

Public tourism policy to increase the international tourism

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Abstract

This article is part of an ongoing research on how to develop a better public policy to attract international tourists to Mexico. The paper presents a theoretical analysis on public policy and a discussion on how it is applied in our country and the effects it has had on the increase of international tourists, in order to determine if it has been successful or can be made improvements to achieve it. The Mexican government considers that tourism is a key sector to increase the country's development and aims to consolidate Mexico as a global destination, consolidating its tourism competitiveness, however, it seems that policies have not been adequately addressed.

Public policies, tourism, tourism competitiveness

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Introduction

Tourism has experienced continued growth and deepening diversification to become one of the fastest growing economic sectors in the world. The tourism industry is one of the worthwhile industries which can support country's income. Public policies play an important role in tourism, like promoting the image of the country in the international perception, plan and make strategies to attract more tourists to visit the destination. The destinations face competitive pressures which are more and more important and complicated in today's globalized society. Therefore, tourism destinations compete for visitors at tourism market and subsequently get into a competitive struggle and it's important that destinations know and analyses their weaknesses and strengths in order to improve and maintain destination performances. Thus, through an analysis of the tourism offer of a destination and the evaluation and impact of public policies, destinations can attract a greater number of visitors and be competitive.

Public Policy

When we talk about public policy, we talk about the processes, decision-making and the results elaborated by the governments, but without ruling out the conflicts of interest, the tensions between the different points of view to solve the problems that are presented in countries, as well as actions, decisions or omissions by the different actors involved in the policy; is a scenario full of powers in conflict, confrontation and collaboration of opinions and actions.

Policies are the creation of collective actions that result in the decision making to carry out such actions. Policies are "the course of action followed by an actor or a set of actors in dealing with a problem or issue of interest. The concept of politics pays attention to what is actually done and carried out, rather than what is proposed and desired.

Policies are shaped by a set of decisions, and the choice between "alternatives" (Aguilar, 1993).

In the 1950s and 1960s, science considered that public policies were variables dependent on political activity (Roth, 2006).

It was assumed that policies were no more than the result or consequence of the rulers or those represented in the system by the political parties. In other words, the policies were the decisions of the governors for the solution of a particular problem, and that they were only carried out to legitimize their power before the governed (Aguilar y Lima, 2009).

Lasswell (1971) defines public policy as a "discipline that deals with explaining science-based, interdisciplinary and policy-making processes and the services of democratic governments", twenty years later, would add: "knowledge of the decision-making process and knowledge in the decision process "; the first, refers to the professional skills needed to participate in policy-making (knowing the policy-making process) and the second based on reliable scientific knowledge necessary to contribute to the invention of a theory and practice (data and theories of science in the policy decision process in order to improve public procurement).

On the other hand, Tamayo (1997), defines that the public policies are the set of objectives, decisions and actions carried out by a government to solve the problems that at any given moment, the citizens and the own government consider a priority.

Public policies are government actions with objectives of public interest that arise from decisions based on a process of diagnosis and feasibility analysis, for effective attention to specific public problems, where citizens participate in the definition of problems and solutions (Corzo, 2013).

Therefore, public policies are not any action taken by governments in response to certain circumstances or to the demand of a country; they are a set of planned, analyzed and intentional actions that are aimed at achieving a goal for the public interest or a benefit and that combined with instruments, procedures and resources can be reproduced consistently in time, making the necessary corrections as time passes and as societies and countries evolve (Ochoa, 2013).

Consequently, public policy refers to actions taken by a government to solve problems that arise in society, and thus, to produce a favorable change.

Tourism is an activity that gives a benefit to society and countries, and therefore, there is a need for certain actions, strategies and laws to govern and regulate this activity, hence we can say that tourism policy emerges.

Tourism policy

Tourism is an important activity for countries because the contributions it makes to the domestic product and to the balance of payments. Therefore, this importance is reflected by the public sector in the elaboration of actions, plans and programs for the countries, so it is necessary to create public policies focused on tourism and thus, to achieve a greater competitiveness in the international tourist market.

The World Tourism Organization defines the "Tourism Policy" as the action that develops the public sector from the set of administrations and institutions that compose it and affect in relevant way to the public activity (Arcoraci, 2009).

Acerenza (2006) defines tourism policy as "the set of decisions on tourism that, are integrated in the context of the national (sustainable) development policy, and guide the conduct of the sector and regulate the actions to be followed, which are translated into plans and programs of sectoral development".

Public tourism policies promote the growth of national income, create jobs, increase foreign exchange earnings and help to increase the number of tourists in different areas of a country (Velasco, 2005). This results in the improvement of the quality of life and the well-being of society (Monfort, 2000).

The position of a government in the development of public policies in tourism can be passive when the basic actions affect the activities, but without influencing their development, or active, manifested in actions that favor tourism development.

This implies the recognition of specific needs, such as providing accommodation in areas with attractive potential, or protecting areas of tourism development (Monfort, 2000)

One of the main objectives of tourism policy is to promote receptive tourism so that different types of measures can be applied, for example, marketing campaigns, improvement of the image of the destination to the outside, as well as the presentation of the products at international fairs and exhibitions, support tourist enterprises and create measures for the establishment of foreign companies (Arcoraci, 2009).

According to Hall (2000), the objectives and functions of public policies in the field of tourism are related to coordination, planning, legislation, promotion, stimulation, and support with the public interest. For example:

- Economic development: refers to the generation of foreign income; assistance in the balance of payments; employment at the national level; improving the economy of destination; provide employment; research and dissemination of information on future market trends and strengthening the image of the destination.
- Competitiveness: ensure the viability and competitiveness of tourism destinations and companies, so that they are able to continue to succeed.
- Local prosperity: tourism contributions should maximize the prosperity of destinations; policies strengthen the prosperity of the destination and seek to avoid leakage outside the economy, for example using local products and local human resources in the tourism sector.
- Quality jobs: policies should seek to strengthen working conditions in tourism and ensure the quality and creation of jobs in this sector.
- Cultural wealth: keep traditions and cultural heritage so they do not get lost.

Therefore, through public policies, destinations are able to create or strengthen their tourism products and services through strategies and actions aimed at improving the quality and conditions of these. Consequently, public policies are a factor that influences the tourist competitiveness of a destination as they help to make decisions, designate resources and solve any problem that is present in society.

Tourism competitiveness

The location of countries obliges tourists to choose between destinations, and to decide which tourism products and services have quality, as well as some added value. As a result, competitiveness and the constant pursuit of excellence and quality have become fundamental objectives of tourist destinations. Hassan (2000) defines tourism competitiveness as a destination's ability to create and integrate value-added products that support local resources and retain its market position respect its competitors. Crouch and Ritchie (1999) defines that tourism competitiveness is the ability of a country to create added value and thus increase national well-being through the management of advantages, processes and attractions, integrating linkages among themselves. Therefore, tourism competitiveness can be defined as the capacity of a destination to create, develop and integrate tourism products with added value that allow increasing the tourist's economic output and national welfare; increasing the profitability of the sector; sustain local resources and improve their competitive position in the market through different strategies to promote and market supply (Ochoa, 2013).

Tourism Policy in Mexico

In Mexico, since the 1950s, the promotion of tourism begun and with this, hotels were developed at strategic points such as Cancun, Los Cabos and Loreto, as well as a major number of buses connecting with more destinations and the introduction of international airlines.

The following is a brief description of what was done in each six-year period to develop Mexico's tourism sector, either through agreements, developing more infrastructure or allocating more funds to the sector.

In 1962 the first National Tourism Development Plan is created; although longer it considered a formal plan is not developed from the concept of strategic planning. It was considered, again, strengthen tourism infrastructure and its peripheral areas, but another very important aspect forgot to project strongly to competitiveness in tourism markets, human capital: entrepreneurs and managers (Magaña, 2004).

During the period 1970-1976 tourism was encouraged by policies that sought to increase the number of visitors to the country. The Mexican Caribbean, especially Cancun and Quintana Roo were pushed; this was an advantage in the use of resources and benefits for the region and strengthened the sector in general. In this period the joint ventures were encouraged to strengthen infrastructure in hospitality; especially the offer rooms were increased and with this, the tourist category which allowed Mexico to improve its offer hosting to internationally competitive levels. In 1975, the initiative was taken to promote Cancún as an Integrally Planned Center, being a pioneer in this type of tourism products (Molina, 2007).

From 1976 to 1982 the importance of tourism was identified as a source of foreign exchange. Emphasis was placed on improving infrastructure, particularly transport and communications and possibilities to open national and foreign private investment.

They were provided tax breaks and credits were granted to support investment in this sector. Tourist hotel classification (from one to five stars and great tourism) began, which allowed organizing the promotion and marketing of accommodation in the main national tourist destinations (Jiménez, 1993).

From 1982 to 1988 the opening of the country's economy began to other markets, which beneficent the establishment of tourism policy efficiently and competitive pricing policy was implemented at the international level, in order to be on par with the tourist destinations in the world (Magaña, 2009).

The Tourist Market was promoted with the National Tourism Program 1984-1988, as an international event for Mexico to offer, market, promote and disseminate their products to national operators and specialized journalists and foreign, especially US and Canada, but also to some European countries (Jiménez, 1993).

The years 1988-1994, tourism was promoted in the US and Europe. Tourist policies highlighted this interest, and expansion of infrastructure investment was supported and promoted again. Also, several mega projects were supported in order to expand tourism and create jobs (Magaña, 2009).

From 1994-2000, the Program for Development of Tourism Sector 1995-2000 was aimed to strength the competitiveness and sustainability of mexican tourism products, which helped in job creation, foreign exchange earnings and promoting regional development. This required conduct research to give guidelines to design strategies that would penetrate and satisfy new markets (Molina, 2007).

From 2001-2006, the National Tourism Program confirmed that tourism can be considered one of the decisive factors to increase opportunities, improve income distribution and use natural and cultural resources.

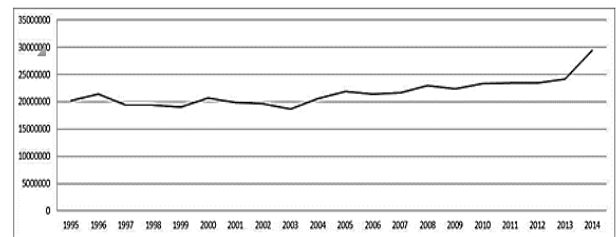
In addition, emphasis was placed on a new tourism policy which aims to reverse the inertia that have limited the potential of this sector, which would be an agent of change and transformation, a true source of economic wealth and social development for Mexico (Magaña, 2009).

The years of 2006-2012, Sectorial Tourism Program is created from a planning process of specific studies on competitiveness, development and evaluation of public policy and sought to achieve a competitive, productive, efficient, job-creating economy. In addition, it was established to make Mexico a leader in tourism through diversification of its markets, products and destinations, as well as promoting the competitiveness of companies in the sector so as to provide a service of international quality (SECTUR, 2007).

In the 2013-2018, the Institutional Program of the Tourism Promotion Council aims to strengthen the country's image through the promotion, quality and diversity and authenticity of the attractions; also seeks to expand connectivity between countries; diversify the products and make greater investments to the sector; as well as seek greater tourism agreements between countries (SEGOB, 2015).

Public policy is an instrument by which the government defines its work plan, the necessary actions to get results and how to translate the qualitative and quantitative benefits in favor of the community.

Graphic 1 shows the international tourist arrivals to Mexico from 1995 to 2014. Peaks are presented in 1996, 2000, 2005, 2008 and 2014, years in which tourism plans were developed for encourage tourism through a series of actions and strategies, mostly in promotion the country to the exterior. Therefore, public policies had a positive influence on attracting tourists in that years.



Graphic1 International Tourist Arrivals from 1995-2014

Countries with more tourism

In this section, a comparative analysis will be carried out between Mexico and the most visited countries according to UNWTO data to determine what factors influenced the attraction of tourists.

The countries that attract more tourists according to the UNWTO (2016) are France, United States and Spain, as shown in table 1 (We add Mexico to compare).

(Millions of people)						
	2010	2011	2012	2013	2014	2015*
France	77,1	81,6	82,0	89,2	83,6	84,5
United States	59,8	62,7	67,0	69,8	75,0	77,5
Spain	52,7	56,7	57,7	60,5	65,0	68,2
Mexico	23,3	23,4	23,7	24,2	29,1	32,1

Table 1 International tourist arrivals 2010-2015. *Preliminary data
Source: UNWTO, 2016

From the countries mentioned, a brief analysis will be made of the political factors that have influenced the increase of tourists to these countries, such as prioritization of tourism, budgets, marketing campaigns, infrastructure, among others.

The data for this analysis was obtained from The Travel & Tourism Competitiveness Report (WEF) 2017, 2015 and 2013, having values from 1 to 7, where one is the minimum and seven, the maximum.

This index is chosen because it is a country performance report according to certain subscripts (eg regulatory framework, infrastructure, cultural and natural resources) and measures a set of factors and policies that allow sustainable development of the tourism sector and tourism, which contributes to the development and competitiveness of a country.

The following table shows the factors analyzed by country and by years:

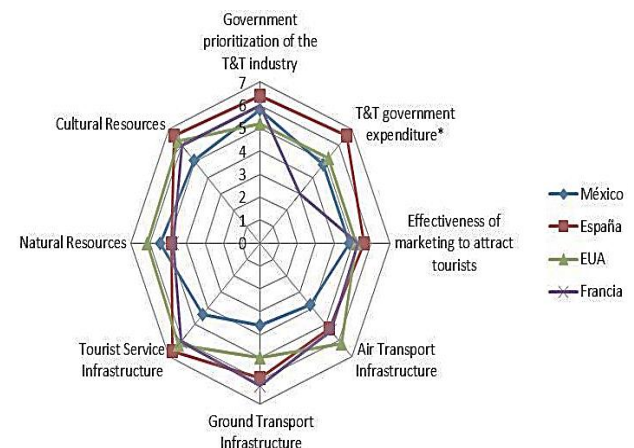
Factors	Mexico			Spain			USA			France		
	2013	2015	2017	2013	2015	2017	2013	2015	2017	2013	2015	2017
Government prioritization of the T&T industry	5	5	5	6	6	6	5	5	5	5	5	6
T&T government expenditure *	4	4	4	6	6	6	5	5	5	3	3	3
Effectiveness of marketing to attract tourists	5	4	4	5	5	5	5	5	5	5	5	5
Air Transport Infrastructure	3	3	3	5	4	5	6	6	6	4	5	5
Ground Transport Infrastructure	3	3	3	5	5	5	4	4	5	5	5	6
Tourist Service Infrastructure	4	4	4	6	6	6	6	6	6	5	6	6

Natural Resources	5	5	5	4	4	4	4	5	6	4	4	4
Cultural Resources	5	4	5	6	6	6	4	4	6	6	6	6

Table 2 Selected countries and factors
Source: own elaboration based on WEF data, 2017

Next, a comparative analysis will be carried out for years using radial graphs to visually present the gaps between the current state and the ideal state (Mexico vs. the best country), to show changes in strengths or weaknesses, and to present clearly the important categories of performance.

The first graph to be made will be the year 2013:

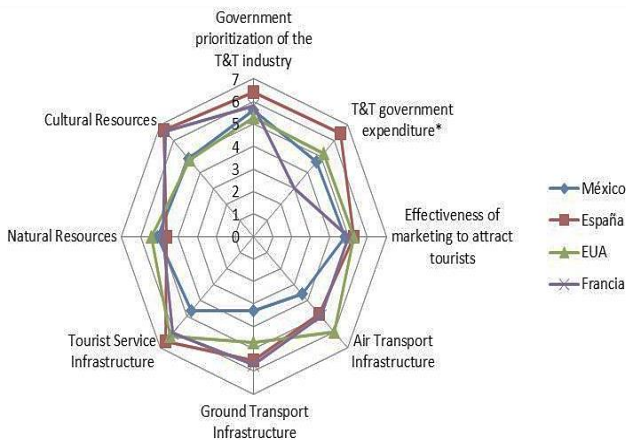


Graphic 2 Comparative 2013
Source: own elaboration based on WEF data, 2017

In graphic 2 it can be seen that the country with the best performance was Spain. According to the analyzed points, this year, Mexico did not get a good score in the tourism budget, which is a fundamental axis, since through this it could allocate more resources to have a greater demand capture through new products, providing training to service providers, or improving the quality of the products and services that are available, etc.

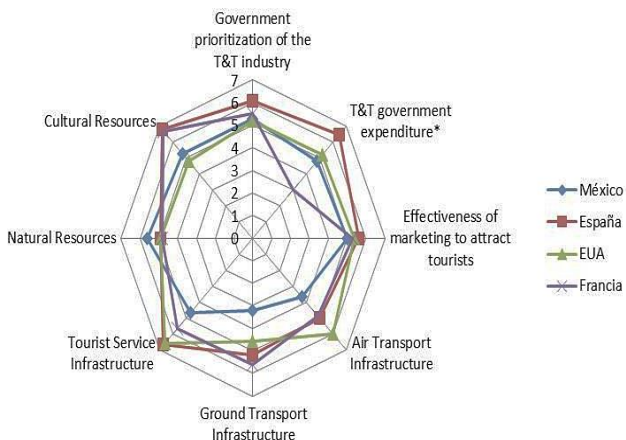
Another weak point that Mexico had in this year was the infrastructure: aerial, terrestrial and touristic. This indicates that the country lacks good roads, as well as airport connectivity and hotel quality.

Graphic 3 shows the comparative of the year 2015, where it can be seen that Mexico continues with failures in infrastructure.



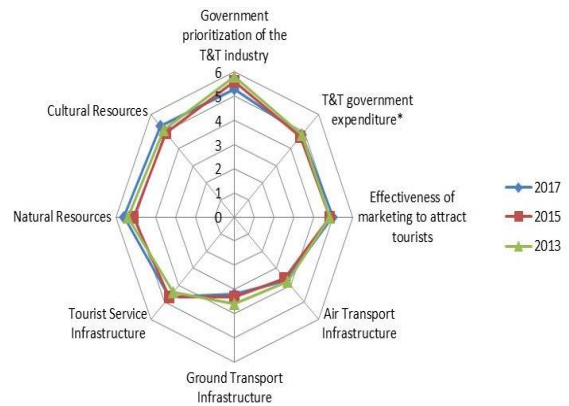
Graphic 3 Comparative 2015
Source: own elaboration based on WEF data, 2017

And in Graphic 4, which is the comparative of the year 2017, continues to present the same flaws.



Graphic 4 Comparative 2017
Source: own elaboration based on WEF data, 2017

And making an annual comparison of Mexico, we get the following:



Graphic 5 Comparative of Mexico 2013-2017
Source: own elaboration based on WEF data, 2017

Therefore, the political aspects that Mexico must consider so that it can compete and attract more tourists would be in terms of infrastructure, since the country has a good tourist offer, good marketing campaigns and has prioritized the importance of tourism over the years, as noted in the section on Tourism Policy in Mexico.

Conclusions and recommendations

The tourism sector of Mexico has a wide variety of tourism products and resources that have not been managed efficiently and effectively. Tourism policies implemented by other countries have focused on building infrastructure, giving greater value to heritage, containing prices and making a strong promotion of brands, destinations or products abroad. On the other hand, the Mexican government has implemented a tourism policy that has been characterized only by promoting tourism abroad: by launching plans focused on strengthening or developing new tourism products and have greater participation in tourism fairs.

Public policies in tourism involve collective actions and provide a framework that guides actions and strategies for the development of such activity.

In addition, for a destination to be successful, it is necessary that the government manage the social and economic factors that influence the tourism sector and stimulate the creation of new products to remain competitive in the market and add value to the country. Therefore, the government has to make strategies and actions to guideline and to attract new tourists.

It is necessary to considerate that tourism is not only promotion, quality is required before promoting a product or service, also, it's necessary to analyze the market, analyze what other countries have done and involve all sectors that intervene in the tourist activity: governmental, private initiative and educational institutions.

Tourism policy should include at least the following points to increase the arrival of tourists:

Tourist superstructure: requires an organism to develop and implement plans, also required to review the structure and legal framework on a regular basis.

Tourist Promotion: the country's tourism sector requires greater promotion and more capital to be more competitive in world markets.

Training and Human Resources Training: improve the human resources according to the new tourism markets.

Tourist Services: modernization of facilities, equipment, operation systems to make them attractive to tourists.

National Tourist Information System: through Internet, maps, brochures, videos and photos.

Tourist Culture: generate greater tourist culture and raise awareness of the importance of tourism.

The following specific actions are also proposed:

1. **Promotion:** Promote greater integration and coordination among the different governmental actors, the different levels of government and the private sector; eliminate resource constraints in order to provide greater support to the private sector, improve strategies to prevent political cycles (six-year periods) from impeding the development of the tourism sector and strengthen the link between advocacy and policies.
2. **About infrastructure:** Improve means of transport and roads; create an integrated and fluid transport system for visitors and residents; continue with air service agreements to support tourism and increase the connectivity with all Mexican airports, both domestic and international flights.
3. **Diversification of products and services:** Develop a more diversified portfolio of tourism products with greater value, focusing on different market segments; it's also necessary to innovate the existing model to offer more value to consumers and to create new experiences, as well as to take advantage of the experience that has with products like "Pueblos Mágicos", tourist routes and tourist clusters.
4. **About finance:** Finance tourism projects that offer greater potential and guarantee the efficient use of public resources and support micro, small and medium-sized enterprises.

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