

## **ESTABLISHING A MULTI-CRITERIA EVALUATION STRUCTURE FOR DEVELOPMENT TOURISM STRATEGIES: THE CASE OF CARTAGENA**

### **ABSTRACT**

Cartagena de Indias, is one of the most representative cities of Colombia, its tourist attractions and its infrastructure, make it one of the most important tourist destinations in the Caribbean. Tourism is therefore one of the main motors of the economy, recognized by locals as the leader in job creation for the city, generating significant economic and social impact. In this work, we will propose a methodology, which seeks to answer the question of what is the most suitable strategy to improve tourism in Cartagena de Indias? Since the selection of a tourism strategy is a multicriteria decision by nature, we will apply the AHP methodology to solve it. We will also work with the participation of experts from different economic and social sectors. Since this prioritization process is key to the strategic planning of the city.

Keywords: Analytic Hierarchy Process (AHP), Cartagena de Indias, Tourism, Strategic Evaluation.

### **1. Introduction**

Cartagena or Cartagena de Indias (Cartagena of the Indies), is a city on the northern coast of Colombia and capital of the Bolívar Department<sup>1</sup>. The city is one of the most representative cities of Colombia to the world. It is also a UNESCO World Heritage City. The fact of being alternative seat of the Presidency of the Republic, its tourist attractions and its infrastructures for the development of meetings and conventions, make it ideal for local, national and international major events (Corpoturismo, 2015). Cartagena and Bolívar have a Regional Competitiveness Plan 2008-2032 in which the development vision for petrochemical industry, logistic, naval, agroindustry and tourism areas is defined. (The Cartagena and Bolívar Regional Commission, 2008). The latter recognized by locals as the most important economic sector and a leader in job creation for the city, generating economic and social impact (Criterium, 2012 & CCC, 2016).

The prioritization of the strategic alternatives to improve the touristic offer of the city is a a decision making problem that should be approached from the multi-criteria analysis, with the participation of actors from different economic and social sectors

To solve this problem we propose to use the AHP method in which alternatives will be the different strategic plans that the city has currently in mind and the criteria will be selected to ensure sustainability and expansion.

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<sup>1</sup> Colombia is a unitary republic divided in departments.

## **2. Literature Review**

According to some authors, key factors of destination strategy development for a tourism destination, must focus on brand development, marketing strategy, limited resources and other factors (Liu & Chou, 2016; Mariani et al, 2014; Konecnik & Gartner, 2007). All of those constitute an integrative and systemic framework, demonstrating its necessary consideration as an elementary prerequisite of the tourist destination planning process, because their disregard can make not practicable whatever plan elaborated (Costa-DeCarvalho & Duarte-Pimentel, 2015).

Tourism policy is a key subject in tourism research, and the role of the local, national and over-national governmental bodies is emerging as a field of study, (Hjalager, 2010).

Therefore collaboration between the public sphere and the private sector is crucial for destination marketing and management (Mariani & Kylanen, 2014), and academics should be more involved in developing new techniques able to describe and prepare destinations (Mariani, Buhalis, Longhi, & Vitouladiti, 2014).

Applications related to tourism strategies objectives using AHP have been developed. These include a research related to measuring tourist preferences of smart tourism attractions via a FCEM-AHP and IPA approach in Hongshan Zoo (Wang et al, 2016); Competitiveness evaluation using a hybrid analytic hierarchy process (AHP) for The West Virginia (Zhou, et al, 2015);

## **3. Data/Model Analysis**

The AHP network designed for this case is presented in the following figure:

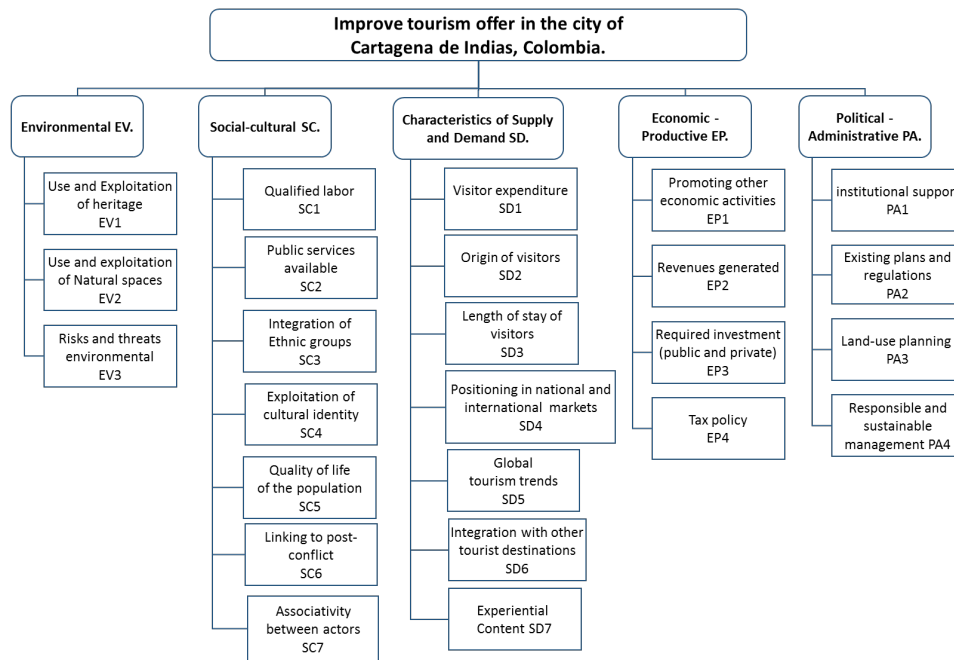


Figure 1. Hierarchy model for the decision making problem

#### 4. Limitations

Given the scope and characteristics of this article, we only focus on tourism. Four other productive sectors of the City of Cartagena (Petrochemical industry, logistics, naval and agroindustry), have not been included in this work.

#### 5. Conclusions

We have not developed the model so far, so we do not have any conclusions yet. At the moment, given the number of selected criteria, we can say the model is not complex and the questionnaire will be simple.

In reviewing literature and local and regional officials Documents, we defined five initials alternatives as follows:

1. Construction of an ecotourism complex that allows outdoor activities and more easily connect to other destinations in the department and the region.
2. Aquatic and terrestrial connection between the historic center, Bocagrande and the cruise port, through groves and mangrove route (Spanish: Ruta del Manglar), with different options of ecological and maritime transport; outdoor activities.
3. Tourist Boulevard project, adequacy of infrastructure beach service, recovery of public space, lighting and improving mobility along Santander Avenue and First Avenue of Bocagrande.

4. Development of a nautical network, whose epicenter is the civic Marina inside the Bay of Animas (Naval Base), and with shippers and complementary springs that connect parts of the city (La Boquilla, Manga, Barú, Mamonal).
5. Develop a tramline extending along the main coastal town line along First Avenue of Bocagrande, Santander Avenue and North Zone, connecting new urban developments and commuter train project between Cartagena de Indias-Barranquilla- Santa Marta.

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