneous conclusions about the actual state of affairs’. The authors further warn readers that they can be seduced into thinking case studies are accounts of the whole, ‘that is, they tend to masquerade as a whole when in fact they are but a part – a slice of life’ (Merriman 1988, p. 33). In addressing this limitation, criteria for judging validity, reliability and triangulation of qualitative case research are addressed in Section 4.3.1. Qualitative case studies are also limited by the sensitivity and integrity of the investigator. As seen by Riley (1963), the researcher is the primary instrument of data collection and analysis. The investigator is left to rely on his or her own instincts
and abilities throughout most of the research effort. The aspect of researcher credibility is further detailed in Section 4.3.2.

In summary, given that this study looks at contemporary phenomena and asks ‘how’ things occur, specifically within the destination competitiveness/development context, it was decided that a case study methodology was the most appropriate research technique. As is discussed in coming sections of this chapter, the case studies acknowledged in this thesis are based first on the identification of two regional destinations on the East Coast of Australia (same competitive set) postulated as being at differing stages of their development (developing/consolidating versus mature/signs of stagnation respectively). Secondly, focus group interviews with key industry stakeholders within each case region will be use to explore the research issue in greater detail. Additional concerns pertaining to applying qualitative methods are now.

4.3.1 Criteria for Judging Validity, Reliability and Triangulation of Case Research

In discussing field work undertaken by a single field worker, Bosk (1979, p. 193) posed the question: ‘Why should we believe it?’ Validity and reliability have long been fundamental issues in debates over the genuineness of qualitative research. Given that qualitative researchers rely – implicitly or explicitly – on a variety of understandings and corresponding types of validity and reliability in the process of describing, interpreting, and explaining phenomena of interest (Maxwell 1992), it is little wonder that Kvale (1989) highlighted that issues such as validity and reliability have come to the fore of the qualitative paradigm.
The traditional criteria for validity find their roots in a positivist tradition, and to an extent, positivism has been defined by a systematic theory of validity (Golafshani 2003). However, a number of authors have demonstrated how validity and reliability can be achieved in qualitative studies (Patton 1990; Parkhe 1993; Eisenhardt 1989; Yin 1989). Patton (1990) views validity in qualitative research as being dependant on careful instrument construction: to be sure that the instrument measures what it is supposed to measure. The instrument must then be administered in an appropriate, standardised manner according to prescribed procedures. Yin (1989), for example, identifies tactics for ensuring construct, internal and external validity in case study research, an approach that can reasonably be applied to this study (see Table 4.3).

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Tests</th>
<th>Tactic</th>
<th>Phase of research in which tactic occurs</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Construct validity</strong></td>
<td>Use multiple sources of evidence</td>
<td>Data collection</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Establish chain of evidence</td>
<td>Data collection</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Have key informants review draft interview reports</td>
<td>Composition</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Internal validity</strong></td>
<td>Do pattern matching</td>
<td>Data analysis</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Do explanation building</td>
<td>Data analysis</td>
</tr>
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<td></td>
<td>Do time series analysis</td>
<td>Data analysis</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>External validity</strong></td>
<td>Use replication logic</td>
<td>Research design</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Reliability</strong></td>
<td>Use interview protocol</td>
<td>Data collection</td>
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</tbody>
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*Table 4.3: Tactics for validity and reliability (Yin 1989, p. 41).*

In this thesis, issues of construct, internal and external validity were addressed through the criteria identified in Table 4.3. In particular, construct validity is addressed through three central tactics. First, multiple data sources are used. These sources of data include focus group discussions with key industry stakeholders in each case destination; the collection and analysis of industry reports, visitation statistics, and other pertinent documentation etc; a review of destination competitiveness literature (Chapter Two), and consumer observations. Secondly, a chain of evidence is established from which explicit links are identified and followed between the questions asked, data collected
and conclusions drawn. Third, focus group reports and audio transcripts were closely appraised.

Internal validity was addressed through triangulation. Triangulation is considered a process of using multiple perceptions to clarify meaning, verifying the repeatability of an observation or interpretation (Denzin & Norman 2003, p. 148). Triangulation is typically a strategy for improving the validity and reliability of research or evaluation of findings. Patton (1987) discusses four types of triangulation to confirm emerging findings including data triangulation, investigator triangulation, theory triangulation and methodological triangulation.

As discussed, the use of multiple sources of evidence is recommended for conducting case studies, as such a strategy assists in the development of converging lines of inquiry. In defining the case study regions, the use of industry information supplied by destination marketing bodies such as Coffs Coast Marketing and Great Lakes Tourism; industry groups, local government entities, relevant press articles, and academic publications were utilised. This is in addition to visitor statistics and consumer surveys. These multiple sources of evidence speak to the question of data triangulation. To itiveness  PAGEREF _Toc263801042 \h 61 taker facilitating a free flowing discussion between the researcher and focus group participants. Secondly, each focus group discussion was recorded via digital voice recorder. Furthermore, this project employed a number of strategies including peer examination – where senior colleagues in related areas were asked to review and comment of the findings – in order to triangulate the qualitative findings (Merriman 1988, p. 169). Theory triangulation was undertaken through extensive reference to relevant literature as detailed in Chapters Two and Three, whereas methodological
triangulation was undertaken with the results of exploratory research examined through confirmatory research (quantitative phase of this study).

External validity is concerned with the extent to which findings are generalisable beyond the immediate case study. In this thesis, external validity is viewed in terms of reader or user generalisability: leaving the extent to which the study’s findings apply to other destinations (of a similar nature, both in terms of locale and market) up to those destinations. Walker (1980, p. 34) argues that ‘it is the reader who has to ask, what is there in this study that I can apply to my own situation, and what clearly does not apply?’. Kennedy (1979, p. 672) also contends that the researcher need not be overly concerned with generalising – as it ultimately should be left to those ‘who wish to apply the findings to their own situation’. It is therefore the aim of the current researcher to provide a rich, thick description of the case destinations ‘so that anyone else interested in transferability has a base of information appropriate to the judgement’ (Lincoln & Guba 1985, pp. 124–5).

The final test utilised in judging the quality of a research design is reliability. In addressing the issue of reliability, Lincoln and Guba (1985, p. 290) pose the following question: ‘How can an inquirer persuade his or her audiences that the research findings of an inquiry are worth paying attention to?’ To ensure reliability in qualitative research, examination of trustworthiness is crucial. Seale (1999, p. 266) states that the ‘trustworthiness of a research report lies at the heart of issues conventionally discussed such as validity and reliability’. Reliability was addressed in this thesis through the implementation of two core strategies. Firstly, a case study focus group protocol, detailed in Section 4.5, was developed, facilitating the replication of research across the two case destinations. Second, a research assistant was used as a note taker
facilitating a free flowing discussion (focus groups) between the researcher and group participants, a method supported by Fontana and Frey (1994).

To conclude, as defined by Patton (1990) and Yin (1994), the credibility of qualitative research through managing validity (construct, internal and external) and reliability has been addressed. An additional aspect of validity and reliability, being credibility of the researcher, is addressed in the following section.

4.3.2 Credibility of the Researcher

Because the researcher is the ‘instrument’ in qualitative inquiry, the issue of the credibility of the researcher is paramount to the study and its outcomes (Patton 1990). There are four ways in which the presence of the research/evaluator, or the fact that an evaluation is taking place, can distort the findings of a study:

1. reactions of program participants to the presence of the researcher;
2. changes in the research instrument during the course of the evaluation – that is, instrumentation effects;
3. the prepositions or biases of the researcher; and
4. researcher incompetence (including lack of sufficient training or preparation).

Unfortunately there are no tests to determine which individuals are likely to be good study investigators (Yin 1994) nor, as highlighted by Patton (1990), are there any simple formulas or clear-cut rules about how to undertake credible, high quality analysis. In this thesis, in order to counter possible negative reactions by focus group participants, the researcher initially contacted each focus group participant (first via email and then by phone), in an effort to fully explain the reasons and nature of the
study. During such conversations, privacy issues were highlighted. Second, every effort was made by the investigator to apply a consistent focus group format across each of the case destinations. The development of a focus group protocol assisted in this manner. Third, researcher bias was managed through the identified focus group protocol being prepared. Finally, the overall preparation of case study protocols, and pre-focus group contact with participants, aided in the interviewer being well prepared and informed.

4.3.3 Case Study Protocol

As Yin (1994, p. 63) explains, the development of a case study protocol ‘is a major tactic in increasing the reliability of case study research’. The use of a case study protocol is therefore an important consideration in the design and application of qualitative research approaches (Perry 1998).

The development of this case study protocol assists the research in two ways. According to Perry (1998), firstly, the protocol allows the researcher to detail in advance the procedures and requirements to be followed during data collection. This is of particular relevance to studies incorporating a multiple case design. Second, the protocol provides direction for the researcher that might act to improve the reliability of the research findings. The essential components, as distinguished by Yin (1994) include:

- An overview of the study: This was developed in Chapters Two and Three of this thesis. A review of the pertinent literature led to the identification of four research questions for this study.
The field procedures to be followed: The issue of field procedures is discussed in Section 4.3.4. This section outlines, in detail, the protocols that were followed, and the resources that were used for this study.

4.3.4 Case Study Field Procedures

As part of a well–defined case study framework, it is essential that field work procedures are clearly identified and articulated. Yin (1994, p. 68) emphasises a number of field work procedures which should be reported, including (but not limited to): gaining access to key organisations and case participants, case participant communication and the identification of field work resources.

4.3.5 Gaining Access to Key Organisations

Collecting case study data from case participants can be difficult and time–consuming (Cavaye 1996). As such, researchers should prepare themselves with sufficient background information about a case study site prior to commencing data collection (Darke, Shanks & Broadbent 1998). In Australia, States and Territories have the responsibility for promoting and marketing state attractions and regulation of tourism development (Buhalis & Laws 2001). Within this governmental structure, local government area (LGA) authorities are actively involved in promoting tourism, providing infrastructure and services to support tourism, and also managing the impacts of tourism (Tourism Australia 2007). For this particular study, two specialist business units – Coffs Coast Marketing and Great Lakes Tourism – are responsible for the effective marketing of each case location as a tourist destination. Details for Senior Staff from Coffs Coast Marketing and Great Lakes Tourism were obtained. Contact was made between the researcher and key contacts from each business unit, to explain
the nature of the current study. By way of this initial communication, a series of visitor statistics, relevant industry reports, and additional tourism-related publications were acquired. As part of the case destination analysis, additional factual evidence relevant to the study was collected by the researcher, for example relevant press articles, supplementary statistics, historian reports and academic publications.

Case participant communication and the identification of field work resources will be detailed, more fully, in later sections of this chapter, as they primarily relate to the conduct of focus group discussions with local tourism stakeholders within each of the case destinations. Case destination selection, including reasoning and justifications, now follows.

4.4 Defining and Justifying Case Selections

Perhaps the most unique aspect of case study in the social sciences is the selection of cases to study (Denzin & Norman 2003, p. 137). Case study research may adopt single-case or multiple-case designs. A single case study is appropriate where it represents a critical case (it meets all the necessary conditions for testing a theory), where it is an extreme or unique case, or where it is a revelatory case (Yin 1994, pp. 38–40). Single cases allow researchers to investigate phenomena in depth to provide rich description and understanding (Walsham 1995). Multiple-case designs allow cross-case analysis and comparison, and the investigation of a particular phenomenon in diverse settings. Multiple cases may also be selected to predict similar results (literal replication) or to produce contrasting results for predictable reasons (theoretical replication) (Yin 1994, p. 46).
There are no precise guides to the number of cases to be included in a study. ‘The literature recommending the use of case studies rarely specifies how many cases should be developed. This decision is left to the researcher’ (Romano 1989, p. 36). Similarly, Patton (1990, p. 181) does not provide an exact number or range of cases that could serve as guidelines for researchers, claiming that ‘there are no rules’ for sample size in qualitative research. Other authorities on case study design, however, have endeavoured to recommend a range within which the number of cases for any research should fall (Perry 1998). For example, Eisenhardt (1989, p. 545) suggests between four and ten cases. Hedges (1985) sets an upper limit of 12, whilst Miles and Huberman (1994, p. 30) suggest that more than 15 cases makes a study ‘unwieldy’. However, the views of these writers often ignore the real constraints of time and funding in postgraduate research (Perry 1998). Due to such constraints, two destinations on the East Coast of Australia, namely the Coffs Coast tourism region, and Great Lakes tourism region, were selected as part of the study. Further, the selection and comparison of two destinations is a common feature within destination competitiveness research (Wong, Bauer & Wong 2008; Cracolici & Nijkamp 2005; Lopez, Navarro & Dominguez 2004; Kozak 2004, 2001; Kim & Dwyer 2003; King 1997).

These destinations were chosen based on a number of key criteria:

- As defined by Merriman (1998, p. 50), the selection of these destinations meets a ‘comparable–case’ sampling strategy, one which entails the selection of ‘individuals, groups [or] sites…on the same relevant characteristics…in order to compare results’. As detailed in Section 4.4.1.3, the Coffs Coast (both in its current and previous forms) continues to compete with a variety of other destinations in New South Wales and Queensland for tourism markets,
including the Forster (Great Lakes) area. Principal competitors, such as the Great Lakes, offers similar or comparable attractions such as weather, beach, price and programs (Tourism Leisure Concepts 2001).

- The competitiveness of a tourism destination should be viewed relative to its main competitors. March (2004) maintains that since destinations compete for target segments, the best means of understanding destination competitiveness is to assess how a destination competes against its main competitors in those segments. Data on visitor gender, age, and reason for visitation categories indicate a large share of visitors to each of the case regions fall within the group, categorised as domestic family holiday/leisure tourists (Coffs Coast Marketing 2007; Council of Tourist Associations 2003).

- Following an evaluation of indicators related to Butler’s (1980) Tourism Area Life Cycle (TALC), a useful descriptive tool for analysing the development of destinations and the evolution of their markets (see for example Cooper & Jackson 1989; Weaver 1990; Agarwal 1994; Cooper 1989; Wall 1982; Prosser 1997; Berry 2001), it was found that whilst the Coffs Coast and Great Lakes tourism regions appear to have evolved through similar cycles of tourism over the last 100 years, the outcome of this development is different in a number of important aspects, details of which are provided in the following sections (Sections 4.4.1.4 and 4.4.2.4). This review concluded that the Coffs Coast was a mature destination showing signs of stagnation, as opposed to the Great Lakes, identified as being heavily positioned within Butler’s (1980) stages of development and consolidation.
4.4.1 Case Destination 1: Coffs Coast Tourism Region – ‘Beach, Bananas and Family’

4.4.1.1 Location and Boundaries

The Coffs Coast tourism region consists of three local government areas (LGAs). They are the City of Coffs Harbour, the Shire of Nambucca and the Shire of Bellingen (Coffs Coast Marketing 2007). The region is 550 kilometres north of the city of Sydney, the capital of New South Wales (NSW) and 430 kilometres, south of Brisbane, the capital city of the State of Queensland (QLD). The coastal destinations of Coffs Harbour and Nambucca are characterised by a mild, pleasurable climate with spectacular beaches and coastal scenery. Bellingen is an attractive rural area, with subtropical ranges and meandering rivers flowing from the Dorrigo World Heritage Area to the Pacific Ocean. Much like the City of Coffs Harbour and the Nambucca Shire, the Bellingen Shire’s locality boundaries do include numerous coastal sites. Figures 4.2 and 4.3 shows the location of the Coffs Coast on the East Coast of Australia.

![Figure 4.2: Location of the Coffs Coast tourism region (East Coast of Australia).](image-url)
4.4.1.2 History of Tourism in the Coffs Coast

The Coffs Coast received its first tourists in 1884. The idea of organised tours were trialled, with transportation provided by coastal steamers, and visitors were treated to ‘a sample of country life’ (England 1976, p. 38). Seaside towns were particularly attractive for the pleasure-seeker at that time (NSW Department of Planning 1989). A busy shipping service commenced to the region, and with the advent of the railway on the North Coast of NSW (a larger region encompassing the Coffs Coast), groups began to regularly visit the area. By the early 1900s, local land owners were ‘convinced of the area’s potential as a holiday resort’ (Yeates 1990, p. 149). Bonville Reserve (located in present day Sawtell) became the main attraction for tourists, especially during the Christmas period when, in 1912, some 300 holiday makers gathered to enjoy fishing and surfing (England 1976, p. 39). Before 1920, England (1976) estimates that more
than 1000 tourists had visited Bonville and that this number was increasing on a yearly basis.

The introduction of the motor car and its increase in popularity as a means of transport had a profound impact on tourism in the Coffs Coast region (Kijas, Ledgar & Beasley 1998). As an example, the Royal Automobile Club of Australia’s Road Guide for ‘The Magic North Coast’ was available by the 1920s (NSW Department of Planning 1989, p. 29). Additionally, the practices of modern aviators landing on a coastal strip near Coffs Harbour lead to commercial airline operations from Sydney to Coffs Harbour in 1946, with stops at Newcastle, Taree, and Kempsey before passengers were able to disembark at the local aerodrome (Yeates 1993). Tourism became the growth industry post–World War II, with tourism development on the North Coast focused on seaside resorts. This progression corresponded with society becoming more mobile through increased ownership of motor vehicles (Kijas, Ledgar & Beasley 1998). Yeates (1993, p. 144) notes that the potential of tourism ‘as a big money spinner’ became recognised by local business proprietors in the mid 1950s. Despite the popularity of camp sites at Bonville, Sawtell, Moonee Beach and Woolgoolga, no effort had been made to promote Coffs Harbour and its surrounding Shires as a tourist destination until that time, when the benefits of income derived from tourism activities were recognised by the business community (Kijas, Ledgar & Beasley 1998).

In 1955 tourism promotion was initiated by a local travel agent. To aid this promotion, the agent successfully influenced Pioneer Coaches to make Coffs Harbour a designated stop. Later that same year, a competition was run, which resulted in the adoption of the ‘Pacific Beautizone’ as the local tourism theme (Yeates 1993). Motels and specialist caravan parks emerged in the late 1950s. Yeates (1993, p. 145) notes that the number of motels in Coffs Harbour ‘went from none in 1957 to seven in 1964’, as local
operators were prepared to take risks on the growing tourism trade (Kijas, Ledgar & Beasley 1998, p. 177). Continued growth in tourism was felt through both the 1970s and 1980s; growth dominated by families, with those under 14 years and those 50 years and over together accounting for 46 per cent of all visitors (Pigram 1987). Visitor numbers and visitor nights recorded in 1986/7 showed 434,000 visitors and 2,210,000 visitor nights, whereas 574,000 visitors and 2,930,000 visitor nights were registered the following year (Pigram 1987). This growth was heavily influenced by a change in tourism theme for the region to ‘The Banana Republic’ (a play on the region’s notoriety at the time of being the largest producer of bananas in Australia). The impact of this promotional initiative, which included the region claiming ‘independence’ from the remainder of Australia, sparked a positive reaction in the levels of awareness from visitors, who again saw Coffs Harbour as a desirable destination when viewed against key competitors including Port Macquarie, Forster (the Great Lakes tourism region) and the Gold Coast. With this theme, the local tourism committee ‘became the only marketing organisation in tourism to use political satire as a promotional tool’ (Pigram 1987, p. 23).

As the importance of tourism as an industry sector increased, with tourism related employment accounting for 23 per cent of total employment in the Coffs Harbour region (Coffs Harbour City Council 1989), fractures within the tourism stakeholder group started to appear. Despite 72 per cent of tourism operators in Coffs Harbour approving of the use of the theme ‘Banana Republic’, serious infighting caused the local Council to freeze the funds of the Banana Republic Tourism Committee (a sub committee of Coffs Harbour City Council in May 1986), ultimately seizing control of the management and direction of the tourism region for the following two years, during which time industry turbulence continued unabated.
The publication of the Coffs Harbour Tourism Draft Management Plan in 1989, and findings from associated industry workshops, endeavoured to mend the differences between stakeholders. Despite reports from industry representatives that local government entities (including the local Council) were ‘not sufficiently receptive to community concerns’, retained ‘no community or industry confidence’ nor were ‘comfortable with the entrepreneurial nature of tourism management’ (Coffs Harbour City Council 1989, p. 23); Council were resolute in their efforts to position tourism as a major industry sector for Coffs Harbour, the largest industrial hub between Newcastle and the Queensland border at the time. Despite an ever-increasing inventory of accommodation offerings (5 star resorts – 216 rooms, 4 star motel/resorts – 439 rooms, motel/apartments – 846 rooms, and caravan parks/cabins – 1252 rooms; Pigram 1987); major deficiencies in transport, mainly road, were found. Road transport was, and still is, the main mode of transportation to the Coffs Coast region (Coffs Harbour City Council 1989, Pigram 1987).

A study by Armstrong et al. (2005) highlighted the need for regional planners to provide infrastructure in the form of well maintained and safe highways for example, to support the arrival of a relatively large number of visitors to the immediate region. This is currently a major concern for tourism planners and marketers on the East Coast of Australia. There have been a relatively large number of traffic accidents involving fatalities on the Pacific Highway (the main highway which provides the primary access to East Coast tourism destinations, including the Coffs Coast region). For example, from 1994 to 2003 the Pacific Highway was the scene of 9996 crashes, accounting for 453 deaths (NRMA Motoring and Services 2005). It is expected that unless significant upgrades are undertaken on the Pacific Highway within the near future, such accidents will exert an important influence on the willingness of self-drive tourists to visit the Coffs Coast and associated regions on the East Coast.
By the late 1980s, annoyance towards the tourist trade was being felt in the region, with local research demonstrating that twenty eight per cent of the community had misgivings about the tourism industry (Coffs Harbour City Council 1989, p. 20). Utilising Doxey’s (1975) index of resident irritation (irridex), Council researchers found that ‘development of tourism has reached an interesting phase in Coffs Harbour. Resident attitudes had yet to become fixed and many local people continued to welcome the changes and the dollars which tourism brings. More importantly, the process of change was still at a stage where direction would be planned and managed’ (Coffs Harbour City Council 1989, p. 20).

On the 31st August 1994, the Coffs Harbour, Bellingen and Nambucca LGAs officially teamed together, under the banner ‘The Holiday Coast’, to promote tourism on the Mid North Coast of NSW (Coffs Harbour Advocate 1994, p. 3). This collaboration allowed the three partner areas to access major Federal and State government funding to assist in the promotion of the region. Tourism flows during this time were still heavily influenced by families (those under 18 years and those 45 years and over together accounted for 72 per cent of visitors in October 1993). Anti–tourism campaigners again began to debate the merits of tourism to the region, leading to the Coffs Harbour City Council seeking legal advice over an anti–tourism leaflet distributed throughout the city in 1996 (Coffs Harbour Advocate 1996, p. 7). Shortly thereafter, ‘a controversial plan’ to rename the region the ‘Coffs Coast’ was first presented to members of Tourism Holiday Coast (Coffs Harbour Advocate 1997, p. 4).

4.4.1.3 Recent Tourism Industry Profile

In 2000, the tourism brand ‘Coffs Coast’ was created. In partnership, the City of Coffs Harbour and Shires of Nambucca and Bellingen, established Coffs Coast Marketing, a
local government–controlled entity, to be charged with marketing and promoting the three LGA areas as one Coffs Coast region. At that time, the City of Coffs Harbour was the only LGA with any dedicated tourism resources (Coffs Coast Marketing 2007).

In spite of the Coffs Coast being a popular holiday destination for visitors for many years, visitor numbers to the region started to decline. Data from the National Visitor Survey, a primary measure of domestic tourism activity travel patterns of domestic tourists within Australia, indicates that visitor numbers decreased in the region from 1,055,000 in the year ending June 1999, to 999,000 in the year ending 2005 (Tourism Research Australia 2005). Figures by Tourism Research Australia indicate further deterioration of domestic tourist visitations to the Coffs Coast region, with 971,000 visitors in the year ending June 2006 (Tourism Research Australia 2007).

Over the same time period, the sum of visitor nights declined from 3,773,000 to 3,480,000 respectively (Tourism Research Australia 2006). Through the period January 1998 to December 2001, the State of NSW as a whole, experienced stable domestic tourist visitation while the North Coast region of the State experienced declines of over five per cent. The decline was recorded principally in the holiday/leisure market (ATS Group 2004, p. 19), and has since continued beyond 2002. According to Tourism NSW (2007), the number of trips taken domestically by Australians (year ending March 2007) to regions such as the North Coast of NSW was down by 2.4 per cent compared to four years ago. Through this volatility, the Coffs Coast has experienced declines in both visitors and visitor nights greater than the North Coast region and the State as a whole (Coffs Coast Marketing 2007). The North Coast Regional Tourism Plan 2004–2007 highlights a number of factors which may have contributed to this decline, namely increased tourism investment and resources applied at other popular coastal ‘hot spots’, some of which fall within a ‘competitive set’
challenging the Coffs Coast region; an increasingly number of ‘like’ destinations along the coastal fringe of NSW, improved transportation access to competing destinations (including capital cities), increasing price competition, and strong competitive regional marketing campaigns highlighting other regions of the State and Country.

The North Coast Regional Tourism Plan, undertaken by the ATS Group, further attributes the decline to changes in the travel behaviour of regional tourists. The report identifies two broad market segments visiting the region, with each segment reflecting different travel motivations. The report describes the first of these segments as the destination specific tourist. This broad segment comprises the dominant market segment for the region that frequently returns each year. These visitors rarely change their destination and participate in traditional coastal activities, such as visiting beaches, that centre on their accommodation base (ATS Group 2004, p. 2). The second segment identified in the ATS Group report has been described as the regional traveller. This segment includes the in–transit traveller who tends to stay for short periods on their journey to another destination; and the experiential traveller, described as those travellers seeking a diversity of experiences within the region. They are referred to as experiential travellers due to their ‘underlying desire to experience and interact with the region’s natural, cultural and social values’ (ATS Group 2004, p. 2–3). High yield niche markets, or defined market segments which yield higher than average returns from tourists, were identified within the experiential traveller segment. Such markets include backpackers, eco–tourism, food and wine, and cultural heritage travellers.

The Coffs Coast has a highly seasonal market, peaking during summer and school holiday periods. As a result, the region experiences a high variation in employment levels in tourism related businesses, volatility in economic activity and vulnerability to uncontrollable events, such as bad weather causing dramatic declines in performance
for a short period such as a school holiday (Coffs Coast Marketing 2007). Families, seen historically as a strong market for the area, continued to contribute heavily to visitations of the region. Throughout the years 1999 to 2005, overnight visits attributed to the family market accounted for 25 per cent of total visitations (Coffs Coast Marketing 2007). In support of this, a study of visitors to the region conducted by Armstrong et al. (2005) indicated the majority of visitors to the region were adults aged between 25 and 44 years (33.3 per cent) and children aged 0 to 13 years (30.9 per cent).

It is generally acknowledged that the local Coffs Coast economy is underpinned by tourism, with visitor expenditure identified as a major economic driver (see for example Sullivan 1996; Pilgram 1987; Coffs Harbour City Council 2001). Utilising REMPLAN, a regional economic modelling system underpinned by region-specific data provided by the Australian Bureau of Statistics (ABS), Fuller and Wilde (2005) endeavoured to provide an economic profile of the tourism sector specific to LGAs comprising the region Coffs Coast. It was determined that total economic impact (include direct, indirect and induced effects) of tourism was $754.5m per year to the Coffs Coast regional economy. The impact of direct tourism demand ($370m) per year maintained employment within the Accommodation, Cafes, Restaurants sector at a level of 3479 people. As ‘flow-on’ effects work through the interacting sectors, employment in Retail Trade (655 jobs), Property & Business Services (368), and Manufacturing (207) expands, giving a total of 6079 jobs across all sectors. This compares with a total figure of nearly 28,000 jobs for the Coffs Coast region as a whole (Fuller & Wilde 2005).
4.4.1.4 Tourism Area Life Cycle – Coffs Coast Tourism Region

As identified in Chapter Three, while trends in visitor numbers is the most commonly used indicator of the stage reached in a destination’s evolution, a number of authors (Butler 1980; Cooper 1990; Haywood 1986; Morgan 1991; Faulkner & Tideswell 2005) have identified a comprehensive range of evolution indicators of ‘stagnation’ (as labelled by Butler 1980), or as substituted by Hovinen (1981), the stage termed ‘maturity’. These are outlined in Table 4.4. Analysis of the Coffs Coast’s position with respect to some of the indicators contained in Table 4.4 is useful for the purposes of this case analysis.

The Coffs Coast, like any tourism destination, competes against other destinations. As such, the competitiveness of a tourism destination should be viewed relative to its main competitors (March 2004). Over time, the Coffs Coast (in its various forms) has competed with a variety of other destinations in New South Wales and Queensland for tourism markets. Currently, its principal competitive destinations – with particular to the family market – include the Northern Rivers of NSW (Byron, Ballina and Lismore), the Port Macquarie and Forster (Great Lakes) area, the lower Hunter Valley wine country (NSW), the Central Coast (NSW), Newcastle (NSW), the Gold Coast (including Tweed Heads and Coolangatta, border towns either side of the NSW/QLD State border), the South Coast of NSW, and the Sunshine Coast (QLD). Each of the principal competitors offers similar or comparable attractions such as weather, beach, price and activities (Tourism Leisure Concepts 2001). Some coastal NSW and Queensland destinations e.g. Tweed Coast, Gold Coast and Sunshine Coast, have recently experienced a boom in infrastructure investment particularly related to commercial holiday accommodation. Despite a flat market, in which visitor nights for domestic tourists are forecast to recover only moderately through to 2016 (Tourism
Research Australia 2007), these destinations are likely to increase domestic tourism visitation as a result of the additional facilities. This would be at the ‘expense of other destinations with similar features’ (Coffs Coast Marketing 2007).

A recent industry survey prepared by Earthcheck Pty Ltd, highlights that little new investment in accommodation or attractions has occurred on the Coffs Coast. In fact, a number of major tourism operators have ceased trading in the region during recent years. Key examples include the Coffs Harbour Aquajet Leisure Park, which featured giant water slides, go karts, mini golf facilitates and a variety of additional activities for families. Ironically, when closed in 2005, the Leisure Park’s equipment (including the giant water slides) was purchased by the Coffs Harbour Zoo, a steadfast attraction in the region since 1962. Despite nearly 400 different animals, continual animal presentations, an animal nursery and a rainforest aviary; the Zoo ceased trading in February 2007, through decreased patronage. The cessation of these attractions are in addition to the closure of Pelican Beach Resort, a 111–room beach front resort in close proximity to the township of Coffs Harbour, in early 2007.
### Destination Stage of Development: Indicators of Maturity/Stagnation

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Area of destination performance</th>
<th>Indicators</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>
| **1. Changing markets**         |  - Growth in low–status, low–spend visitors and day visitors  
                             - Overdependence on long–haul market  
                             - Emphasis on high–volume, low–yield inclusive tour market  
                             - **A decline in visitors length of stay**  
                             - Type of tourists increasingly organised mass tourists  
                             - A declining proportion of first–time visitors, as opposed to repeat visitors  
                             - Limited or declining appeal to overseas visitors  
                             - **Highly seasonal** |
| **2. Emerging newer destinations** |  - Competition from emerging newer destinations  
                             - The destination is well known, but no longer fashionable |
| **3. Infrastructure**           |  - Outdated, poorly maintained accommodation and amenities  
                             - Older properties are changing hands and newer properties, if they are being built are on the periphery of the original tourist areas  
                             - **Market perceptions of the destination becoming overcommercialised, crowded and ‘tacky’**  
                             - Diversification into conventions and conferences to maintain numbers  
                             - Large number of man–made attractions, which start to outnumber the more natural attractions that made the place popular in the first place |
| **4. Business performance**     |  - Declining profits of major tourism businesses  
                             - Lack of confidence in the tourism business community  
                             - A decline in the elasticity of advertising  
                             - **Lack of professional, experienced staff** |
| **5. Social and environmental carrying capacities** |  - Visitor levels approaching or exceeding social and environmental carrying capacities  
                             - Local opposition to tourism as the resort’s (destination) residential role increases |
| **6. Institutional environment** |  - Local government reorganisation (amalgamation) diluting the political power of resorts (destinations) in larger authorities  
                             - Demands for increased operational efficiency and entrepreneurial activity in local government  
                             - Short–term planning horizons in local government owing to financial restrictions and a low priority given to strategic thinking  
                             - **Shortage of research data** |

**Table 4.4**: Indicators in bold apply to the Coffs Coast on the basis of existing data (modifications from Butler 1980; Cooper 1990; Haywood 1986; Morgan 1991; Russell & Faulkner 1998; Faulkner & Tideswell 2005).
With declining visitor numbers, few new investments in tourism products and an escalating number of ‘like’ destinations seeking to enhance their overall competitiveness and attractiveness; anecdotal evidence suggests a lack of confidence within the Coffs Coast tourism business community. Of particular interest is a reduction in the participation by larger Coffs Coast tourism operators in recent Tourism NSW cooperative marketing activities for the region (Coffs Coast Marketing 2007). This reduction may, in part, have encouraged recent research (see Roy Morgan Research 2006) which suggests the general region encompassing the Coffs Coast is no longer fashionable. In spite of the destination of ‘Coffs Harbour’ being well known, consumer surveys and focus groups conducted in 2006 and 2007 determined that there is a low awareness of Coffs Coast and a poor understanding of what it has to offer – beyond a beach and a Big Banana (a tourist attraction located in Coffs Harbour, and consisting of a large building in the shape of a banana). Key findings of the study (Roy Morgan Research 2006), which featured focus group meetings in Sydney, Melbourne and Brisbane, were:

- Most people are not aware of the term ‘Coffs Coast’
- People’s perceptions have changed very little since 2001
- Perceptions of Coffs Coast are based on Coffs Harbour
- Most people have old memories of Coffs Harbour, and perceive it to be unfashionable
- Few people recalled hearing about the term ‘Coffs Coast’ but could not recall it through a media campaign
- No recognition or awareness of any of the other promotional material (e.g. brochures) produced by the region
- A bit ‘uncool’ when compared with Byron Bay
- Lacking a stand–out feature that makes it superior to other competing destinations
To conclude, following a review of documentation pertaining to the Coffs Coast tourism region including tourism strategic plans, council policies, industry focus groups and workshops, national tourism data sets, current marketing activities, and market perceptions of the Coffs Coast as a visitor destination; it is reasonable to at least conclude that the Coffs Coast is a mature destination showing signs of stagnation. The ongoing image for the Coffs Coast continues to be ‘very much beach, bananas and family’ (Tourism Leisure Concepts 2001).

4.4.2 Case Destination 2: Great Lakes Tourism Region – ‘A good family destination’

4.4.2.1 Location and Boundaries

The area encompassed by the Great Lakes tourism region stretches from Tea Gardens and Hawks Nest in the south, Hallidays Point in the north, and inland to the west to the foothills of the Great Dividing Range. Located on the eastern seaboard of Australia, the Great Lakes region forms part of the greater Hunter region (Barlin 2006). The Great Lakes region comprises both coastal and forested rural hinterland. One third of the area is made up of two National Parks and seven State Forests (Great Lakes Council 1997). With a combination of National Parks/State Forests, mountain ranges, lake systems, rivers and 27 beaches (along 145 kilometres of total coastline), the Great Lakes has become a major recreation area. Forster, the largest town within the region, is 320 kilometres north of Sydney (the capital of NSW). Figures 4.5 and 4.6 shows the location of the Great Lakes tourism region on the East Coast of Australia.
4.4.2.2 History of Tourism in the Great Lakes

The Great Lakes area has enjoyed a level of tourism since its earliest days of European settlement. Cape Hawke and Port Stephens (at the southern edge of the Great Lakes region) were originally discovered and named in 1770. The first settlements in the area occurred from 1818 to 1826, following a number of successful expeditions to the area.
A fledgling tourist industry commenced by the end of the nineteenth century in Forster and the nearby settlement of Tuncurry (Great Lakes Council 2007). Unlike other destinations on the North Coast of NSW, the opening of the North Coast railway in 1913 did not have an immediate impact throughout the Great Lakes area. Coastal areas (such as Forster and Tuncurry) generally were still too far away and continued to rely on coastal shipping. However, improved motor road transport in the region around 1920 stimulated tourism development by providing fast, reliable transport to the Sydney markets. By the 1930s, the more motorised travellers were beginning to visit direct from Sydney (Great Lakes Council 2007). A 1938 estimate showed that Forster’s population increased from around 700 to about 5,000 during the tourist season (Rowan 2001). The Town and Country Journal published frequent accounts during the late nineteenth century of places to visit, highlighting scenic attractions and offering advice on travel and accommodation. The Bellevue Hotel at Tuncurry was mentioned as the best house on the northern rivers for cuisine and accommodation (Revitt 1979).

The greatest changes in tourism to the Great Lakes occurred post World War II. Development on the coastal fringe shifted the emphasis of economic growth and influence from the agricultural lands of the western part of the Great Lakes area to the coast. With the improved road connections and wider car ownership, the 1950s saw the
development of relatively unsophisticated unit and cottage accommodation, weekenders, caravan parks and early motel accommodation. Much of this development occurred in Forster and Tuncurry, leading to these destinations outstripping other population centres in the Great Lakes district. After about 1970, accommodation acquired a more up market component with more sophisticated motels and holiday units in addition to the usual unit and caravan park accommodation (Great Lakes Council 2007). It would therefore appear, through this review, that whilst the Coffs Coast and Great Lakes tourism regions appear to have evolved through similar cycles of tourism leading through to the 1970s, the outcome of this development (in more recent times), is different in a number of important respects, details of which are provided in the following section.

4.4.2.3 Recent Tourism Industry Profile

Like many destinations on the North Coast of NSW, the Great Lakes has experienced a decline in visitor numbers over the last few years. Estimates at an LGA level derived from the 2005 National Visitor Survey (Tourism Research Australia 2006), recorded 513,000 overnight domestic visitors resided in the area in 2005. This figure was in comparison to an average of annual domestic overnight visitors (1998–2005) of 626,000 (Council of Tourist Associations 2006a). This level of visitation can also be compared to 563,000 domestic visitors in 2003. Visitor nights (domestic tourists), however, were seen to increase through 2003. Domestic visitor nights were documented as 2,517,0000 which compared to an average annual domestic nights (1998–2003) of 2,399,000 (Council of Tourist Associations 2003). As discussed previously, according to Tourism NSW (2007), the number of trips taken domestically by Australians (year ending March 2007) to regions such as the North Coast of NSW was down by 2.4 per cent compared to four years ago. Indeed, a Tourism Industry
Council NSW report (2007) highlights the fact that since 2000, in NSW, domestic visitor expenditure has fallen by 14 per cent. It is therefore with no surprise that total visitor numbers to the Great Lakes region have decreased over this period of time. Key tourism figures are summarised in Table 4.5.

The Great Lakes tourism market is well defined. Visits to the region are dominated by domestic tourists. For example, statistics related to the number of visitors to the Great Lakes in 2004 indicate that 92 per cent of visitor nights were attributed to domestic visitors (Great Lakes Tourism 2005). Further visitor scrutiny has shown that in 1995, 75 per cent of visitors to the region emphasised ‘holidaying’ as their primary motive for travel the Great Lakes region, 92 per cent of visitors utilised a private car travelling to and from the area, and 49 per cent of domestic visitors visiting the region resided in the Sydney Metropolitan region as their home destination (Great Lakes Tourism 1995). Similar results in these key elements where found in a 1998 Visitor Survey conducted in the region. This survey revealed that the majority of visitors to the region (76 per cent) to the area were travelling in a family group. This finding is consistent with the local tourism theme that the Great Lakes provide a fun, safe family environment (Great Lakes Tourism 1998).
Tourism Region | Coffs Coast | Great Lakes
--- | --- | ---
Visitors numbers to region | 971,000 (2006) | 513,000 (2005)
Major visitor segment | Majority of visitors to the region were adults aged between 25 and 44 years (33.3%) and children aged 0 to 13 years (30.9%) (Armstrong et al. 2005) | 76 per cent to the area were travelling in a family group (Great Lakes Tourism 1998)
Economic Impact of Tourism | $754.5 million (Fuller & Wilde 2005) | $240 million (Barlin 2006)

Table 4.5: Comparison of key tourism figures – Coffs Coast and Great Lakes tourism regions.

More recent statistics related to this tourism zone continue to indicate strong domestic visitations, mainly by family groups. Average annual domestic overnight visitors during the period 2002 to 2003 show 171,000 visitors in the region were classified as ‘family groups’, with 46 per cent of those survey confirming that their travel group contained 3–5 persons, and 57 per cent recording their home region as Sydney (Council of Tourist Associations 2003). Coupled with this visitation are economic benefits. The estimated spend ($m) by domestic overnight visitors each year over the period 1998 to 2005 is $240 million. When the spending of domestic day visitors ($46m) is included, jobs directly related to this spend in the Great Lakes region are 2,737 (Council of Tourist Associations 2006b), compared to 10,734 jobs in the entire region (Australian Bureau of Statistics 2001), highlighting the regions reliance on this sector as a major employment industry. The broader economic contributions of tourism to the Great Lakes region is further evidence by Barlin (2006), who having applied a tourism impact model to the region, found that the theoretical cessation of tourism industry in the region would reduce the overall population base by 6,333 persons, or 18.6 per cent of the total population. On balance, unemployment in the Great Lakes
region has fallen, from rates in excess of 16 per cent in mid 1999 and 2003 to around 10 per cent in the June quarter 2008. Despite this fall, industries in the Great Lakes LGA where there was a proportional contraction in employment between the 1996–2006 census periods include agriculture, forestry and fishing; mining and wholesale trade (Hawkins 2008). In contrast, service–related industries like tourism were seen to increase.

Release of the 2006 Census data allows the identification of structural differences between the Great Lakes and NSW State economies. The dominance of the service sector in the Great Lakes economy is clearly apparent, with retail trade being the largest employer in the LGA, accounting for almost 14 per cent of total employment in 2006. Additionally, the Great Lakes have proportionally higher employment in accommodation and food services, and the construction sector, when compared to the State of NSW as a whole. Compared to the State, higher proportional employment in accommodation and food services is indicative of the Great Lakes growing popularity as a tourist destination, while higher proportional employment in construction reflects increases in both residential and non–residential building developments (detailed in the following section) especially between the years 2000 and 2006 (Hawkins 2008).

Like the Coffs Coast, the Great Lakes tourism region competes against other destinations. According to Great Lakes Tourism (R Old 2009, pers. comm., 24 Sept), key competitors include Coffs Harbour, Port Macquarie (both located north of the Great Lakes on the Mid North Coast), Shoalhaven, Eurobodalla (located on the south coast of NSW) and the broader Sydney area.
4.4.2.4 Tourism Area Life Cycle – Great Lakes Tourism Region

As discussed in Section 3.3, Butler’s (1980) Tourism Area Life Cycle (TALC) intended to show the development of a destination in terms of the series of life stages defined by infrastructures and number of visitors (Toh, Khan & Koh 2001). However, whilst visitors numbers at times have been solely used to address a destination’s stage of development (for example Cooper & Jackson 1989; Cooper 1990; O’Hare & Barrett 1993; Choy 1993), in this study, a combination of statistics and data sources (including population growth rates, employment structures, the type of tourism development etc) in addition to visitors statistics are utilised in the analysis of TALC indicators, as they relate to the Great Lakes tourism region (see Table 4.7).

As tourism continues to contribute to the Great Lakes region, developers external to the area have been seen to pursue a number of recent development applications surrounding tourism and recreation, including the advancement of a $120 million eco–residential development at Seven Mile Beach, south of Forster (Great Lakes Council 2007). However, despite this increased interest, major Australian and international tourism chains or management firms (such as Rydges, Accor, and Sheraton) have thus far failed to engage the region (unlike many other coastal destinations including Port Macquarie, Byron Bay and the Coffs Coast). Development impacts, generally, in the Great Lakes have not been as acute as that which has occurred in other major coastal tourist destinations like Coffs Harbour, Port Macquarie and Nelson Bay, particularly during the 1980s ‘development boom’. As reported in the Sun Herald (a popular Australian national newspaper) in May 1988, ‘property developers armed with cheque books are frantically jostling each other for a stake in the NSW coastline. With tourist accommodation and resort projects worth more than $3,000 million in the pipeline, the development boom is definitely on’ (Mealey 1988). Despite a comprehensive list
detailing 12 coastal destinations (including Coffs Harbour, where $1.5 billion worth of developments were detailed), the Great Lakes tourism region failed to draw significant development funding during that time (Mealey 1988). As a result, evidence such as this suggests that the wider region (including tourism regions bordering the Great Lakes) may have been successful in preserving their authentic character and core values which, may now, start to pay off as more traditional coastal holiday makers are now viewing the region as an alternate less developed coastal tourism destination enabling the area to capture a larger share of this regional market (Brennan 2005).

It is likely that the increased attention of larger external organisations will occur in the short to medium term, with recent statistics indicating that with the highest population growth on the North Coast of NSW expected around regions such as the Great Lakes with a projected population increase of 55 per cent by 2026 (in contrast, whilst Coffs Harbour’s population is still growing, this growth has slowed considerably compared to the early 1990s – Van der Veen 2004), a noticeable ‘trend towards an increase in off peak visitation rates’ (Barlin 2006), and forecasts suggesting an increase in tourism of between one and two per cent per annum locally (Great Lakes Tourism 2005).
Destination Stage of Development: Indicators of Development/Consolidation

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Area of destination performance</th>
<th>Indicators</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. Tourism market</td>
<td>• Tourism market is well-defined</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Efforts are being made to extend the tourism season</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Rate of increase in numbers of tourists will decline</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Although total numbers with still increase</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Total visitor numbers exceed the number of permanent residents</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. Facilities and control</td>
<td>• Local involvement declines as they lose control of development</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• External organisations will replace local provided facilities with larger, more elaborate and modern facilities</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Overuse and deterioration of facilities</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. Economic impact</td>
<td>• Economy of the region is now dependent on tourism</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4. Perceptions</td>
<td>• Heavy marketing and advertising will be extensive</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Opposition and feelings of discontent are evident among the host community</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 4.7: Indicators in bold apply to the Great Lakes on the basis of existing data (from Butler 1980; Cooper 1992).

In order to improve their overall competitiveness, destinations must make their infrastructure as user–friendly as possible for visitors (Ritchie & Crouch 2003). In 1995, a survey involving 757 respondents (from May until October) presented visitors an opportunity to make comments and suggestions on additional facilities, services or attractions required to improve visitor satisfaction. Eleven major categories of suggestions were derived. Of major significance were categories such as roads (including improvements to the Lakes Way, a major arterial road leading from the Pacific Highway into Forster and Tuncurry), food outlets (including the need for improved quality in restaurants), accommodation (such as improving motel quality, and the need for a quality resort in the area), attractions/entertainment (with particular reference to more variety for families), and the environment (Great Lake Tourism 1995). Similar overtures were present in a comparable study conducted in 1998.
Although many elements of infrastructure are linked to competitiveness, of particular significance was the increase of complaints about road conditions during the preceding three years, ‘with repeat visitors growing tired of the current state of the roads’ (Great Lakes Tourism 1998). This is of critical importance to regions such as the Great Lakes, given the aforementioned reliance on private transportation to and from the region.

In summation, an appraisal of indicators pertaining to the Great Lakes tourism region taken from items such as council policies, tourism data sets, recent development activities, and consumer concerns of the Great Lakes has concluded that this region contains signs of development and consolidation. Indicators such as the decline of local involvement in tourism developments, the advent of external organisations seeking to replace local amenities (and their management) with larger, more elaborate and modern facilities; and a recognised deterioration of facilities (as viewed by visitors), support this finding. It would be negligent of the author, however, to conclude, categorically, that the Great Lakes tourism region’s stage of development falls entirely within the identified stages. As first seen by Hovinen in 1981, in his appraisal of the Lancaster County, Pennsylvania, found the coexistence of a number of stages. Coexistence of this nature is further supported by Getz (1992). From evidence obtained by the researcher, it would be rational to infer that the Great Lakes tourism region (when viewed against a competitive set of destinations such as Byron Bay, Port Macquarie, the lower Hunter Valley, Central Coast and the Coffs Coast), is heavily positioned within Butler’s (1980) stages of development and consolidation.

This chapter now turns its attention to the second qualitative method employed in this research: focus group discussions.
4.5 Focus Group Discussions

Focus groups are a form of group interview that capitalises on communication between research participants in order to generate data (Freeman 2006). Although group interviews are often used simply as a quick and convenient way to collect data from several people simultaneously, focus groups explicitly use group interaction as part of the method. This means that instead of the researcher asking each person to respond to a question in turn, people are encouraged to talk to one another: asking questions, exchanging anecdotes and commenting on each others’ experiences and points of view (Kitzinger 1995). Focus group discussions have formed part of a number of TDC enquiries (Ritchie & Crouch 2003; Al-Masroori 2006; Dwyer & Kim 2003; Huybers & Bennett 2003).

The motivation for using focus group discussions in this research is underpinned by a number of principles. Firstly, the facilitator/researcher, in support of Jennings (2001), believes that the interaction between group members will add to the richness of data collected, as a result of group members questioning, clarifying and challenging their position as part of the wider discussion. As with interviews, a focus group discussion will enable the researcher to gather more data, and in more detail, than they would have been able to collect had all the participants been involved in some form of survey (Jennings 2001). The focus group discussion also provides ample opportunity for the facilitator/researcher to probe for clarification, thus providing for ‘continuous assessment and evaluation of information by the inquirer, allowing him to redirect, probe, and summarise’ (Guba & Lincoln 1981, p. 187).

The weaknesses of focus groups, much like the strengths, are linked to the process of producing focused interaction. These weaknesses principally pertain to the role of the
moderator, and the risk of dominant members, as both may impact the data (Morgan 1996). In relation to the role of the moderator, a study by Agar and MacDonald (1995), which compared the exchange between interviewers and interviewees in a single focus group to a set of individual interviews, concluded that the dynamics of the individual interviews put more responsibility on the interviewees to explain themselves to the interviewer, whilst the interviewer’s attempts to guide the group discussion disrupted the interaction of group members. A clear assessment of the level of moderator involvement is therefore considered as part of the focus group protocol. The protocol seeks to define the process by which focus group discussions were conducted. In providing and following such a process, the researcher endeavoured to apply a consistent focus group format across each of the case destinations. As such, reliability in the qualitative stage of the research, as defined by Yin (1994) and Patton (1990), was addressed. In managing group dynamics, the moderator/researcher utilised a structured approach, thus encouraging those who might otherwise say little and limit those who might otherwise to dominate the discussion.

One of the warnings often given in the use of focus groups is that researchers should be careful not to allow one member of the group to dominate the discussion (Morgan 1996). This is often felt for the most part in groups including people previously unknown to each other (Reed & Payton 1997). In this study, however, group members were known to each other, given the nature of the research topic, and study locations. Focus group discussions involved 9 tourism representatives in the Coffs Coast, and 7 representatives (due to two late cancellations) in the Great Lakes tourism region. This number ensured the focus groups were workable, given larger numbers tend to constrain or limit the interactions between members (Jennings 2001). Further, smaller groups are commonly utilised when the researcher typically wants more in–depth insights, and where participants have a great deal to share about the topic and/or have
had lengthy experiences with the topic under discussion (Krueger & Casey 2000). Details regarding the selection of respondents are provided in Section 4.5. The focus groups were conducted to first identify critical attributes of TDC, and second, to explore the significance and importance of these attributes to destinations as differing stages of development. Preceding each focus group, participants were provided with a Focus Group Question and Discussion Guide (Appendix Three). Included with this guide was an Informed Consent Form, a requirement of data collection (Appendix Four). Issues covered in the guide include: purpose of the research, expected results/outcomes, why the research is important, and a definition of 'tourism destination competitiveness'. In support of Taylor and Bogdan (1984), who raise the need for clear acknowledgement of the investigator’s motives and intentions from the outset of the study, it was anticipated that this guide (in addition to the Informed Consent Form and Project Information Sheet) would provide participants a clear sense of the project, and would allow them to prepare their thoughts.

The Focus Group Question and Discussion Guide was a central instrument in the design and implementation of the qualitative phase of this research (Perry 2001). The guide, thus, gave direction, structure and a degree of flexibility to the investigation of the stated research questions (Burns 1994, Yin 1994). The guide included 9 key questions, in three sections. These sections encompassed a general discussion of the major elements/features required to make a destination competitive; a review of the evolution and development phase of the case destination areas, and closing questions that allowed for discussions related to the competitiveness of the case destinations for specific consumer market segments, namely Australian domestic family holiday/leisure tourists. The list of questions that were used is provided in Appendix Three.
Upon arrival at the discussion location, participants were asked to submit their Informed Consent Form. Additionally, participants were asked to submit their Focus Group Questions and Discussion Guide (including any associated notes or commentary) at the completion of the discussion for further review. This guide ensured that the views of each participant were recorded, a view supported by Sussman et al. (1991).

As noted in Section 4.3.1, a research assistant was used as a note taker facilitating a free flowing discussion (focus groups) between the researcher and group participants, and to record participant responses. This is a method supported by Fontana and Frey (1994). In addition, each focus group discussion was recorded via a digital voice recorder. This presented the researcher with a full account of the dialogue following each focus group. Such dialogue assisted in addressing the issue of investigator triangulation (detailed in Section 4.3.1).

Summing up, a significant requirement for undertaking sound qualitative research, the use of a focus group protocol, has been provided here. The selection of focus group participants is discussed in the following section.

### 4.5.2 Focus Group Participant Selection and Justification

Each group contained a combination of tourism destination managers, industry representatives, and tourism operators (including participants from a mix of small, medium and large firms). Justification for utilising ‘experts’ in focus groups, as opposed to tourists, has strong support within the destination competitiveness literature (see Section 2.6). At least as a first step, a study based on an analysis of expert judgement seems to be a much more sensible starting point as a means of first identifying critical attributes linked to the notion of TDC, and following, estimating the
relative importance and determinance of each of the attributes. Consequently, such practitioners were viewed as an appropriate population to respond to the initial phase of the research (Crouch 2007).

A list of potential group participants was derived, with the assistance of Senior Managers of Coffs Coast Marketing and Great Lakes Tourism (key destination marketing bodies within the defined case regions). The intention of this methodology was to gain access to individuals knowledgeable in the area on tourism, namely on the notion of destination competitiveness. Potential participants (18 individuals in each case region) were contacted, via email by the researcher (attached to this email was a Project Information Sheet – see Appendix Two) and then by phone, in an effort to fully explain the reasons and nature of the study. During this phone conversation, participants were asked to contribute to the study. Initially, 10 individuals from each destination expressed their interest in attending. As mentioned in Section 4.5.2, due to some late cancellations, in total, 9 attendees contributed to the Coffs Coast focus group discussion, with 7 attendees in the Great Lakes. However, prior to each focus group, participants were provided with a Focus Group Questions and Discussion Guide (Appendix Three), allowing participants time to prepare their thoughts. Included with this guide was the Informed Consent Form. Despite non–attendance at the focus group, 2 completed (written) guides were submitted by non–attendees post discussion. Therefore, in total, Discussion Guides were submitted by 10 (Coffs Coast tourism region) and 8 (Great Lakes tourism region) participants respectively.
4.5.3 Focus Group/Field Work Resources

Focus group discussions were held in formal settings, at Southern Cross University’s Coffs Harbour Campus (Coffs Coast tourism region) and a corporate conference facility in Forster (Great Lakes tourism region).

4.6 Section Summary

Following an assessment of indicators related to Butler’s (1980) Tourism Area Life Cycle (TALC), identified in Chapter Three as a useful descriptive tool for analysing the development of destinations and the evolution of their markets (Cooper & Jackson 1989; Weaver 1990; Agarwal 1994; Cooper 1989; Wall 1982; Prosser 1997; Berry 2001), it was found that whilst the Coffs Coast and Great Lakes tourism regions appear to have evolved through similar cycles of tourism over the last 100 years, the outcome of this development is different in relation to a number of important aspects (see Sections 4.4.1.4 and 4.4.2.4). This review concluded that the Coffs Coast is a mature destination showing signs of stagnation, as opposed to the Great Lakes, identified as being heavily positioned within Butler's (1980) stages of development and consolidation.

Previous life cycle–related research indicates a series of theoretical and practical implications which are seen to affect the relationship between mature destinations and their less mature counterparts. For example, Kozak (2004, p. 38) asserts that ‘developing destinations pose a threat to mature destinations by offering affordable prices and unspoiled resources’. Manente and Pechlaner (2006, p. 235) note that destinations ‘with a certain tradition in providing tourism’ are often characterised by one or more negative trends. Mature destinations are perceived to suffer from
congestion and overcrowding (including transportation deficiencies), with the upkeep of facilities often neglected (Sheldon & Abenoja 2001). Another trend viewed in the extant literature as impacting mature destinations is the increased perceptions of negative impacts and negative attitudes towards tourism from local people. Previous studies supporting this idea have linked local perceptions of tourism impacts to the stage of development, with positive attitudes generally associated with less developed destinations (Diedrich & Garcia–Buades 2009). For instance; Long, Perdue, and Allen (1990) report that local awareness of both positive and negative impacts of tourism in communities in rural Colorado increased with the level of tourism, with associated attitudes increasing favourably to a threshold and then becoming more negative. Mansfeld and Ginosar (1994) also conclude, having reviewed four tourist towns in Israel, that residents have less positive perceptions and attitudes once tourism develops past a certain point. There will, however, always be scenarios or examples that do not coincide with this generalisation, with both Liu and Var (1986) and Faulkner and Tideswell (1997) observing in Hawaii and the Gold Coast region of Australia, respectively, that community perceptions will not always be negative in mature destinations (Diedrich & Garcia–Buades 2009). Importantly, Upchurch and Teivane (2000) maintain that local attitudes observed in latter stages of the TALC continuum are largely contingent upon how the community copes with impacts that have accumulated during the development stage. In this context, the development phase of a destination’s life cycle therefore provides a critical period during which time a location can shape its future as a tourism destination.

The destination maturation process can also affect travel behaviour (McKercher & du Cros 2008). In study by Kozak (2001), based on data collected from Britons visiting Spain and Turkey, the author found that the more mature a destination, the more repeat tourists it has and the greater was the stated intention for return visits. The finding
parallels that of previous research carried out by Gyte and Phelps (1989). McKercher & du Cros (2008) provide further support to this notion, stating that low–cost, familiar destinations may enjoy resurgence at maturity due to higher travel intensities, resulting in these places being visited as one of many trips taken a year. However, destinations with reliance upon more mature markets can experience slow or no growth, meaning that destinations must steal share from other destinations in order to grow. Different marketing tactics and different levels of marketing sophistication are therefore required as both markets and destinations evolve (McKercher & du Cros 2008).

The identification of two case destinations, postulated as being at differing stages in their development/evolution (developing/consolidating versus mature/signs of stagnation), therefore provides an appealing context from which to assess the significance and importance of attributes of tourism destination competitiveness, contributing to the competitiveness of destinations at different stages of development.

This chapter now turns its attention to the second qualitative method employed in this research: focus group discussions.

4.7 Analysis of Qualitative Data

Miles and Huberman (1994) provide a guide to analysing qualitative exploratory data (see Figure 4.7). Their model illustrates a process where by the researcher weaves backwards and forwards between processes of data reduction, data display, and conclusions.
Miles and Huberman’s (1994) approach is broadly supported (Yin 1989, Merriman 1988), although like many aspects related to qualitative research, there are no overall guidelines as to how many of these techniques should be applied. These techniques (Miles & Huberman 1994) include:

1. Putting information into different arrays
2. Developing categories and placing the evidence within such categories
3. Creating data displays – flow charts and other devices – for examining the data
4. Tabulating the frequency of different events
5. Putting information into chronological order or using some other temporal scheme

For the current study, the researcher endeavoured to constantly look ‘for what appears to be the main concern or problem for the people in the setting’ (Strauss 1987, p. 35). With the general research aim in mind, audio recordings of focus group discussion were reviewed, transcribed into electronic form, and read for clarity with the dominant concepts noted. By ‘eyeballing’ the transcripts, questions and responses were clearly marked to detect the balance of narrative between interviewer and interviewee (Smith,
Chen & Liu 2008). Equally, searching for repetitions within transcripts is best done by eyeballing, although this can be quite time consuming (Ryan & Bernard 2003).

Gordon and Langmaid (1988) identify the large–sheet–of–paper approach to analysing focus group data. The large–sheet–of–paper approach is the equivalent of manual cut and paste and involves breaking the transcripts down into text segments and allocating these under themes and headings identified deductively and/or inductively (Catterall & Maclaran 1997). Cutting and pasting of text segments, both qualitative and quantitative, are further advocated by Morgan (1995), and Stewart and Shamdasani (1990) respectively. These kinds of techniques, whilst considered ‘low technology’, allow the researcher to compare, contrast, start to build up categories and typologies and to discuss the ‘meaning’ of their data (Green & Thorogood 2004). Although electronic methods of coding data are increasingly being used by researchers, Basit (2003) suggests that the use of software may not be considered feasible to code only a few interviews, a stance supported by Green and Thorogood (2004). Relatively unrelated minor categories (or comments) that achieved limited or no response were disregarded as irrelevant.

4.8 Ethical Considerations

In qualitative case study research, ethical dilemmas are likely to emerge from two points: during the collection of data and in the dissemination of findings (Merriman 1998). Walker (1980) highlights a number of common problems case study investigators may encounter whilst conducting research, such as:

- Problems over confidentiality of data
Problems concerning publication, such as the need to preserve the anonymity of subjects

Problems from the audience being unable to distinguish between data and the researcher’s interpretation

In this research, details (name, affiliation) of each participant were suppressed, with anonymity within the final thesis assured. In addressing problems concerning publication; participants, in signalling their intention to participate in the project through the submission of an Informed Consent document, acknowledge the research findings will be submitted for publication, with a copy of the final thesis made available at the Southern Cross University Library. Thus, a clear indication was given to all potential participants of how the data would be managed and reported in the final thesis. In attending to Walker’s (1980) third matter, as detailed in Section 4.3.1, this research employed a number of strategies including peer examination – where colleagues were asked to review and comment of the findings – in an effort to highlight the investigators interpretation of the research (Merriman 1988, p. 169).

Two further key ethical considerations are introduced by Emory (1991) and Foddy (1994) to direct researchers in their task. First, the proper treatment of participants is raised. To instil confidence in research participants, full disclosure about the purpose and context of the research (including the provision of a copy of the Focus Group Questions and Discussion Guide) was provided to all participants prior to the time of the discussions. The second consideration is that the researcher conducts themselves in a manner that sustains the standards of those he or she represents. Official letterhead, used on all research documents, and business cards were utilised to protect the rights of the researcher’s supporting institutions, including the Sustainable Tourism CRC (provider of the candidate’s PhD scholarship).
4.9 Chapter Summary

This chapter has outlined the qualitative methodological approach employed in this research. In highlighting a lack of research exploring the importance between key destination competitiveness variables and the stage of development for a tourism destination, the choice of a research paradigm that supports this area of examination as an emergent field of enquiry was chosen. Differing strategies for academic inquiry were considered, in an effort to meeting the research objectives, resulting in the researcher embracing a case study method. Utilising the extant literature, justification for this selection was offered, with a protocol guiding the research (including the organisation and administration of focus group discussions) developed. Limitations of this methodology were also raised, and addressed. Finally, ethical considerations were emphasised. Discussion will now advance in Chapter Five, which provides validation for the quantitative methods employed in this study.
CHAPTER V QUANTITATIVE METHODOLOGY

5.1 Introduction

The preceding chapter presented qualitative methods employed in the initial phase of this study. These methods included steps pertaining to the administration of focus group discussions with key tourism industry stakeholders within each of the two case destinations. The focus groups were conducted to first identify critical attributes of TDC, and second, to explore the significance and importance of these attributes to destinations as differing stages of development. Findings from these discussions are provided in the following chapter. These findings were subsequently synthesised with conclusions derived from the literature reviewed in Chapters Two and Three to form the basis of a quantitative survey, which is utilised to answer Research Question 1b: What critical attributes affect the competitiveness of tourism destinations from a consumer perspective?; Research Question Three: To what extent is the importance of destination attributes, to consumers, affected by demographic subgroups? and Research Question Four: Do developing and mature destinations perform differently in relation to the destination attributes from a consumer perspective?

This chapter provides justification for the quantitative analysis techniques employed; details how the questionnaire was designed; outlines data collection methods; and data preparation and screening systems.
5.2 Justification for the Quantitative Research Paradigm, Methodology and Design

As recognised in Section 4.2, qualitative research was identified as being more suited to theory generation, with quantitative research to theory testing. For that reason, quantitative analysis techniques were used to evaluate the importance of numerous TDC attributes (first identified by local tourism stakeholders as being critical to the competitiveness of regional Australian tourism destinations) from a consumer perspective. In doing so, this research seeks to compare (and contrast) qualitative importance ratings (prescribed by local tourism stakeholders) against those quantitative ratings agreed upon by consumers. Further, these methodologies are also used to rate the performance of the two competing case destinations (postulated as being at differing stages of development) across those TDC attributes, again from a consumer perspective. As stated by Dwyer and Kim (2003), TDC is intrinsically linked to the relative ability of a destination to perform better than other destinations on those aspects of the tourism experience considered to be important by tourists (Dwyer & Kim 2003).

Yin (1994), discussed in Section 4.2, identifies three key conditions a researcher should consider when determining which type of research strategy should to be utilised within an evaluation, those conditions being: a) the type of research question posed, b) the extent of control an investigator has over the actual behavioural events, and c) the degree of focus on contemporary as opposed to historical events. Yin (1994), in Table 4.2, further highlights five differing strategies for academic inquiry within the social sciences: experiments, surveys, archival analysis, histories, and case studies. Through reference to Table 4.2, it is evident that Research Questions One (RQ1b), and Research Questions Three and Four would be most appropriately addressed through the use of a survey based approach. Research Questions One (RQ1b) and Three seeks to identify
‘what’ competitiveness attributes consumers (namely domestic family holiday/leisure tourists) find important. These questions, in addition to Research Question Four, can also be addressed without control over behavioural events, as the research is seeking to have respondents provide reflective responses regarding their tourism experiences. Finally, all questions (Research Questions One – RQ1b – Three and Four) are focused on contemporary phenomena.

In a similar fashion, Bennett (1991) identifies criteria for selecting a research methodology. These include asking whether the selected method allows the research question to be answered. Using Bennett’s (1991) first criterion, it is evident that for Research Questions One (RQ1b), Research Question Three and Research Question Four to be addressed (from a consumer perspective), the importance of key competitiveness attributes and the performance of the case destinations in respect to these attributes, needs to be tested. The adoption of a survey methodology would consequently allow statistical tests of the associations between variables (attributes) to be undertaken. Therefore in relation to Bennett’s first criterion, a survey methodology is deemed suitable. Another criterion affirmed by Bennett (1991), relating to examining the current state of knowledge, also supports the use of a quantitative survey design in this study. The current state of knowledge regarding tourism destination competitiveness, in particular as it relates to destinations at different stages of life cycle development, is extremely limited (as evidenced in Chapters Two and Three). The adoption of a survey methodology will therefore aid in further understanding this research topic.

The arguments presented in this section show that positivist, quantitative methods are generally best for theory testing. As highlighted by both Yin (1989) and Bennett’s (1991) criteria for the selection of a research methodology, the use of a quantitative survey is deemed an appropriate method for investigating Research Question 1b,
Research Question Three and Research Question Four. In the next section, the selection of a specific survey technique – an Internet, web based survey – is discussed.

5.3 Data Collection Methods

Several alternative survey techniques are available to the researcher. These include telephone interviews, personal interviews, shopping mall interviews, and self-administered questionnaires, including internet surveys (Zikmund 2003). For the purposes of this study, a web-based self-administered questionnaire was selected as the most effective means of data collection.

As identified by Zikmund (2003), personal interviews are generally more expensive than mail, Internet, or telephone surveys. The geographic proximity of respondents, and the length and complexity of the questionnaire, all influence the cost of the personal interview (Zikmund 2003). Whilst shopping mall or intercept interviews are commonly used in tourism-related studies (see for example LeHew & Wesley 2007; Anwar & Sohail 2004; Guinn & Vincent 2003), the complexity and length of the current survey precluded the use of this technique. Self-administered surveys, in particular Internet-based surveys, provide a particularly appealing means for data collection. The advantages of reduced response time, lowered cost, ease of data entry, flexibility in format, and the ability to capture additional response-set information are common to Internet-based data collection across a variety of disciplines (Granello & Wheaton 2004). Nevertheless, as with any survey method, issues related to informed consent, non-response error, sample population, and technical issues must all be addressed before meaningful data can be obtained. These and a number of related issues will be attended to below, inline with principles of respondent-friendly online research, as defined by Dillman et al. (1999) and Granello and Wheaton (2004).
When using the Internet to collect data, a standard of what constitutes informed consent has not been well established within the research community (Rhodes, Bowie & Hergenrather 2003). Some literature (Rhodes, Bowie & Hergenrather 2003) contends that knowing whether the respondent truly understands the research and providing the respondent with opportunities for clarification are limited, if not impossible online e.g. with such distance between the researcher or data collection staff and respondent, researchers cannot verify basic demographics of a respondent. It is well worth considering however that historically there are other venues for research that offer as much opportunity for deception such as mail surveys, telephone interviews, questionnaires passed out in large classrooms, and other approaches (Walther 2002).

A number of ‘rules of thumb’ pertaining to informed consent, as related to online research, have been offered (Elgesem 2002; King 1996), and were adopted as part of the current study:

- Prior to the collection of research responses online, and having clicked the survey weblink, prospective respondents were presented with an informed consent information page. The researcher utilised this page to appropriately inform potential respondents about the researchers’ identity and affiliations, the purpose of the research, offered contact details should interested individuals need to contact the researcher, and importantly addressed any potential vulnerabilities or privacy concerns by individual respondents.
- The informed consent information page of the survey also clearly explained that each person should complete the survey one time only.
- By agreeing to continue in the study (by clicking the ‘Start’ button on this web page), and providing data, the subject’s consent was therefore reasonably inferred.
This approach seems to have become an acceptable substitute in many cases, meeting the functional requirements of informed consent through logistics adapted to the Internet (Walther 2002). Additionally, a “leave the study” option was made available on the survey page, allowing participants to leave the study at any time.

5.3.1 Non–Response Error

Non–response error arises when some of the potential respondents included in the sample do not respond (Malhotra et al. 1996). This type of error exists to the extent that people included in the sample fail to provide usable responses and maybe different than those who do on the characteristics of interest in the study. In this thesis, the degree of non–response error was assessed through the use of trend analysis.

Given the identity of respondents and non–respondents were not known, and that non–respondents could not be contacted to obtain reasons for non–completion; trend analysis is an attempt to discern a trend between early and late respondents, which is projected to non–respondents to estimate where they stand on the characteristics of interest (Malhotra et al. 1996). To facilitate this analysis, two groups were selected; group one included responses received prior to and including the 14th of November 2008, with the second group including responses received after the 14th of November 2008. This latter date corresponds with a follow up email sent to respondents.

Multiple t tests on key variables (50 t tests in total) were undertaken between the two groups. These tests were performed using a 0.001 sig level. The chances of a Type 1 error (defined by Hair Jr. et al. 1998 as the error of rejecting a null hypothesis when it is actually true) are increased with multiple related tests. Therefore, based on the Bonferroni inequality (Sheskin 1997), where the significance level is divided by the
total number of tests (e.g. 0.05/50 = 0.001), an adjustment was made to the significance level. Based on this level, no significant differences were found on these key items, indicating no difference between early and late respondents and by extension no difference between respondents and non-respondents (Miller & Smith 1983).

5.3.2 Other Forms of Error

Administrative error, as discussed by Zikmund (2003), was addressed and managed by establishing careful data entry procedures. These processes included recording on each questionnaire the date when it was received, the development of a consistent method for coding questionnaires; entering all coded questionnaires into an SPSS data file; and checking the accuracy of the entered data and correcting any errors. A final process of data cleaning involved manual checks of a number of hard-copy printed questionnaires against the data file.

5.4 Study Population and Sample Selection

Population can be defined as the entire group under study as specified by the objective of the research (Yoon 2002). Since the objective of this study was to examining principal attributes contributing to the competitiveness of tourism destinations, when the stage of development or evolution of a destination is considered, the population of this study includes both tourism stakeholders and actual consumers. Specifically, the target population includes members from two case study destinations, and consumers that have visited each case destination.

To address the research aim and Research Questions One (RQ1b), Three and Four; respondents who had knowledge of tourism offerings in both case destinations were
required. This is because the competitiveness of a tourism destination should be viewed relative to its main competitors, with March (2004) maintaining that the best means of understanding destination competitiveness is to assess how a destination competes against its main competitors. Researchers (Chon 1991; Fakeye & Crompton 1991; Leisen 2001) view destination images retained by past tourists to a destination and those who have not visited the destination to be very different. In this research, it was expected that the sample population had direct experience with the case destinations in order respond accurately to questions regarding destination performance. Otherwise, findings may not truly reflect the performance of the case destinations on specific attributes (Kozak 2003). Thus it was considered critical by the researcher that respondents must have visited both destinations, within a relatively recent timeframe.

For a sample of respondents to be contacted, with the support of Coffs Coast Marketing (the destination marketing authority in one of the respective case locations), the researcher was given permission to include information pertaining to the web survey (together with the inclusion of the survey weblink) in their regular electronic newsletter. Included in this newsletter invite were instructions specifically seeking respondents that had visited both case destinations. Each month, the organisation distributes an online, electronic newsletter, discussing tourism within their region. The electronic mailing list included 2556 registered contacts. This list included both previous visitors and those individuals who have expressed an interest in learning more about the Coffs Coast. From this mailing list (through electronic newsletter content), respondents were recruited, with demographic information collected as part of the surveying process.

The degree of fit between a sample and the target population about which generalisations can be made is a common challenge in many studies. This shortcoming does not impugn the Internet as a data-gathering device or the respondents to Internet
methodologies as any more or less useful than any other sample (Walther 2002). In support of the current study, it has been found that discrete sub-populations, while tenuously generalisable to wider populations, can provide very good samples (Walther 2002). For example, a Usenet group focused on a particular hobby, for instance, may be a very useful bank of respondents in which to quantitatively gather information about a commercial service related to the electronic provision of that hobby, such as an e-commerce site. Similarly, as suggested by Armstrong and Hagel (1996), a questionnaire posted to the Amazon.com site certainly does not describe the entire nation’s or the world’s potential book buyers, but does provide a sensible and reasonable view of the behaviours of a wider population base. In a tourism context, Litvin and Kar (2001), in exploring the potential and efficacy of electronic data collection, found that electronically solicited respondents were not significantly different from those sampled randomly using a mall–intercept method, particularly in respect to dimensions such as travel innovativeness or travel opinion. Litvin and Kar (2001) were reasonably confident that their findings could be generalised to the broader local population.

5.5 Questionnaire Design and Measurement of Key Variables

Chapter Four outlined that the survey would be developed from results generated during the case destination focus group discussions, and key literature sources (Chapters Two and Three).

This resulted in the final survey instrument which is provided in Appendix Five. The actual survey, presented on paper, received ethics approval from Southern Cross University, following minor modifications to wording. The development of the web based questionnaire generally followed aspects of user friendly internet research, as defined by Dillman et al. (1999), and Granello and Wheaton (2004). Dreamweaver (a
A web site/coding tool was utilised in the construction of the survey instrument. Due to the three-way matrix employed in the survey tool, other on-line surveying applications such as Survey Monkey were deemed to be inadequate for the task.

The survey instrument was designed in three sections. The first section of the survey addressed the issue of TDC. This section asked respondents to indicate the importance of 38 TDC attributes associated with the research topic. The attributes were selected following focus group discussions with local tourism industry stakeholders, in collaboration with the key literature sources (see Kim & Dwyer 2003; Ritchie, Crouch & Hudson 2001). Measurement is important for accurate representation of the concept of interest (Hair Jr. et al. 1998). Respondents indicated the importance by assigning a value between 1 (not important) and 7 (very important) to each attribute. Importance scales have been used in previous TDC studies to measure attribute significance (Kim & Dwyer 2003; Jonkers 2004; Enright & Newton 2004, 2005). 7-point scales were employed as such a scale required emphasis to be placed in one direction of the scale, or the other. Further, the selection of a 7-point scale allows for a provision of more discretion and sensitivity than with a 5 number scenario (Diefenbach et al. 1993). In the same way, respondents were asked to rate the performance of each destination (against the 38 attributes) on a 7 point, where 1 represented ‘very poor’ and 7 represented ‘very good’.

In the second section, respondents were asked a series of short questions to measure their attitudes towards the stage of development for each of the case destinations. Key destination development/evolutionary terms utilised in question wording, such as ‘developing’, ‘maturity’, and ‘stagnating’, were derived from seminal TALC studies (see for example Butler 1980; Haywood 1986).
The third section related to demographics. A variety of descriptive data on respondents was collected including home region, travel party consumption, gender, age, household income, and previous visitation patterns (including principal mode of transport) to the case regions. These demographic clusters were selected due to the significant attention they have received within marketing and tourism literature, relating to their use in segmenting markets (see for example Sirgy 1982; Blattberg et al. 1976; Myers 1976; Alpert 1972; Kotler et al. 2001; Kelly & Nankervis 2001).

The survey instrument was developed over several months. Prior to survey distribution, a final review by academic staff was completed to confirm the clarity and validity of the questions (see Section 5.7).

5.6 Other Technical Issues

The web survey form included a number of error detection elements. Errors can occur for a wide variety of reasons, many of which are beyond the researcher's control. For example, although multiple submissions have not proved to be a serious problem in online data collection to date, the potential for multiple submissions is clearly present (Zhang 1999). For the current study, scripting built into the survey instrument gathered the date, time, and Internet protocol (IP) address details as error detection variables. This method has become an important tool in solving the problem of people submitting the form/survey several times (Walther 2002). Multiple submissions can occur when persons, using computers with slow connections (during which submissions can take several seconds), believe they had not submitted the form correctly (due to the slowness of submission) and submit their survey again (Walther 2002). The researcher can then check for such multiple submissions by noting that the date and IP address were exactly the same and the times of submission were very close together (typically within only a
few seconds of each other), and, of course, the data from each individual submission matched. It should be noted that the IP address does not identify the person who submitted the form but the computer from which it was submitted. Identification of the person from the IP address is virtually impossible (Walther 2002).

Further error was reduced by the inclusion of explanatory material and prompts. Respondents interact with a questionnaire in a structured format, minimising entry of erroneous or unacceptable data. With a paper and pencil survey, respondents can skip items, albeit unintentionally. Thus, multiple responses to questions requiring single answers were prohibited in the current survey (via scripting embedded in the survey page), and the completion of all questions was required before a questionnaire could be successfully submitted and accepted. These advanced functions aided in reducing incomplete responses and unacceptable data (Schmidt 1997; Teo et al. 1997).

5.7 Survey Pilot Study

As with a paper and pencil survey, the goal of a pilot study is to check for clarity of wording and participant acceptance of the questions (Granello & Wheaton 2004). An additional goal of the piloting process specific to online surveys is to have pilot participants submit the survey from a variety of computers and Internet connections, using different browsers (for example Mozilla Firefox, Internet Explorer), including all possible versions, on different platforms (namely Mac and Windows). As the non–availability of a population list with names and email addresses precluded the direct testing of the survey with potential respondents, five academics, selected on the basis of their knowledge in tourism and online survey research, were asked to provide detailed feedback to the researcher. These individuals included an Associate Professor of Tourism, a Senior Lecturer of Tourism (specialising in destination development and
management), an Associate Professor of Marketing and Management, a Senior Lecturer in Information Technology, and a Lecturer in Management. Additionally, key personnel housed within each of the case destination marketing authorities were also asked to review the appropriateness of the survey (e.g. grammar, survey structure, survey useability etc). Where possible, the researcher was present with members of the review group as they completed/reviewed the survey as to listen to comments and detect and make note of any misconceptions, a stance supported by Wyatt (2000).

In the following section, processes applied in the design of the Internet survey used in this thesis are discussed.

5.7.1 Data Collection

In Section 5.3, a web based survey was identified as an appropriate method for collecting data to address Research Questions One (RQ1b), Three and Four. A growing and significant limitation for research relying on the self administered survey method is low response rates. This problem was addressed in several ways that have been suggested to increase response to such surveys (de Vaus 1995; Dillman 2000; Frazer & Lawley 2000). Survey respondents were first contacted using content placed within an electronic newsletter dispatched by one of the destination marketing authorities. Following a period of 7 days, a reminder email was sent to all potential respondents. This reminder did stimulate further survey submissions. Given researcher access to this mailing list was restricted; no further contact with non–respondents could be issued following this 7 day reminder.
5.7.2 Response Rate

As discussed previously, information relating the survey instrument was sent to 2556 registered contacts. In total, 394 surveys were received via the online surveying tool, thus a response rate of 15.4 per cent was achieved. This rate is not dissimilar to other web–based surveys (Porter & Whitcomb 2003; Dillman et al. 2008). Upon closer inspection, 50 surveys were removed prior to data analysis (reducing the response rate to 13.4 per cent, where N=344) due to a number of factors. Firstly, five duplicates (based on date, time, and Internet protocol address details) were found, and as such, were removed. An additional six surveys were deemed problematic, and were therefore removed from the final data set. For example, some respondents rated the importance of all 38 competitiveness attributes in the survey as ‘7s’ – very important, or alternatively rated all elements as ‘1s’. Clearly, no meaningful effort has been made by these 6 respondents in relation to their observations. Thus, in the context of this study, these responses are prone to response set bias – a tendency for a respondent to answer a series of question in a certain direction regardless of their content (Sarff et al. 2008). It is therefore argued (see for example Barnett & Lewis 1994) that it is only common sense that those data points be removed. A further 39 surveys, where respondents identified that 1) they had not visited one of the two case destinations or in some cases 2) had not visited either case destinations, were also removed. In relation to a number of research questions, particularly Research Question Four and its reference to attribute performance, it was deemed critically important that respondents had to have visited both case destination regions in order to satisfactorily comment on their respective performance. As detailed in Section 5.3.2, non–response bias was addressed, indicating that no difference between early and late respondents, and by extension, respondents and non–respondents, existed (Miller & Smith 1983).
5.7.3 **Data Preparation and Screening**

Data preparation and screening activities were undertaken following the return of the questionnaires. These activities are reported in the remainder of this section with discussion focusing on data coding, data entry and cleaning, detection of outliers, and the assessment of normality.

5.7.4 **Data Coding**

‘Coding means assigning a code, usually a number, to each possible response to each question’ (Malhotra et al. 1996, p. 383). In this thesis the seven point scale items were pre-coded. Additional coding for demographic information was also undertaken. Date and time of questionnaire submission (in addition to the relevant IP address) were also recorded on each questionnaire and entered into the data file, with the date received becoming a variable for use in non-response bias testing.

5.7.5 **Data Entry and Cleaning**

Entering the data involved transferring it from the coded questionnaires into a computer program. Data from 394 useable and coded questionnaires were entered into a SPSS (Statistical Package for the Social Sciences) for Windows Release 17.0.0 data file. As seen in Section 5.7.3, following data entry, 50 surveys were removed from the data file prior to data analysis. Subsequent to data analysis, a check was made for administrative errors, a process detailed in Section 5.3.2, where a number of surveys were manually checked against the data set. Furthermore, a series of range checks (for example minimum versus maximum) were undertaken.
5.7.6 Detection of Outliers

An outlier is defined as a data point which is very different from the rest of the data based on some measure (Aggarwal & Yu 2001). Hair Jr. et al. (1998) classify those characteristics identifiable as distinctly different from the other observations into four classes. The first class arises from a procedural error, such as a data entry error or a mistake in coding (Hair Jr. et al. 1998). As discussed in the previous section, such outliers were scrutinised through a series of range checks. The second class of outlier occurs as a result of an extraordinary event which serves as an explanation (Hair Jr. et al. 1998). The third class is those for which the researcher has no explanation; with the fourth and final class being those that fall within the ordinary range of values on each of the variables, but are unique in their combination of values across the variables (Hair Jr. et al. 1998). The first three classes, as defined by Hair Jr. et al. (1998), are examples of univariate outliers and the fourth an example of a multivariate outlier.

The detection of possible univariate outliers was first undertaken. Potential outliers were found across a number of items. All scores were checked against survey responses and found to be accurate. Retaining these outliers appeared to have little impact on the data (as a whole), and thus, it was determined that the small number of potential outliers be retained as part of the analysis, as researchers should be cautious to deleting outliers too easily (Hair Jr. et al. 1998). Detecting multivariate outliers is a second step. The technique used was the calculation and statistical assessment of Mahalanobis distances for each case (Hair Jr. et al. 1998). This was undertaken for all relevant scaled items in this study, with the ID variable used as the dependent variable and the scaled items as independent variables. A conservative probability level of 0.001 was used to explore whether a case could be a multivariate outlier (Hair Jr. et al. 1998). Findings relating to
multivariate outliers will be discussed in the following chapter, namely in relation to Research Question Three.

5.7.7 Assessment of Normality

Normality is a most fundamental assumption in multivariate analysis (Hair Jr. et al. 1998), and thus is an important early step in the analysis process (Tabachnick & Fidell 2001). Two key components of normality are skewness and kurtosis. In this thesis, univariate normality was assessed through the recommended technique of examining skewness and kurtosis indices (Hair Jr. et al. 1998; Kline 1998). The following section discusses the first of four quantitative analysis techniques utilised in this study, being factor analysis.

5.8 Analysis of Survey Data

5.8.1 Factor Analysis

Factor analysis is a multivariate statistical technique applied to a single set of variables when the researcher is interested in discovering which variables in a set form coherent subsets that are relatively independent of one another (Tabachnick & Fidell 2001). The aim of factor analysis is to identify underlying dimensions, or factors within a particular data set. Essentially a factor is a construct, a condensed statement of the relationship between a set of variables (Kline 1994).

Following attributes identification by industry stakeholders, this technique was utilised to answer Research Question One (RQ1b): What critical attributes affect the competitiveness of tourism destinations from a consumer perspective?
Factor analysis is one of the more widely used procedures in the researcher's arsenal of analytical tools (Stewart 1981). Two general types of factor analysis exist, exploratory factor analysis (EFA) and confirmatory factor analysis (CFA). Exploratory factor analysis (EFA) is used when the researcher does not know how many factors are necessary to explain the inter-relationships among a set of characteristics, indicators or items (Pett, Lackey & Sullivan 2003). Thus, EFA provides a tool for consolidating variables and for generating hypotheses about underlying processes (Tabachnick & Fidell 2001). In contrast, confirmatory factor analysis (CFA) is considered to be more of a theory testing procedure (Bandalos 1996), and is utilised when the researcher has specified an exact factor model in advance (Stevens 1996; Pett, Lackey & Sullivan 2003). In summation, EFA is utilised when theoretical knowledge of the data set is minimal, while CFA is employed to test pre-existing theory (Tabachnick & Fidell 2001). Hence, each factor method has differing purposes.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Exploratory factor analysis (EFA)</th>
<th>Confirmatory factor analysis (CFA)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Theory generation</td>
<td>Theory testing</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Heuristic – weak literature base</td>
<td>Strong theory and/or strong empirical base</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Determine the number of factors</td>
<td>Number of factors fixed a priori</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Determine whether the factors are correlated or uncorrelated</td>
<td>Factors fixed a priori as correlated or uncorrelated</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Variables free to load on all factors</td>
<td>Variables fixed to load on a specific factor or factors</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Table 5.1: Differences between Exploratory factor analysis (EFA) and Confirmatory factor analysis (CFA) (Stevens 1996, p. 389).*

Within the TDC literature, a number of studies (for example Dwyer et al. 2004; Chan & Wong 2005; Cracolici & Nijkamp 2005; Bahar & Kozak 2007) have utilised EFA. For example, the objective of the analysis by Dwyer et al. (2004) was to explore the groupings between 83 individual competitiveness indicators. In Dwyer et al. (2004), and other TDC studies, a factor analysis approach was primarily adopted because many
research settings, from which TDC is being investigated, lack pre–existing theory or an empirical foundation. This too is the case with the current research. For this reason, EFA was used to determine the underlying dimensions of TDC based on a visitor perspective. After the selection of an appropriate factor method has taken place, a number of steps must be completed in order for factor analysis to occur. These steps, as outlined by Tabachnick and Fidell (1996), are as followed:

- Preparing and examining the correlation matrix,
- Extracting a set of factors from the matrix,
- Determining the number of factors to be extracted,
- Factor rotation,
- Assignment of factor scores; and
- Interpretation of the results.

The following sections outline each of the above steps.

**5.8.2 Preparing and Examining of the Correlation Matrix**

Even when the goal of the researcher is to identify dimensions within a set of data, factor analysis may not be appropriate. Pallant (2005) highlights two main issues to consider in determining whether a particular data set is suitable for factor analysis: the strength of the relationship among the variables (or items), and sample size.

The researcher must determine that the data matrix has sufficient correlations between variables to justify the application of factor analysis (Hair Jr. et al. 1998). A visual examination of the entire correlation matrix is therefore the first of several useful methods for determining the suitability of data for factor analysis. Consequently,
factoring is not worthwhile unless there is a substantial number of large correlations’ (Nunnally & Bernstein 1994, p. 469). Tabachnick and Fidell (2001) recommend coefficients greater than 0.3. If few correlations above this are found, then the use of factor analysis may be inappropriate.

Aside from a visual inspection of the correlation matrix, Bartlett’s test of sphericity, a statistical test for the presence of correlations among the variables, is a widely used test for factor analysis appropriateness (Hair Jr. et al. 1998). The hypothesis tested is that the correlation matrix comes from a population of variables that are independent. Rejection of the hypothesis is an indication that the data is appropriate for factor analysis.

The Kaiser–Meyer–Olkin measure of sampling adequacy (MSA) is advanced as a more sophisticated test for factorability (Tabachnick & Fidell 2001). The MSA provides a measure of the extent to which variables belong together and thus are appropriate for factor analysis. Stewart (1981) while quoting Kaiser and Rice (1974), provides the following calibration of the MSA:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Marvellous</th>
<th>Meritorious</th>
<th>Middling</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>.90+</td>
<td>.80+</td>
<td>.70+</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>.60+</td>
<td>.50+</td>
<td>Miserable</td>
<td>Below .50</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Mediocre</td>
<td>Miserable</td>
<td>Unacceptable</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 5.2: Kaiser–Meyer–Olkin measure of sampling adequacy (MSA) calibration.

As indicated, those variables with correlations greater than 0.6 are suited to factor analysis.

On a practical level, it is also important to review the number of cases/sample size when considering the use of factor analysis as an analytical tool. There are two categories of general recommendations in terms of minimum sample size in factor analysis. One
category says that the absolute sample size/number of cases is important. Hair Jr. et al. (1998) suggest that the sample size should be 100 or larger, a stance supported by Gorsuch (1983), Kline (1979), and Bryman & Cramer (1997). Others postulate the need for higher sample sizes, with Hutcheson and Sofroniou (1999) recommending at least 150 – 300 cases, Guilford (1954) signifying at least 200 cases are required, and Cattell (1978) supporting a 250 case/sample rule. In addition to the absolute number of cases, another widely used criteria to determine the suitability of factor analysis is the subjects–to–variables (STV) ratio. Numerous authors (Bryant & Yarnold 1995, cited in Garson 2008; Gorsuch 1983, cited in MacCallum et al. 1999, p. 84) recommend a subjects–to–variables ratio no lower than 5. For Cattell (1978), a ratio of 3 to 6 is acceptable, whereas Garson (2008) and Everitt (1975) advocate at least 10 cases for each item in the instrument being used. Some researchers even propose a minimum of 20 cases for each variable (Hair et al. 1995).

In conclusion, indiscriminate application of factor analysis to data sets is unwarranted. Although no one procedure is deemed definitive; examination of the correlation matrix, Bartlett's test of sphericity, Kaiser–Meyer–Olkin measure of sampling adequacy (MSA), and sample size provide important indications to the suitability of the data for factor analysis. Results related to these procedures are presented in Section 6.8.

5.8.3 Extracting a Set of Factors from the Matrix

Another fundamental consideration required in using factor analysis is the selection of an appropriate factor extraction model. Factor extraction involves determining the smallest numbers of factors than can be used to best represent the interrelations among the set of variables (Pallant 2005). Hair Jr. et al. (1998) emphasise that a factor analyst can utilise two basis models to obtain a factor solution: common factor analysis and
component analysis (often termed principal component analysis). Both approaches are widely practiced, with the selection of one method over the other usually dependent on two key criteria. Firstly, the objective of the researcher conducting factor analysis plays an important role in the selection of a factor extraction model, and second, the amount of prior knowledge about the variance of the variables (Hair Jr. et al. 1998). Previous TDC studies (for example Dwyer et al. 2004) have used principal component analysis for factor extraction. Nunnally and Bernstein (1994) observe that if an exploratory study is both well designed, and possesses a large sample, thus minimising the spurious contributions of sampling error, the conclusions one reaches will be very similar, regardless of extraction method used. Based on these affirmations, principal component analysis (see Section 6.8.2) was used for the current study.

5.8.4 Determine the Number of Factors to be Extracted

Nunnally and Bernstein (1994) maintain that extracting too many factors dilutes the structure of the rotated factors, thereby making the results more difficult to interpret. As a result, potentially important aspects of data may be lost if too few factors are retained.

Hair Jr. et al (1998), in addition by Pallant (2005), provide a number of methods that can be utilised when deciding how many factors to retain. These methods include the latent root criterion, a priori criterion, percentage of variance criterion, scree test, Horn’s parallel analysis, and the heterogeneity of the respondents. As with many aspects of factor analyses, no one procedure provides a definitive, completely safe way to determine the correct number of factors. On this account, most authorities (see for example Cattell 1978; Harman 1976; Stewart 1981) on factor analysis recommend a combination of approaches for determining the number of factors to extract.
The most widely used method for factor determination is the latent root criterion, or Kaiser–Guttman rule. This approach advocates the retention of those components or factors whose eigenvalues are greater than 1. Eigenvalues represent the total variance explained by each factor, hence the greater the eigenvalue, the more variance is explained by the factor (Nunnally & Bernstein 1994). Whilst this is fairly precise, the criterion is more accurate when the number of variables is small (10 to 15) to moderate (20 to 30), as gross overestimation's of eigenvalues may occur with studies using more than 40 variables (Tabachnick & Fidell 1996). As the current study is using 38 variables, this number of variables would be considered upward of moderate.

Another approached that can be used is Catell’s scree test (Catell 1966). The scree test provides a pictorial representation of the eigenvalues (Tabachnick & Fidell 1996). This test involves plotting each of the eigenvalues of the factors and inspecting the plot to find a point at which the shape of the curve changes directions are becomes horizontal (Pallant 2005).

![Scree Plot](image)

**Figure 5.1:** Eigenvalue plot for Scree Test Criterion (example).
Figure 5.1 provides an example of a scree test plot. By way of the illustration, the point at which the curve first begins to straighten (e.g. Factor 6) is considered the maximum number of factors to extract. Therefore, six factors would qualify. Beyond six, too large a proportion of variance would be included, thus these factors would not be acceptable (Hair Jr. et al. 1998). An examination of the scree plot for the current data set will be performed (see Figure 6.1).

A third technique gaining popularity, particularly in the social science literature (eg. Choi, Fuqua & Griffin 2001; Stober 1998), is Horn’s parallel analysis. Parallel analysis involves comparing the size of the eigenvalues with those obtained from a randomly generate set of the same size. Only those eigenvalues that exceed the corresponding values for the random data set are retained. This approach to identifying the correct number of components to retain has been shown to be the most accurate, with both Kaiser’s criterion and Catell’s scree test tending to overestimate the number of components (Pallant 2005; Hubbard & Allen 1987; Zwick & Velicer 1986).

This section has mentioned several ways of extracting and determining the number of factors. Three widely used approaches, the latent root criterion (Kaiser–Guttman rule), Catell’s scree test and Horn’s parallel analysis (see Section 6.8.4 for results related to these approaches); appear to provide an effective means for determining the number of factors.

5.8.5 Factor Rotation

Hair Jr. et al. (1998) affirms the term rotation means exactly what it implies: the reference axes of the factors are turned about the origin until some other position has been reached. ‘The ultimate effect of rotating the factor matrix is to redistribute the
variance from earlier factors to later ones to achieve a simpler, theoretically more meaningful factor pattern’ (Hair Jr. et al. 1998, p. 107).

The simplest case of rotation is an orthogonal rotation, in which the axes are maintained at 90 degrees. When not constrained to being orthogonal, the rotational procedure is called an oblique rotation (Hair Jr. et al. 1998). Each method has noted advantages and disadvantages. Orthogonal rotational approaches are more widely used because all computer packages with factor analysis contain orthogonal rotation options, while oblique procedures are not so widespread (Hair Jr. et al. 1998). Orthogonal approaches would also be the procedure of choice when a general factor is expected (Stewart 1981). An oblique rotation generally allows factors to place closer to groups of variables since the groups are usually not independent (Hair Jr. et al. 1998). Oblique factors thus generally represent the salient attributes better than orthogonal factors, and therefore are more interpretable (Nunnally & Bernstein 1994).

Within the two broad categories of rotational approaches there are a number of different rotational techniques. Varimax, Quartimax, and Equamax are the three major orthogonal approaches, with Direct Oblimin and Promax as oblique methods. Varimax has been shown to be among the best orthogonal rotation procedures (Stewart 1981). The Varimax method attempts to minimise the number of variables that have high loadings on each factor (Pallant 2005). The current research will initially use this orthogonal approach. However, while renowned as ‘the definitive orthogonal solution’ (Nunnally & Bernstein 1994), Varimax and other orthogonal results should not be viewed in isolation. For example, Stewart (1981, p. 59) believes ‘the careful researcher should almost invariably perform both an orthogonal and oblique rotation, particularly in exploratory work’ (see Section 6.8.3 for results). This recommendation will be adopted, as these two solutions can be compared to identify the simpler structure and to
determine whether the oblique rotational procedures produce a marked difference in the factor solutions (Stewart 1981).

5.8.6 Assignment of Factor Scores

The fifth step in the factor analysis process is the computation of factor scores. Factor scores are estimates of the scores subjects would have received on each of the factors had they been measured directly (Hair Jr. et al. 1998). Hair Jr. et al. (1998) maintain two methods of factor–based scoring – factor scores (a weighted measure) and summated scales (unweighted averages) – can be employed (see Section 6.8.6 for factor score results). Since orthogonality will be maintained, factor scores (weighted average) are deemed suitable (Hair Jr. et al. 1998), and therefore will be used in the current research. In this way, each respondent will have new variables that could be substituted in multivariate techniques (Hair Jr. et al. 1998), as will occur in addressing Research Questions Three and Four.

5.8.7 Interpretation of the Results

When a factor solution has been obtained in which all variables have a significant loading on a factor, the analyst must attempt to assign some meaning to the pattern of factor loadings. This often involves the naming of the factors (Hair et al. 1995). When examining all underlying variables for a particular factor, the analyst should place greater emphasis on those variables with high loadings. Thus, the assigned name or label should accurately reflect the variables loaded on that factor (Hair et al. 1995).
5.9 Multivariate Analysis of Variance (MANOVA)

The second statistical technique used in the current study is that of multivariate analysis of variance (MANOVA). This test is applied in the analysis of Research Question Three: To what extent is the importance of destination attributes, to consumers, affected by demographic subgroups?

Multivariate analysis of variance (MANOVA) is an extension of analysis of variance (ANOVA) to accommodate more than one dependent variable. It is a dependence technique that measures the differences for two or more metric dependent variables based on a set of categorical (nonmetric) variables acting as independent variables (Hair Jr. et al. 1998). Like ANOVA, MANOVA is concerned with differences between groups. However, ANOVA is termed a univariate procedure because we use it to assess group differences on a single metric dependent variable. In contrast, MANOVA is termed a multivariate procedure because it is used to assess group differences across multiple dependent variables. As such, in MANOVA, each group is observed on two or more dependent variables (Hair Jr. et al. 1998).

MANOVA possesses a number of advantages over ANOVA. First, by measuring several dependent variables instead of only one, the researcher improves the chance of discovering what it is that changes as a result of different treatments and their interactions (Tabachnick & Fidell 2001). A second advantage, highlighted by Pallant (2005), relates to Type 1 error. Type I error, in simple terms, is the error of rejecting a null hypothesis when it is actually true (Hair Jr. et al. 1998). In many settings, a researcher may opt to conduct a series of ANOVAs separately for each dependent variable (Pallant 2005). However, in conducting a whole series of ANOVAs separately for each dependent variable, the researcher runs the risk of an inflated Type 1 error. The
use of MANOVA ‘controls’ or adjusts for this increased risk of Type 1 error (Pallant 2005). A third advantage of MANOVA is that, under certain conditions, it may reveal differences not shown in separate ANOVAs (Tabachnick & Fidell 2001).

Still, MANOVA is a substantially more complicated analysis than ANOVA. As such, there are several important assumptions and practical issues to consider. These steps, detailed by Pallant (2005) amongst others (for example Tabachnick & Fidell 2001), include:

- Sample size
- Normality and Detection of Outliers
- Linearity
- Multicollinearity
- Homogeneity of variance–covariance matrices

The following sections provide details on each of the named assumptions.

### 5.9.1 Sample Size

When using MANOVA, it is necessary to have more cases than dependent variables. There are two reasons for this requirement. The first is associated with the assumption of homogeneity of variance–covariance matrices (Section 5.9.5). If a cell has more dependent variables than cases, the cell becomes singular and the assumption is untestable (Tabachnick & Fidell 2001). According to Hair Jr. et al. (1998), at a minimum, the sample (ie. cases) in each cell must be greater than the number of dependent variables included. Second, the power of the analysis is lowered unless there are more cases than dependent variables in every cell because the reduced degrees of
freedom for error (Tabachnick & Fidell 2001). Five dependent variables (based on factor scores) were used: Destination Management (Public & Private), Facilities and Activities, Nature, Augmented Benefits and History. Once 5 dependent variables were identified in the current study, the issue of sample size was assessed as being satisfied (ie. all cells had in excess of 5 cases).

5.9.2 Multivariate Normality and Detection of Outliers

Although significance tests for MANOVA and other multivariate techniques are based on the multivariate normal distribution, in practice, MANOVA is reasonably robust to modest violations to normality (Pallant 2005). According to Tabachnick and Fidell (2001, p. 329), a sample size of at least 20 in each cell should ensure ‘robustness’. Due to a large sample size (N=344), and a minimum of 25 cases in each cell, for the current study, robustness is therefore evident. As examined in Section 5.7.7, an outlier is defined as a data point which is very different for the rest of the data based on some measure (Aggarwals & Yu 2001). Hair Jr. et al. (1998) classified outliers into four classes: procedural errors, outliers occurring as a result of an extraordinary event; outliers for which the researcher has no explanation; and those within the ordinary range of values on each of the variables, but are unique in their combination of values across the variables (Hair Jr. et al. 1998). The first three classes, as defined by Hair Jr. et al. (1998), are examples of univariate outliers and the fourth an example of a multivariate outlier.

First, for dependent variables associated with Research Questions Three and Four, univariate outliers were assessed. A small number of univariate outliers were discovered. On inspection, these outliers were not due to any input errors across the individual variables (in this case individual indicators of TDC) that make up the dependent
variables (factor mean scores). As a secondary measure, the researcher reviewed the 5 per cent trimmed mean (a measure provided by SPSS) for each dependent variable. Across the 5 dependent variables, the difference between the original mean and the new trimmed mean was very small. Given these findings, it was determined that potential outliers be retained.

The second stage of this process, also discussed in Section 5.7.7, involved the detection of multivariate outliers. One statistic used to identify multivariate outliers is Mahalanobis distance (Hair Jr. et al. 1998). Mahalanobis distance is the distance of a case from the centroid of the remaining cases where the centroid is the point created at the intersection of means of all the variables. The Mahalanobis distance was calculated for all relevant scaled items in this study, with the ID variable used as the dependent variable and the scaled items as independent variables. A conservative probability level of 0.001, was used to explore whether a case could be a multivariate outlier (Hair Jr. et al. 1998).

5.9.3 Linearity

MANOVA assumes linear relationships among all pairs of dependent variables, all pairs of covariates, and all dependent variable–covariates pairs in each cell (Tabachnick & Fidell 2001). Deviations from linearity reduce the power of the statistical tests because 1) the linear combinations of any dependent variables do not maximise the separation of groups for the independent variables, and 2) covariates do not maximise adjustment for error (Tabachnick & Fidell 2001). Therefore, this assumption refers to the presence of a straight–line relationship between each pair of dependent variables (Pallant 2005). This can be assessed in a number of ways, the most straightforward of which is to generate scatterplots between each pair of variables (Pallant 2005). Therefore, with the aid of
SPSS, scatterplots were generated for dependent variables utilised specifically in Research Questions Three and Four.

5.9.4 Multicollinearity

According to Pallant (2005), MANOVA works best when the dependent variables are only moderately correlated. When correlations among dependent variables are high, one dependent variable is a near–linear combination of other dependent variables; the dependent variable provides information that is redundant to the information available in one or more of the other dependent variables (Tabachnick & Fidell 2001). One of the simplest (but effective) ways to check of multicollinearity is to check the strength of the correlations amongst the dependent variables. ‘Correlations up around .8 or .9 are reason for concern’ (Pallant 2005, p. 255). If such high correlations are found, the researcher should consider removing one of the strongly correlated pairs, or alternatively combining them to form a single measure (Pallant 2005).

5.9.5 Homogeneity of Variance–Covariance Matrices

The multivariate generalisation of homogeneity of variance for individual dependent variables is homogeneity of variance–covariance matrices. The assumption is that variance–covariance matrices within each cell of the design are sampled from the same population variance–covariance matrix and can reasonably be pooled to create a single estimate of error (Tabachnick & Fidell 2001). Box’s M Test of Equality of Covariance Matrices is commonly utilised when assessing homogeneity of variance–covariance matrices. It should be noted, however, that this test is very sensitive, thus, a significance level of .01 or less is used as an adjustment for the sensitivity of the statistic (Tabachnick & Fidell 2001).
In brief, both the appropriate application and important underlying assumptions of MANOVA, a technique used for assessing group differences across multiple dependent variables simultaneously, based on a set of categorical variables acting as independent variables; have been addressed. Consequently, a series of one–way between–group MANOVAs were used as a vehicle to account for the extent to which the importance of destination attributes (to consumers) are affected by demographic subgroups – Research Question Three.

5.10 Importance–Performance analysis (IPA) technique

The third quantitative method employed is a visual aid, the Importance–Performance analysis (IPA) technique. The technique is utilised in addressing Research Question Four: **Do developing and mature destinations perform differently in relation to the destination attributes from a consumer perspective?**

In response to the growing importance of service quality as a means of gaining competitive advantage, researchers developed detailed attribution techniques aimed at measuring customer perceived service quality within the services sector. These systems included Parasuraman, Zeithaml and Berry’s (1985) SERVQUAL instrument; and Cronin and Taylor (1992) SERVPERF technique. Another direct measurement technique is the Importance–Performance analysis (IPA) technique which emerged from the earlier work of Martilla and James (1977). Martilla and James (1977, p. 77) argued that ‘an easily applied technique for measuring attribute importance and performance can further the development of effective marketing programs’, a view confirmed by Lovelock, Patterson and Walker (1999) who state that importance–performance analysis is a useful management tool which can help firms to redirect their scarce resources from low impact areas to high impact areas.
Importance and performance analysis was first applied by Martilla and James (1977) to the automotive market; however, further IPA endeavours can be found within a multiplicity of settings including food, housing, education, health care, recreation and tourism (Aktas, Aksu & Beykan 2007; Tarrant & Smith 2002; Evans & Chon 1989; Go & Zhang 1997; Sethna 1982; Cunningham & Gaeth 1989; Albrecht & Bradford 1990; Dolinsky 1991). In a tourism context, IPA was first applied in destination image research by Crompton and Duray (1985) in an analysis of the image of Texas. Since then, other studies have used the technique to investigate perceptions of a mountain destination (Evans & Chon 1989), short break destinations (Chon, Weaver & Kim 1991), Western Australia (Pritchard 1997), convention destinations (Go & Zhang 1997), and ski resorts (Hudson & Shephard 1998).

**Figure 5.2**: Example IPA grid (constructed by the researcher, in reference to Martilla & James 1977).

When utilised in tourism or recreational settings, IPA plots consumer perception (performance) and importance values against a grid, divided into the 4 quadrants. The plotted values are then assessed according to their position in the quadrant on the grid (Edward & George 2008). Each quadrant suggests a different strategy (Aktas, Aksu &
Beykan 2007). Attributes that are rated high in importance and high in performance (Quadrant 1) suggests to keep up the ‘good’ work and increase resources directed towards these areas. In contrast, attributes having low importance rating and a low performance rating suggest that investing resources to these areas may offer only little advantage (Quadrant 3). Attributes that are rated high in importance and low in performance (Quadrant 2) are areas that managers should pay particular attention to for improvement. Lastly, attributes rated low in importance and high in performance (Quadrant 4) are areas providers should continue to maintain the level of effort (Edward & George 2008).

When the IPA is applied, three key criteria require determination: the criterion of importance, criterion of performance, and a cross–hair measure (Kao 2007). As viewed in the literature, the importance of attributes can be measured using a rating scale, constant sums scales, or derived importance, such as multiple regression weights and correlation coefficients (see for example Bacon 2003; Matzler et al. 2004). A study by Bacon (2003), seeking to compare different measurements of importance, found that direct (self stated) measures of importance were more appropriate than using regression and correlation coefficients. Moving to performance, importantly, in this study, performance is measured using the same set of attributes so that importance and performance of the destination can be directly compared for each attribute (based on factors) via the IPA plot or grid. As observed in Section 5.5, this study measured both importance and performance of each competitiveness variable using seven point scales. The last criterion that needs to be determined is the cross–hair measurement (Kao 2007). While the IPA grid is constructed to show importance and performance, cross–hair line settings also need to be drawn. These quadrants were formed based on the mean scores of the importance performance ratings (e.g. the mean values of importance and performance scores are used as the crossing point in constructing the IPA grid).
The popularity of the IPA framework arises from its ease of use, its visual display, and its clear outcome strategies. Recent studies, however, have raised some uncertainty about the validity of the IPA framework (Tarrant & Smith 2002). One problem concerns the lack of statistical analysis of the IPA approach (see Hammit et al. 1996). For example, sample sizes considerably smaller than 30 have often been reported in the literature when utilising IPA frameworks (Kennedy 1986). To envelope further statistical confidence for the current study/analysis (in respect to Research Question Four), aside from a visual inspection of the grid, paired–samples t tests are utilised to accurately determine whether mean performance scores, provided by respondents for both case destinations, differ significantly across the dependent variables (mean factor performance scores).

5.11 Paired–samples t test

Paired–samples t–tests (also referred to as repeated measures) are used when an researcher has only one group of respondents, from which data is collected 1) on two different occasions, or 2) under two different conditions. Similarly, paired–samples t–tests can also be used when measures (in the current research, this would relate to performance ratings) are provided by the same individual in terms of two different questions. Repeated measures are therefore obtained on one group of participants, thus, each person serves as his/her own control. Further, because the two sets of scores to be compared are obtained from the same person, the two groups of scores are not independent. The difference between the observations is calculated for each pair and the mean and standard error of these differences are then determined (Pallant 2005).

In the current study, respondents were asked to rate the performance of two case destinations, across a number of destination competitiveness attributes (Research
Performance ratings were presented on a 7 point scale, with a score of 1 representing ‘very poor’, and 7 demonstrating a result of ‘very good’. The assumptions underlying the repeated samples $t$–test are similar to the one–sample $t$–test, but refer to the set of difference scores. Important assumptions include that: the observations are independent of each other; the dependent variable is measured on an interval scale; and the differences are normally distributed in the population.

5.12 Chapter Summary

Chapter Five has provided justification for the adopted quantitative methods and provided a detailed account of how quantitative methodologies were applied in this study. In doing so, this chapter builds upon the relationship between interpretivist, qualitative research (Chapter Four) and positivist, quantitative research.

Justification for the use of a web–based survey was provided, with reference made to key criteria for the selection of this research methodology (Yin 1989; Bennett 1991). Questionnaire design and data collection processes were subsequently detailed. This included identification of the population being surveyed. The administration of the questionnaire was also described. The response rate of 13.4 per cent was noted and details provided as to how it was calculated.

Data preparation and screening processes were then applied following recommendations from the literature (Tabachnick & Fidell 2001; Pallant 2005; Hair Jr. et al. 1998). These procedures included data coding, data entry and cleaning, detection of outliers, assessment of normality, linearity and testing for non–response bias. Finally, having prepared and screened the data, the use of exploratory factor analysis (EFA),
multivariate analysis of variance (MANOVA), Importance–Performance analysis (IPA) and paired–samples t tests were justified.

In the following chapter, the results of implementing the sequential mixed method research design (see Section 4.2) employed in this study are presented. Conclusions and implications regarding these results are then reflected upon in Chapter Seven.
6.1 Introduction

Chapters Four and Five outlined the qualitative and quantitative methodologies used in the thesis, providing justification for the specific methodologies employed. This chapter provides an analysis of the data generated by the research in answering four research questions. Qualitative focus group discussions are first summarised. These discussions served to address the following research questions:

**Research Question One (RQ1a):** What critical attributes affect the competitiveness of tourism destinations from a destination stakeholder’s perspective?

**Research Question One (RQ1b):** What critical attributes affect the competitiveness of tourism destinations from a consumer perspective?

**Research Question Two:** How do the critical destination attributes contribute to the competitiveness of developing and maturing destinations?

In addition to these qualitative findings, this chapter additionally provides an analysis of results ensuing from the application of the survey methodology outlined in Chapter Five, which was designed to speak to the following quantitative research questions:

**Research Question One (RQ1b):** What critical attributes affect the competitiveness of tourism destinations from a consumer perspective?
**Research Question Three:** To what extent is the importance of destination attributes, to consumers, affected by demographic subgroups?

**Research Question Four:** Do developing and mature destinations perform differently in relation to the destination attributes from a consumer perspective?

Discussion regarding the results is then undertaken in Chapter Seven.

### 6.2 Qualitative Findings: Focus Group Discussions

This section presents data, discussion points, and comments gleaned from focus group discussions held in each of two case destinations. These discussions were conducted to identify important themes relevant to the conceptual nature of the relationship between key destination competitiveness variables and a tourism destination’s stage of development. The findings are supported by quotations extracted from focus group transcripts (and associated focus group discussion guides), presenting both group–held positions or dissenting comments raised during the debate. In addition, all themes are presented in relation to the literature (see Chapter Seven).

Data and insights gained from this phase of the research were subsequently synthesised to form the basis and design of a quantitative survey instrument that was administered to selected consumers, namely domestic family holiday/leisure tourists.

#### 6.2.1 Topic One – Attributes of Destination Competitiveness

The first question asked of focus group participants was ‘*What do you feel are the major elements required to make a destination competitive?*’ An overview of the discussion
Chapter VI – Analysis of Data

held in response to this statement is now provided for (1) Coffs Coast participants and (2) the Great Lakes group.

6.2.1.1 Views of Coffs Coast Stakeholders

As discussed in Section 2.6, at least as a first step, a study based on the views of local tourism stakeholders seems to be a sensible starting point in distinguishing critical attributes of destination competitiveness (Crouch 2007). As highlighted in Chapter Two, no universal set of items, attributes or indicators exist within the growing body of TDC literature. Therefore, given a large number of variables are linked to the notion of destination competitiveness, it is not surprising that numerous elements of competitiveness were acknowledged by group participants, both verbally or via the Focus Group Questions and Discussion Guide. Following is a list of elements (Table 6.1) declared by group participants. These attributes were subsequently grouped by the researcher into like sets (ie. as per common attribute groupings utilised in existing TDC literature).

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Natural Attractions</th>
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<tr>
<td>Natural attractions</td>
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<td>Look and feel</td>
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<table>
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<tr>
<th>Uniqueness and Culture</th>
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<td>A distinctive point of difference</td>
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<td>Culture in the region</td>
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<td>Charisma of the destination</td>
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<tr>
<th>Variety</th>
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<tr>
<td>Wide variety of tours, attractions, accommodation for all budgets</td>
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<tr>
<td>Variety of activities/experiences</td>
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<td>Ensure a destination lives up to the appeal by offering a range of experiences</td>
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<td>Consistency of experience</td>
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<thead>
<tr>
<th>Value and Safety</th>
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<td>Value for money</td>
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<td>Safety</td>
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</table>
Attraction & Activities

- Tourist attractions
- Major events

Infrastructure and Accommodation

- Accommodation offerings
- Availability of accommodation in peak periods
- New or ‘re–birth’ of existing structures
- Continue progression and upgrading of facilities
- Good infrastructure

Products and Services

- Appropriateness of product – goods and services
- Quality & quantity of product
- Dynamic distribution and booking systems
- Friendly, outgoing staff
- Freshness and new product development
- High level of industry cohesiveness & collaboration
- Cohesion and consistency in management, messages and service delivery

Research

- Assessing current trends
- Alignment of supply with demand
- Knowledge of destination

Marketing

- Ability to position a destination as desirable to the targeted audience
- Marketing
- Promote products that have appeal to their prospects

Access and Transport

- Transport and accessibility

Host population

- A welcoming host population
- Residents understanding that tourism is everyone’s business

Table 6.1: Aspects of competitiveness identified by Coffs Coast tourism stakeholders.

Overall, group participants were vocal in their advocacy of broad factors which can affect the competitiveness of tourism destinations. Following is a summation of arguments provided by Coffs Coast stakeholders in support of those aspects outlined in Table 6.1.
Many participants thought it important to highlight the role of natural attractions in building the competitiveness of destinations. The benefits of the region’s natural features, mainly in terms of destination marketing, were highlighted in a number of statements, such as:

... ‘If the point of differentiation for the Coffs Coast is genuinely the natural environment, than that is the way we should go’.

... ‘Nature–based tourism in the region is something that we could embark on, it just has to be fleshed out’.

... ‘There are things you have look at in trends; big trends in green. We have to look at those trends that are out there. Because of our beauty, it’s not just the physical beauty that we have; we have a look at our other product that complements nature. So I think we need to take a different view...make the natural environment a real differentiation point’.

The need for a ‘distinctive point of difference’ formed a focal point for a number of participants, with one participant highlighting this aspect as being ‘the real challenge from a destination development point of view’. But as is displayed in the following statement, it would appear (in the mind of this participant) that this aspect has not been addressed locally:

... ‘We’ve never actually sat down to work out our point of differentiation. So from that point of view, there is a whole new world to explore’.

A second participant was heard to support this notion, by saying:

... ‘We need to work out what is the quintessential Coffs Coast experience. How is it different from other destinations?’

Experience was another source of attraction from a stakeholder perspective, specifically the variety of experiences and consistency across visitor encounters. Both positive and
disapproving comments were declared by participants in terms of 1) possible opportunities, and 2) concerns related to current strategies surrounding the development of these experiences:

...‘For example, the Solitary Island Marine Park is one of the top 10 dive spots in Australia. The issue is, and I take up [another participant’s] comments, what are the opportunities for experiencing the natural environment, and how are they new and different?’

...‘One of the issues I think the Coffs Coast is finding, is that it's being promoted as a single entity, a single destination experience; but in fact, it's been managed in a very fragmented way’.

...‘It's all about the total experience...if their [visitor] experience is poor when they go home, that word–of–mouth stuff is an absolute disaster’.

Major challenges for a destination, in terms of tourism activities, facilities and services, also shaped a large part of the initial discussion. Issues of value, quantity and quality appeared important to a destination in maintaining its competitive status. One participant was keen to underscore the vital role local tourism operators play in building an image around the notions of value, quantity and quality, in particular, the harmful effect poor infrastructure may pose on a destination’s image:

...‘When we look at [a local accommodation facility – identity suppressed], that's actually doing us a great disservice. If you go and look at [the accommodation provider], it is well beyond being totally stripped, completely refurbished. It's not doing us any good. So when people actually book at the property, they're doing a disservice to us’.

Further to this opinion, the continued upgrading of facilities – especially accommodation facilities – was acknowledged by a number of attendees as a major element of competitiveness. In a similar vein (to the previous quotation), these
comments tended to highlight stakeholders’ dissatisfaction with current accommodation offerings in the region:

...‘Part of the problem we have is that we’re getting repeat business [and] that [repeat business] is asking themselves, why would I go back to such poor accommodation?’

...‘Here’s an example. I got an e–mail today from a person looking to bring a television programme to the region, who was up for the weekend. They said, ‘sorry I didn't get back to you, because the resort I was staying at only had dial–up Internet, so I had to wait until I got back to Sydney’.

Of particular interest to the researcher was a related comment that implied the implications of this poor accommodation offering could also be seen to impact other destinations surrounding the Coffs Coast:

...‘Consumers start to think, “maybe I don't want to stay in a place like this?” And this is a perception that those visitors will take into the wider region. They might take that perception with them up the coast’.

The degree to which tourists feel safe in a destination was advanced as another element that can affect the competitiveness of a destination. Issues of safety appeared to correlate closely with significant markets drawn to the region, especially families:

...‘When we talk families, the major element you need is to have a safe environment, and I think that’s become paramount now. Show the safety of the location, and brand it [the destination] that way. We should be looking at that’.

...‘The safety and the prevention of crime have been a real focus in the Nambucca area, such as cleaning up the town centres’.
The fundamental need to develop appropriate tourism products and services warranted debate in the initial part of the focus group discussion. In acknowledging the need to ensure that the most appropriate products and services are encouraged, respondents were also heard to link the attainment of tourist-friendly staff with appropriate development principles. For example:

...‘Over Christmas, a tourism operator was asked a question [by a tourist] about certain things about the [proposed Coffs Harbour] foreshore development. The operator’s response to that visitor was that our Council won’t get their act together. It was a blame game. And personally even if that is the case, that negative promotion is not what we should be portraying to our customers. It should be more about the positive things are happening’.

The marketing of a destination was extended as a necessary prerequisite for supporting the competitiveness of a destination, as was the need to implement research strategies around understanding both potential and existing customers, and in effect, extending the destination’s insight into consumer behaviour, product innovation and competitive marketing strategies:

...‘It’s all about the way you market a destination’.

...‘Your marketing must be very clear to target those people who value your destination, and all the activity must be around that marketing focus, with investment made around that common theme’.

...‘But I take your [another participants] point, in that it is vital that we know who is coming here, why they are coming here, how often they are coming, and most importantly, what do they want?’.
There was also broad agreement amongst group contributors as to the need for industry collaboration and cohesion in maintaining, promoting, and stimulating tourism activity. The following statements provide an insight into the wider group position:

...‘There is such a lack of cohesion across the industry, and it comes with all the stakeholders. Even in your own area you need to get cohesion, because you look stupid when tourists come to town’.

...‘The challenge is where do the resources come from to do that, and that cohesion needs to be there. We can throw as much marketing dollars as we like, but if the cohesion is not there between partners and industry, it’s simply not going to happen’.

Tightly aligned with industry collaboration and cohesion appeared to be the role of local government authorities (i.e. Coffs Coast Marketing) in the delivery of tourism. This issue was the source of some disagreement. As noted in Section 4.3.5, in Australia, States and Territories have the responsibility for promoting and marketing state attractions and regulation of tourism development (Buhalis & Laws 2001). Within this governmental structure, local government area (LGA) authorities are actively involved in promoting tourism, providing infrastructure and services to support tourism, and also managing the impacts of tourism (Tourism Australia 2007). In this particular study, Coffs Coast Marketing is responsible for the effective marketing of the Coffs Coast tourism region. The main points of discussion in relation to Council’s involvement in tourism focused upon the perceived ‘differences’ between Council and other tourism stakeholders:

...‘You have the tourism managers, in you have Councils, and then you have the industry sector as well. I think all of them must be consulted through this process, because the tourism sector sees things a lot differently than Council does’. 
...‘Following the point made by [another participant] earlier, there is a big difference between local government and tourism operators. It can't just be the local council managing that, there has to be interaction, a solid base of interaction with operators, and other stakeholders’.

...‘Bureaucracy [in respect to tourism] has had a different way of working, compared to other industries in the world’.

...‘A core issue here is that a lot of tourism businesses won’t work with Council. Whilst tourism remains solely a council–driven function, many operators don't see the benefits’.

The role of Council, however, was moderated by some participants, in that local government area (LGA) authorities should only be considered as one stakeholder in the promotion of tourism. For example:

...‘We need to put that [Council’s role] in perspective, in that it's a two–way street. At the end of the day, if tourism, as an association or a network takes a lead role, then we should support them [local government] in that’.

...‘Council can only do so much. We need to get these disparaging industry groups on board, working together with key stakeholders. We’ve got to get all the operators to come together. Council don't have a total influence over those operators. What assistance can the Councils get from industry?’

6.2.1.2 Views of Great Lakes Stakeholders

Great Lakes tourism stakeholders also acknowledged many individual elements of competitiveness. Following is the list of elements declared by Great Lakes group participants (Table 6.2). These elements were once again grouped by the researcher into related sets.
Natural Attractions
- Natural attractions
- Climate
- Environment

Uniqueness and Culture
- Uniqueness of destination
- The ‘feel’ of the destination

Variety
- The breadth of experiences
- Diversity of products and experiences

Value
- Affordability
- Pricing in terms of whole of holiday experience

Attraction & Activities
- Quality leisure activities
- Activities and features
- Variety of attractions
- ‘Things to do’ at destination
- Plenty of dining options and plenty of ‘experience’ based operators

Infrastructure and Accommodation
- Accommodation – variety and feasibility
- Quality accommodation
- Infrastructure – the ability of the visitor to use/enjoy destination
- Continued growth and expansion
- Overall destination safety

Products and Services
- Customer service levels

Access and Transport
- Ease of access – particular safe roads
- Location
- Distance from target markets
- Travel time to destination

Marketing
- Word-of-mouth marketing

Table 6.2: Aspects of competitiveness identified by Great Lakes tourism stakeholders.
The physical, natural qualities of a destination were elevated by Great Lakes participants as an important determinant of destination competitiveness. A number of stakeholders pointed to aspects such as beaches, rivers, lakes and climate as fundamental ‘pull’ factors for tourism locally, for example:

...‘The top thing I wrote down on my list for the key features of a competitive destination was the natural features of a destination’.

However, a destination’s natural beauty may not be unique. Thus, the need for a destination to differentiate itself from competitors with like natural features was evident within the discussion, as garnered from the following comment (with specific reference to the Great Lakes tourism region):

...‘It’s [the case of the Great Lakes] similar to what is found on the South Coast [of NSW]. Beach after beach. Nothing stood out until you reached Ulladulla’.

Efforts to provide and enhance the quality of experiences were raised by participants as the second broad aspect of competitiveness. Yet, like natural features, a cross section of participants were swift to point to the need to develop ‘unique’ experiences, as supported by the following stakeholder statement:

...‘There's a lot of areas that offer similar activities, and similar experiences. It's about how you stand out from those other areas’.

The concept of ‘uniqueness’ was further evoked during the discussion to denote a ‘unique’ tourism destination as a whole. A distinctive community spirit appeared to underpin a number of statements:
...‘It is like we are still a small fishing village, still local. You can get to know the local person who runs the café’.

...‘John [a local tourism operator] knows them [repeat visitors] by first name, and they like it. Because John will say, ‘G’day Pete, how are you going?’

...‘What they want to experience is real community places rather than being transplanted from their house to another area’.

During the initial portion of the Great Lakes focus group discussion, participants acknowledged the importance of enhancing cooperation among, and between, industry stakeholders in order to take full advantage of the benefits surrounding tourism. Almost paralleling the views of Coffs discussion participants, Great Lakes stakeholders added a great deal of weight to the argument that ‘different facets of our industry...don’t coordinate’:

...‘People need to realise that, collaboratively, you need to grow the pond instead of fighting for your bit of the pond. Everyone cuts each other’s throats by thinking the best way to attract people is to drop your prices’.

...‘We don’t really talk together. And I think that if any region is going to go ahead quickly, the whole local government plus the tourism operators really have to work cohesively. Quite often, all they want to do is compete, which is natural’.

...‘Everyone is fighting against one another, trying to do it their way instead of sitting around a table and working out how we can do it collectively. We have the facilities in the town to try and do all this. We have the brains to get this thing moving, but we are too busy fighting amongst each other’.

...‘I feel that different facets of our industry here don’t coordinate. Dining doesn’t coordinate with accommodation, accommodation doesn’t coordinate well with tourism activities. We just don’t work well together’.
The advent of local attractions, services and activities that appeal to tourists were additionally deemed important by focus group participants, as was accessibility to a destination. Whilst raised (only seldomly) by Coffs Coast group members, in contrast, Great Lakes participants were very strong in their promotion of accessibility as one of the biggest obstacles to tourism destination competitiveness:

...‘Obviously first up is location, the distance from your target market’.

...‘I suppose another factor other than affordability is your location and your distance from your target market, particularly with fuel costs. One thing that benefits us is that the roads between us and our target market overall are still very good. You get further north to Coffs, the state of the roads are quite poor’.

Strongly linked to the physical distance from markets was the notion of location. A destination’s location, as seen by Great Lakes stakeholders when viewed against major source markets such as Sydney and Central Coast (Hunter) localities, has much to do with the Great Lakes’ ability to attract visitors:

...‘I think most of these guys have already hit the nail on the head, it's about location. That gives us a competitive advantage over Coffs’.

...‘A generation ago, it took you 9hrs to get here, and now it's three, where 80% of our visitors come from, Sydney and the Hunter. I think the geographical location is a huge advantage. Even the geography of the town. The way you can get around so easily. I know this is being Forster centric, but the ease of getting around over the likes of Port [Macquarie] and Coffs, and Port Stephens is a lot easier’.

Whilst of the opinion that infrastructure developments (especially accommodation infrastructure) provide a further important element of destinations competitiveness, one participant was heard to confirm the earlier finding (as detailed in Section 4.6.1.3) that
development impacts, generally, in the Great Lakes had not been as acute when viewed against other major coastal tourist destinations like Coffs Harbour, particularly during the 1980s ‘development boom’:

...‘A difference between the Great Lakes and Coffs, and for Port Macquarie for that matter, is that for probably the last 30 or 40 years even, because we are off the highway, development just kept leap–frogging up the coast and the Great Lakes was left behind. We missed the booms and jumps. Port Stephens got it, Port Macquarie got it, Coffs got it. Now it’s kind of sliding back down [the coast of NSW] as the highway is improving’.

The marketing of a destination acts as another vital conduit in achieving destination competitiveness. According to one attendee:

...‘I guess what’s working for areas like those [ie. Coffs] is that they have had 20 or 30 years of marketing at a national level, that the Great Lakes just hasn’t had. Great Lakes is only now just getting onto the radar at, probably, an east coast level, where people in Melbourne and Brisbane do have some idea where the Great Lakes area is. 5 or 10 years ago, they would have had no idea where the Great Lakes is’.

The importance of this aspect, when compared to the view of Coffs Coast participants, appeared to be heightened in the Great Lakes, given the region was stilling ‘developing’ as a destination, in that the ‘the actual marketing of tourism is very young’, and that ‘it’s not an old destination like others’.

6.2.1.3 Comparison of Case Destination Perspectives

As illustrated in Table 6.3 (continuing over two pages), similarities in the views of stakeholders across the two case destinations are apparent. Broad attributes surrounding natural attractions, uniqueness, variety and value in terms of activities, experiences, products and services; quality infrastructure, tourism stakeholder collaboration,
accessibility and destination marketing were accentuated by both groups as important elements of destination competitiveness. Alternatively, attributes related to a destination’s host population, in addition to a rigorous consumer research program were exclusively raised by destination stakeholders in the Coffs Coast tourism region. However, as viewed in the following sections, Great Lakes participants are seen to touch on the importance of host populations and market research in later portions of the focus group discussions. Therefore, these similarities provide the basis for the selection of individual attributes of destination competitiveness, the importance of which were tested with consumers (visitors) via a web–based survey.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Coffs Coast tourism stakeholders</th>
<th>Great Lakes tourism stakeholders</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Natural Attractions</strong></td>
<td><strong>Natural Attractions</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td>▪ Natural attractions</td>
<td>▪ Natural attractions</td>
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<tr>
<td>▪ Look and feel</td>
<td>▪ Climate</td>
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<td>▪ Environment</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Uniqueness and Culture</strong></td>
<td><strong>Uniqueness and Culture</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td>▪ A distinctive point of difference</td>
<td>▪ Uniqueness of destination</td>
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<td>▪ Culture in the region</td>
<td>▪ The ’feel’ of the destination</td>
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<td>▪ Charisma of the destination</td>
<td><strong>Variety</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Variety</strong></td>
<td>▪ The breadth of experiences</td>
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<tr>
<td>▪ Wide variety of tours, attractions, accommodation for all budgets</td>
<td>▪ Diversity of products and experiences</td>
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<td>▪ Variety of activities/experiences</td>
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<tr>
<td>▪ Ensure a destination lives up to the appeal by offering a range of experiences</td>
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<td>▪ Consistency of experience</td>
<td><strong>Value</strong></td>
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<td>▪ Affordability</td>
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<td>▪ Value for money</td>
<td>▪ Pricing in terms of whole of holiday experience</td>
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<td><strong>Attraction &amp; Activities</strong></td>
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<td>▪ Tourist attractions</td>
<td>▪ Quality leisure activities</td>
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<td>▪ Major events</td>
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<td></td>
<td>▪ ‘Things to do’ at destination</td>
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<td></td>
<td>▪ Plenty of dining options and plenty of ‘experience’ based operators</td>
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Infrastructure and Accommodation
- Accommodation offerings
- Availability of accommodation in peak periods
- New or ‘re–birth’ of existing structures
- Continue progression and upgrading of facilities
- Good infrastructure
- Safety

Products and Services
- Appropriateness of product – goods and services
- Quality & quantity of product
- Dynamic distribution and booking systems
- Friendly, outgoing staff
- Freshness and new product development
- High level of industry cohesiveness & collaboration
- Cohesion and consistency in management, messages and service delivery

Access and Transport
- Transport and accessibility

Marketing
- Ability to position a destination as desirable to the targeted audience
- Marketing
- Promote products that have appeal to their prospects

Host population
- A welcoming host population
- Residents understanding that tourism is everyone’s business

Research
- Assessing current trends
- Alignment of supply with demand
- Knowledge of destination

Table 6.3: Comparison of aspects of competitiveness – Coffs Coast and Great Lakes tourism stakeholders. (Note: realignment of attributes from Tables 6.1 and 6.2 was undertaken to show the comparison of aspects of competitiveness across the two case destinations).
Many of the attributes in Table 6.3, however, represent traditional supply–side measures of competitiveness, as opposed to consumer measures of competitiveness (Ritchie, Crouch & Hudson 2001). Ritchie, Crouch and Hudson (2001) demonstrate the significance of aligning traditional industry measures with recognised consumer measures of competitiveness. For instance, whereby the terms ‘activities’ and ‘experiences’ were raised by stakeholders in this research as important features of destination competitiveness, on the consumer–side of the competitiveness equation, this may also equate to ‘water based activities’, ‘entertainment’, ‘nature based activities’ and ‘adventure activities’. Therefore, these terms were utilised in the quantitative instrument.

As another example, since natural attractions of a destination are seen ‘in the eye of the beholder’ (Ritchie, Crouch & Hudson 2001, p. 5) – the consumer – the identification of the broad attribute ‘natural attractions’ by stakeholders in this research could be measured from a consumer perspective via a number of terms or statements such as ‘nature based activities (eg. bushwalking, camping)’, ‘national parks’, ‘accessibility to natural areas’, ‘flora and fauna’, and ‘natural scenery’ (Dwyer et al. 2004). Therefore, to ensure broad attributes identified by tourism industry stakeholders (Table 6.3) were adequately aligned to what the marketplace (ie. consumers) understands to be appropriate ‘jargon’, operational terms identified by Ritchie, Crouch and Hudson (2001), and Dwyer et al. (2004) were used extensively to assist with attribute listing. In support of elements listed in Table 6.3, a total of 38 attributes and/or statements were derived and utilised in the quantitative phase of this research (see Appendix Five for survey instrument).
6.3.1 Topic Two – Level of Importance of Destination Competitiveness Attributes

Stakeholders were then asked to identify those broad elements considered critical in improving the competitiveness of a destination. ‘Are some of these competitive elements more important than others?’

6.3.1.1 Attributes Considered Most Important by Coffs Coast Stakeholders

At the commencement of this segment of the discussion, a focus towards the ‘intended target audience’ was particularly stressed by a number of Coffs Coast participants. For example:

...‘I’ll have to give you a stock standard marketing answer for that – it’s about the needs of an identified target audience. And it depends who you are talking about when considering what those elements will be’.

The researcher probed participants to consider domestic family holiday/leisure tourists as a target market. In response to this prompt, one participant was heard to question whether this segment was indeed a market attending the case region, by saying:

...‘The thing is, has our market really been identified with clarity for this area, and that would be my question. Do we really know who’s coming here? We haven’t got that conclusive research behind this to go’.

A number of other attendees were quick to point to known visitor statistics, such as the National Visitor Survey, in confirming the importance of the family segment to the case region, such as:

...‘In terms of who’s coming here, this is from the National Visitors Survey, roughly of all the overnight trips, 16% are a parent with the youngest child
aged five or less, the next biggest is 15% with youngest child 6 to 14, so we do have a good handle on the visitors coming to Coffs, in respect to where they fall in a life-cycle stage’.

Further arguments were provided in terms of the importance of ‘elements’ depending upon the target audience, in that low cost accommodation might be key feature for families, whereas nightlife might be significant factor for backpackers:

...‘In respect to product development, there is the need to know exactly who you’re talking about’.

A theme of marketing of a destination continued throughout this stage of the Coffs Coast discussion. A co-operative approach to marketing a destination, as opposed to a fragmented attempt by destination marketing authorities and industry operators to conduct marketing individually emerged, as did the importance of ‘letting intended visitors know what is here and what they’re missing out on if not coming here’, in addition to the provision of sufficient dollars being invested in marketing the destination, ‘otherwise a destination cannot compete with other major locations’.

Yet, ‘the challenge is...that cohesion needs to be there. If the cohesion is not there between the partners and industry, it’s simply not going to happen’. Thus, for this participant, cohesion and consistency ‘underpins expectations in the consumer’s mind’. Industry cohesion gained further support from stakeholders, who highlighted ‘a culture of happy, smiling staff in all businesses’, and ‘businesses that go that bit extra to ensure the visitors have a great time’. As a result:

...‘If a destination is lacking cohesion it may prove very difficult to develop and implement the strategies to make the destination successful’.
Other attributes such as accessibility and value for money, which like marketing and product development can ultimately be controlled and influenced by a destination, were also raised during this conversation as being of chief importance to a destination, and as shown in the following statement. This attendee implicitly identified that accessibility and value for money were very important regardless of market segment:

...’There are probably some motherhood statements you could make such as being accessible, provide value for money, being consistent; and it doesn’t matter what market segment it is, these things will always hold true’.

6.3.1.2 Attributes Considered Most Important by Great Lakes Stakeholders

For some Great Lakes stakeholders, affordability ‘is becoming more important for year round [repeat] visitors’. In concert with this notion, distance to major target markets ‘also becomes a factor with time, fuel costs and the state of roads’. As discussed in Section 2.5.4, the most frequently cited issue of accessibility in regional Australian tourism destinations is the rising cost of petrol and the impacts, direct and indirect, on involvement in leisure travel (Kelly 2005).

...’I think that affordability is becoming more and more important, in terms of your location your distance from your target market, and with fuel costs’.

Transport, in particular ‘low–cost options available to competing destinations’ was further attached to the concept of accessibility. Again, as discussed in Section 2.5.4, the relatively new presence of reduced cost airfares to regional destinations (e.g. since the early 2000s, the advent of low cost carriers Virgin Blue, Jetstar and Tiger Airways has brought fierce price competition to regional Australian cities and other regional destinations), has lead to a greater regional dispersion of domestic and international tourists (Koo, Wu & Dwyer 2009). For those regions in the vicinity of low cost
gateways, benefits are recognised. However, as noted by Koo et al. (2009), the consequences of substitution toward air travel can be detrimental to peripheral destinations, like the Great Lakes (ie. the Great Lakes tourism region does not possess a regional airport able to accept larger jet aircraft commonly utilised by low cost airlines in Australia):

...'I’m getting e-mails now offering $29 to Melbourne [in reference to airfares] and $39 for Cairns. You can't drive to Sydney to 30 bucks. So an airport would be great (laughter)’. 

After this comment was expressed, one participant appeared not be overly concerned about the lack of air transportation options available locally, by saying:

...'But an airport doesn't work that well for Coffs. Yes, you can get cheap airfares to Coffs these days, but it's still not the bulk of their market, as you [another participant] said, Coffs still caters for a massive drive market. What was it, 80% drive?’

Like the Coffs Coast discussion, tourism industry representatives in the Great Lakes note that the importance of elements very much depends on the traveller. For example, families are looking for safe driving distances, are budget conscious, and seek value for money in respect to leisure activities. Alternatively, younger couples or people without children may be looking for higher quality accommodation.

...'You need to have a range of elements that cater to your audience. Limiting the range reduces the volume, reduces the profitability of the providers’.

The range of elements also extended to the diversity of products and experiences, and convenient access to these experiences, in that the ‘more range a destination has in terms of products and experiences the more competitive it becomes’:
...‘I think they [elements of competitiveness] are all important, however experiences are what people really want’.

As a concluding point, some respondents observed that principles underpinning a strong service orientation were also of increased importance in terms of destination competitiveness. For those respondents, it was the quality of service provided by those individuals employed in tourism that should become a key focus of a destination’s tourism offering. The following statement reflects on this point:

...One of the things that I wrote down on my critical list for the most important features of a competitive destination was customer service. Service is where we can stand out from other areas. Take a region like ours [the Great Lakes] compared to Coffs. On the outside, Coffs may have more to offer, they could provide a better experience then the Great Lakes, but in respect to customer service and how they [visitors] are treated, and the atmosphere that they get, we can do better [than Coffs].

6.4.1 Topic Three – Views on Life Cycle Stage of Case Destination

6.4.1.1 Perceptions of Life Cycle Stage of Coffs Coast

Following the general discussion on elements considered critical in improving the competitiveness of a destination, participants were asked whether, in their opinion, they agreed with the earlier judgment that the Coffs Coast was a mature destination. As summarised in Section 4.4.1.4, following a review of documentation pertaining to the Coffs Coast tourism region including tourism strategic plans, council policies, industry focus groups and workshops, national tourism data sets, current marketing activities, and market perceptions of Coffs Coast as a visitor destination; it was postulated that it be reasonable to at least conclude that the Coffs Coast is a mature destination showing
signs of stagnation. Members of the group strongly supported this conclusion. The following statements were found to be indicative of the wider view of the group:

...‘In respect to the life cycle of the destination, we are a mature product and destination and in need of revitalisation’.

...‘Yes – it has not evolved with consumer demand. There has been little capital injection into the destination, in order to revitalise it’.

...‘The Coffs Coast is not attracting new markets. It’s no longer seen as a cool or exciting destination’.

...‘Agree – because the Coffs Coast has not seen any major injection of tourist facilities since the resort development of the 80s. Coffs is not unlike a number of coastal places that have relied on the sea change tourist’.

...‘Yes – the Coffs Coast is definitely a mature destination. The physical attributes of the area are tired. Services in the area are tired and not appealing. The current promotion and strategic development is stale’.

One participant expressed caution in categorically claiming the region to be mature, saying:

...‘I somewhat disagree with the notion that we are a mature destination in that we haven't really promoted our greatest asset being the beauty of the place. Ecotourism is something that we can work on’.

Whilst some group members expressed agreement to the belief that, as a product, ecotourism had not been explored locally in any meaningful way; the ‘reality’ of the tourism product found within the Coffs Coast region did lend itself to the perception, particularly amongst key segments, that the region was indeed a mature destination. Comments to that point include:
...‘Well, maturity is often built on perception, not reality. If people think you’re mature, then that’s what drives their decision–making’.

...‘The product we are looking at, the product that’s being marketed is a mature product, and the reason why it’s a mature product is because we haven’t had any new resorts or developments in any period of time since in 1980s. So you’re talking 20 years since anything of any significance that allows people to feel ‘hey, wow, Coffs Harbour has something new to offer’.

It was interesting to note that maturity was also viewed in an affirmative context. For example, one participant felt that:

...‘There are both positives and negatives with the signs of maturity. The positive side is that it’s a known experience – people know what to expect. It’s a tried–and–true brand’.

6.4.1.2 Perception of Life Cycle Stage of Great Lakes

In Section 4.4.2.4, an appraisal of indicators pertaining to the Great Lakes tourism region taken from items such as council policies, tourism data sets, recent development activities, and consumer concerns of the Great Lakes concluded that this region contains signs of development and consolidation. Members of the Great Lakes discussion group generally confirmed this conclusion, with the following statements symptomatic of the general group view:

...‘I agree. There are still developments going up. There are still ‘new’ visitors coming to the area, particularly with Sydney getting closer travel–wise. Changing work habits gives the Great Lakes a greater exposure to short visits’.

...‘Yes. The Great Lakes main centre, Forster, still bears resemblance to a small fishing community. Many opportunities exist to expand the demographic of visitors. Large opportunities to expand visitation outside of peak months’.
...‘Yes. Location off the major highway, without air access etc has seen the Great Lakes bypassed in the past. However, road improvements and marketing of the region has seen tourism expand’.

...‘I agree with this finding. When we lost the Ironman event we lost a lot of people coming to the area [first staged in Forster in 1985, promoters of the Ironman Australia triathlon event opted to move the event to Port Macquarie in 2006]. We then finally woke up and started to market Forster for ‘other things to do’ and are now developing which makes infrastructure grow’.

...‘Yes. There is confidence in the local market shown by recent investment, both in accommodation & shopping facilities’.

...‘Agreed. Rapid growth in developments in the last 8 years have increased accommodation choice greatly. Also, it is much easier to get to this region as road infrastructure improves. Also, it is important that local government continues to assist and fund the tourism industry as it is not mature enough to run itself yet’.

One Great Lakes attendee diverged from the wider group view:

...’I think we are more in a consolidation/stagnation stage and I say this because tourism to the area is not a new product. Tourists have been visiting the area since the early 1900s’.

To summarise, in this section, destination stakeholders were seen to confirm earlier findings (see Sections 4.4.1.4 and 4.4.2.4) that the Coffs Coast is a mature destination showing signs of stagnation, as opposed to the Great Lakes, identified as being heavily positioned within Butler’s (1980) stages of development and consolidation.

6.5.1 Topic Four – Critical Elements needed to Improve Competitiveness of a Destination at its Given Lifecycle

Participants were also asked to each provide those elements they considered critical in improving the competitiveness of a destination categorised as mature (Coffs Coast
participants) and developing/consolidating (Great Lakes stakeholders). As was found within the earlier discussion on attributes, a series of items of heightened importance to mature and developing/consolidating destinations were proposed.

6.5.1.1 Critical Elements to Improve a Mature Destination

Attendees were first asked to list those elements, in their opinion, considered critical in improving the competitiveness of a destination categorised as mature in their Focus Group Questions and Discussion Guide. Participants were then invited to inform the wider group as to the reasons for their selection. An analysis of the audio transcript, and corresponding notes, emphasised four emergent themes, concerns or responses posed repeatedly by respondents, the first being a theme of ‘freshness’. Coffs Coast stakeholders broadly described the importance for a mature destination to encourage fresh perspectives across a number of attributes such as finance, human resource management, product development, marketing and infrastructure. Individual attributes identified by respondents are bulleted, with quotations extracted from the transcript shown thereafter.

1st Emergent Theme – Freshness and Revitalisation

**Capital injection**

...‘It’s about getting businesses to invest in themselves, by giving them some sort of opportunity to know that there is a reward for making that investment. It’s about bringing the operators up to a desired standard’.

**Ongoing industry development and training**

...‘It is about standards. People want structure’.
Product innovation

...‘One of the things about the TALC model, that I think is really interesting when I relate it to a Gold Coast marketing campaign, that has really stuck in my mind as being so clever, is when it [the Gold Coast] got that reputation of being really tired their marketing campaign/slogan became ‘the always amazing, ever changing Gold Coast’. This lured people back to the region to have a look at the revitalisation. But first they did the work [of revitalisation], then it promoted the work in a really effective way that was memorable’.

Continual improvement of facilities (infrastructure, tourism superstructure)

...‘People are prepared to travel to those destinations where the product is perceived to be appropriate, and there is enough of the product, for a given period of time’.

...‘I think there is a ‘catch–22’. Commercial organisations aren’t looking to develop tourism infrastructure in a region where tourism is on the decline’.

...‘There needs to be a continuous cycle of revitalisation’.

Fresh product and fresh marketing approach

...‘It’s critical to continually develop new packages and interests for visitors’.

...‘Usually what happens when any [tourism] market that grows, and Coffs has never done this, is you build a convention and tourist market on top of the general tourism market. So if Coffs had a major conference facility in this area, it becomes self sufficient and self sustaining. Coffs has never done that’.

2nd Emergent Theme – Community Wide Vision

In Section 6.2.1.1, a number of statements supporting the need for industry collaboration and cohesion were offered. Focus group participants further identified the development of a strong community vision for the future of tourism in a mature
destination, with these attributes and comments forming the basis of a second emergent theme.

**Whole of community support**

...‘Tourism is everybody’s business. We need a local marketing job to educate stakeholders, including the wider public. We need to keep plugging away, as there is no realisation that the butcher down the road is involved with tourism...they hold the view that they are just selling meat. They guy that’s serving petrol...he’s involved in tourism too. We just need to get that message over’.

...‘It’s about investment in the community’.

**Tourism industry understanding**

...‘For many [residents], the airport is not seen as a gateway to tourists, but more as a separate business that gets 300,000 passengers a year. There is not really an understanding that everybody involved in that business [the airport] is part of this bigger thing called the tourism industry. They’re sitting out there and there’s no links, it's pretty frustrating. I don't know how you change that, I suppose it's about changing the mindset’.

**3rd Emergent Theme – Brand, Image and Position**

As discussed by Buhalis (2000), destinations offer an amalgam of tourism products and services. As these elements (products and services) are branded together under the name of the destination, a unique brand and image is formed in the minds of consumers (Buhalis 2000). For that reason, tourism scholars (for example Wheeler 2007) acknowledge that the competitiveness of destinations depends on the ability to develop and project a unique and recognisable brand. Coffs Coast stakeholders therefore advanced the need for a mature destination to enhance and differentiate their brand and image compared to that of their competitors.
Establish a point of difference and strong brand

...‘It’s about perception too, it’s about bragging rights for a destination’.

...‘It’s like if someone is going to Byron Bay, people say ‘cool!’.

Presentation and Theming

...‘For a mature destination, you need to build a strong theme, and have a really strong image, and you can build the image without have to necessarily alienate certain market segments’.

Point of difference

...‘This place doesn't need to be a duplicate of the Gold Coast. If people want a Gold Coast type of experience, they'll go there’.

...‘How are we offering the experience to the consumers, so they go away saying ‘that's really special’. So if you look at, for example, Cairns with their tree top walks, it's a different way of experiencing the environment. Or the new cloud cable car experience in Tasmania. It's somebody giving people another way to experience the natural environment. Such a point of difference gives a mature destination a chance to get back to the marketplace’.

4th Emergent Theme – Industry Collaboration

The fourth and final broad theme outlined by participants led to the further advancement of stakeholder collaboration. For a mature destination such as the Coffs Coast, collaboration had the potential to lead to dialogue and a broader exchange of ideas amongst a wide range of tourism–related stakeholders.

Industry collaboration/cohesion with stakeholders

...‘It also has to happen at a broader industry level. At the moment, we have three industry bodies across the wider Coffs Coast region that are
essentially fighting each other, even though they all acknowledge that they are better off working together...but none of them are willing to take that first step’.

...‘We are three council areas that have historically managed things is a very different fashion. And in many respects, we have not really collaborated very much when it comes to tourism’.

...‘As much as we say we do [collaborate], we don’t on the ground. So we're promising something, but when people arrive here on the ground, we are not actually delivering on that promise’.

6.5.1.2 Critical Elements to Improve a Developing Destination

The following quotes are exerts from the Great Lakes focus group transcript which trace the opinions of respondents in response to the question of which elements they considered critical in improving the competitiveness of a destination categorised as developing/consolidating. Initial introductory comments are attached to four major themes (Getting the Basics Right, Vision through Leadership, Enterprising Matters and Industry Collaboration) to demonstrate the context in which the quotes were made.

1st Emergent Theme – ‘Getting the Basics Right’

The first emergent theme apparent during Great Lakes discussions paid attention to destination development strategies. In particular, tactics surrounding the development of quality accommodation and other tourism infrastructure (including means of accessibility) to satisfy both immediate and future demand were deemed critically important to a destination still developing in terms of its life cycle.
**Good planning and development strategies**

...‘You really rely on the foresight of planners and developers. You really rely so much on the Council having an impact, doing something now that takes effect in 10 years time’.

...‘But they [visitors] will keep coming back if next time they come back the place has changed. Some people will always come back here, but some people will be looking for a change’.

...‘One has to mention that whilst good planning is critical, you’re dealing with developers whose sole aim is to make dough [money] and not so much about creating a great area. Unless Council has a vision and creates incentive for developers for appropriate development, we could see them [developers] putting up unimaginable 10 storey buildings next door to each other’.

**Quality accommodation**

...‘That's the thing with this region, and again I’m being Forster centric, the development over the last 10 years is now relatively modern so to speak’.

... ‘It’s vital to our area that major accommodation management chains come in. We really need investment from those bigger players. Whether it’s accommodation or some big tourism operators, even larger shopping centres as that would help to raise awareness and provide another attraction for people to come to town. But until we get Rydges or Sheraton [leading accommodation firms], we can't compete against other destinations’.

**Ease of access/accessibility**

...‘I think that accessibility is becoming more and more important, because especially with the young families these days, both the partners work. To get away for a holiday, the holiday is getting more and more compressed’.

...‘People want to get away from that busyness’.
**Improving facilities and infrastructure**

...‘See, for a mature destination like Coffs, it's difficult. The infrastructure they put in 15 to 20 years ago, to make it the real jewel on the coast, you can't knock it over because it costs you too much. It is at the stage where it is past its life span’.

**2nd Emergent Theme – Vision through Leadership**

As mentioned by Coffs participants, the developing of a vision for tourism was advocated. Similarly for Great Lakes stakeholders, vision for tourism was likewise important. However, in the context of a developing destination, stakeholders felt that the development of a vision first needed to come from principal stakeholders such as Councils and operators. Thus, leadership is needed.

**Leadership**

...‘That's where I think the leadership is required, with key stakeholders involved’.

...‘You've just got to go through the big race. Just keep promoting the industry, but we need our industry champions to do that’.

...‘I'm a lot different to most of the individuals here. I am not an operator. I have just been helping with the tourism committee. All stakeholders have to have a more hands–on approach to everything with what’s going on [in building the industry]. As I said earlier, we are a relatively young marketable destination. The change in the Council’s view on tourism...it is a very difficult kind of thing to promote, but operators need to help’.

**3rd Emergent Theme – Enterprising Matters**

The motivations (and disparities) of tourism operators based within a destination formed the foundations of a third theme for developing destinations. Firstly, for some respondents (see first statement), the ability of operators to be flexible in their delivery
of tourism products and services had the potential to influence the competitiveness of a
developing region.

*Open when they [the visitors] are here*

... ‘A lot of the businesses that move up here have got this perspective that
they are on a semi–retirement plan, and say so. When I first came up here, I
was looking to build and buy a block of land. The salesman [real estate
agent] kept looking at his watch. I said “have you got another meeting?”.
He said “No, we close at 12 on Saturday’s”. I come from an environment
down from Sydney where firms are open on Saturdays and Sundays. The
Forster mentality is, “No, it’s 12 o’clock. I didn’t move up here to work all
day”’.

However, as is attested in a number of others statements, the ability to be flexible
whilst maintaining profitability was seen as a difficult compromise.

...‘I’m a retailer, and in defence of that, last Easter we stayed open until 8
or 9pm at night, and what you would find is that it’s just not viable in terms
of patronage for people coming through the doors when you’re paying three
or four staff. We would love everyone to be open 24/7, but it comes to a
point where it is not economically viable to keep my business open another
hour.

...‘We’ve hang ourselves out there a few times, but we just can’t continue to
do it’.

...’We’ve tried. We were open on Friday and Saturday nights for nearly 18
months, 2 years. We’ve been there, done that’.

...‘Yes, we were fully open for 2 years, solidly every Friday and Saturday
night. But you don’t get the patronage’.

...‘It’s a vicious circle’.
The ability of operators to learn from their customers and the provision of superior customer service where also reflected in participant comments.

**Learning from your customers**

...‘I think it’s up to a lot of the operators to put themselves out there and get a feel for their customers about why they come, what they want, why they won’t be coming back or why they will be coming back. And if we can gather that information, and I think most of this here, you know, we’re into getting that feedback from customers. Because if you don’t get the feedback, you don’t really have an idea of what direction you’re taking’.

**Customer service**

...‘That service one’s a cracker. Yesterday I heard from a person that booked some accommodation, and the real estate agent didn’t leave a key anywhere. How’s that for a first time experience? Not good when you’re trying to grow your destination’.

**4th Emergent Theme – Industry Collaboration**

In concert with the views for Coffs Coast stakeholders, attendees to the Great Lakes discussion emphasised the need for industry collaboration, should a developing destination desire to be in a competitive position.

**All facets of industry working together**

...‘My perception of Port Macquarie is that they are actually working together quite well. They are actually going down a more privatised model. I feel that different facets of our industry here don’t coordinate’.
Communication between industry, the community and customers

...‘Collaboration is not just a Chamber of Commerce issue. I think it’s a mindset. Linked to that is the case that many businesses don’t believe they are linked to tourism’.

...‘We talk here today about collaboration, but in reality, quite often, everyone is fighting against one another, trying to do it their way instead of sitting around a table and working out how we can do it collectively. We have the facilities in the town to try and do all this. We have the brains to get this thing moving, but we are too busy fighting amongst each other’.

To conclude, according to the results described in this section, key destination stakeholders endorsed that the attributes they believe most important to a destination considered being at the mature stage of its life cycle, are quite different to those attributes regarded as being critically important to developing destinations. These findings will be further scrutinised in Chapter Seven.

6.6.1 Topic Five – Targeted Segments

The final issue related to the notion of destination competitiveness discussed was the competitiveness of the case destinations in relation a key market segments, namely domestic family holiday/leisure tourists. As discussed in Sections 4.4.1.3 and 4.4.2.3, families are seen as a strong market in each area, with this segment continuing to contribute heavily to visitations in both regions.
6.6.1.1 Competitiveness of the Coffs Coast – Families

Coffs Coast participants were asked ‘how competitive is the Coffs Coast as a destination for families?’ Overall, mixed responses were provided by respondents, as ascertained in the following statements:

...‘Good for low budget families but they [the families] don’t inject much value to the city. They don’t spend much money. We are not competitive with the Gold Coast because of a lack of attractions and air travel access’.

...‘We have a good level of competitiveness. This is due to a reasonable stock of family friendly, natural and man–made experiences and accommodation offerings’.

...‘We are pretty good for the family market. Opportunities and experiences in the region are tied to this market. Great beaches and waterways!’.
...‘Most of the marketing it directed to the family market. However, the area does not really promote family activities’.

...‘Not a lot of marketing is done to this market and only in magazines. Most of the individual accommodation houses do more marketing to this market [than Council]. We offer value for money with accommodation and attractions. We also have a variety of accommodation, tours and attractions to suite all budgets’.

Further, destination stakeholders were asked to highlight ‘what must the Coffs Coast do to increase its overall competitiveness to attract a greater share of the family market?’

As already highlighted throughout the wider focus group discussion, of significant interest to stakeholders was the provision of accommodation, attractions, products and experiences which were appealing to family–based consumers.

...‘The destination must understand what modern families want, try to attract those people with funds. Suitable accommodation, attractions, events
must be established, and a proper marketing strategy developed to communicate the benefits’.

... ‘Introduce new products and experiences by encouraging existing operators to improve their experiences on offer. Also, encourage new product development, and have current family orientated product operators collaborative and cross–sell’.

... ‘Ensure that we don’t appear to ‘rip–off’ our visitors at holiday time’.

... ‘Improve communication of the range of experiences on offer. We also need to ease of the purchase and access of these experiences’.

6.6.1.2 Competitiveness of the Great Lakes – Families

Destination stakeholders in the Great Lakes tourism region were seen to mainly underplay the regions’ ability to meet the needs of the family market. With this view, a number of additional statements as to ‘what must the Great Lakes do to increase its overall competitiveness to attract a greater share of the family market?’ were noted.

... ‘We are not very competitive. We only have natural attractions mainly – surfing, fishing, sailing. Great for seniors but not enough fun park–type activities for the younger family’.

... ‘The Great Lakes is losing its competitiveness – accommodation costs are high and inflexible’.

... ‘We are a cheaper alternative than a Gold Coast theme park holiday. But the Great Lakes require more attractions based around family leisure activities’.

... ‘We are pricing ourselves out of the lower end of the family market [camping] because of the change of strategy of parks [more cabins – more expensive]. There is a lack of things to do for kids – they require more than just kicking a ball around. They are hungry for attractions’.
...‘We need more activities, water and fun parks but I can’t see that happening’.

...‘There needs to be a greater emphasis on developing existing venues at the destination’.

...‘It’s all about increasing the experiences and access to these. Work more cooperatively’.

...‘We really need to introduce family things to do. Look outside the square. Maybe something in the hinterland, what about the Barrington Tops for an alternative attraction’?

6.6.1.3 Section Summary

In this section, findings from focus group discussions with destination stakeholders in two case destinations (Coffs Coast and Great Lakes tourism regions) were discussed. These discussions will be reflected upon in more detailed in Chapter Seven. A significant portion of this discussion involved the identification of individual attributes of destination competitiveness, the importance of which were tested with consumers (visitors) via a web–based survey. The results from the quantitative phase of this research are now examined.

6.7 Analysis of Research Question One (RQ1a and RQ1b)

6.7.1 Research Question 1a: Critical Competitiveness Attributes – Industry Perspective

As discussed in Section 6.2.1.3, and summarised in Table 6.3, a series of destination competitiveness indicators were proposed by tourism stakeholders located in each case destinations. Broad attributes surrounding natural attractions, uniqueness, variety and value in terms of activities, experiences, products and services; quality infrastructure,
tourism stakeholder collaboration, accessibility and destination marketing were accentuated by both groups as important elements of the competitiveness of destinations (particularly in a regional Australian context). These findings thus provided a selection of individual attributes of destination competitiveness, the importance of which were tested with consumers (visitors) via a web–based survey (Research Question 1b). Additionally, destination stakeholders identified those elements considered critical in improving the competitiveness of a destination. Descriptive data related to those consumers surveyed are presented in the following sections.

6.7.2 Research Question 1b: Critical Competitiveness Attributes – Consumer Perspective

6.7.2.1 Quantitative Descriptive Data

As noted in Section 5.7.3, a sample of 2556 individuals (including previous visitors and those people who had expressed an interest in learning more about the Coffs Coast) was used in the current study, with 394 surveys received. Following data cleaning procedures, 344 useable surveys (a response rate of 13.6 per cent) formed the basis for final data analysis. As noted in Section 5.7.3, this rate is not dissimilar to other recent TDC studies.

To facilitate an analysis of non–response bias (see Section 5.3.2), two respondent groups were selected; group one included responses received prior to and including the 14th of November 2008, with the second group including responses received after the 14th of November 2008. This latter date corresponds with a follow up email sent to respondents.
Multiple t tests on key variables (50 t tests in total) where undertaken between the two groups. These tests were performed using a 0.001 sig level. Based on the findings of these tests, no significant differences were found on these key items, indicating no difference between early and late respondents and by extension no difference between respondents and non-respondents (Miller & Smith 1983).

Key demographics of those 344 respondents are presented in the following section. Several demographic statistics bear a close resemblance to those identified in previous studies conducted within the Coffs Coast tourism region. Such similar demographic figures suggest the sample selected for the current study is representative of a larger population of consumers.

6.7.3 Key Demographics

Of the 344 cases used in the analysis, 248 were women. Seventy seven per cent of respondents identified NSW as their state of residence (a summary of demographic characteristics of respondents is provided in Table 6.4). Other recorded state of residence figures included Queensland (10.2 per cent) and Victoria (9.3 per cent). These travel habits closely resemble those identified in previous tourism related research undertaken within the Coffs Coast tourism region. For example, the Coffs Coast Visitor Survey (2005) identified NSW tourists accounting for 78.1 per cent of the sample, Queensland (6.1 per cent) and Victoria (7.9 per cent). 42 per cent of respondents (N=146) stated that their typical travel party consisted on travelling with their partner and children. This number can be compared to a study of visitors to the region conducted by Armstrong et al. (2005), which indicated the majority of visitors to the region were adults aged between 25 and 44 years (33.3 per cent) and children aged 0 to 13 years (30.9 per cent). Generally, respondents (83.1 per cent) were seen to utilise a
vehicle without caravan when visiting the Coffs Coast (Armstrong et al. 2005 report 73.6 per cent of visitors used their own vehicle to travel to the region for a holiday).

Respondents were also asked to identify the last time they visited each of the case destinations. For the Coffs Coast, 42.4 per cent visited in last 12 months, 23.8 per cent within 1–2 years, 22.4 per cent within the past 2–5 years, and 11.3 per cent recording their last visit as 5 years plus. For the Great Lakes, 29.4 per cent visited in last 12 months, 22.4 per cent within 1–2 years, 25 per cent within the past 2–5 years, and 23.3 per cent last visiting the region more than 5 years ago.

A range of age groupings were identified, with 18 to 24 year old representing 1.7 per cent of respondents, 25–34 years (15.1 per cent), 35–44 years (29.7 per cent), 45–54 years (30.8 per cent), and 55+ years (22.7 per cent). Again, the range of values for estimated household incomes varied. 5.2 per cent of all cases registered an estimate annual household income under $20,000, 33.4 per cent within the $20,000–$59,999 range, 34.9 per cent – $60,000–$99,999, 19.2 per cent for $100,000–$139,999, with the remaining 7.3 per cent of respondents indicating a household income in excess of $140,000.
### Table 6.4: Summary of demographic characteristics of respondents.

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<th>Variable Name</th>
<th>Categories</th>
<th>Frequency</th>
<th>Valid Percent</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
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<td>(N=344)</td>
<td>New South Wales</td>
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<td>76.7</td>
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<td></td>
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<td>35</td>
<td>10.2</td>
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<td>0.3</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Western Australia</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>South Australia</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>0.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Total</td>
<td>344</td>
<td>100.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Mode of Transport</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(N=344)</td>
<td>Domestic airline</td>
<td>31</td>
<td>9.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Tour coach</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Vehicle with caravan</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>2.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Transport coach</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Vehicle without caravan</td>
<td>286</td>
<td>83.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Motor home</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Train</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>1.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Other</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>2.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Total</td>
<td>344</td>
<td>100.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Travel Party</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(N=344)</td>
<td>I normally travel alone</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>3.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>I normally travel with my partner</td>
<td>146</td>
<td>42.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(without children)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>I normally travel with my partner</td>
<td>146</td>
<td>42.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>and children</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>I normally travel with friends</td>
<td>24</td>
<td>7.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Other</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>4.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Total</td>
<td>344</td>
<td>100.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Last Visitation – Coffs Coast</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(N=344)</td>
<td>Within the past 12 months</td>
<td>146</td>
<td>42.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Within the past 1–2 years</td>
<td>82</td>
<td>23.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Within the past 2–5 years</td>
<td>77</td>
<td>22.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>More than 5 years ago</td>
<td>39</td>
<td>11.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Total</td>
<td>344</td>
<td>100.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Last Visitation – Great Lakes</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(N=344)</td>
<td>Within the past 12 months</td>
<td>101</td>
<td>29.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Within the past 1–2 years</td>
<td>77</td>
<td>22.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Within the past 2–5 years</td>
<td>86</td>
<td>25.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>More than 5 years ago</td>
<td>80</td>
<td>23.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Total</td>
<td>344</td>
<td>100.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Household Income</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(N=344)</td>
<td>Under $20,000</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>5.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>$20,000 to $59,999</td>
<td>115</td>
<td>33.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>$60,000 to $99,999</td>
<td>120</td>
<td>34.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>$100,000 to $139,999</td>
<td>66</td>
<td>19.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>$140,000+</td>
<td>25</td>
<td>7.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Total</td>
<td>344</td>
<td>100.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Age</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(N=344)</td>
<td>18–24 years</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>1.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>25–34 years</td>
<td>52</td>
<td>15.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>35–44 years</td>
<td>102</td>
<td>29.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>45–54 years</td>
<td>106</td>
<td>30.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>55+ years</td>
<td>78</td>
<td>22.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Total</td>
<td>344</td>
<td>100.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Gender</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(N=344)</td>
<td>Male</td>
<td>96</td>
<td>27.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Female</td>
<td>248</td>
<td>72.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Total</td>
<td>344</td>
<td>100.0</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
6.7.4 Travel Experience and Perception of Case Destination Life Cycle

Given a destination’s stage of development has the potential to influence a tourist’s decision-making process as to whether or not they will visit a destination (as discussed in Chapter Three), respondents were asked to classify (in their opinion) the stage of development for which they perceived each case destination currently fell into. In relation to the Coffs Coast tourism region, 41 per cent of respondents believed the region was still developing or growing as a tourism destination, 45.3 per cent felt the region was showing signs of maturity, 11.6 per cent believed the region was stagnating, or was in decline; with the remaining 2 per cent of respondents indicating other views. Although no statistical significant differences were found, from this result, it would appear reasonable to contend that the Coffs Coast, from a consumer perspective, is a destination showing signs of maturity’ (ie. 45.3 per cent felt the region was showing signs of maturity, 11.6 per cent believed the region was stagnating, or was in decline).

For the Great Lakes, 58.7 per cent of all respondents believed the region was still developing or growing as a tourism destination, 24.4 per cent identified the region as being in a mature stage of the life cycle, 15.1 per cent believed stagnation had taken hold, with 1.7 per cent recording other views. It would therefore appear acceptable, from these results, to declare that the Great Lakes tourism region (from a consumer perspective) is a destination presenting strong signs of growth and development. A summary of these statistics is provided in Table 6.5. In both cases, consumers support the general views of industry stakeholders in terms of stage of development for the respective case regions (see Sections 6.4.1.1 and 6.4.1.2).
Following attribute identification (by destination stakeholders) and quantitative enquiries (consumer web survey), factor analysis (described in Section 5.8.1 through 5.8.7) was then utilised in the current study. Factor analysis was used to identify the relationship (underlying dimensions) between the set of TDC attributes.

6.8 Analysis of Research Question One (RQ1b): Exploratory Factor Analysis – Classifying Key Destination Attribute Factors

The statistical program, SPSS 17.0, was chosen to process the data. A data table was prepared using this program and the correlation matrix produced. It is emphasised within the TDC literature that the competitiveness established between destinations is facilitated by the different aspects and/or features the destination’s possess (Bordas 1994). The lack of certain aspects can possibly limit a destination’s capability to attract and satisfy potential tourists and hence affect its competitiveness. As such, the issue of attribute or aspect importance is clearly evident, and thus consumer ratings of importance formed the basis for the EFA. Examination of this matrix revealed

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Variables</th>
<th>Frequency</th>
<th>Valid Percent (%)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Stage of Development – Coffs Coast (N=344)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Developing or Growing</td>
<td>141</td>
<td>41.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Signs of Maturity</td>
<td>156</td>
<td>45.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Region is Stagnating/in Decline</td>
<td>40</td>
<td>11.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>2.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>344</td>
<td>100.0</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

| Stage of Development – Great Lakes (N=344)   |           |                   |
| Developing or Growing                        | 202       | 59.0              |
| Signs of Maturity                            | 84        | 24.4              |
| Region is Stagnating/in Decline              | 52        | 15.1              |
| Other                                        | 6         | 2.0               |
| Total                                        | 344       | 100.0             |

Table 6.5: Summary of stage of development respondent views.
correlations in excess of 0.3. If only few correlations above this were found, then the use of factor analysis may be inappropriate (Tabachnick & Fidell 2001). Bartlett’s test for sphericity (yielding a high chi-square value of 6157 and a significance level of 0.000) rejected the hypothesis that the correlation matrix came from a population of variables that are independent. This rejection implies the data is suitable for factor analysis (Tabachnick & Fidell 2001). The Kaiser–Meyer–Olkin measure of sample adequacy (MSA) was also calculated. The measure of sample adequacy (MSA) was 0.902. This value is considered by Stewart (1981) to be in excess of ‘meritorious’. Therefore, further evidence exists that the data matrix is suitable for factor analysis.

As highlighted in Section 5.8.1, it is also important to review the number of cases/sample size when considering the use of factor analysis as an analytical tool. A number of general recommendations in terms of minimum sample size in factor analysis were given. In reference to these rulings, having ascertained 344 cases for the current study, the use of factor analysis is deemed suitable. In addition to the absolute number of cases, another widely used criteria to determine the suitability of factor analysis is the subjects–to–variables (STV) ratio. For the current study, a subject–to–variable ratio 9 to 1 was found, and that is considered to be sufficient for factor analysis (Bryant & Yarnold 1995, cited in Garson 2008; Gorsuch 1983, cited in MacCallum et al. 1999, p. 84).

6.8.1 Normality and Outliers

Preliminary assumption testing (as defined by Pallant 2005) was conducted. In terms of normality, both skewness and kurtosis were verified for the data set. Skewness and kurtosis falls within an acceptable range (Kendall & Stuart 1958; Kline 1998). Kline, upon classifying factor analysis as a special case of Structural Equation Modelling
(SEM), notes that absolute kurtosis values greater than 10 may suggest a problem, with values greater than 20 indicating more serious issues. In assessing potential outliers, the researcher reviewed histograms and boxplots for each item. In addition, the 5 per cent trimmed mean (a measure provided by SPSS) for each variable was ascertained. The difference between the original mean and the new trimmed mean was very small across the importance variables utilised in the analysis. Given these findings, it was determined that potential outliers be retained. Descriptive statistics for these variables are provided in Appendix Six.

6.8.2 Extracting a Set of Factors from the Matrix

As first discussed in Section 5.8.2, a principal components analysis was performed on the data. Nunnally and Bernstein (1994) observe that if an exploratory study is both well designed, and possesses a large sample, thus minimising the spurious contributions of sampling error, the conclusions one reaches will be very similar, regardless of extraction method used. Based on these affirmations, principal component analysis was used for the current study.

6.8.3 Factor Rotation

As previously mentioned, while the matrix obtained in the extraction phase indicates the relationship between the factors and the individual variables, it is usually difficult to identify meaningful factors based on this matrix. Therefore, the factors are usually rotated to make the matrix solution more interpretable (Nunnally & Bernstein 1994). In Section 5.8.4, Stewart (1981, p. 59) maintained that ‘the careful researcher should almost invariably perform both an orthogonal and oblique rotation, particularly in exploratory work’. In practice the two approaches (orthogonal and oblique rotations)
often result in similar solutions, particularly when the pattern of correlations among the items is clear (Tabachnick & Fidell 2001). Having compared the rotational outcomes, in seeking to ascertain ‘a simple structure’ (as highlighted by Thurstone 1947), the varimax (orthogonal) rotation was deemed more suitable in this study, providing a more simplified factor structure. Factor loadings of 0.45 were used as a starting point in factor loading interpretation in this research. Loadings less than 0.3 have been suppressed in Table 6.6.

6.8.4 Determining the Number of Factors to be Extracted

The principal components analysis identified 8 factors with eigenvalues greater than 1. These factors explained 61.9 per cent of variance. The scree test of the data was also examined (see Figure 6.1), but appears to support the notion that only 5 factors should be extracted. The parallel analysis, utilising the Monte Carlo PCA software package, also supports the view that only 5 factors should be extracted. After examining both the 8–factor and 5–factor solutions, it was concluded that the 5–factor solution provided a more meaningful, stable factor solution.

Following factor rotation, researchers should also examine item cross–loading, as such loadings may reveal items for removal (Farrell & Rudd 2009). A small number of cross–loaded items appear in Table 6.6. Anderson and Bourke (2000) maintain that making decisions about item removal requires not only an understanding of the results of the factor analysis; it also requires an understanding of the characteristic/s being assessed. Thus, a balance needs to be struck between increasing empirical validity at the cost of judgmental validity (omitting important aspects from the overall result) (Anderson & Bourke 2000). Ho (2006) suggests that in circumstances where cross–loadings exists, the researcher should examine the wording of the cross–loaded
variables, and based on face–validity, assign them to the factors that they are most conceptually/logically representative of. Following examination of Table 6.6, and based on face–validity, the following items/attributes were assigned to the logically representative factors: Cleanliness (assigned to Destination Management – Public & Private); Variety and quality of Accommodation (Destination Management – Public & Private); Variety of food services (Destination Management – Public & Private); and Variety of shopping outlets (Facilities & Activities).

Upon witnessing item cross–loading items, discriminant validity should also be examined. Discriminant validity concerns the degree to which a particular measure of a given construct diverges from measures of related, but separate, constructs (Ong & van Dulmen 2006). As such, the measures of theoretically different constructs should have low correlations with each other. Therefore, a low cross-construct correlation is an indication of discriminant validity (Farrell 2009). According to Julian, Wachter and Mueller (2009), no measurement item should load more highly on a construct other than the construct it intends to measure. An examination of the factors and cross–factor loadings (Table 6.6 – continues over two pages) shows that the allocated items (assigned on face–validity) satisfy this criterion.
Figure 6.1: Eigenvalue plot for Scree Test Criterion – current research.
### Attributes of Tourism Destination Competitiveness

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Item</th>
<th>Destination Management (Public &amp; Private)</th>
<th>Facilities &amp; Activities</th>
<th>Nature</th>
<th>Augmented Benefits</th>
<th>History</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Value for money in destination tourism experiences</td>
<td>.707</td>
<td>.577</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Attitudes of residents towards visitors</td>
<td>.688</td>
<td>.552</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Security and safety of visitors</td>
<td>.684</td>
<td>.513</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Value for money of shopping items</td>
<td>.666</td>
<td>.300</td>
<td>.551</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Destination’s ability to ‘listen’ to the needs of tourists</td>
<td>.659</td>
<td>.531</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Quality of tourism/hospitality services</td>
<td>.610</td>
<td>.550</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Value for money in accommodation</td>
<td>.591</td>
<td>.444</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>.451</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A favourable destination image</td>
<td>.581</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Variety and quality of accommodation</td>
<td>.575</td>
<td>.498</td>
<td>.609</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Health and medical facilities</td>
<td>.575</td>
<td>.418</td>
<td>.515</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cleanliness</td>
<td>.513</td>
<td>.497</td>
<td>.515</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Variety of food services (eg. Restaurants)</td>
<td>.463</td>
<td>.462</td>
<td>.523</td>
<td></td>
<td>.515</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Availability of tourist information</td>
<td>.460</td>
<td>.315</td>
<td>.399</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Adventure activities (eg. rafting, skydiving)</td>
<td>.730</td>
<td></td>
<td>.613</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Recreation facilities (eg. parks, leisure facilities, horseriding)</td>
<td>.723</td>
<td></td>
<td>.572</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Amusement/fun/theme parks</td>
<td>.665</td>
<td></td>
<td>.540</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Local public transportation</td>
<td>.653</td>
<td></td>
<td>.581</td>
<td></td>
<td>.533</td>
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<tr>
<td>Airport quality</td>
<td>.631</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Night life (eg. bars, clubs)</td>
<td>.628</td>
<td>.300</td>
<td>.507</td>
<td></td>
<td>.505</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Special events and festivals</td>
<td>.620</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The degree in which you are ‘tied’ to the destination</td>
<td>.334</td>
<td>.578</td>
<td>.499</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Variety of shopping outlets</td>
<td>.467</td>
<td>.520</td>
<td>.520</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Entertainment (eg. theatres, galleries, cinemas)</td>
<td>.497</td>
<td>.350</td>
<td>.410</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sporting facilities (eg. golf, tennis)</td>
<td>.307</td>
<td>.421</td>
<td>–.310</td>
<td>.599</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Distance or flying time to the destination from your home</td>
<td>.472</td>
<td></td>
<td>.289</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nature based activities (eg. bushwalking, camping)</td>
<td>.778</td>
<td></td>
<td>.666</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>National parks</td>
<td>.775</td>
<td></td>
<td>.638</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Accessibility to natural areas</td>
<td>.739</td>
<td></td>
<td>.639</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Flora and fauna</td>
<td>.681</td>
<td></td>
<td>.586</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Natural scenery</td>
<td>.640</td>
<td>.336</td>
<td>.563</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Variety of cuisine</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>.579</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Perceived comfort</td>
<td>.413</td>
<td>.600</td>
<td>.564</td>
<td></td>
<td>.431</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Climate</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>.554</td>
<td></td>
<td>.427</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Breadth of activities for tourists</td>
<td>.394</td>
<td>.441</td>
<td>.427</td>
<td></td>
<td>.385</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>‘Uniqueness’ of the destination</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>.404</td>
<td>.332</td>
<td>.385</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Richness of culture | .321 | .715 | .682
Heritage sites | .410 | .587 | .572
Water based activities (eg. swimming, surfing, boating, fishing) | .340 | -0.506 | .531
\%
Eigenvalue | 10.456 | 3.515 | 2.888 | 1.739 | 1.567
Cronbach Alpha | 0.892 | 0.873 | 0.815 | 0.679 | 0.772

Table 6.6: Principle component matrix: 5–factor solution – orthogonal (varimax) rotation.

### 6.8.5 Assigning Factor Names and Factor Reliability

**Factor 1** consisted of numerous destination management attributes, including value for money in destination tourism experiences, attitudes of residents towards visitors, security and safety of visitors, value for money of shopping items, destination’s ability to ‘listen’ to the needs of tourists, quality of tourism/hospitality services, value for money in accommodation, a favourable destination image, variety and quality of accommodation, health and medical facilities, cleanliness, variety of food services (eg. restaurants), and the availability of tourist information. This factor was named ‘Destination Management (Public and Private)’. Cronbach’s coefficient alpha is a widely used internal consistency measure. A low alpha value indicates the scale contains too few items, items have little in common, or that the distributions of the items are different. A coefficient alpha of around 0.70 is considered to be acceptable (Nunnally & Bernstein 1994). Alpha was calculated to be 0.892. This is greater than 0.7, and is therefore considered acceptable. Alpha could not be increased by deleting any of the variables from the factor.

**Factor 2** contains elements related to facilities and activities, namely adventure activities (eg. rafting, skydiving), recreation facilities (eg. parks, leisure facilities,
horseriding), amusement/fun/theme parks, local public transportation, airport quality, night life (eg. bars, clubs), special events and festivals, the degree in which you are ‘tied’ to the destination, variety of shopping outlets, entertainment (eg. theatres, galleries, cinemas), sporting facilities (eg. golf, tennis), and distance or flying time to the destination from your home. Hence, this factor was named ‘Facilities and Activities’. Alpha was calculated to be 0.873, as this is greater than 0.7, it is considered acceptable. Alpha could not be increased by deleting any of the variables from the factor.

**Factor 3**, labelled ‘Nature’, contains attributes associated with nature based activities (eg. bushwalking, camping), national parks, accessibility to natural areas, flora and fauna, and natural scenery. Alpha was calculated to be 0.815, as this is greater than 0.7, it is considered acceptable. Alpha could not be increased by deleting any of the variables from the factor.

**Factor 4** contains a number of ‘mixed’ attributes – variety of cuisine, perceived comfort, climate, breadth of activities for tourists, ‘uniqueness’ of the destination. This factor has been labelled ‘Augmented Benefits’. Alpha was calculated to be 0.679, which is close to 0.7, it is considered acceptable. Alpha could not be increased by deleting any of the variables from the factor.

**Factor 5** clearly represents aspects of ‘History’, with richness of culture and heritage sites loaded on this factor. Alpha was calculated to be 0.772, as this is greater than 0.7, it is considered acceptable. Alpha could not be increased by deleting any of the variables from the factor.
6.8.6 Assignment of Factor Scores

Since orthogonality was maintained, factor scores (weighted average) were deemed suitable (Hair Jr. et al. 1998). The computation of factor scores is the final step in the factor analysis process. It is necessary to facilitate further analysis.

To obtain the relative importance of the identified competitiveness dimensions (factors) to consumers, factor scores (weighted averages) for each dimension were calculated. With the aid of SPSS, the weighted average score for each variable (attribute) loaded on individual factors were determined. The mean factor scores and standard deviations appear in Table 6.7.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Factor Name</th>
<th>Mean</th>
<th>Std. Dev</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Destination Management (Public &amp; Private)</td>
<td>5.9544</td>
<td>0.76962</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Facilities and Activities</td>
<td>4.2180</td>
<td>1.13169</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nature</td>
<td>5.3291</td>
<td>0.9919</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Augmented Benefits</td>
<td>5.7020</td>
<td>0.76257</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>History</td>
<td>4.5349</td>
<td>1.19166</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 6.7: Factor scores (weighted averages) for identified dimensions – importance.

The factors derived in this section will be used in further analysis (see Research Questions Three and Four).
6.9 Analysis of Research Question Two: Critical Destination Attributes – Developing and Maturing Destinations

At the commencement of this research, little was known about the relative importance of factors of competitiveness to destinations at different stages of development or evolution. Quite simply, it had been argued, conceptually, that at each stage of the life cycle, the mix of evolutionary and competitive forces differs and thus, strategies to deliver a sustainable destination should be distinctive at each life cycle stage (Cooper 2002). It was therefore a key aim of this research to present exploratory findings from focus group discussions with destination stakeholders in two competing destinations, identified by both stakeholders and consumers as being at differing stages in their development/evolution (developing/consolidating versus mature/signs of stagnation).

For the Coffs Coast, an analysis of the data reveals emergent themes based around freshness and revitalisation; community wide vision; brand, position and marketing; and industry collaboration appeared to be critical for a destination identified as mature, and showing signs of stagnation. In relation to the Great Lakes, key themes that emerged relate more to getting the basics right (in respect to accommodation, accessibility, and tourism infrastructure); vision through leadership; enterprising matters and industry collaboration.

In summary, according to the results reported from these discussions, key stakeholders in the tourism industry confirmed that the factors they believe most important to a destination considered to be at the mature stage of its life cycle, are quite distinct to those factors of importance for destinations at other stages of the destination life cycle. The findings were supported by quotations extracted from the focus group transcripts.
and associated focus group discussion guides. These themes will be reflected upon (in relation to the literature) in more detailed in Chapter Seven.

6.10 Analysis of Research Question Three: Consumer Importance of Destination Attribute Factors – Demographic Subgroups

In addressing Research Question Three (to what extent is the importance of destination attributes, to consumers, affected by demographic subgroups?), one way between–groups multivariate analysis of variance (MANOVAs) were performed to investigate the importance of destination attributes (factors) based on three groupings: travel party composition, home region/state (geographic), and household income. These groupings are generally recognised as some of the more common approaches to market segmentation within the marketing and consumer behaviour literature (Hanlan, Fuller & Wilde 2006; Kelly & Nankervis 2001; Kotler et al. 2001).

Preliminary assumption testing (as defined by Pallant 2005) was conducted to check for:

- Normality – Mahalanobis distance calculated at 22.092. For the 5 dependent variables, there was one case (ID=325) identified which exceeded the critical value of 20.52. Due to the single nature of this violation (ie. one individual), the case was retained.
- Linearity – revision of scatterplots did not show evidence of non-linearity, therefore, the assumption of linearity is satisfied.
- Univariate and multivariate outliers – as discussed in Section 6.8.1, the researcher reviewed the 5 per cent trimmed mean (a measure provided by SPSS) for each dependent variable. Across the 5 dependent variables, the difference
between the original mean and the new trimmed mean was very small. Given these findings, it was determined that potential outliers be retained.

- **Homogeneity of variance-covariance matrices** – results for Box’s Test of Equality of Covariance Matrices ranged from .042 to .426. Being larger than a significance level of 0.001, this assumption is not violated.

- **Multicollinearity** – the strength of the correlations amongst the 5 dependent variables were determined, with correlations found between .188 and .655. Correlations of .8 to .9 should be viewed as ‘a concern’ (Pallant 2005).

In view of these results, and further supported by commonly applied rules discussed in Sections 5.9.1 through 5.9.5, no serious violations are therefore noted.

Five dependent variables (based on factor scores) were used: Destination Management (Public & Private), Facilities and Activities, Nature, Augmented Benefits and History. For the first MANOVA, the independent variable was household income. Five household income groups were utilised:

- Group 1 – under $20,000
- Group 2 – $20,000 to $59,999
- Group 3 – $60,000 to $99,999
- Group 4 – $100,000 to $139,999
- Group 5 – $140,000 and above

There was a statistically significant difference between income groupings on the combined dependent variables: $F (20, 1112)=2.30$, $p=0.001$; Wilks' Lambda=$.87$; partial eta squared=$0.055$. When the results for the dependent variables were considered separately, the only difference to reach statistical significance, using a Bonferroni
adjusted alpha of 0.01, was Factor 1 (Destination Management – Public and Private). In MANOVA, when there is a significant difference between groups, a post hoc test (such as Tukey HSD test or Scheffe test) is performed to know the exact group means, which significantly differ from each other.

Comparing Group 2 ($20,000 to $59,999 – mean score of 6.092) with Group 4 ($100,000 to $139,999 – mean score of 5.594), post hoc comparisons using the Tukey HSD test indicated the mean score for Group 2 was significantly different ($p<0.0005$, mean difference of 0.498 on the 7 point scale) from Group 4. Comparing Group 3 ($60,000 to $99,999 – mean score of 6.005) with Group 4 ($100,000 to $139,999 – mean score of 5.594), the Tukey HSD test yielded a significant ($p=.004$) mean difference of 0.411.

No other significant differences were found amongst the remaining income groupings. Further, no significant differences were found in two additional MANOVA tests, with travel party composition (family vs. non–family) and home region/state (NSW/ACT vs. combined other Australian states) substituted as the independent variable.

Tests of statistical significance are commonly invoked to test the null hypothesis. The word ‘significant’, however, can mislead professional practitioners and the lay public into thinking that the research results are important for this reason (Gall 2001). Several other forms of statistical examination, such as effect size, have been suggested for making clearer judgments about the importance of research results. This importance is commonly termed ‘practical significance’.

Effect size is a statistic used to determine the magnitude of a research result. Typically, it is used to determine the magnitude of the difference in the mean scores of two groups
on a measure. The effect size does not actually specify the amount of points by which the group differ. Instead, the amount of difference is expressed in standard–deviation units. The advantage of standard–deviation units is that effect sizes calculated on different measures within the same study or across studies have the same meaning (Gall 2001). Thus, researchers (see for example Hojat & Xu 2004; Pallant 2005; Cohen 1988) have shown that effect size is a useful indicator of the practical significance of research results. The effect of results in terms of practitioner importance can be operationally defined from being ‘negligible’ to ‘moderate’, to ‘important’. For the current study, the proportion of the variance in the dependent variable (Factor 1: Destination Management – Public and Private) that can be explained by the independent variable (income), was calculated at 0.055. According to Cohen (1988), a value of 0.055 is considered to be close to a moderate effect (0.06).

To conclude, through the utilisation of MANOVA, it was found that there was a statistically significant difference in the mean importance scores attributed by respondents for Factor 1 (Destination Management – Public and Private), when income categories were considered. Briefly, respondents in lower income groupings ($20,000 to $59,999; $60,000 to $99,999) recorded a statistically higher importance score for Factor 1 when compared to respondents with higher household incomes ($100,000 to $139,999). According to Cohen (1988), this finding has moderate practical significance.

6.11 Analysis of Research Question Four: Destination Performance – Developing and Mature Destinations

In exploring Research Question Four, which endeavoured to investigate whether developing and mature destinations performed differently in relation to the destination attributes from a consumer perspective, factor scores were plotted against an
Importance–Performance grid. As ascertained in Section 6.8, the importance of 38 attributes of TDC were factor analysed (using principal components analysis applied with a varimax rotation), producing a five factor solution. Names assigned to each factor were: Factor 1 – Destination Management (Public and Private), Factor 2 – Facilities and Activities, Factor 3 – Nature, Factor 4 – Augmented Benefits, and Factor 5 – History. Weighted average scores (importance and performance) for each attribute loaded on individual factors were then determined. The mean factor scores (importance – out of the maximum of 7) and standard deviations appear in Table 6.7. Similarly, mean factor scores (performance) and standard deviations for each of the case destination appear in Tables 6.8 and 6.9 respectively.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Factor Name</th>
<th>Mean</th>
<th>Std. Dev</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Destination Management (Public &amp; Private)</td>
<td>5.6999</td>
<td>0.74536</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Facilities and Activities</td>
<td>4.8946</td>
<td>0.94597</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nature</td>
<td>5.7128</td>
<td>0.82417</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Augmented Benefits</td>
<td>5.6933</td>
<td>0.68383</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>History</td>
<td>4.6366</td>
<td>1.11520</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 6.8: Coffs Coast tourism region – factor scores (weighted averages) for identified dimensions – performance.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Factor Name</th>
<th>Mean</th>
<th>Std. Dev</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Destination Management (Public &amp; Private)</td>
<td>5.3831</td>
<td>0.80967</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Facilities and Activities</td>
<td>4.4876</td>
<td>0.95418</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nature</td>
<td>5.6297</td>
<td>0.92780</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Augmented Benefits</td>
<td>5.2994</td>
<td>0.77551</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>History</td>
<td>4.5451</td>
<td>1.11451</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 6.9: Great Lakes tourism region – factor scores (weighted averages) for identified dimensions – performance.

The average factor ratings of both importance and performance for each destination were calculated for the whole sample. The grand means for performance (x = 5.33) and importance (y = 5.15) determined the placement of axes on the Coffs Coast tourism region IPA grid (Figure 6.2). Similarly, in assessing the Great Lakes tourism region
matrix, grand means for performance (x = 5.07) and importance (y = 5.15) established the cross hair measure on the second visual grid (Figure 6.3). Each factor was then assessed according to the quadrant on the grid it is placed. As discussed in Section 5.10, each quadrant suggests a different response from the destination marketing strategy point of view.

**Figure 6.2**: IPA plot for Coffs Coast tourism region.

**Figure 6.3**: IPA plot Great Lakes tourism region.
Plotting factors into the Importance – Performance matrix reveals that, for the Coffs Coast, attributes related to Destination Management (Public and Private), Augmented Benefits and Nature falls into Quadrant 1 (indicating both high importance and high performance). As mentioned by Edward and George (2008), attributes that are rated high in importance and high in performance suggest keeping up the ‘good’ work and increasing resources directed towards these areas.

In contrast, attributes related to Factor 2 (Facilities and Activities) and Factor 5 (History) having low importance and a low performance ratings (Quadrant 3) in the Coffs Coast tourism region, suggests that investing resources to these areas may offer only little advantage to the region (Edward & George 2008). Plainly, the placement of attributes related to facilities and activities, in addition to elements of history and culture appear less important, as viewed by consumers, and therefore require less effort as part of the destination’s wider development activities, compared to other areas of competitiveness.

Turning attention to the Great Lakes tourism region IPA plot (Figure 6.3). Like the Coffs Coast, the importance and performance analysis for the Great Lakes positioned key drivers of competitiveness, namely Destination Management (Public and Private), Augmented Benefits and Nature, into Quadrant 1 (high importance and high performance). Further mirroring results from the Coffs Coast, attributes related to Factor 2 (Facilities and Activities) and Factor 5 (History) were also viewed by consumers to be of low importance and low performance in the Great Lakes region (Quadrant 3).

In addition to a visual inspection of plots, a series of paired–samples t tests were conducted to evaluate whether mean performance scores, provided by respondents for both case destinations, differed statistically across paired dependent variables (mean
factor performance scores). Using a Bonferroni adjusted alpha of .01, there was a statistically significant increase in performance scores for Factors 1, 2 and 4 ($p<0.0005$) for the Coffs Coast when assessed against the Great Lakes. For Factor 1 (Destination Management – Public & Private), the Coffs Coast recorded a mean performance rating of 5.6999, compared to 5.3831 for the Great Lakes. In the case of Factors 2 and 4 (Facilities and Activities; Augmented Benefits), the Coffs Coast recorded a mean performance rating of 4.8946 (Factor 2) and 5.6933 (Factor 4), compared to respective scores of 4.4876 and 5.2994 in the Great Lakes. The eta squared statistic for each significant result (0.30, 0.36 and 0.33), indicates that the difference between mean performance scores on Factors 1, 2 and 4 (between the Coffs Coast and Great Lakes tourism regions) are of a large effect (Cohen 1988).

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Paired Differences</th>
<th>99% Confid. Interval of the Difference</th>
<th>Sig. (2-tailed)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Mean</td>
<td>Std. Dev.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dest. Mgmt (Pub/Priv)</td>
<td>.31686</td>
<td>.47853</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Facilities &amp; Activities</td>
<td>.40698</td>
<td>.53859</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nature</td>
<td>.08314</td>
<td>.62275</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Augmented Benefits</td>
<td>.39390</td>
<td>.56243</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>History</td>
<td>.09157</td>
<td>.65769</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 6.10: Summary of results – paired-samples t tests.

Factor 3 (Nature) provided a value ($p > 0.010$) which was not statistically significant (using a Bonferroni adjusted alpha of .01). Similarly, Factor 5 (History) returned a non-significant result ($p<0.01$). Additionally, it is noted that whilst both Factors 3 (Nature) and 5 (History) offered results very close to significant; the practical significance of these findings was negligible, given the very small differences in means.
In summary, this section compared the performance of two case destinations across a series of destination competitiveness attributes. From the reported results, it is found that in terms of three attribute–based factors (Destination Management – Public & Private; Facilities and Activities; and Augmented Benefits), the Coffs Coast tourism region was seen (by consumers) to perform at a higher level across these determinants of competitiveness relative to a main competitor, the Great Lakes tourism region. The use of the IPA Grid offered a method of analysis that is common in tourism destination research, and hence, in this study, provides additional commentary in assessing the stated research aim. These findings will be reflected upon further in Chapter Seven.

6.12 Chapter Summary

Chapter Six applied the research methodology first outlined in Chapter Four and Five, therefore reporting results from research aiming to investigate the significance and importance of attributes of tourism destination competitiveness, contributing to the competitiveness of destinations at different stages of development. Reported results in this chapter first identified (via a series of focus group discussions) numerous critical attributes, determined by destination stakeholders, which affect the competitiveness of tourism destinations. These focus group discussions also outlined the relationship of how these critical destination attributes contribute to the competitiveness of developing and maturing destinations? The importance of those attributes identified by destination stakeholders were then tested with consumers.

Test results obtained using Exploratory Factor Analysis (EFA), linked 38 individual TDC attributes together (in the minds of the respondents) into five factors. These factors were labelled: Destination Management (Public & Private), Facilities and Activities, Nature, Augmented Benefits and History.
Third, the extent to which the importance of destination attributes (to consumers) was affected by demographic subgroups was addressed utilising multivariate analysis of variance (MANOVA). As seen in Section 6.10, the proportion of the variance in the dependent variable (Factor 1: Destination Management – Public and Private) that can be explained by the independent variable (income), was calculated at 0.055, a moderate effect. No other significant differences were found amongst the remaining income groupings. Further, no significant differences were found in two additional MANOVA tests, with travel party composition (family vs. non–family) and home region/state (NSW/ACT vs. combined other Australian states) substituted as the independent variable.

Finally, the results reported in Chapter Six also provided a solution to Research Question Four, which asked: Do developing and mature destinations perform differently in relation to the destination attributes from a consumer perspective? It is established that in terms of three attribute–based factors (Destination Management – Public & Private; Facilities and Activities; and Augmented Benefits), the Coffs Coast tourism region outperformed (in terms of both statistical and practical significance) the Great Lakes tourism region across these determinants of competitiveness.

Detailed discussion regarding theoretical and practical implications and conclusions pertaining to these results is undertaken in the following chapter.
7.1 Introduction

This chapter provides discussion and conclusions surrounding the analysis of results provided in the previous chapter. The stated aim of this thesis was to assess the significance and importance of attributes of tourism destination competitiveness, contributing to the competitiveness of destinations at different stages of development. In doing so, this thesis incorporated two broad theories: tourism destination competitiveness, and destination development and evolution. In support of this aim, four research questions were postulated.

The research questions were:

**Research Question One**: What critical attributes affect the competitiveness of tourism destinations?

**RQ1a**: What critical attributes affect the competitiveness of tourism destinations from a destination stakeholder’s perspective?

**RQ1b**: What critical attributes affect the competitiveness of tourism destinations from a consumer perspective?

**Research Question Two**: How do the critical destination attributes contribute to the competitiveness of developing and maturing destinations?
Research Question Three: To what extent is the importance of destination attributes, to consumers, affected by demographic subgroups?

Research Question Four: Do developing and mature destinations perform differently in relation to the destination attributes from a consumer perspective?

The thesis was structured using seven chapters. Chapter One introduced the research problem, whilst Chapter Two reviewed literature linked to the broad concept of competitiveness, with a view to developing a structure for the research of destination competitiveness within the field of tourism. Chapter Three then provided a theoretical overview of evolutionary themes, and assessed the significance of descriptive frameworks utilised within tourism evolution research, in particular, Butler’s (1980) Tourism Area Life Cycle (TALC). This review of extant literature identified that research seeking to identify the significance and importance of key TDC indicators to destinations at different stages of development or evolution was limited, and that further inquiry was needed to examine the association between key destination competitiveness variables and the stage of development for a tourism destination.

In Chapter Four, the rationale and methods associated with the research was discussed. This chapter provided justification for the application of a case study methodology (involving focus group discussions). Chapter Five then offered validation for the quantitative methods (exploratory factor analysis, MANOVA, importance–performance analysis, and paired–sample t tests) employed in this thesis.

Following method justification, focus group discussions with tourism industry stakeholders in two case destinations were held. According to focus group results reported in the thesis (Chapter Six), key stakeholders in the tourism industry confirmed
that attributes considered most important to a destination identified as being at a mature stage of its life-cycle, are quite distinct to those factors of importance for a destination seen to be developing. Furthermore, these discussions (together with key literature sources) allowed for the identification of 38 critical attributes of destination competitiveness. The importance of these 38 attributes to consumers (visitors) were subsequently tested through the use of a web based survey. Attribute importance (in addition to the performance of the case destinations in respect to these attributes) was measured using 7–point scales, with a final response rate of 13.4 per cent being achieved.

In the following sections, conclusions regarding the research questions are initially discussed. Subsequently, implications for theory, implications for policy and practice and the limitations of the study and implications for further research relating to this thesis are specified.

7.2 Conclusions about each Research Question

Findings presented in the previous chapter are now examined to identify the contributions made to the literature. In doing so, these conclusions are compared with literature reviewed in Chapters Two and Three of this thesis. Conclusions and contributions for each of the four research questions are first summarised in Table 7.1.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Research Question</th>
<th>Conclusions about each research question</th>
<th>Contribution</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>RQ1a</td>
<td>Focus group interviews with destination stakeholders reinforced perspectives evident in the literature that certain attributes were more important than others. Whether or not those attributes, reflected upon as being more important than others, are implemented within a specific destination context appeared to be underpinned by two important requisites, the first being the degree of industry collaboration and cohesion; and second, that the importance of competitiveness elements very much depended upon the traveller – the target audience.</td>
<td>The findings from focus group discussions support the view of Dwyer, Livaic and Mellor (2003) in that there is no single set of competitiveness indicators that applies to all destinations at all times.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>RQ1b</td>
<td>Following attribute identification (by destination stakeholders – RQ1a) and quantitative enquiries (consumer web survey), exploratory factor analysis (EFA) was used to identify the relationship (underlying dimensions) between the set of TDC attributes. The exploratory factor analysis indicates that:    - Respondents clearly differentiate those management attributes categorised as being under the control of a destination, from other attributes underpinning the competitiveness of a destination.    - Respondents did not generally distinguish between destination management activities that are primarily the responsibility of the public sector, as opposed to the private sector.    - The results appear to verify that the importance of many competitiveness elements, and their linkages, considered by consumers (respondents) are not dissimilar from other stakeholder–based TDC studies.    - Results found that those attributes soundly linked to the management of a destination were considered by consumers as the most important attributes of destination competitiveness.</td>
<td>In seeking to ascertain ratings of importance across a series of competitiveness attributes from actual consumers, this thesis makes a substantial contribution to the TDC literature, which rarely seeks to present empirical findings based on the views of consumers.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>RQ2</td>
<td>Key destination stakeholders endorsed that the attributes they believe most important to a destination considered being at the mature stage of its life cycle (showing signs of stagnation), are quite different to those attributes regarded as being critically important to developing destinations.</td>
<td>Given that the examination of principal attributes contributing to the competitiveness of tourism destinations, when the stage of development or evolution of a destination is considered, appears to have ‘been totally neglected by tourism researchers to date’ (Dwyer &amp; Kim 2003, p. 406), this exploratory study makes a considerable contribution to knowledge.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Due to potentially higher levels of disposable income, it may be reasonable to conclude that perhaps, for some respondents, value-related dimensions of competitiveness are of less importance. It is further suggested that these respondents may be projecting travel personality traits associated with the work of Plog (1974) and Cohen (1972).

Cautionary evidence presented in this section points to the need for further research into the impact of income on the importance of competitiveness attributes.

In terms of three attribute–based factors (Destination Management – Public & Private; Facilities and Activities; and Augmented Benefits), the Coffs Coast tourism region was seen (by consumers) to perform at a higher level across these determinants of competitiveness relative to a main competitor, the Great Lakes tourism region. The results indicate that in terms of attribute performance, relative destination immaturity may well constrain a developing destination’s ability to satisfy the needs of both principal and emerging markets.

This section identified specific attributes (such as the need for sound planning and development strategies; development of quality accommodation and other tourism infrastructure; the development of an industry vision etc) which appear to be affected by a developing destination’s ‘immaturity’.

Table 7.1: Summary of results conclusions.

7.2.1 Discussion – Research Question One: What critical attributes affect the competitiveness of tourism destinations?

RQ1a: What critical attributes affect the competitiveness of tourism destinations from a destination stakeholder’s perspective?

The initial part of Research Question One (RQ1a) called upon the experience and knowledge of key tourism stakeholders residing in each of the two case destination regions. As acknowledged by Dwyer, Livaic and Mellor (2003, p. 62), and evidenced in Table 2.2, ‘for any given element of destination competitiveness, any number of indicators may be employed as measures. And for any given destination, different indicators of competitiveness will be relevant’. In order to identify a set of tourism–specific items recognised to apply to regional Australian destinations (such as the Coffs Coast and Great Lakes tourism regions), at least as a first step, a study based on the views of local tourism stakeholders was justified as a reasonable starting point in
distinguishing critical attributes of destination competitiveness (Ritchie & Crouch 1993; 2000, 2003; Murphy, Pritchard & Smith 2000; Crouch 2007).

The findings from focus group discussions with destination stakeholders, detailed in Sections 6.2.1 to 6.6.1.3; support the view of Dwyer, Livaic and Mellor (2003) that there is no single set of competitiveness indicators appear to apply to all destinations at all times. In this particular study, broad attributes surrounding natural attractions, uniqueness, variety and value in terms of activities, experiences, products and services; quality infrastructure, tourism stakeholder collaboration, accessibility and destination marketing were accentuated by both groups as important elements of destination competitiveness. Table 6.3 provided a comparison between those aspects of competitiveness raised by both stakeholder groups. In considering these results, it is evident that the specific attributes noted by destination stakeholders here are generally acknowledged by other TDC researchers (Ritchie & Crouch 1993; Chon & Mayer 1995; Kozak & Rimmington 1999; Yuksel & Yuksel 2000; Dwyer, Livaic & Mellor 2003; Dwyer & Kim 2003; Ritchie & Crouch 2003; Baloglu, Pekcan, Chen & Santos 2003; Enright & Newton 2005; Garau–Taberner 2007; Bahar & Kozak 2007; Gomezelj & Mihalic 2008).

Further, the focus group interviews reinforced perspectives evident in the literature that certain attributes were more important than others (Dwyer et al. 2003; Bahar & Kozak 2007; Crouch 2007). On being asked ‘are some of these competitive elements more important than others?’, Coffs Coast stakeholders highlighted an effective destination marketing function as an attribute of destination competitiveness which appeared to be of elevated importance. Competitive marketing has, in itself, developed strongly as a key theoretical discipline, and therefore, its inclusion in destination competitiveness frameworks identified in this thesis (Ritchie & Crouch 1993, 2003; Dwyer, Livaic &
Mellor 2003) appears warranted by the results reflected upon in this section. Other management-related attributes such as accessibility and value for money were also championed by Coffs Coast stakeholders. Transport’s pivotal role within Leiper’s tourism system was recognised in Chapter Two, with accessibility affecting three critical points in the system – the traveller generating region, the transit route and the tourist destination region. Perhaps, understandably then, accessibility within a transportation context was afforded significant weighting by Coffs Coast stakeholders. In supporting this conclusion, Great Lakes participants also cited accessibility as a critical factor of competitiveness, with particular reference to the introduction of ‘low-cost options available to competing destinations’ (focus group extract). The physical connectivity between visitors and destinations should therefore not be discounted.

Value for money was also raised as being of chief importance to stakeholders in the Coffs Coast. Most empirical studies on tourism demand (see for example Durbary & Sinclair 2003; Dwyer et al. 2000, 2001, 2003; Lim 1997; Song et al. 2000) found that price had a significant impact on tourism demand. In partnership with their Coffs industry peers, Great Lakes attendees’ also felt that value and affordability was ‘becoming more important for year round [repeat] visitors’, whereby affordability ‘also becomes a factor with time, fuel costs and the state of roads’ (focus group extracts). Hence, there appears to be an implicit general consensus amongst these regional Australian tourism stakeholders that the relative price competitiveness of a destination compared to other competing destinations is highly relevant within the ‘competitiveness’ argument.

The greater the ‘range a destination has in terms of products and experience, the more competitive it becomes’ (focus group extracts) was moreover identified as an important dimension of competitiveness. Evoked by comments such as, ‘I think they [elements of
competitiveness] are all important, however experiences are what people really want’, strong ties between this attribute and principles underpinning a strong service orientation (another attribute identified in terms of ‘are some of these competitive elements more important than others?’) are evident from the results presented in this thesis. Consequently, for some stakeholders, it is the quality of service provided by a diverse range of individuals working within the wider tourism industry that should become a key focus of a destination’s tourism offering. The following statements reflected this point: ‘a culture of happy, smiling staff in all businesses’, and ‘businesses that go that bit extra to ensure the visitors have a great time’ (focus group extracts).

Whether or not those aspects, reflected upon here as being more important than others, are implemented within a specific destination context appeared to be underpinned by two important stipulations, the first being industry collaboration. ‘The challenge is...that cohesion needs to be there. If the cohesion is not there between the partners and industry, it's [the implementation of attributes] simply not going to happen’. Detailed conclusions regarding industry collaboration will be supplied in Section 7.2. The second stipulation identified by stakeholders from both case destinations was that the importance of competitiveness elements very much depended upon the traveller – that is, the intended target audience. Arguments provided by stakeholders in relation to this requirement questions approaches to competitiveness that assume that the relative importance of attributes is common across locations, in that the findings presented in this research asserts that the importance of competitiveness attributes may vary across individual destinations, depending on targeted market segments. As such, this examination confirms the urgings of some tourism researchers (Dwyer & Kim 2003; Enright & Newton 2005) that principal factors contributing to competitiveness will vary amongst destinations, and as such, destinations must take a more tailored
approach to enhancing and developing tourism competitiveness, rather than adopting a single, universal policy or strategy.

**RQ1b: What critical attributes affect the competitiveness of tourism destinations from a consumer perspective?**

Provided with a selection of individual competitiveness attributes deemed important by destination stakeholders in two case destination regions (Table 6.3), Research Question 1b endeavoured to test the importance of these individual attributes with consumers (visitors) via a web–based survey. Exploratory factor analysis (EFA) was used to identify the relationship (underlying dimensions) between the set of TDC attributes. Further, factor scores (weighted averages) for each dimension were calculated. In seeking to ascertain ratings of importance across a series of competiveness elements from actual consumers, this thesis makes a substantial contribution to the TDC literature, which rarely seeks to present empirical findings based on the views of consumers.

**Factor 1** consisted of numerous destination management attributes, including value for money in destination tourism experiences, attitudes of residents towards visitors, security and safety of visitors, value for money of shopping items, destination’s ability to ‘listen’ to the needs of tourists, quality of tourism/hospitality services, value for money in accommodation, a favourable destination image, variety and quality of accommodation, health and medical facilities, cleanliness, variety of food services (eg. restaurants), and the availability of tourist information. This factor was named ‘Destination Management (Public and Private)’.
Factor 2 contained elements related to facilities and activities, namely adventure activities (eg. rafting, skydiving), recreation facilities (eg. parks, leisure facilities, horseriding), amusement/fun/theme parks, local public transportation, airport quality, night life (eg. bars, clubs), special events and festivals, the degree in which you are ‘tied’ to the destination, variety of shopping outlets, entertainment (eg. theatres, galleries, cinemas), sporting facilities (eg. golf, tennis), and distance or flying time to the destination from your home. Hence, this factor was named ‘Facilities and Activities’.

Factor 3, labelled ‘Nature’, contained attributes associated with nature based activities (eg. bushwalking, camping), national parks, accessibility to natural areas, flora and fauna, and natural scenery. Factor 4 was seen to be a ‘mixed’ factor – with attributes including variety of cuisine, perceived comfort, climate, breadth of activities for tourists, and ‘uniqueness’ of the destination. This factor was labelled ‘Augmented Benefits’. Finally, Factor 5 clearly represented aspects of ‘History’, with richness of culture and heritage sites loaded onto this factor.

The exploratory factor analysis indicates that respondents clearly differentiate those management attributes categorised by the literature (Ritchie & Crouch 2003; Dwyer, Livaic & Mellor 2003; Dwyer & Kim 2003; Enright & Newton 2005) as being under the control of a destination, from other attributes underpinning the competitiveness of a destination. The importance of those management activities required in implementing the policy and planning framework of a destination is a focal point within seminal TDC literature (Ritchie & Crouch 1993; Poon 1993), and it would appear here that these activities continue to play a key role in influencing the competitiveness of a modern tourism destination. This conclusion is further underpinned by respondents
(consumers), who advised that these management–related attributes rate most highly in their minds (mean factor score of 5.9544 on a 7–point scale) in terms of importance.

Furthermore, respondents did not generally distinguish between destination management activities that are primarily the responsibility of the public sector (for example security and safety of visitors, health and medical facilities, cleanliness, the availability of tourist information etc) from those features that are predominantly the responsibility of private sector operators (such as quality of tourism/hospitality services, variety of food services, value for money of shopping items etc). This finding both supports and builds upon the conclusions of Dwyer et al. (2003), who factor analysed 83 attributes of destination competitiveness, showing similar linkages. However, it is important to note that the research of Dwyer et al. (2003) involved 294 tourism industry stakeholders in both Australia and Korea. The scope of Dwyer’s et al. (2003) project did not enable consumers to be directly surveyed as to their views on the ranking of different attributes of competitiveness. The current study therefore adds to the literature by prescribing consumers’ importance rating against key management attributes of TDC.

The factor analysis further indicates that respondents linked a series of recreational facilities and activities. Given that for many tourists ‘the real reason for visiting a destination is to do things – to actively participate in activities that stimulate for the moment, and then to leave as a participant who has vibrant memories of what he or she has done’ (Ritchie & Crouch 2003, p. 118), it is clear that attributes loaded against Factor 2 have the potential to become strong ‘pull’ factors for visitors, and thus, should be developed and managed accordingly. Further tied to this factor are attributes of accessibility (local public transportation, airport quality, distance or flying time to the destination from your home). The relatively low importance rating imposed by
consumers for this factor (mean factor score – 4.2180) appears contradictory to some of the insights obtained during the initial qualitative stage of research, with destination tourism stakeholders repeatedly highlighting the perceived importance of these attributes to key markets. This variance in opinions may reflect a feeling amongst respondents (consumers) that the importance of these facilities/activities decreases with time, in that is it ‘assumed’ by visitors that in any event, a base of facilities/activities will be in place in a given destination. The overall quality of these facilities/activities, however, may differ across locations.

A third group of elements (Factor 3, labelled ‘Nature’) contained attributes associated with nature based activities. This factor was credited with a relatively high importance rating by respondents (mean factor score – 5.3291). The importance of these attributes supports the work of Hassan (2000), who advanced environmentally sustainable competitiveness factors. Other researchers (Kozak & Rimmington 1999; Dwyer & Kim 2003; Omerzel 2005) also advocate nature–based elements of competitiveness. It is evident from the current results that respondents think strongly about the environment and experiencing nature, namely in a passive sense. Like man–made activities (as loaded heavily on Factor 2), these results point to the need to maintaining robust environmental strategies for the tourism industry.

In a destination context, features deemed ‘augmented benefits’ (Factor 4) could be those attributes which whilst not viewed as ‘core’ to the competitiveness of a destination, their existence provides additional value to the customer's purchase – that little extra. In the same way to natural features, the climate of a destination has long been regarded as particularly important to the touristic attractiveness of a destination (Crouch 2007). Consumers also linked perceived comfort to this factor. The high importance rating attributed to this factor (mean factor score – 5.7020) is therefore not
surprising when viewed against extant literature. To some extent, the loading of the remaining attributes (variety of cuisine, breadth of activities for tourists, ‘uniqueness’ of the destination) onto this mixed factor as opposed to other factors (ie. some food–related attributes are loading onto Factor 1, with numerous activities correlated on Factor 2) was unexpected. In considering these three mixed attributes, the researcher draws a clear conclusion that these attributes relate to the notion of variety. The connection of these variety–related attributes onto a separate factor, when viewed against other factors containing variety–based elements, only intensifies the importance of variety in the eyes of consumer respondents.

The final linkage sees history–based attributes appearing on their own factor. The appearance of these attributes (richness of culture and heritage sites) on a separate factor would seem to lend support to the views of Dwyer et al. (2003), who note that destination marketing strategies that treat nature–based tourism and heritage tourism as potentially different markets may prove beneficial.

To conclude, the results of this factor analysis firstly appear to verify that the importance of many competitiveness elements, and their linkages, considered by consumers (respondents) are not dissimilar from other stakeholder–based TDC studies (Dwyer et al. 2003; Ritchie & Crouch 2003). Further, results of this analysis found that those attributes soundly linked to the management of a destination were considered by consumers as the most important attributes of destination competitiveness. Focus group discussions with destination stakeholders in the Coffs Coast and Great Lakes tourism regions, in particular, raised management–related activities (such as product development, diversity of activities/experiences, transport and accessibility) as those attributes considered important to the competitiveness of the destination. A consensus between visitors and stakeholders in the two case destinations is therefore visible.
7.2.2 Discussion – Research Question Two: How do the critical destination attributes contribute to the competitiveness of developing and maturing destinations?

Research Question Two was formulated in response to an identified gap in the extant TDC literature. As discussed in Sections 2.6, clearly destinations need to take into consideration the phase of development they are in, as well as the patterns of destination life cycle experienced in competing destinations, and adopt their policies accordingly (Buhalis 2000). Yet research seeking to identify attributes, and their relative importance, contributing to the competitiveness of destinations at different levels of development was an area that had been ignored by tourism researchers to date (Dwyer & Kim 2003; Cooper 2002). In addressing Research Question Two, this thesis makes a considerable contribution to the literature.

As detailed in Sections 6.5.1.1 and 6.5.1.2, a series of items of heightened importance to mature and developing/consolidating destinations were proposed by destination stakeholders. For a mature destination, like the Coffs Coast tourism region, four emergent themes were posed by respondents, the first being a theme of ‘freshness’. Coffs Coast stakeholders strongly advocated the need to acquire fresh perspectives across a number of destination competitiveness attributes. For example, infrastructure has been seen to significantly affect the performance and operation of suppliers, tourism enterprises, marketing intermediaries and other supporting industries, in that poor or outdated infrastructure can potentially produce an unproductive environment in which such supporting firms are to function (Ritchie & Crouch 2003). This aspect, as gleaned from the results presented in the previous chapter, appears acutely important in the maturing case destination. In addition, destination stakeholders highlighted the need to revitalise the marketing approach for a mature destination. Stakeholder
statements surrounding this undertaking provide evidence to support the observations of McKercher & du Cros (2008), who found that different marketing tactics and different levels of marketing sophistication were required as destinations evolve. The rejuvenation of local industry investment and human resource management policies were further acknowledged by focus group attendees. Whilst the ‘revitalisation’ of a destination is by no means a new concept (Butler 1980; Richardson 1986; Faulkner & Tideswell 2005), the contribution of the current findings relate to the identification of specific destination competitiveness attributes, which were deemed by destination stakeholders as being critically important to the future competitiveness of a maturing/stagnating destination.

However, due to the complex nature of destinations, including the interaction across a broad range of tourism stakeholders, understanding aspects of such as marketing, product development and infrastructure were seen by stakeholders to be heavily influenced by the degree of collaboration across the tourism industry. This argument therefore serves to consolidate and reinforce the views of other tourism researchers (Dwyer & Kim 2003; Heath 2003; Ritchie & Crouch 2003) who discuss industry collaboration. Quite often, this type of collaboration requires cooperation between government agencies, various levels of government, public and private sectors. It is therefore not uncommon that the divergent views held by such stakeholders may, at times, hinder attempts for collaboration.

In spite of a strong desire by Coffs Coast participants to work more ‘collaboratively’ with stakeholders, the simple adoption of a collaborative planning process at the destination level may not as being straightforward for a mature destination. According to Cooper (2002), the life cycle of a destination will heavily influence the acceptability of a destination–wide planning exercise. In the early stages of the life cycle, for
example, success often obscures the long term view, whilst in the later stages, particularly when a destination is in decline, opposition to long term planning exercises may be rationalised on the basis of cost. Whilst the findings from this thesis do not conform to the notion that the reluctance of Coffs Coast industry stakeholders, for example, to work with local government authorities up until this time appeared to be rationalised by focus group attendees on the basis of cost, this study does support the wider opinion of Cooper (2002) that collaborative activities within mature destinations appear fraught with major challenges and obstacles.

In seeking to offset such challenges, Coffs Coast focus group participants identified the development of a community wide vision for tourism as an important starting point from which whole-of-destination collaboration may occur. Cooper (2002) asserts that destination visioning is becoming the sound tool for sustainable and strategic tourism planning in tourism destinations, as tourism seeks the involvement of the destination community to manage change. Of promise to stakeholders of the Coffs Coast tourism region is the knowledge that visioning projects have proven successful in regions close to the Coffs Coast, including the Gold Coast (undertaken in 1999) and the Tweed Shire (located in Northern New South Wales, and undertaken in 2002). The final theme identified by respondents as being critical within a mature destination revolved around the concepts of brand, image and position. Destinations offer a blend of tourism products and services. As these elements (products and services) are branded together under the name of the destination, a unique brand and image is formed in the minds of consumers (Buhalis 2000). Coffs Coast stakeholders therefore advanced the need for a mature destination to enhance and differentiate their brand and image compared to that of their competitors.
Clearly efforts related to a destination brand are aimed at the two sides of the tourism industry. As noted in Chapter Two of this thesis, from a demand–side perspective, tourists are often required to deal with an array of destination images (or brands) during the traveller destination decision–making process (see Chon 1990; Woodside & Lysonski 1989; Gunn 1989). However, as viewed by destination stakeholders in the Coffs Coast, from the supply side, mature destinations may not easily lend themselves to the development of a distinctive image – a unique ‘point of difference’ – primarily due to a lack of cohesiveness and collaboration amongst stakeholders. Thus, if all stakeholders were to actively work together in developing the destination’s brand, then ‘such a point of difference gives a mature destination a chance to get back to the marketplace’ (focus group extract).

In contrast to the needs of a mature destination, Great Lakes discussions focused on competitiveness strategies for a destination still developing in terms of its life cycle. In particular, strategies surrounding the development of suitable accommodation and other tourism infrastructure (both public and private) were seen to be essential in meeting both immediate and future demand – getting the basics right. General infrastructure, especially in regional and rural locations within Australia, is generally delivered by local government authorities. In the case of the Great Lakes, this would involve Great Lakes Shire Council. As a result, this authority has the ability to heavily influence the overall effectiveness, and by extension, competitiveness of this element. In terms to infrastructure development, particular emphasis was placed by participants onto issues of accessibility.

It would appear from comments presented in Section 6.2.1.2, that for a developing destination, significant value can be found in being closely linked (physically) to key market segments, in addition to other major tourism areas. For accommodation
infrastructure, the advent of major accommodation chains in the case region was amongst the strongest views advocated against this aspect. For example, whilst families may be budget conscious, alternatively, younger couples or people without children may be looking for higher quality accommodation (see Section 6.3.1.2 for comments linked to this assertion). Increasing the mix of tourist accommodation offerings, suggested by stakeholders in a developing destination, provides some credence to Ryan’s (1991) earlier assertion that infrastructure development has implications for the types of tourists that will be attracted.

The motivations (and disparities) of tourism operators based within a destination formed the foundations of a second theme for developing destinations. In Chapter Two, it was noted that Poon (1993) suggested four key principles which destinations must follow if they are to be competitive: put the environment first; make tourism a leading sector; strengthen the distribution channels in the market place; and build a dynamic private sector. As raised by destination stakeholders in this research, the significance of private sector firms in delivering a substantial portion of tourism products and services should not be overlooked. However, it was clearly observed that individual operators have very different business strategies. Whilst this issue/finding is not by any means considered to be the exclusive domain of developing destinations, indisputable challenges related to ‘lifestyle business’ formation are evident in the developing case region. Examples (in a regional Australian context) of repetitive and unimaginative product development, and an oversupply of bed and breakfast and guesthouse accommodation are discussed in the literature (Kelly 2005), with these examples often ascribed to the presence of ‘backyard operators’ and those choosing involvement in tourism as part of a lifestyle change. With few barriers of entry existing within the broader tourism industry, stakeholder comments give the impression that investment in business training and development is a key requirement in destination development,
and further, that operators need to be flexible in their delivery of tourism products and services, as this had the potential to influence the competitiveness of a developing region.

The development of a vision for tourism was also advocated by Great Lakes stakeholders. However, in contrast to Coffs Coast participants, attendees to the Great Lakes discussion felt that the development of a vision first needed to come from principal stakeholders such as Councils and operators, before attempts are made to generate further support from community members. As such, leadership is needed from industry champions. This leadership may involve the promotion of a wide range of opportunities available for local entrepreneurs, or may consecutively encourage current tourism firms to grow, develop and reinvest in the tourism industry. Yet again, the multiplicity of firms in the tourism industry can create difficulties in effectively building and conveying a vision within an often fragmented industry landscape. Importantly, as highlighted by Great Lakes participants, ‘all stakeholders have to have a more hands-on approach to everything with what’s going on [in building the industry]’, particularly for a ‘relatively young marketable destination’ (focus group extract).

Attendees to the Great Lakes discussion therefore also emphasised the need for industry collaboration, as a final general theme, should a developing destination desire to build a competitive standing. Focus was placed by participants on the extent to which stakeholders were seen to be ‘fighting against one another’ and ‘trying to do it their way instead of sitting around a table and working out how we can do it collectively’ (focus group extracts). On one level, ‘quite often, all they [tourism stakeholders] want to do is compete, which is natural’ (focus group extract), yet, on another level, stakeholders clearly articulated the need for a collaborative dimension
within the tourism industry, and the role this collaboration can play in the competitiveness of destinations.

To conclude, according to the results described in this section, key destination stakeholders endorsed that the attributes they believe most important to a destination considered being at the mature stage of its life cycle (showing signs of stagnation), were quite different to those attributes regarded as being critically important to developing destinations. The findings of this section declare that advantages do exist (as viewed by destination stakeholders in two competing destinations) in adapting destination competitiveness strategies, whereby consideration is given to the life cycle experienced by a tourism destination.

7.2.3 Discussion – Research Question Three: To what extent is the importance of destination attributes, to consumers, affected by demographic subgroups?

In Section 7.2.1 of this chapter, conclusions drawn from an examination of focus group discussions involving industry stakeholders in two case destinations confirmed the opinion of some tourism researchers (Dwyer & Kim 2003; Enright & Newton 2005) that attributes contributing to competitiveness will vary amongst destinations. In particular, focus group participants declared that the importance of competitiveness attributes may vary across individual destinations, depending on targeted market segments. Given this stakeholder declaration, and when viewed against TDC and TALC literature (Kim & Dwyer 2003; Lundtorp & Wanhill 2001; France 1991; Haywood 1986) which calls for research seeking to identify the importance of different attributes of destination competitiveness in determining tourism flows for visitors in different market segments; results linked to Research Question Three are thus able to
offer some guidance as to what extent is the importance of destination attributes, to consumers, affected by demographic subgroups?

In defining and justifying case destination selections (Section 4.4), it was found that data on visitor gender, age, and reason for visitation categories indicated a large share of visitors to each of the case regions (Coffs Coast and Great Lakes tourism regions) fell within the group, categorised as domestic family holiday/leisure tourists (Coffs Coast Marketing 2007, Council of Tourist Associations 2003). Forty two per cent of survey respondents (N=146) stated that their typical travel party consisted of travelling with their partner and children (see Table 6.4 for a summary of demographic characteristics of respondents). Travel party composition therefore formed the basis for a one way between–groups multivariate analysis of variance (MANOVA) test, performed to investigate whether the importance of destination attributes (factors) differed between respondents grouped on this characteristic. Two further MANOVAs tests, based on home region/state (geographic) and household income groupings, were also undertaken as part of the analysis of data (Chapter Six). These three groupings were recognised in Chapter Three as some of the more common approaches to market segmentation within the marketing and consumer behaviour literature (Hanlan, Fuller & Wilde 2006; Kelly & Nankervis 2001; Kotler et al. 2001).

As reported in Section 6.10, there was a statistically significant difference between income groupings on the combined dependent variables (attribute factors). In simple terms, in respect to Factor 1, respondents in lower income groupings ($20,000 to $59,999; $60,000 to $99,999) recorded a statistically higher importance score for Factor 1 when compared to respondents with higher household incomes ($100,000 to $139,999). No other significant differences were found amongst the remaining income groupings. Further, no significant differences were found when travel party
composition (family vs. non–family) and home region/state (NSW/ACT vs. combined other Australian states) were substituted as the independent variable.

In examining these findings, are number of observations are made. Factor 1 (Destination Management – Public and Private) contains a number of value-related attributes, for example: value for money in destination tourism experiences, value for money of shopping items, and value for money in accommodation. Due to potentially higher levels of disposable income, it may be reasonable to conclude that perhaps, for those respondents, such value-related dimensions of competitiveness are of less importance. This conclusion would be seen to be supported by some extant literature (like Kozak 2004) which maintains, for example, that individuals with low income levels have a tendency to prefer value-based ‘packaged’ tourism offerings. But findings related to Research Question Three may also be seen to contradict previous TDC studies (Kim & Dwyer 2003; Omerzel 2005; Crouch 2007) which generally show ‘value for money’ to be an important facet of competitiveness. Further, according to Cohen (1988), this income–based finding had moderate practical significance. Moreover, destination stakeholders were seen to comment that ‘there are probably some motherhood statements you could make such as being accessible, provide value for money, being consistent; and it doesn’t matter what market segment it is, these things will always hold true’ (focus group extract). Therefore, evidence presented here should be considered cautionary, denoting that the impact of income on the importance of competitiveness attributes deserves further investigation.

A second conclusion in term of results noted in this section relates to tourist psychology and personality. Plog (1974), in Chapter Three, identified those individuals who are likely to spend discretionary income more freely, as ‘allocentric’ (or venturers). At the other end of Plog’s (1974) spectrum were those he categorised
‘psychocentrics’ (or dependables), who are generally seen to be cautious and conservative in their daily lives, and restrictive in spending discretionary income. Cohen’s (1972) review of the sociology of international tourism also categorised tourists into character types. In the context of the current research, high income respondents in this study may be advocating the psychology of an ‘individual mass tourist’, in that they have a propensity to travel but not in an entirely pre–planned fashion, and further, that they seek more novelty in their travels (Cohen 1972). This would be in contrast to lower income earners, who, in the quest for value, are seeking to largely remain within their ‘environmental bubble’ throughout their trip (Cohen 1972).

In conclusion, it is cautiously suggested here that demographic variables, such as income levels, may impact the importance of ratings conveyed by consumers in respect to key competitiveness attributes. Further research that seeks to better understand the effects of income on destination competitiveness attributes is warranted.

7.2.4 Discussion – Research Question Four: Do developing and mature destinations perform differently in relation to the destination attributes from a consumer perspective?

As raised at the conclusion of Chapter Three, competitiveness is no guarantee of performance (Ritchie & Crouch 2003). Destination competitiveness and performance were shown to be linked in several ways. In Chapter Two, destination competitiveness was seen to combine comparative advantages and competitive advantages. Comparative advantage relates to inherited resources such as climate, scenery, flora, fauna, etc., while competitive advantage relates to created items such as tourism superstructure, the quality of management, skills of workers and government policy.
The implementation of strategies surrounding these advantages, and their concurrence with destination goals, are then judged by stakeholders and visitors as to the ‘success’ of the destination (Ritchie & Crouch 2003). These strategies, like so many aspects of a destination, however, can be tempered by a destination’s stage of development. This research pointed to the remarks of Haywood (1986), who noted that destination decision-makers need to know what strategic moves are appropriate given each TALC stage situation. Despite this assertion, empirical assessments seeking to understand the repercussion of a destination’s stage of development on the performance of key competitiveness attributes is limited, thus this gap in the literature was reflected upon through Research Question Four.

Tables 6.8 and 6.9 in the previous chapter summarised average factor ratings of both importance and performance for each case destination, calculated for the whole sample. Figure 6.2 revealed that in terms of performance, respondents gave most consideration to attributes related to Destination Management (Factor 1 – mean performance score of 5.6999 on a 7-point scale), Augmented Benefits (Factor 4 – 5.6933) and Nature (Factor 3 – 5.7128) for the Coffs Coast tourism region. As destination competitiveness elements, these 3 factors should therefore be viewed by stakeholders as key areas of strength in the appeal of the Coffs Coast tourism region amongst domestic consumers, and suggest that these dimensions should likely form the foundation for future destination marketing activities. The presence of both man-made and natural attributes in Quadrant 1 (see Figure 6.2) projects unique characteristics which, when combined, help determine the core attractiveness of the Coffs Coast tourism region. In terms of the remaining competitiveness attribute factors, Factor 2 (Facilities and Activities) and Factor 5 (History) were credited with both low importance and low performance ratings (Quadrant 3) in the Coffs Coast tourism region. As alluded to in Section 7.2.1, the positioning of Factor 2, especially in regard
to facilities–related attributes, in this quadrant appears somewhat contradictory to some of the insights obtained during the qualitative stage of this research (see Research Question 1a and Research Question Two), whereby local tourism stakeholders repeatedly highlighted the perceived importance of these attributes to visitors. As noted in Section 7.2.1, this disagreement may reflect a belief amongst respondents (consumers) that the importance of these facilities/activities decreases with time, in that is it ‘assumed’ by visitors that in any event, a base of facilities/activities will be in place in a given destination.

For the Great Lakes tourism region (see Figure 6.3), like the Coffs Coast, key drivers of competitiveness (Destination Management – Public and Private; Augmented Benefits and Nature) were placed by consumers into Quadrant 1 (indicating both high importance and high performance). Similarly, remaining attribute factors (Facilities and Activities; History) were also viewed by respondents to be of low importance and low performance in the Great Lakes region (Quadrant 3).

In addition to a visual inspection of plots, in Section 6.11, a series of paired–samples t tests were conducted to evaluate whether mean performance scores differed statistically across paired dependent variables (mean factor performance scores). Using a Bonferroni adjusted alpha of .01, there was a statistically significant increase in performance scores for Factor 1 (Destination Management – Public & Private), Factor 2 (Facilities and Activities) and Factor 4 (Augmented Benefits) for the Coffs Coast when assessed against the Great Lakes. The eta squared statistic for each significant result (.30, .36 and .33), indicated that the difference between mean performance scores on Factors 1, 2 and 4 (between the Coffs Coast and Great Lakes tourism regions) were of a large practical effect (Cohen 1988).
A number of conclusions are drawn from these results. Firstly, as highlighted by Enright and Newton (2004), an important caveat should be added when considering factors that fall into the IPA quadrants that denote low importance. It is possible that whilst these factors, such as History in this research, are necessary factors for the overall competitiveness (Heath 2003, Dwyer & Kim 2003, Ritchie & Crouch 2003, Crouch 2007); tourists may not actually use them, and in cases where such attributes are not present, then it might generate dissatisfaction (Enright & Newton 2004). A recent tourism industry profile of both case destinations (see Sections 4.4.1.3 and 4.4.2.3) failed to identify any distinctive cultural elements relevant to the case regions. Thus, from a case destination perspective, the placement of this factor in Quadrant 2 appears warranted. Nonetheless, the potential to attract particular segments of tourists with high preference for these features could be an avenue which could be further explored and researched in the case destination regions.

Secondly, whilst developing destinations have been seen to threaten mature destinations (Diedrich & Garcia–Buades 2009; Kozak 2004; Manente & Pechlaner 2006; Sheldon & Abenoja 2001), the results in this section indicate that in terms of attribute performance, relative destination immaturity may well constrain a developing destination’s ability to satisfy the needs of both principal and emerging markets. Whilst tourism was not defined by Great Lakes stakeholders as being in its infancy locally, it appears that some significant issues (for example, Great Lakes stakeholders identified issues such as a critical need for sound planning and development strategies; development of quality accommodation and other tourism infrastructure; the development of an industry vision etc) exist in developing destinations, and that these matters must be effectively and appropriately responded to by industry stakeholders, in order to take advantage of potential growth opportunities. Importantly however, literature presented in Chapter Three proposed that the development phase of a
destination’s life cycle does provides a critical period during which time a location can shape its future as a tourism destination (Upchurch & Teivane 2000). Therefore, stakeholders in a developing destination can continue to dictate (to a significant extent) the development and positioning of their destination, with particular reference to destination management activities (both public and private), which were considered by consumers to be the most important attributes of destination competitiveness.

To conclude this section, by linking key attributes of competitiveness with consumer satisfaction/performance ratings, this research has drawn some focus towards the ability of two case destinations (identified by both stakeholders and consumers as being at differing stages of development) to meet visitor expectations and therefore ensure their appeal to key segments. A careful appraisal of destination attributes where performance may be deficient has the potential to offer stakeholders several directions for development focus, in order to better support the needs of visitors.

7.3 Implications for Theory

A series of clear implications pertaining to theory development are derived from conclusions reported in this thesis. Each of these implications is now discussed.

First of all, it had been proposed in the literature that destinations needed to take into consideration the phase of development they were in, as well as the patterns of destination life cycle experienced in competing destinations, and adopt their policies accordingly (Buhalis 2000). Yet, following a review of relevant literature in Chapters Two and Three, it was found that empirical research seeking to identify attributes, and their relative importance, contributing to the competitiveness of destinations at different levels of development was extremely limited. Indeed, as asserted by Dwyer
and Kim (2003, p. 406), research into this association appears to have ‘been totally neglected by tourism researchers to date’. For that reason, research seeking to understand how a destination’s competitiveness can be sustained and enhanced, when the destination’s stage of development is reflected upon, would appear to make a fundamental contribution to knowledge. This thesis therefore both extends and develops theory supporting this important research theme. Its results clearly show that the importance of attributes (in the view of stakeholders) do in fact differ between destinations postulated as being at a developing and mature stage of their development respectively. In particular, for the Coffs Coast, an analysis of the data revealed four emergent themes based around freshness and revitalisation; community wide vision; brand, position and marketing; and industry collaboration appeared to be critical for a destination identified as mature, and showing signs of stagnation. In relation to the Great Lakes, key themes that emerged related more to getting the basics right (in respect to accommodation, accessibility, and tourism infrastructure); vision through leadership; enterprising matters and industry collaboration.

The value of qualitative methodologies employed in this research, involving focus group discussions with key destination stakeholders in two identified case destinations, proposed to be well suited to theory generation (Parkhe 1993; Strauss & Corbin 1990) is apparent. Findings derived in this study, particularly from the stakeholder focus groups, lends credibility to justifications which postulated, at least as a first step, that a study based on the views of local tourism stakeholders seemed to be a sensible starting point in distinguishing critical attributes of destination competitiveness (Crouch 2007). The knowledge of stakeholders (detailed in Chapter Six) in understanding both the importance of, and complex relationships between, attributes of destination competitiveness affords further validation to research suggesting that their (stakeholders) views can constitute accurate measures of competitiveness (Evans &
Initially, this research validates the multidimensional nature of destination competitiveness. In this context, the first major theoretical finding from this research was the identification of a series of destination attributes, identified by regional Australian destination stakeholders, as being critical to the competitiveness of tourism destinations. The advancement by stakeholders of broad competitiveness attributes such as natural attractions, uniqueness, variety and value in terms of activities, experiences, products and services; quality infrastructure, tourism stakeholder collaboration, accessibility and destination marketing are seen both to support and build upon aspects of competitiveness acknowledged by other TDC researchers (Ritchie & Crouch 1993; Chon & Mayer 1995; Kozak & Rimmington 1999; Yuksel & Yuksel 2000; Dwyer, Livaic & Mellor 2003; Dwyer & Kim 2003; Ritchie & Crouch 2003; Baloglu, Pekcan, Chen & Santos 2003; Enright & Newton 2005; Garau–Taberner 2007; Bahar & Kozak 2007; Gomezelj & Mihalic 2008).

Further to this, in Chapter Two, the discussion of competitiveness in the general economics and business literature was seen to stress the importance of competitive advantage, while de-emphasising comparative advantage as a source of competitiveness. The extant TDC literature clearly appreciated the importance of both comparative advantage and competitive advantage within the tourism industry (Chon & Mayer 1995; Evans, Fox & Johnson 1995; Faulkner, Oppermann, & Fredline 1999; d’Hauteserre 2000; Hassan 2000; Ritchie, Crouch & Hudson 2001). Results presented in this thesis therefore reinforce the view that general frameworks of competitiveness appearing in the wider literature, whilst useful, do not address the special considerations relevant to determining destination competitiveness (Dwyer & Kim...
The identification of individual attributes considered critical to the competitiveness of tourism destinations also add to theory, in that ‘there is particular value in turning the focus of research more towards assessing the relative importance of these attributes’ (Crouch 2007, p. 1). In reacting to the call of Crouch (2007), this study consequently provides evidence as to the impact of individual competitiveness attributes.

Key destination stakeholders further endorsed those attributes they believe most important to a destination considered being at the mature stage of its life cycle (showing signs of stagnation), in contrast to those attributes regarded as being critically important to developing destinations. This constitutes the second major theoretical finding from this research. Extant literature argued that for any strategic or competitive plan for a destination to succeed, it is vital to understand the dynamics of change and development within a destination (Cooper 2002). According to Buhalis (2000), it therefore appeared critical to understand both the stage and roots of tourism development when developing a competitive strategy for a destination. Empirical results presented in this thesis therefore provides evidence regarding the types of capabilities, competencies and resources that can assist developing and maturing destinations respectively, in their pursuit of competitiveness. As a result, this study confirms that understanding the sequence of events that mark the development of a destination can assist in bringing a destination’s inherent potential and its impediments into sharper focus (Faulkner & Tideswell 2005).

A third major theoretical finding of this thesis relates to consumers and attribute importance. Whilst this study has provided validation to other research suggesting that stakeholders views can constitute accurate measures of competitiveness (Swart & Var 1974; Evans & Chon 1989; Faulkner, Oppermann & Fredline 1999; Yoon 2002; March
2004), in was suggested within the literature that components of TDC should be measured by direct consumer surveys, rather than indirect measures (Hudson, Ritchie & Timur 2004). Hence, addressing aspects of TDC with actual consumers was identified as an important building block in the further practical advancement of TDC research (Dwyer et al. 2003, Crouch 2007). This study therefore adds to theory by first identifying the importance of TDC attributes as viewed by actual consumers (ie. visitors). In further adding to the literature, this research confirmed (via quantitative methods utilised by the researcher) that consumers considered those attributes linked to the management of a destination to be the most important attributes of destination competitiveness.

Additionally, results obtained using Exploratory Factor Analysis (EFA) linked individual TDC attributes together (in the minds of the respondents) into five factors. These factors were labelled: Destination Management (Public and Private), Facilities and Activities, Nature, Augmented Benefits and History. The significance of this finding in regard to theory is particularly evident when considered in collaboration with prior attempts to explore the groupings between competitiveness indicators (Bahar & Kozak 2007; Dwyer, Livaic & Mellor 2003; Yoon 2002).

The fourth major theoretical contribution of this dissertation is attached to destination performance. As stated by Dwyer and Kim (2003), TDC is intrinsically linked to the relative ability of a destination to perform better than other destinations on those aspects of the tourism experience considered to be important by tourists. The use of an importance performance analysis (see Section 6.11) assisted this thesis in generating TDC findings across a much broader spectrum. In assessing the performance of the two case destinations from a consumer perspective, the findings demonstrate the veracity of claims (Dwyer & Kim 2003; Ritchie & Crouch 2003; Haywood 1986) that
destination competitiveness and performance are linked, whilst providing prima–facie evidence that relative ‘destination immaturity’ may well constrain the capacity of developing destinations to meet the core needs of visitors in an ever increasing competitive marketplace.

As a closing implication for theory, Butler’s (1980) TALC framework, and associated TALC indicators identified in the literature (Butler 1980; Cooper 1992; Cooper 1990; Haywood 1986; Morgan 1991; Russell & Faulkner 1998; Faulkner & Tideswell 2005) proved very useful in determining the stage of development for the respective case destinations. The agreement by both stakeholders and consumers to TALC evolutionary findings presented in Chapter Four, adds further strength to the TALC framework’s applicably in destination life cycle research.

Table 7.2 provides as a summary of the theoretical findings under the headings, ‘knowledge confirmed by the research’, ‘knowledge extended by the research’ and ‘new contributions made by the research’.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Knowledge confirmed by the research</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>▪ Research validates the multidimensional nature of destination competitiveness.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>▪ Reinforces the view that general frameworks of competitiveness appearing in the wider literature, whilst useful, do not address the special considerations relevant to determining destination competitiveness.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>▪ Confirms that understanding the sequence of events that mark the development of a destination can assist in bringing a destination’s inherent potential and its impediments into sharper focus.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>▪ Demonstrates the veracity of claims that destination competitiveness and performance are linked.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>▪ Affords justification to research suggesting that stakeholders views can constitute accurate measures of competitiveness.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>▪ Adds further support to the TALC framework’s applicably in destination life cycle research.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Knowledge extended by the research

- The use of exploratory factor analysis (EFA) linked individual TDC attributes into five factors.

New contributions of the research

- Adds to theory by identifying the importance of TDC attributes as viewed by actual consumers.
- Established that consumers considered those attributes linked to the management of a destination to be the most important attributes of destination competitiveness.
- Provides evidence regarding the types of capabilities, competencies and resources that can assist developing and maturing destinations respectively, in their pursuit of competitiveness.
- Advances the argument that relative ‘destination immaturity’ may constrain the capacity of developing destination’s in seeking to meet the core needs of visitors.

Table 7.2: Summary of main theoretical findings.

Close examination of results presented in this study also provide detailed and useful implications for industry practitioners. These applications are detailed in the next section.

7.4 Implications for Policy and Practice

For industry professionals engaged in the marketing and management of tourism destinations, a string of implications for managerial practice are derived from the results reported in this thesis. Each of these implications is discussed in turn.

Firstly, this research demonstrates that there may be considerable practical value in placing particular emphasis on different competitiveness attributes. By allowing for the integration of a destination’s evolutionary cycle into competitiveness–based strategies; or put another way, by viewing destination competitiveness through an evolutionary prism; destination managers may be better able to steer their strategies towards a more focused, destination specific conclusion.
In building upon preceding TDC literature, focus group participants (stakeholders) were also seen to reinforce that certain competitiveness attributes were more important than others. Accordingly, the managerial implication of this finding would relate to the effective deployment of tourism resources, in that evidence now exists (although this evidence is potentially limited to regions similar to the case study destinations) to assist policy makers in the development of appropriate resource deployment decision-making processes. This study points to the importance (mean factor score of 5.9544 on a 7-point scale), in the view of consumers, of management-related attributes to the competitiveness of destinations. These attributes are commonly under the control of a destination. Therefore, this finding leads to another important finding related to destination management organisations.

As discussed previously, in Australia, local government area (LGA) authorities are commonly involved in promoting tourism, providing infrastructure and services to support tourism, and also managing the impacts of tourism (Tourism Australia 2007, (Buhalis & Laws 2001). For this particular study, two specialist business units – Coffs Coast Marketing and Great Lakes Tourism – are responsible for the effective development of each case location as a tourist destination. Thus, in order to build a competitive tourism destination, these types of business units are critically important, particularly to regional locations. However, in many instances, the role of such organisations is limited to marketing and promotion (Ritchie & Crouch 2003). Thus, in order to influence other key elements of the competitiveness sphere, the role of these units may need to build to become destination management organisations, in that their role could be emphasised to attend to other aspects related to destination management and operational functions emphasised in this thesis. However, the augmentation of the role of a DMO should not be seen to diminish the individual importance of destination marketing. As noted by stakeholders in Section 7.2.1, the importance of
competitiveness attributes may vary across individual destinations, depending on targeted market segments. Therefore, any deployment of tourism-related resources such as attractions and facilities must be accompanied by well-executed marketing tactics.

The need to establish stronger relationships between local government agencies and industry stakeholders is evident. It is clear in this study that the implementation of competitiveness strategies across any destination is tightly aligned with linkages between industry representatives and government bodies. Building such connections will allow private operators (including developers) and government-based tourism planners and policy-makers to better understand each other’s motives, thus allowing for the joint development of the destination going forward. This understanding will be of great benefit when viewed against competitiveness attributes such as value and variety in terms of products and experience, as such offerings are almost always created by industry operators. This type of robust collaboration can also assist in alleviating issues pertaining to ‘destination immaturity’, as discussed in Section 7.2.4.

Another managerial lesson garnered from the analysis of results is community involvement in tourism. The findings in this thesis suggest to practitioners should be mindful of including the views of community members in the development of a tourism industry (particularly in a destination showing signs of maturity), and that their views be reflected upon in the development agenda of a destination.

7.5 Limitations

As outlined in Chapter One of this thesis, this study contains a number of limitations. Firstly, the selection of two regionally–based Australian tourism destinations, in itself,
has the potential to limit the generalisation of results across a range of destinations. Clearly findings from this research cannot be extrapolated across all destinations, as a whole. Further empirical research in the other regionally Australian destinations, or other nearby regions and countries could extend the scope of this research.

A second delimitation surrounds construct and measurement scales. At the conclusion of Chapter Two, it was recognised that no universal set of items, attributes or indicators (used to measure the competitiveness of tourism destinations) exists (Dwyer, Livaic & Mellor 2003). The variety of attributes or indicators adopted by TDC researchers (see Table 2.2 for recent TDC studies) in the field are testament to this. Other attributes or indicators not discussed or measured as part of this study may be present.

A third limitation of this research related to sampling. The degree of fit between a sample and the target population about which generalisations can be made is a common challenge in many studies, but this shortcoming does not restrict the chosen medium as a data-gathering device or the respondents to Internet methodologies as any more or less useful as any other sample (Walther 2002). It is also recognised that those industry stakeholders invited to contribute in the qualitative phase of this research do not constitute the entire population of industry stakeholders. The use of single focus group discussions in each of the two case destinations is also viewed as a limitation of the study. By extension, the qualitative results reported in this thesis should be considered as exploratory. Future research could be strengthened with the input of other interest groups, such as State and Federal Government representatives, other related industry bodies, or consumer advocate groups.
Visitation patterns of respondents might also be viewed as a limitation. Approximately 25% of respondents noted that they had last visited the Great Lakes area more than 5 years ago prior to the surveying period. It is conceivable that a portion of these respondents may be basing their evaluations on an experience gained many years prior to the surveying period. Time lag in terms of perceptions therefore could exist. A final limitation is associated with gender. 70.23 per cent of those individuals contained within the mailing list utilised for the survey where female. This is in comparison to the 72 per cent of survey respondents that identified themselves as female. Internet–related literature (for example Dholakia 2006; Dholakia and Srinivasan 2005) contends that:

- There are more women (55.1%) than men (44.9%) among those who access the Internet only from home.
- Internet applications with apparent female bias include tasks such as travel information, health information, and research for school.
- Females were found to be more likely to spend more than half an hour on the internet performing messaging tasks compared to males.
- Females tend to view computer-mediated communication more favourably than males.

These findings may add some reasoning as to the large proportion of female respondents that participated in the research.
7.6 Further Research

A range of opportunities for future research arise from conclusions of this research. Firstly, this study is exploratory in nature. Given that this thesis appears to be the first identifiable research that explicitly 1) links the broad concept of tourism destination competitiveness with the development and evolution of tourism destinations, and 2) clearly suggests the significance or importance of key competitiveness attributes to destinations at different levels of development; future research could seek to assess the conclusions made in study against other destinations, regions, and/or countries. Given the geographical limitations acknowledged in this study, different results and conclusions in terms of the importance of competitiveness attributes may exist elsewhere. For example, destination stakeholders in other locations may possess dissimilar perceptions, attitudes, and behaviours concerning competitiveness strategies.

The use of exploratory factor analysis shed some light on the relationship (in the mind of consumers) between a series of attributes of destination competitiveness. Even though competitiveness attributes utilised in this research were selected based on the opinions of destination stakeholders (in association with key literature sources), other critical attributes may exist. Future quantitative research involving consumers could utilise other attributes used in previous TDC research, thus further exploring the theoretical and empirical association between the competitiveness of a destination and the destination life cycle.

In this thesis, it was cautiously suggested that demographic variables, such as income levels, may impact the importance of ratings conveyed by consumers in respect to key competitiveness attributes. Thus, further research seeking to better recognise the
effects of income on the importance of destination competitiveness attributes is warranted.

In the current research, qualitative (focus group) and quantitative (web–survey) data was collected over a relative short timeframe. Other researchers may find value in increasing future TDC studies in terms of longitudinal characteristics, thus making it possible to analyse the contribution of TDC attributes over longer periods of time.

7.7 Chapter Summary and Concluding Comments

This chapter provided an interpretation of results, based on a series of research questions outlined in Chapter One. The chapter evaluated findings presented in Chapter Six against extant literature sources, with conclusions offered in terms of ‘knowledge confirmed by the research’, ‘knowledge extended by the research’ and ‘new contributions made by the research’. Finally, this chapter concluded by offering both areas of further research, and key limitations of the study. As one of few empirical studies on tourism destination competitiveness, this study primarily offered evidence regarding the types of capabilities, competencies and resources that could assist developing and maturing destinations respectively, in their pursuit of competitiveness.

Although exploratory in nature, this thesis also advanced the argument that relative ‘destination immaturity’ may constrain the capacity of developing destination’s in seeking to meet the core needs of visitors. Finally, this thesis made a substantial contribution to theory by identifying the importance of TDC attributes as viewed by actual consumers. As such, in terms of consumer preferences, destination stakeholders are now better able, firstly, to develop destination competitiveness strategies which focus on the needs of the consumer, and second, to better understand the competitive destination marketplace from which they compete.
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APPENDIX ONE – Additional Reading – Perspectives of Competitiveness

Perspectives of Competitiveness: Absolute Advantage

Adam Smith is famous in the history of international trade doctrines for his spirited support of free trade. His insights and influence assure him a lasting place in the history of economics. Smith in ‘An Inquiry into the Nature and Causes of the Wealth of Nations’, first published in 1776, argued that competition and trade were essential to the innovation and economic growth of a country. The importance of competition as a concept underpinning economic growth was not well understood at this time. Smith found the fundamental basis for foreign trade and competition, in what has since been called absolute advantage (Bloomfield 1994). He stated that trade and competition could be advantageous for countries based on the concept of absolute advantages in production: ‘If a foreign country can supply us with a commodity cheaper than we ourselves can make it, better buy it off them with some part of the produce of our own industry employed in a way in which we have some advantage’ (Smith 1776). Thus, if a country can produce some set of goods at lower cost than a foreign country, then it would be better for that country to trade their relatively cheaper goods for the relatively cheaper goods of another country. By doing so, countries producing greater quantities of the goods may well specialise in that production over time, as they improve their production methods and hence lower their costs of production, thereby achieving self-reinforcing absolute advantages in those goods (Blecker 1997).

The foundations of Smith’s theory were dependent on key differences in absolute production costs, mainly in the differences in climate, natural or other acquired resources. For example, in referring to differences in various countries in 'soil, climate, and situation', he notes that the 'silks of France are better and cheaper than those of England, because the silk manufacture, at least under the present high duties upon the importation of raw silk, does not so well suit the climate of England as that of France’ (Smith 1776). His famous illustration about the difficulties of growing grapes in Scotland is prefaced by the remark that the ‘natural advantages which one country has over another in producing particular commodities are sometimes so great, that it is acknowledged by all the world to be in vain to struggle with them’; and it is followed
by the observation: ‘Whether the advantages which one country has over another, be natural or acquired, is in this respect of no consequence’ (Bloomfield 1994).

As current research and teachings move away from the methods and intentions of previous writers such as Smith, the evaluation of previous principles become increasingly skewed (Herbert 1993). Thus, some writers tend to conclude that Smith’s contribution to modern international trade theory is minimal. Anderson, Levy and Tollison (1989, p. 174) ask why should scholars continue to interpret the notions of an eighteenth-century economist: ‘there is as little to be gained scientifically from reading old texts as there is from prowling old bookstores for undervalued rarities’. In addition, Stigler (1969, p. 218) concluded, ‘The economics of 1800, like the weather forecasts of 1800, is mostly out of date’. Yet, the broad contributions of Smith deserve consideration and respect. Smith analysed in greater detail than any of his predecessors, the nature and benefits of international trade and competition and the factors affecting them. He saw more clearly than any one before him the importance of differences in relative factor endowments and costs in shaping the face of competition (Bloomfield 1994). His notion was a precursor to contemporary competitive theory and commentary. Indeed, in 1971, Boulding posed a brazen question: who needs Adam Smith? This query, coming a year after a scant two journal articles had focused on Smith or his work, was answered by a flood of scholarship on Smith, numbering more than six hundred articles and thirty books over the subsequent twenty-seven years (Wight 2002).

In summary, Smith presented a position into the underlying basis of trade and competition, providing early logic that trade and competition could be advantageous for countries based on the concept of absolute advantage. However, other writers such as Robert Torrens, James Mill and David Ricardo postulated that it could be beneficial for two countries to trade and compete, even though one of them may be able to produce every kind of item more cheaply than the other. This rule is known as the theory of comparative advantage.
Perspectives of Competitiveness: Comparative Advantage

In an early attempt to understand how nations compete, David Ricardo refined Smith’s notion of absolute advantage, in which a nation exports an item if it is the world's low-cost producer, to that of comparative advantage, recognising that market forces will allocate a nation’s resources to those industries where it is relatively most productive (Porter 1990). Ricardo’s exposition that nations will export not only what they have an absolute advantage in producing, but also what they have a comparative cost edge in producing, has been taught as one of the most brilliant insights within economic theory. However, some research has suggested that it was not Ricardo who first formulated the theory (Greenwald 1982; Rothbard 1995).

Thweatt (1976) demonstrated that Ricardo did not originate the rule of comparative advantage. Ricardo devoted only a few paragraphs to the law in his 1817 text, ‘Principles of Political Economy and Taxation’. The discovery of the law of comparative advantage came considerably earlier. The issue of international trade came to public attention in Britain when Napoleon imposed his Berlin decrees in 1806, ordering the blockade of his enemy (England) from all trade with the continent of Europe. Immediately, William Spence published his ‘Britain Independent of Commerce’ in 1807, advising Englishmen not to worry about the blockade, since only agriculture was economically important; and if English landlords would only spend all their incomes on consumption all would be well (Rothbard 1995). Spence’s piece caused a storm of controversy, stimulating early works by two noteworthy British economists. One was James Mill.

Although Torrens and Mills had expressed the general idea of comparative costs as early as 1815, it was Ricardo who spelled out the argument in detail, made it his own and drove home the practical application (Blaug 1990). The very early theories such as those of Ricardo explain trade flows with the productive efficiency (technology in Ricardo's work) or relatively available resource endowments of countries. It is the difference in technology and/or endowments according to these theories that are the prime motivators or underlying causes of international trade. However, our understanding of trade theories and their association with competitiveness is largely based on good-producing sectors. Yet today, in industrialised economies, the service sector dominates.

Although most of the service economy is driven by domestic demand, the volume of internationally traded services is increasing. Studies that have examined the validity of trade theories in services (see Deardoff 1985; Feketekuty 1988; Gray 1989; Richardson 1987) generally conclude that there is nothing in the theory which intrinsically makes it less applicable to services (Ritchie & Crouch 2000). Such findings are of particular relevance to the tourism industry. For example, tourists choosing to visit one country may do so because of cultural affinity like pilgrim tourism; they may be attracted by the natural endowment, such as sun, sand and sea, like island tourism, or some cultural heritages. The relative price competitiveness of the tourism product at the destination country compared to other competing destination countries can also be the cause of tourism flows. Some destinations have an abundance of endowed resources, or comparative advantages; others are ‘genetically’ disadvantaged with limited naturally occurring and created resources, minimum support for tourism development, and poor basic infrastructure (Zhang & Jensen 2005).

In conclusion, comparative advantage is observed by economists to be a key determinant of international competition and trade patterns.

Perspectives of Competitiveness: Competitive Advantage

In recent times a much greater emphasis has been placed on the role of competitive advantage as a predictor of the economic fortunes not just of firms, but of nations as a whole; a different approach to understanding competition exemplified by Porter (1980).
Professor Michael Porter of the Harvard Business School, published research pertaining to why some nations succeed and others fail, and in doing so, introduced a ‘new’ competitiveness theory, believing the long–dominant eighteenth century theories of Smith and Ricardo for why nations succeed in particular industries, were showing signs of strain (Porter 1990). There is an extensive history of theories to explain the patterns of nations' exports and imports, dating back to the work of Adam Smith and David Ricardo in the eighteenth century. It has become generally recognised, however, that these theories have grown inadequate to the task (see Hindley & Smith 1984; Leamer 1980). Changes in the nature of international competition, among them the rise of the multinational corporation that not only exports but competes abroad via foreign subsidiaries, have weakened the traditional explanations for why and where a nation exports (Porter 1990). While new rationales have been proposed, none is sufficient to explain why firms based in particular nations are able to compete successfully, through both exporting and foreign investment, in particular industries. Nor can they explain why a nation’s firms are able to sustain their competitive positions over considerable periods of time (Porter 1990).

The main intent of Porter’s (1990) text, ‘The Competitive Advantage of Nations’, was to explain the theory of competitive advantage. Porter argued that there had been growing sentiment that comparative advantage, based on factors of production, is not sufficient in explaining modern patterns of trade and competition. Most importantly however, in Porter’s mind (1990, p. 12), there had been a growing awareness that the assumptions underlying comparative advantage theories are unrealistic in many industries:

...More and more industries do not resemble those that comparative advantage was built on. In modern times, economies of scale are widespread, most products and services are differentiated, and buyer needs vary among nations...at best, factor comparative advantage theory is useful primarily for explaining broader tendencies in the patterns of trade and competition.

Porter posed the question of why do firms based in particular nations achieve international success in distinct segments and industries? That is, what are the decisive characteristics of a nation that allows its firms to create and sustain competitive advantage in particular fields, thus identifying the competitive advantage of nations.
One of Porter’s claims, supported by Ettlinger (1991) and Grant (1991), was that the theory of competitive advantage enhanced the earlier concept of comparative advantage, as it was an attempt to explain why a nation’s firms gain competitive advantage in all its forms, not only the limited types of factor–based advantage contemplated in the theory of comparative advantage. Porter offered a model to help understand the competitive position of a nation in global competition, outlining four broad attributes of a nation that shape the environment in which local firms compete that promote or impede the creation of competition advantage. This model is commonly referred to as Porter's Diamond of National Advantage. The model’s determinants are:

1. **Factor conditions.** The nation’s position in factors of production, such as skilled labour or infrastructure, necessary to compete in a given industry.
2. **Demand conditions.** The nature of home demand for the industry’s product or service.
3. **Related and supporting factors.** The presence or absence in the nation of supplier industries and related industries that are internationally competitive.
4. **Firm strategy, structure, and rivalry.** The conditions in the nation governing how companies are created, organised, and managed, and the nature of domestic rivalry.

The Determinants of National Advantage (Porter 1990, p. 72).
These determinants, individually and as a system, create the context in which a nation’s firms are born and compete. Porter argued that nations are most likely to succeed in industries or industry segments where the national ‘diamond’ is most favourable. The ‘diamond’ is a mutually reinforcing system, in that the effect of one determinant is contingent on the state of others. Favourable demand conditions, for example, will not lead to competitive advantage unless a state of rivalry is sufficient to cause firms to respond to them (Porter 1990).

**Factor Conditions**

Each nation possesses what economists have termed *factors of production*, and relate to inputs such as labour, land, natural resources, capital, and infrastructure. Porter (1990, pp. 74–75) grouped key factors of production, or comparative advantages, into five broad categories: human resources, physical resources, knowledge resources, capital resources and infrastructure. These factors can be readily appreciated in a tourism context.

**Human resources**: The quantity, quality and cost of human resources clearly play a role in the competitiveness of nations (Porter 1990). The necessity of appropriate human resources is no more evident then in the tourism industry. The tourism industry employs a diverse range of personnel from bartenders to hotel managers, airline pilots, consultants and entrepreneurs. The availability, skills, costs, work ethics and standard working conditions of a destination's tourism managers and employees are critical in an industry that emphasises customer service (Ritchie & Crouch 2000).

**Physical resources**: The abundance, quality, accessibility of a nation’s land and other physical resources will influence national competitiveness and advantage (Porter 1990). For the tourism industry, the diversity, uniqueness, abundance, accessibility and attractiveness of scenic, ecological, recreational and other natural physical features, such as mountains, lakes, deserts and canyons, often represent a primary motivation for travel. A destination's climate, location relative to important markets, and geographical size are also important natural endowments, and perform a fundamental role in attracting tourism to a destination (Ritchie & Crouch 2000).
**Knowledge resources**: ‘a nation’s stock of scientific, technical and market knowledge bearing on goods and services’ (Porter 1990, p. 75). Although the tourism industry is not as knowledge-intensive as other high technology sectors, Ritchie and Crouch (2000), and Baggio (2004) argue knowledge resources are nevertheless important. Ritchie and Crouch (2000) illustrate this by comparing the ability, in terms of know-how, of Third World countries to host tourists in comparison with the industrialised world. For example, Third World destinations often need to import knowledge related to hotel management. Baggio (2004) agrees that for tourism as a service industry, information is one of the most important quality parameters, as the factor of knowledge may lead to strong advantage in competition.

**Capital resources**: The ability of a destination to develop its tourism superstructure and finance its operations depends on the amount and cost of capital available. In turn, the availability of capital depends not only on the overall volume and structure of wealth but also on the extent to which investors believe that the returns from tourism development are commensurate with the risks. In this regard, the financial performance of the tourism industry has been mixed. Notwithstanding the existence of some very large corporations, the predominance of small businesses in the tourism sector means that development often depends on the extent of personal savings and investment as much as it does on capital markets (Ritchie & Crouch 2000).

**Infrastructure**: the type, quality, and cost of infrastructure affects competition, including the transport system, the communications system, payment and fund transfers, public services such as health care, fire and police services, and so forth (Porter 1990). It is stock of created assets, in combination with the inherited natural assets, which supports economic activity. For the tourism industry, Ritchie and Crouch (2000) note the existence of additional tourism-related infrastructure, known as tourism superstructure, which represents the additional created assets which rest upon this infrastructure and which serve visitor-oriented needs and desires. Examples include hotels, restaurants, theme parks, resorts, golf courses and many other facilities.

The mix of these factors, known as factor proportions, and the role of factor endowment differ widely amongst industries. The effective and efficient deployment of these factors is crucial to the gaining of competitive advantages. Few factors of production are truly inherited by a nation or region. Most must be developed over time.
through investment, to which the extent and difficulty of the required investment varies dramatically. Yet despite a destination’s perceived abundance of comparative advantages: human and physical resources, knowledge and financial capital, and vital infrastructure (both of a general nature, and tourism-specific); the wise stewardship of resources is critical to the long-term competitiveness of the tourism industry. Naturally occurring resources are classified as either renewable resources, or those that are not. For example, as viewed by Ritchie and Crouch (2000), hunting and fishing involve a renewable resource, whilst a sensitive ecological reserve cleared for agriculture or mining is lost forever despite any reclamation efforts. Strategies are required for the education and training of human resources, the protection and care of natural physical resources, the expansion and domestication of knowledge resources, the investment and growth of capital resources, the construction and maintenance of infrastructure and tourism superstructure, and the preservation and fostering of historical and cultural resources (Ritchie & Crouch 2000).

Another important distinction among factors is whether they are inherited by a nation, such as its natural resources or location, or created. Those factors most important in achieving higher-order and more sustainable advantage, are created. Nations therefore succeed in industries where they are particularly good at creating, and most importantly, upgrading the factors (Porter 1990). No nation can possibly create and upgrade all types and varieties of factors. Which types are created and upgraded, and how effectively, depends heavily on the other determinants, such as demand conditions, the presence of related and supporting industries, and the nature of rivalry (Porter 1990).

The World Competitiveness Report (WCR) (WEF/IMD 1992) makes an important point concerning the role of non-renewable resources in a nation's competitiveness. The report argues that, under the traditional theory of comparative advantage, ‘countries are better off if they trade the products or services that give them the greatest advantage, or least disadvantage, relative to their possible trading partners’ (p. 12). ‘A comparative advantage can be based on having an abundance of natural resources in a country, for example oil, whereas competitive advantage can only be based on an entrepreneur's ability to add value to the available resources, by refining the crude oil, say. By merely selling its natural richness, a country does not become better off in the long term – a sale [caused by natural resource degradation] must be written off as a
minus on the national balance sheet; selling the value added resources (and not the resources) creates a surplus that a country can then invest in its economic development’ (p. 14). For this reason, the WCR model focuses on value added and ignores inherited factors.

**Demand Conditions**

The second broad determinant of national competitive advantage in an industry is home demand conditions for the industry’s product or service. It shapes the rate and character of improvement and innovation by a nation’s firm. Three broad attributes of home demand are significant: the composition of home demand, the size and pattern of growth of home demand, and the mechanism by which a nation’s domestic preferences are transmitted to foreign markets (Porter 1990).

The most important influence of home demand on competitive advantage is through the mix and character of the buyer’s needs (Linder 1961). The composition of home demand shapes how firms perceive, interpret, and respond to buyer needs. Nations gain competitive advantage in industries or industry segments where the home demand gives local firms a clearer or earlier picture of buyer needs than foreign rivals can have. Nations also gain advantage if home buyers pressure local firms to innovate faster and achieve more sophisticated competitive advantages compared to foreign rivals (Porter 1990). Firms that are better able to perceive, understand, and act on buyer needs in their home market, tend to be more confident in doing so (Porter 1990). Additionally, the size and pattern of growth in home demand can reinforce national advantage in an industry. The size of the home market has been prominent in discussions of national competitiveness (Scott & Lodge 1985). Some authors argue that a large home market provides strength through economies of scales, whilst other commentators see it as a weakness, reasoning that limited local demand forces firms to export, which is important to competitive advantage in global industries (Porter 1990).

Provided it anticipates buyers needs in other nations, early local demand for a product or service in a nation helps local firms to move sooner than foreign rivals to become established in an industry. Early penetration helps local firms become established, and forces them to continue innovating and upgrading. It should be clear from the work of Porter that the various home demand conditions can reinforce each other and have their
greatest significance at different stages of an industry’s evolution. The most important attributes of home demand are those that provide an ongoing stimulus for investment and innovation (Porter 1990).

**Related and Supporting Industries**

The third determinant of Porter’s Diamond of National Advantage in an industry is the presence in the nation of supplier industries or related industries that are internationally competitive. As determined by Porter (1990), the presence of competitive suppliers creates advantages in several ways. It provides greater access or availability to inputs. Further, this access to inputs provides ongoing coordination between local firms. Perhaps the most important benefit of strong localised related industries is in the process of innovation and upgrading (Porter 1990). Competitive advantage emerges from close working relationships between world–class suppliers and the industry. Suppliers help firms perceive new methods and opportunities to apply new technology. Firms gain quick access to information, to new ideas and insights, and to supplier innovations. The presence in a nation of competitive industries that are related often leads to new competitive industries. Related industries are those in which firms can coordinate or share activities in the value chain when competing, or those which involve products that are complementary. Furthermore, the presence of successful related industry in a nation provides opportunities for information flow and technical interchange, much like the case with home–suppliers (Porter 1990).

**Firm Strategy, Structure and Rivalry**

The fourth and final broad determinant of national competitive advantage in an industry is the context in which firms are created, organised and managed as well as the nature of domestic rivalry. The goals, strategies, and ways of organising firms in industries vary widely among nations. National advantage results from a good match between these choices and the sources of competitive advantage in a particular industry (Porter 1990). Nations will tend to succeed in industries where the management practices and modes of organisation favoured by the national environment are well suited to the industries’ sources of competitive advantage (for example see Lieberman 1988).
The Role of Chance and Government

The determinants of national advantage shape the environment for competing in particular industries. In the histories of most of the successful industries Porter studied, however, chance events also played a role. Chance events are occurrences that have little to do with circumstances in a nation and are often largely outside the power of firms (and often the national government) to influence. Some examples (see Porter 1990) which are particularly important in influencing competitive advantage are the following:

- Acts of pure invention
- Major technological discontinuities
- Discontinuities in input costs such as the oil shocks
- Significant shifts in world financial markets or exchange rates
- Surges of world or regional demand
- Political decisions by foreign governments
- Wars

Chance events play their role partly by altering conditions in the diamond. Major shifts in input costs or exchange rates, for example, create selective factor disadvantages that catalyse periods of significant innovation. Wars viewed from this perspective can raise the level and urgency of local scientific investments – factor creation – and disrupt customer relationships – demand conditions (Porter 1990). Government can also influence (and be influenced by) each of the four determinants either positively or negatively. Government’s role in shaping local demand conditions is often more subtle. Government bodies establish local product standards or regulations that mandate or influence buyer needs. Government is also often a major buyer of many products in a nation, among them defense goods, telecommunications equipment, aircraft for the national airline, and so on. The way this role as a buyer is played can either help or hurt the nation’s industry. As seen by Crouch and Ritchie (1999), governments may exert a direct impact on an industry. For example, governments have tended to become more actively involved in tourism as the stakes have grown.
APPENDIX TWO – Project Information Sheet

SOUTHERN CROSS UNIVERSITY
INFORMATION SHEET

NAME OF PROJECT

An Investigation into Principal Factors Contributing to the Competitiveness of Tourism Destinations at Varying Stages of Development: A Regional Australian Perspective

You are invited to participate in a study being conducted that seeks to investigate the theory of destination competitiveness. It is clear that research is needed to examine the association between key destination competitiveness variables and the stage of development of a tourism destination. Of particular interest is the applicability of tourism destination competitiveness models to destinations at different stages of development. This research forms part of a doctoral thesis being completed by Simon Wilde and supervised by Dr Carmen Cox and Associate Professor Stephen Kelly.

The evolution of tourism areas is of critical importance to tourism planners and managers. The evolution process has a positive or negative affect not only on the basic attractiveness of the area and its tourism resources, but on the people who live and work in the community, of visitors who come into the area, and on the tourist industry as a continued investment opportunity. There is no identifiable research that 1) links this broad concept of tourism destination competitiveness with the development and evolution of tourism destinations, nor 2) suggests the relevance or importance of key competitiveness variables to destinations at different levels of development. By providing your expertise, experience and insights to the study, the researcher hopes to gain valuable information on this topic.

A sample of two destinations on the East Coast of Australia, namely the Coffs Coast Tourism Region, and the Great Lakes Tourism Region, have been selected as part of the study. To explore and refine the research issues in this thesis, focus group discussions will be held in each destination. It is in relation to these focus groups that your participation is being requested.

Procedures to be followed

The focus group discussions should take approximately 90 minutes in total to complete. Each group will contain a combination of tourism destination managers and industry operators (12–14 persons). Participation in this research is purely voluntary and no financial remuneration or incentive will be offered for taking part in this research. There are no travel expenses, nor are there any costs associated with participation in this research. There is no cost to you apart from your time.

Participants will be required to read a brief ‘Focus Group Questions and Discussion Guide’, which will be distributed before each focus group discussion (reading time will be approximately 10 minutes). Issues covered in the guide include: purpose of the research, expected results/outcomes, why the research is important, a definition of ‘tourism destination competitiveness’, and a review of questions/topics to be discussed.
It is anticipated that this guide (in addition to this letter of introduction) will provide you with a clear sense of the project, and will allow you to prepare your thoughts.

It is important to note that a research assistant will be used as a note taker, facilitating a free flowing discussion between the principal researcher and group participants. Further, each discussion will be recorded via a digital voice recorder, subject to the consent of participants. Participants may request that tape recorder be turned off during the focus group if sensitive information is being discussed. Despite this record, details (name, affiliation) of each participant will be concealed, with anonymity within the final thesis assured. Any identifying information will be kept completely confidential and kept securely in a locked facility at Southern Cross University for a period 5 years.

Possible Discomforts and Risks

There are no foreseeable risks or discomforts associated with this study.

Responsibilities of the Researcher

It is essential that you sign a consent form before you participate in this discussion. Please note the research findings will also be submitted for publication; but with no identifying information, and a copy of the final thesis will be available at the Southern Cross University Library.

Freedom of Consent

If you decide to participate, you are free to withdraw your consent and to discontinue participation at any time.

Inquiries

This form is yours to keep for future reference. If you have any questions, please ask the Principal Investigator. If you have any additional questions at any time please ask:

**Simon Wilde – Principal Investigator**
PhD Candidate
Australian Regional Tourism Research Centre
Southern Cross University
Ph: 02 6659 3656
Mobile: 0404 428 253
Fax: 02 6659 3144
E-mail: simon.wilde@scu.edu.au

**Dr Carmen Cox (Supervisor)**
Senior Lecturer
Graduate College of Management
Southern Cross University
Tweed Heads NSW 2485
Phone: 07 5506 9321
Fax: 07 5506 9301
Email: carmen.cox@scu.edu.au

The ethical aspects of this study have been approved by the Southern Cross University Human Research Ethics Committee. The Approval Number is ECN–08–001. If you have any complaints or reservations about any ethical aspect of your participation in this research, you may contact the Committee through the Ethics Complaints Officer.

All complaints, in the first instance, should be in writing to the above address. All complaints are investigated fully and according to due process under the National Statement and this University. Any complaint you make will be treated in confidence and you will be informed of the outcome.
APPENDIX THREE – Sample Focus Group Discussion Guide

Purpose of the research: This study aims to examine the theory of destination competitiveness. Of particular interest is the applicability of tourism destination competitiveness models to destinations at different stages of development, as it is clear that further research is needed to examine the association between key destination competitiveness variables and the stage of development for a tourism destination.

Expected Results/Outcomes: There is no identifiable research that 1) links the broad concept of tourism destination competitiveness with the development or evolution of tourism destinations, 2) nor suggests the relevance or importance of key competitiveness variables to destinations at different levels of development. This research will address that gap.

Why is this research important?: The ability of destinations such as the [insert destination] to influence its image and overall competitiveness is paramount to the overall success and appeal of that destination. This research will point, in certain respects, to which elements (such as created assets or natural assets) are required to build a ‘competitive destination’.

A definition of ‘tourism destination competitiveness’

Tourism destination competitiveness is concerned with the relative ability of a destination to meet visitor needs on various aspects of the tourism experience, or to deliver goods and services that perform better than other destinations on those aspects of the tourism experience considered to be important by tourists.

Important note: competitiveness should not be confused with attractiveness. The competitiveness of a destination is not the same as the attractiveness of a destination e.g. a destination may be attractive to tourist, but due to limited access, poor accommodation facilities, and other supply factors; the destination may not be competitive.

Voluntary participation: Your participation in this research is voluntary. You are under no obligation to participate. However, your experience, expertise and insights will provide the study with a very valuable source of information. It is envisaged that each group discussion will last approximately 90 minutes.

Risk to the participant: By participating in this study, you will not be exposed to any potential risks. Focus group discussions will be recorded (digital voice recorder) subject to your approval. Nonetheless, should you have any concerns relating to your participation in the focus group discussion, please contact the Principal Researcher of the study:
This guide is not a survey – it provides a framework for the focus group discussion, and provides you (as a participant) with an opportunity to review the main themes of reference prior to attending the group session.

The following themes and questions will be asked during the focus discussion:

**GENERAL DISCUSSION**

1. What do you feel are the major elements/features required to make a destination ‘competitive’?

   *Your Notes:*

   ________________________________

   ________________________________

   ________________________________

   ________________________________

   ________________________________

2. Are some of these competitive elements more important than others? Please express your views.

   *Your Notes:*

   ________________________________

   ________________________________

   ________________________________

   ________________________________

   ________________________________
3. If thinking specifically about how [insert destination] can compete in relation to [insert other case destination], which factors or elements do you see as most important?

Your Notes:

DESTINATION EVOLUTION AND DEVELOPMENT

The evolution and development of tourism areas is of critical importance to tourism planners and managers. The evolution process has a positive or negative affect not only on the basic attractiveness of the area and its tourism resources, but on visitors who come into the area. Clearly, therefore destinations need to take into consideration the phase of development they are in, as well as the patterns of destination life cycle experienced in competing destinations, and adopt strategies accordingly.

Participants are to be shown Butler’s Tourism Area Life Cycle (TALC), including key criteria utilised by TALC researchers in highlighting a destination’s stage of development.

A review of relevant data (the collection and analysis of industry reports, visitation statistics, relevant press articles, supplementary statistics, historian reports and academic publications) found evidence to suggest that the [insert destination] is currently found to be in a stage of [insert stage].

4. First, do you agree with this finding? Why or why not?

Your Notes:
Given this finding and your views on where [insert destination] sits in relation to its stage of development:

5. Do you feel the importance of the aforementioned competitive elements have now altered in your mind? Are certain elements now more important for a destination in Stage X?

Your Notes: 

6. In which ways do you believe the critical competitiveness factors important to a destination in a stage of [insert stage] differs from a destination which is [insert stage]?

Your Notes: 

7. Name the five (5) elements you consider critical in improving the competitiveness of a destination categorised as X.
TARGET MARKETS/SEGMENTS

The competitiveness of a tourism destination should be viewed relative to its main competitors. Since destinations compete for target segments, the best means of understanding destination competitiveness is to assess how it competes against its main competitors in those segments. Data on visitor gender, age, and reason for visitation categories indicate a large share of visitors to the [insert destination] fall within the group, categorised by the Australian Bureau of Statistics (ABS), as domestic family holiday/leisure tourists.

8. How competitive is the [insert destination] as a destination for families? Why or why not?

Your Notes: ____________________________________________________________
_____________________________________________________________________
_____________________________________________________________________
_____________________________________________________________________
_____________________________________________________________________

9. What must the [insert destination] do to increase its overall competitiveness to attract a greater share of the family market?

Your Notes: ____________________________________________________________
_____________________________________________________________________
_____________________________________________________________________
_____________________________________________________________________
_____________________________________________________________________
Your time and expert opinion is greatly appreciated. I would be most happy to provide you with a summary of the study’s results once available.

Kindest regards

Simon
APPENDIX FOUR – Informed Consent Form

CONSENT FORM

This consent form is based on the National Statement on Ethical Conduct in Human Research (National Statement/NS)

Title of research project:

An Investigation into Principal Factors Contributing to the Competitiveness of Tourism Destinations at Varying Stages of Development: A Regional Australian Perspective.

NOTE: This consent form will remain with the Southern Cross University researcher for their records.

Tick the box that applies, sign and date and give to the researcher

I agree to take part in the Southern Cross University research project specified above  Yes  No

I have been provided with information at my level of comprehension about the purpose, methods, demands, risks, inconveniences and possible outcomes of this research, including any likelihood and form of publication. I understand this information.  Yes  No

I agree to be interviewed by the researcher, via a focus group discussion  Yes  No

I agree to allow the focus group to be audio–taped  Yes  No

I agree to make myself available for further interview if required  Yes  No

I understand that my participation is voluntary.  Yes  No

I can choose not to participate in part or all of this research at any time, without negative consequence to me.  Yes  No

I understand that any information that may identify me, will be de–identified at the time of analysis of any data. Therefore any information I have provided cannot be linked to my person/company (Privacy Act 1988 Cth)  Yes  No

I understand that neither my name nor any identifying information will be disclosed or published.  Yes  No

I understand that all information gathered in this research is confidential. It will be kept securely and confidentially for 5 years at the University.  Yes  No
I am aware that I can contact the Supervisor or other researcher(s) at any time with any queries.  

Yes ☐  No ☐

I understand that the ethical aspects of this research have been approved by the SCU Human Research Ethics Committee and that approval number is ECN–08–001  

Yes ☐  No ☐

If I have concerns about the ethical conduct of this research, I understand that I can contact the SCU Ethics Complaints Officer. All inquiries are confidential and should be in writing, in the first instance, to the following:  

Yes ☐  No ☐

Ms Sue Kelly  
Graduate Research College  
Secretary, HREC  
Southern Cross University  
Po Box 157  
Lismore NSW 2480  
Email: sue.kelly@scu.edu.au  
Tel: (02) 6626 9139

Participants name:
____________________________________________________________

Participants signature:
____________________________________________________________.

Date: ______________________ 200___

Contact: Tel: (02) ________________

Email: ______________________________
APPENDIX FIVE – Consumer Web Survey (paper based example)

Destination Competitiveness Survey

Thank you for your interest in participating in this survey.

This survey will take up a 10–15 minutes of your time. Please complete the survey only once.

OK…let’s get started.

A destination's competitiveness (attractiveness) in tourism depends on the performance on various dimensions of the visitor tourism experience. For the questions below we ask you to indicate:

1. How important the feature is to you when choosing to visit a tourism destination,
2. Then tell us how well you feel the Coffs Coast performs in relation to that feature,
3. And finally, in your view, tell us how well you feel the Great Lakes performs in that feature.

Again, for the purposes of this survey, please focus your answers to the two case destinations: the Coffs Coast and the Great Lakes Tourism Regions.

Part A:

For each of the following elements (attractors), please give a rating for how important they are in attracting you to a tourism destination. Please assign your rating on a scale from 1 to 7, where 1 represents "Not Important" and 7 represents "Very Important".

Secondly, we would also like to get your views on how each of the destinations performs on these attractors. As seen in the columns to the right, we ask that you assign your rating as to how you feel each destination performs in that element. Please note that the ranking scale is different for these columns – you are asked to rate the performance on a scale from 1 to 7, where 1 represents "Very Poor" and 7 represents "Very Good".

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Not Import</th>
<th>Coffs Perform.</th>
<th>Great Lakes Perform.</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Very Import</td>
<td>V. Poor</td>
<td>V. Good</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>V. Poor</td>
<td>V. Good</td>
<td>V. Poor</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1. Climate</td>
<td>1 2 3 4 5 6 7</td>
<td>1 2 3 4 5 6 7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. Cleanliness</td>
<td>1 2 3 4 5 6 7</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. Perceived Comfort</td>
<td>1 2 3 4 5 6 7</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4. Natural Scenery</td>
<td>1 2 3 4 5 6 7</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5. Flora and fauna</td>
<td>1 2 3 4 5 6 7</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6. Richness of Culture</td>
<td>1 2 3 4 5 6 7</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7. Heritage sites</td>
<td>1 2 3 4 5 6 7</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8. Variety of cuisine</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9. ‘Uniqueness’ of the destination</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10. Special events and festivals</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11. Amusement/Fun/Theme parks</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12. Breadth of activities for tourists</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>13. Water based activities (eg. swimming, surfing, boating, fishing)</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>14. Entertainment (eg. theatres, galleries, cinemas)</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>15. Nature based activities (eg. bushwalking, camping)</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>16. Adventure activities (eg. rafting, skydiving)</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>17. National Parks</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>18. Night life (eg. bars, clubs)</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Part B:

The competitiveness of a tourism destination also depends on the types of facilities and services available to meet visitor needs. Using the same rating scales, tells us how important each aspect is to you, and rate the performance of both the Coffs Coast and Great Lakes in that aspect.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>19. Variety and quality of Accommodation</td>
<td>1 2 3 4 5 6 7</td>
<td>1 2 3 4 5 6 7</td>
<td>1 2 3 4 5 6 7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>20. Value for money in accommodation</td>
<td>1 2 3 4 5 6 7</td>
<td>1 2 3 4 5 6 7</td>
<td>1 2 3 4 5 6 7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>21. Airport quality</td>
<td>1 2 3 4 5 6 7</td>
<td>1 2 3 4 5 6 7</td>
<td>1 2 3 4 5 6 7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>22. Availability of tourist information</td>
<td>1 2 3 4 5 6 7</td>
<td>1 2 3 4 5 6 7</td>
<td>1 2 3 4 5 6 7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>23. Local public transportation</td>
<td>1 2 3 4 5 6 7</td>
<td>1 2 3 4 5 6 7</td>
<td>1 2 3 4 5 6 7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>24. Variety of shopping outlets</td>
<td>1 2 3 4 5 6 7</td>
<td>1 2 3 4 5 6 7</td>
<td>1 2 3 4 5 6 7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>25. Variety of food services (eg. restaurants)</td>
<td>1 2 3 4 5 6 7</td>
<td>1 2 3 4 5 6 7</td>
<td>1 2 3 4 5 6 7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>26. Accessibility to</td>
<td>1 2 3 4 5 6 7</td>
<td>1 2 3 4 5 6 7</td>
<td>1 2 3 4 5 6 7</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
natural areas

27. Recreation facilities (eg. parks, leisure facilities, horseriding) 1 2 3 4 5 6 7
28. Sporting facilities (eg. golf, tennis) 1 2 3 4 5 6 7
29. Health and medical facilities 1 2 3 4 5 6 7
30. Quality of tourism/hospitality services 1 2 3 4 5 6 7
31. Distance or flying time to the destination from your home 1 2 3 4 5 6 7

Part C:

The competitiveness of a tourism destination also depends on the Management and Policies undertaken by and within a destination and activities which support tourism development. Using the same rating scales, tells us how important each element is to you, and rate the performance of both the Coffs Coast and Great Lakes in that aspect.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>32. Security and safety of visitors</td>
<td>1 2 3 4 5 6 7</td>
<td>1 2 3 4 5 6 7</td>
<td>V. Poor V. Good V. Poor V. Good</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>33. Value for money in destination tourism experiences</td>
<td>1 2 3 4 5 6 7</td>
<td>1 2 3 4 5 6 7</td>
<td>Scale Continues</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>34. Value for money of shopping items</td>
<td>1 2 3 4 5 6 7</td>
<td>1 2 3 4 5 6 7</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>35. Attitudes of residents towards visitors</td>
<td>1 2 3 4 5 6 7</td>
<td>1 2 3 4 5 6 7</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>36. The degree in which you are ‘tied’ to the destination (eg. business, sporting, ethnic, religious links with the destination)</td>
<td>1 2 3 4 5 6 7</td>
<td>1 2 3 4 5 6 7</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>37. A favourable destination image</td>
<td>1 2 3 4 5 6 7</td>
<td>1 2 3 4 5 6 7</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>38. Destination’s ability to ‘listen’ to the needs of tourists</td>
<td>1 2 3 4 5 6 7</td>
<td>1 2 3 4 5 6 7</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Part D:

As we know, tourist destinations compete against each other, trying to attract visitors. However, no two destinations are matched. For example, some destinations have an abundance of natural resources (natural scenery, flora and fauna etc), but may have poor tourism–related infrastructure (e.g. airports, hotels etc) or other tourism resources. On the other hand, a destination may have a vast amount of tourism infrastructure, but lack the natural beauty of other competing destinations. Given this development has the potential to influence a tourist’s decision–making process as to whether or not they will visit a destination, it is critical for destinations, like the Coffs Coast, to recognise the stage of development they are in.

Therefore:

How would you classify the stage of development for the Coffs Coast Tourism Region? (think about your answer in relation to other destinations the Coffs Coast competes against, like the Great Lakes). Select from the options below the statement best aligned with your view (only choose one).

I believe the region is still developing or growing as a tourism destination

I believe the region is showing signs of maturity as a tourism destination

I believe the region is stagnating, or is in decline as a tourism destination

I have a differing opinion to the options provided (please explain)

What about the Great Lakes as a tourism destination? Again, select from the options below the statement best aligned with your view (only choose one).

I believe the region is still developing or growing as a tourism destination

I believe the region is showing signs of maturity as a tourism destination

I believe the region is stagnating, or is in decline as a tourism destination

I have a differing opinion to the options provided (please explain)
In your own words, is the Coffs Coast becoming more or less fashionable (e.g. is it a more desirable or less desirable place to visit), for tourists compared to five years ago? Again, select from the options below the statement best aligned with your view (only choose one).

More fashionable (please explain your reasoning)  
Less fashionable (please explain your reasoning)  
Your reasoning:

What about the Great Lakes: it is becoming more or less fashionable for tourists compared to five years ago? Again, select from the options below the statement best aligned with your view (only choose one).

More fashionable (please explain your reasoning)  
Less fashionable (please explain your reasoning)  
Your reasoning:

Profile: Question 1

We would like to know a little bit about your background. Where do you usually live? Indicate the appropriate state that matches your Region, plus please add your Post Code:

NSW  
Northern Territory  
Victoria  
Western Australia  
Queensland  
Tasmania  
ACT  
South Australia  
Post Code
Profile: Question 2

Please tell us the main mode of transport you usually use when travelling to the Coffs Coast (or if you have not visited the region, but are likely to, what mode of transport would you most likely use) – please select only one.

Domestic airline  
Vehicle without caravan

Tour coach  
Motor home

Vehicle with caravan  
Train

Transport coach  
Other

Profile: Question 3

When travelling to the Coffs Coast, define your ‘typical’ travel party – please tick one.

I normally travel alone

I normally travel with my partner (without children)

I normally travel with my partner and children

I normally travel with friends

Profile: Question 4

Have you ever taken a trip to the Great Lakes Tourism Region before?

Never before  
Within the past 2–5 years

Within the past 12 months  
More than 5 years ago

Within the past 1–2 years
### Profile: Question 5
To the best of your knowledge, please estimate the yearly income (before taxes) for your household.

- Under $20,000
- $20,000 to $59,999
- $60,000 to $99,999
- $100,000 to $139,999
- $140,000+

### Profile: Question 6
What is your gender?

- Male
- Female

### Profile: Question 7
Please indicate your age grouping.

- 18–24 years
- 25–34 years
- 35–44 years
- 45–54 years
- 55+ years

THANK YOU FOR YOUR TIME IN COMPLETING OUR SURVEY
## APPENDIX SIX – Descriptive Statistics for Importance Variables

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Attributes of Competitiveness - Importance</th>
<th>N</th>
<th>Min</th>
<th>Max</th>
<th>Mean</th>
<th>Std. Dev</th>
<th>Skewness</th>
<th>Kurtosis</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Climate</strong></td>
<td>344</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>6.02</td>
<td>0.949</td>
<td>-0.66</td>
<td>0.131</td>
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<td><strong>Cleanliness</strong></td>
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<td>7</td>
<td>6.26</td>
<td>0.934</td>
<td>-1.37</td>
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<td><strong>Perceived Comfort</strong></td>
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<td><strong>Natural Scenery</strong></td>
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<td><strong>Flora and fauna</strong></td>
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<td>1.261</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Richness of Culture</strong></td>
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<td><strong>Heritage sites</strong></td>
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<td>1.383</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Variety of cuisine</strong></td>
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<td>7</td>
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<td>1.219</td>
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<td><strong>'Uniqueness' of the destination</strong></td>
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<td>1.241</td>
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<td><strong>Special events and festivals</strong></td>
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<td>1.561</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Amusement/Fun/Theme parks</strong></td>
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<td><strong>Breadth of activities for tourists</strong></td>
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<td>5.37</td>
<td>1.18</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Water based activities (eg. swimming, surfing, boating, fishing)</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Entertainment (eg. theatres, galleries, cinemas)</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Nature based activities (eg. bushwalking, camping)</strong></td>
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<td>4.92</td>
<td>1.485</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Adventure activities (eg. rafting, skydiving)</strong></td>
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<td>3.62</td>
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<td><strong>National Parks</strong></td>
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<td>4.94</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Night life (eg. bars, clubs)</strong></td>
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<td>7</td>
<td>3.54</td>
<td>1.854</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Variety and quality of Accommodation</strong></td>
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<td><strong>Value for money in accommodation</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Airport quality</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Availability of tourist information</strong></td>
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<td>7</td>
<td>5.9</td>
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<td>-1.2</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Local public transportation</strong></td>
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<td>1.949</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Variety of shopping outlets</strong></td>
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<td>7</td>
<td>4.99</td>
<td>1.573</td>
<td>-0.58</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Variety of food services (eg. Restaurants)</strong></td>
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<td>1</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>5.69</td>
<td>1.16</td>
<td>-0.5</td>
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<td><strong>Accessibility to natural areas</strong></td>
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<td>7</td>
<td>5.54</td>
<td>1.249</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Recreation facilities (eg. parks, leisure facilities, horseriding)</strong></td>
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<td>7</td>
<td>3.85</td>
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<td><strong>Sporting facilities (eg. golf, tennis)</strong></td>
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<td><strong>Health and medical facilities</strong></td>
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<td>7</td>
<td>5.29</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Quality of tourism/hospitality services</strong></td>
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<td>7</td>
<td>5.61</td>
<td>1.196</td>
<td>-0.92</td>
<td>0.131</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Distance or flying time to the destination from your home</strong></td>
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<td>1</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>4.62</td>
<td>1.997</td>
<td>-0.64</td>
<td>0.131</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Security and safety of visitors</strong></td>
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<td>7</td>
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<td>1.03</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Value for money in destination tourism experiences</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Value for money of shopping items</strong></td>
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<td>7</td>
<td>5.68</td>
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<td>0.131</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Attitudes of residents towards visitors</strong></td>
<td>344</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>5.36</td>
<td>1.255</td>
<td>-1.21</td>
<td>0.131</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>The degree in which you are ‘tied’ to the destination</strong></td>
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<td>1</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>3.58</td>
<td>1.889</td>
<td>0.067</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>A favourable destination image</strong></td>
<td>344</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>5.7</td>
<td>1.259</td>
<td>-1.11</td>
<td>0.131</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Destination’s ability to ‘listen’ to the needs of tourists</strong></td>
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<td>1</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>3.84</td>
<td>1.211</td>
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Valid N 344