

# **Assessing the competitiveness of Matera and the Basilicata Region (Italy) ahead of the 2019 European Capital of Culture**

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## **Abstract**

Cities/regions are increasingly using events to aid social/economic development. The European Capital of Culture promotes urban management and economic production using culture to drive social legacies, job creation and civic re-positioning. This paper aims to understand how Matera and Basilicata's residents perceive destination competitiveness ahead of the 2019 ECoC. This paper adapts the Integrated Model of Destination Competitiveness and suggests a new determinant to understand resident perceptions. This paper contributes a new determinant to consider in competitiveness research: social conditions to improve local wellbeing. 200 respondents identify strengths/weaknesses of each competitiveness determinant. The results presented in this study display sample mean values and standard deviations for each indicator, as well as Wilcoxon test statistic (z). Competitive indicators are those showing means above 4.0. Descriptive and inferential analyses using SPSS 17 show strengths/weaknesses comparing Matera (city) and Basilicata (region)—with similarities and differences outlined to consider both urban and regional perspectives and differences. For the data analysis, Wilcoxon paired signed rank test displays differences in the competitiveness factors between Matera and Basilicata. Wilcoxon (a nonparametric alternative to paired sample t-test) was performed since the data distribution was left-skewed and Kolmogorov-Smirnov statistic indicates violation of normality assumption. Results show the majority of inherited, created and supporting resources are competitive, as well as image and social conditions; however, management and organisation needs improvement. It is essential that ECoC hosts have long-term competitive strategies in place to strengthen urban and regional capacity when delivering diverse cultural programmes, at present, and into the future. This study offers insight before the 2019 European Capital of Culture to inform planners and policy makers ahead of the event and offers consideration and discussion of social impacts and the need to gain such insight in competitiveness research going forward.

## **Keywords**

Matera, Basilicata, European Capital of Culture, Destination Competitiveness, Social Conditions

## **Introduction**

Events are increasingly playing an important role in regenerating cities by catalysing culture and aiding social and economic development. The European Capital of Culture (ECoC) promotes urban management using culture to drive the restructuring of social legacies, job creation and civic re-positioning (Richards et al., 2013; Richards & Wilson, 2007; Spirou, 2011). It is essential that ECoC hosts have long-term competitive strategies in place to strengthen urban and regional capacity when delivering diverse cultural programmes, at present, and into the

future. To establish competitive and comparative advantages, it is important that host destinations consider their competitiveness alongside growth and intended development (Crouch, 2011). While host cities are often focal points when it comes to strengthening competitiveness, it is also important to consider immediate regions and their level of preparedness.

Destination competitiveness is concerned with measuring economic, political, psychological, social, cultural and environmental factors to increase impact and improve management (Crouch & Ritchie, 1999; Ritchie & Crouch, 2003) and inform policy and planning (Budd & Hirmis, 2004; Estol & Font, 2016). Furthermore, tourism managers, officials and planners are investing time and financial resources to promote subsequent cultural, social and economic developments and opportunities (Deery et al., 2012; Smith, 2012). Destination competitiveness research has focused on a range of specific topics. These have included price competitiveness (e.g. Dwyer et al., 2000), the natural environment (e.g. Hassan, 2000), business features (e.g. Enright & Newton, 2004), quality of tourism management (e.g. Go & Govers, 2000), perceptions of destination attractiveness (e.g. Cracolici & Nijkamp, 2009), disability/accessibility (e.g. DomínguezVila et al., 2015), mass tourism (e.g. Claver-Cortés et al., 2007) and cultural heritage (e.g. Alberti & Giusti, 2012). While these address specific topics in tourism, more research positioning urban and regional competitiveness ahead of hosting events is needed (Getz & Page, 2016). It is argued that competitiveness studies are essential in more peripheral and emerging destinations (Ayikoru, 2015; Campón-Cerro et al., 2017; Mulec & Wise, 2013), especially relevant to this study given Matera's geographical location.

Crouch (2011) argued there is a need to focus on and measure particular approaches to tourism and destination competitiveness. This will help determine how competitive a destination is in developing (and delivering) a niche product. This paper addresses the preparedness Matera and of the Region of Basilicata ahead of 2019. Matera attracts visitors because it has a designated World Heritage Site (since 1993), but intra-regional tourism in other parts of Basilicata are not as affirmed. Matera will represent the focal attraction; however, given this part of southern Italy is peripheral in the Italian context, it is important to understand the administrative region's competitiveness because future visitors will need to traverse extents of the region to attend events. There are no direct air connections to Matera (with Bari and Naples the closest major airports to the region). ECoC events/activities will (ideally) influence the greater region. Forte et al. (2015) highlight European Union policy aims to improve "regional economic wellbeing, promote growth and reduce disparities through convergence. Positioning a conceptual framework for this study, Gomezelj and Mihalič (2008: 295) stress maintaining high levels of competitiveness is linked to a destination's "ability to create added value, and managing assets and processes, attractiveness, aggressiveness and proximity." Ideally, this will allow the destination to prosper so future generations can learn to improve and continue managing. Event competitiveness research is therefore important to assess destination strengths, weaknesses and preparedness, initially, in commencing longitudinal research.

### **The Case of Matera 2019**

The Basilicata Region is located in the south of Italy along the Ionian and Tyrrhenian Seas bordering the regions of: Apulia (to the north and east), Campania (to the west) and Calabria (to the south). As a part of South Italy's macro-region, Basilicata's defined as a developing tourism region, compared to vibrant northern Italian regions that show higher levels of competitiveness and tourism opportunities (Aquilino & Wise, 2016). The geographical location of the region, unlike northern regions of Italy, with proximity to the most developed European

countries. Thus, the Region of Basilicata sees limited incoming tourist flow. Matera (the main city in Basilicata) attracts the highest number of arrivals (ISTAT, 2016).

The region's extremely varied natural landscape consists of lakes, forests, hills, mountains and rivers with a diversity of fauna and flora situated in several protected areas and regional parks and two national parks, Pollino National Park and Val d'Agri National Park. Its landscape shows the traces of its historical milestones that have shaped its archaeological, historical, cultural heritage. These rich landscapes have attracted national and international filmmakers to film in naturally and historically dramatic places (Bencivenga et al., 2015). The economy of Basilicata is mostly dependent upon national or regional markets (ISTAT, 2015). Isolation has affected Basilicata's demographic and social dimensions, impacted by stagnating population growth, low employment-rates and an economy based primarily on local mechanics and mineral exploitation/extraction (ISTAT, 2015; Tanizawa et al., 2011). There are concerns of future social instability with increased numbers of migrants arriving in the southern regions of Italy from Africa and Middle East (ISTAT, 2015). This increase in migration will likely change the demographics of the Basilicata Region, and likewise adjacent regions in the coming decades, and embracing such multi-culturalism during the ECoC is essential.

Tourism is an increasing economic driving force in Matera and Basilicata. Given the mild Mediterranean climate, varied dramatic landscapes, and rich cultural heritage, Basilicata promotes eclectic markets like sea and sun, culture, sport and leisure, and wine and food (APTb, 2016). Tourist arrivals and overnight stays have increased in the last few years, improving local GDP (APTb, 2016). The support of the local government and relevant investments in tourism development and promotional activities using events is contributing new insight with the aim of guaranteeing sustainable developments and tackling tourism seasonality. The city of Matera has been the central attraction since the *Sassi*, a vast agglomeration of very ancient dwellings standing in the middle of the city, received UNESCO World Heritage recognition in 1993 (Bernardo & De Pascale, 2016). *Sassi* is now seeing increased investments in urban regeneration and infrastructure in preparation for ECoC 2019.

ECoC will produce tourism multiplier effects in Basilicata and adjacent regions. Matera 2019 is a catalyst for subsequent social, cultural and economic development in Basilicata. This paper attempts to begin a preliminary discussion pertinent to destination competitiveness in the city and region to further explore research directions based on identified strengths/weaknesses as the city (and region) extends its tourism and events offerings.

### **Competitiveness Research**

Destination competitiveness refers to the ability to create additional values—thus increasing capital by managing: assets and processes, attractiveness, aggressiveness and proximity, and relationships (Camagni & Capello, 2013; Turok, 2004; Ritchie & Crouch, 2003) for future generations. Generating insight of destination competitiveness allows researchers to assess current management practices, existing strategies, planning agendas, potential impacts and, importantly, identify strengths and areas where attention or investment might enhance a destination (Crouch & Ritchie, 1999; Dwyer & Kim, 2003). Focusing on the need to be critical of needed improvements, Gomezelj and Mihalič (2008: 294) note:

“In an ever more saturated market, the fundamental task of destination management is to understand how a tourism destination's competitiveness can be enhanced and sustained. There is thus a strong need to identify and explore competitive (dis)advantages and to analyse the actual competitive position.”

Destination's competitiveness positions a destination among similar (and competing) markets locally, regionally and globally. While important to highlight how a destination positions itself among competitors, it has long been important to focus on strategies concerning how to develop a destination—in terms of maintaining or diversifying the tourism product offering(s) (Benur & Bramwell, 2015; Kozak & Rimmington, 1999). In such an intricate urban and regional scenario, understanding trends and rule changes concerning external/internal environments are no longer sufficient for shaping competitive tourism products. If supply and demand becomes compromised by patterns directly (or indirectly) related to the tourism industry, managing a tourism destination will require the development of mechanisms that could lead to foreseen changes to pre-emptively design strategies (Dwyer et al., 2000). Destination marketing and management organisations play an important role in coordinating and facilitating the combination of resources and in shaping competitive products, ensuring tourist loyalty and cost-effective promotion (Shirazi & Som, 2011). This will involve managing networks and cooperation among relevant stakeholders, in both the private and public sectors. One of the challenges is often overcoming the inconsistency of business strategies and tourism policies implemented by not-interrelated players (Bertelli et al., 2007). Foreseeing changes and integrating strategies and policies are endeavours of a complex system of governance involving different layers of management and relative stakeholders, within public and private contexts (Bertelli et al., 2007).

According to Crouch (2011: 27), “a further challenge to the management of destination competitiveness is that the goals of this competition are not always clear or congruent.” Therefore, performance based motives (which may involve financial, social or environmental demands) should be measured based on performance and the ability to monitor and continually improve a destination and its attractions (Armenski et al., 2011). Competitiveness, therefore, is measured empirically determined based upon a destination's dependency on its (tourism) sector, with subsequent successes or failures relating to changes and nascent industry developments influencing performance (Dwyer et al., 2016).

To better understand and measure competitiveness, tourism researchers have presented various models since the 1990s (Crouch, 2011). There are a number of ways of measuring destination competitiveness (e.g. Enright & Newton, 2004; Hassan, 2000), and numerous scholars have used and widely adapted models developed by Ritchie and Crouch (2003) and Dwyer and Kim (2003). Despite the approach, each model focuses on specific determinants to measure impacts and quality standards. For instance, Hassan's (2000) model emphasises environmental determinants, in addition to comparative advantages, tourism structure and demand factors. As will be outlined in the next section, this paper adopts Dwyer and Kim's (2003) Integrated Model of Destination Competitiveness. Detailed work undertaken by tourism researchers on overall tourism competitiveness (Crouch & Ritchie, 1999; Ritchie & Crouch, 2000). They examined the applicability of competitiveness research and models in other contexts spanning companies and products, national industries, and national economies, as well as competitiveness across service industries. Crouch and Ritchie (1999) claim that, competitive destinations bring success and wellbeing for its residents helping create both economically and socially sustainable futures. Ritchie and Crouch (2003) tested and presented an updated version of their competitiveness model: the Conceptual Model of Destination Competitiveness (with elements of the model including destination policy, planning and development, destination management, core resources and attractors and supporting factors and resources). Ritchie and Crouch (2003) highlight competitiveness research needs to focus more on sustainability, and this paper contributes a new determinant further addresses this point by considering social conditions,

and economic wellbeing. To be competitive, destination development must be sustainable, not only economically and ecologically, but also socially, culturally and politically (Ritchie & Crouch, 2000). Acknowledging competitiveness can lead to informing tourism policy and practice. Scholars have recently built on foundation work developing subsequent models for improving destination competitiveness approaches (DomínguezVila et al., 2015; Mendola, & Volo, 2017). This paper now turns to the competitiveness approach adapted for the case of Matera and Basilicata.

## **Method**

Dwyer and Kim's (2003) Integrated Model was adapted for this study. A survey questionnaire using a seven-point Likert scale from 1 (less competitive) to 7 (most competitive) was conducted divided into six main determinants of destination competitiveness: Inherited Resources; Created Resources; Supporting Resources; Destination Management and Organisation; Social Conditions to Improve Local Wellbeing; and Image and Awareness Conditions. This Integrated Model is useful for this study because it seeks a realistic picture of the connections between different parts of the model, compared to the Conceptual Model which is more linear (meaning dependence between different groups of factors are shown in only one direction). Thus, the Integrated Model assumes mutual dependence between indicators, and explicitly separates the sources accordingly based on specific determinants. Moreover, the Integrated Model underlines the importance of demand factors (including inherited resources, created resources and supporting resources). Awareness of alternative tourist destinations, their tourism offer(s) and tourist perception are critical factors influencing tourist flow. Therefore, destinations must develop tourism products that will provoke demand. Alternatively, the Crouch and Ritchie's (1999) Conceptual Model neglects competition factors on the demand side, focusing only on the supply side, which Gomezelj and Michalic (2008) argue provides an incomplete picture of destination competitiveness.

From the Integrated Model, amending the demand conditions determinant proposes the need to considering social conditions in urban and regional competitiveness research. Demand conditions, being awareness, perception and preferences link to image conditions, thus joined with the image and awareness determinant. This work contributes new insight to expand the Integrated Model to consider and include social conditions and local wellbeing because local residents completed the survey. To contribute a different approach to data collection, it is tourism experts and/or by suppliers who usually complete competitiveness surveys to address demand. When targeting insight from local residents, the focus on demand differs concerning local benefits/impacts. Developing this determinant aims to consider how local residents perceive such benefits/impacts ahead of ECoC 2019 (concerning social conditions and wellbeing). Quality of life is uniformly difficult to define due to the broad conceptualisation that imply contribution of some determinants that improve people's social, economic and environmental welfare, as it can be argued that a competitive destination is one that bring success and effectively creates sustainable wellbeing to its residents (Boukas & Ziakas, 2016; Cracolici & Nijkamp, 2009). The indicators to develop this determinant are based on discussions framed in the social impacts of tourism and events literature (Deery et al, 2012; Smith, 2013), further detailed in the discussion. Moreover, there is a need to assess how events and future tourism opportunities will create opportunities and have a local social impact (Richards et al., 2013).

No single set of competitiveness indicators apply to all destinations indicators in each determinant must be relevant to the case (Dwyer & Kim, 2003). Specific to Matera and Basilicata, a final set of 83 indicators were included in the survey (organised by the listed

determinants). 200 surveys were returned and all were coded for the analysis. Scattered missing values shows respondents abstained from answering a few questions either pertaining to certain demographics or to certain factors of competitiveness. The survey was prepared in English and then translated to Italian. A pilot study in the form of a translation test with participants fluent in both Italian and English was conducted before disseminating the survey. Those who participated in the pilot translation had varied knowledge of tourism. This was to ensure question clarity, especially among anticipated participants who may lack knowledge of tourism and to minimise jargon. Any confusion was noted, then amended, and confirmed, to ensure a clear and coherent survey prior to its wider distribution.

The results presented in the following sections display sample mean values and standard deviations for each indicator, as well as Wilcoxon test statistic ( $z$ ). Descriptive and inferential analyses using SPSS 17 show strengths/weaknesses comparing Matera (city) and Basilicata (region)—with similarities and differences presented in the next section. Indicators deemed competitive are those showing means above 4.0. For the data analysis, Wilcoxon paired signed rank test displays differences in the competitiveness factors between Matera and Basilicata. Wilcoxon, a nonparametric alternative to paired sample  $t$ -test, was performed since the data distribution was left-skewed and Kolmogorov-Smirnov statistic indicates violation of normality assumption (Terrell, 1999). Each indicator was calculated and analysed based on completed responses provided (questionnaires with missing values were not excluded).

Table 1 shows respondent demographic. The nonzero probability of involving different members of the population was satisfied. Survey data was collected both online and through paper distribution between October 2015 and September 2016. Online, participants accessed the Google Forms survey through a link, where the completed survey data then populated in a Google Drive Excel file. With the assistance of local tourism organisers and social media, upon completion participants were asked to forward the link to Matera and Basilicata residents. Printed surveys were distributed and collected locally in Matera. Indeed, the sample shows diversity across the age range, level of education and type of employment. People from Matera and/or Basilicata spend most of their lives here. While it is widely accepted to measure competitiveness based on perspectives of industry experts, this can result in bias and skewed perceptions by respondents working in a particular (or ancillary) area of tourism. Dredge (2010) considers local insight tourism development essential, eluding potential conflicts between locals, planners and policy makers, and helps foster social development.

**Table 1. Sample demographics**

<b>Sample</b>	<b>%</b>	<b>Sample</b>	<b>%</b>
<i>Gender</i>		<i>Age</i>	
Male	44.2	18-24	5.5
Female	41.2	25-30	19.1
n/r	14.6	31-35	16.6
<i>Place of Residence</i>		36-40	7.5
Matera (city)	65.8	41-45	11.6
Basilicata	23.6	46-50	11.6
n/r	10.6	51-55	6.0
<i>Matera/Basilicata home place</i>		56-60	10.6
Yes	70.9	61-65	4.5
No	26.1	66-70	1.0
n/r	3	71-75	1.0
<i>Level of Education</i>		n/r	5.0
PhD	11.6	<i>Employment Status</i>	
Master	12.1	Employed	53.3
PG Cert/Dip. (Laurea Spec.)	32.2	Unemployed	18.6
Bachelor	19.6	Self-Employed	24.6
High School	21.6	Retired	3.5
Training Qualification	1.0		
n/r	1.9		
<i>Type of Employment or Expertise</i>			
<i>Goods Producing</i>		<i>Serviced Providing</i>	
Construction	2.5	Educational Services	12.1
<i>Agriculture, Forestry, Fishing/Hunting</i>		Financial Activities	4.5
Wage and salary	0.5	Health Care/Social Assist.	3.0
Self-Employed or Family Worker	0.5	Informatin and Comms.	4.5
<i>Trained Specific Industries</i>		National Federal Govt.	4.5
Science and/or technology	7.5	Police, safety/security	0.5
Other (not specified)	15.6	Prof. and Bus Services	2.5
<i>Other</i>		Regional/Local Govt.	5.0
Environmental Protection	2.5	Retail Trade	1.5
Run a social Enterprise	1.5	Tourism, Leisure and Hosp.	17.6
Volunteer or Charity Worker	2.0	Utilities	1.5
n/r	6.7	Self-Employed	3.5

**Results and Descriptive Analysis**

Calculating Cronbach's Alpha before Wilcoxon (z) tested the internal consistency for each of the competitive category for both Matera and Basilicata. Results demonstrate alpha coefficients for each factor is acceptable and well above the minimum value of 0.7 (Table 2). All values of Cronbach alpha's are above the threshold value of 0.7 as suggested by Nunnally (1978). SPSS 17 performed descriptive and inferential analyses to identify strengths/weaknesses. Tables 3-8 show similarities and differences between the competitiveness of the city of Matera and the Region of Basilicata, followed by a discussion that articulates results.

**Table 2. Internal consistency of factors extracted**

Competitiveness Category	Cronbach's Alpha	
	Matera	Region of Basilicata
Inherited Resources	0.733	0.794
Created Resources	0.935	0.925
Supporting Resources	0.940	0.950
Destination Management and Organisation	0.966	0.971
Social Conditions to Improve Local Wellbeing	0.946	0.948
Image and Awareness Conditions	0.937	0.943
Competitiveness scale	0.909	0.921

Inherited resources include both natural and cultural elements. According to respondents, Matera seems to be more competitive in all inherited elements specifically compared to Basilicata regionally, except for cleanliness in the destination ( $z=-1.32$ ;  $\text{sig.}=0.185$ ) and space/capacity to host events ( $z=-3.02$ ;  $\text{sig.}=0.002$ ). Furthermore, respondents stated that the attractive natural environment adds value to the destination experience indicator with the highest competitive advantage (Matera=6.42,  $SD=1.10$ ; Basilicata=6.17,  $SD=1.28$ ). Insufficient space/capacity to host events and cultural activities are marked as the highest disadvantage in both subsamples (Matera=4.36,  $SD=1.79$ ; Basilicata=4.72,  $SD=1.82$ ) (Table 3).

**Table 3. Inherited resources**

	Matera			Region of Basilicata			z	Sig (2-tailed)
	N	$\bar{X}$	SD	N	$\bar{X}$	SD		
Space/capacity to host events and cultural activities	194	4.36	1.79	190	4.72	1.82	-3.02	0.002
Cultural heritage (i.e. traditional arts, music, gastronomy)	194	6.11	1.16	190	5.85	1.32	-3.86	0.000
Aesthetic, artistic and architectural features add value to the destination experience	191	6.27	1.21	191	5.82	1.36	-5.17	0.000
Attractive natural environment adds value to destination experience	193	6.42	1.10	190	6.17	1.28	-4.03	0.000
Ideal climate for tourists/visitors	192	5.56	1.35	187	5.37	1.51	-2.62	0.009
Cleanliness of the destination	192	5.10	1.76	187	5.02	1.79	-1.32	0.185

Table 4 displays created resources findings. Descriptive results indicate quality of food as the highest comparative advantage in both researched areas. However, Wilcoxon Signed Ranks Test shows no significant differences between Matera and Basilicata, indicating similar responses for quality of food ( $z=-1.24$ ;  $\text{sig.}=0.213$ ). Likewise, items related to the capacity of the accommodation that would allow for increased visitation ( $z=-0.09$ ;  $\text{sig.}=0.924$ ) and accommodation value for money ( $z=-1.27$ ;  $\text{sig.}=0.202$ ) were not perceived differently. This may be due to similar price range of accommodation and hosting capacity across the Basilicata



Region. In addition, availability of both urban ( $z=-1.93$ ;  $\text{sig}=.053$ ) and rural zones ( $z=-1.13$ ;  $\text{sig}=0.258$ ) for hosting outdoor events shows no competitive differences between Matera and Basilicata. It is also worth mentioning that respondents consider entertainment opportunities and cultural activities cater to youth interests (below 18) to be the least competitive in Matera ( $=3.75$ ;  $\text{SD}=1.68$ ), while lack of diverse opportunities for nightlife is perceived to be the least competitive in Basilicata overall ( $=3.25$ ;  $\text{SD}=1.69$ ).

**Table 4. Created resources**

	Matera			Region of Basilicata			z	Sig (2-tailed)
	N	$\bar{X}$	SD	N	$\bar{X}$	SD		
Local transportation efficiency/quality	192	3.88	2.04	190	3.34	2.06	-4.15	.000
Variety of food service and facilities	190	5.11	1.60	186	4.53	1.60	-4.66	.000
Quality of food	193	5.94	1.32	185	5.85	1.37	-1.24	.213
Accommodation capacity allow for increased visitors	189	4.04	1.70	185	4.05	1.66	-.09	.924
Quality/value for money of accommodation for prices	190	4.44	1.63	184	4.58	1.56	-1.27	.202
Diversity of shopping opportunities and experiences	190	3.89	1.59	187	3.47	1.58	-3.92	.000
Range of nightlife opportunities	190	4.00	1.73	181	3.25	1.69	6.30	.000
Entertainment opportunities and cultural activities cater to youths interests (below 18)	186	3.75	1.68	179	3.32	1.74	-3.72	.000
Entertainment opportunities and cultural activities cater to young adults interests between ages of 18-35	189	4.33	1.66	183	3.58	1.72	-6.45	.000
Entertainment opportunities and cultural activities cater to adults interests between ages of 35-55	191	4.77	1.58	180	3.98	1.71	-7.20	.000
Entertainment opportunities and cultural activities cater to people over 55	184	4.77	1.48	177	4.21	1.63	-6.08	.000
Sufficient number of event venues (e.g. conferences halls, sports stadia, auditoriums) to organise indoor events and cultural activities	189	3.93	1.75	181	3.64	1.59	-2.96	.003
Availability of land and ease of zoning land in urban areas to host larger outdoor events and cultural activities	183	3.93	1.78	176	3.70	1.58	-1.93	.053
Availability of land and ease of zoning land just outside urban areas and in rural areas to host larger outdoor events and cultural activities	181	4.11	1.79	174	4.00	1.69	-1.13	.258

The ratings for the indicators of determinant supporting resources (Table 5) were considerably lower than for the inherited resources and created resources in both Matera and Basilicata. Some supporting resources, including the availability of health/medical facilities, easy

to use telecommunication systems for tourists and availability of financial institutions and currency exchange facilities, are most competitive. Alternatively, links with major origin markets and accessibility of both Matera (=3.63; SD=2.16) and Basilicata (=3.42; SD=2.12) is generally seen as the least competitive indicator. Supporting resources are statistically different, whereas Matera's results show a higher level of competitiveness in every supporting factor.

**Table 5. Supporting resources**

	Matera			Region of Basilicata			z	Sig (2-tailed)
	N	$\bar{X}$	SD	N	$\bar{X}$	SD		
Destination links with major origin markets: accessibility of the destination in terms of transportation	191	3.63	2.16	185	3.42	2.12	-2.71	.007
Affordable flight prices to the destination (or within proximity of the destination) through low-cost/discount airlines/flight companies	180	4.05	2.02	180	3.51	1.94	-5.76	.000
Established events districts, or facilitating complexes of venues with accommodation	188	4.06	1.82	179	3.75	1.77	-3.638	.000
Ease and availability of health/medical facilities	184	4.62	1.68	182	4.23	1.73	-4.72	.000
Availability of financial institutions and currency exchange facilities	183	4.27	1.70	175	3.89	1.68	-4.90	.000
Easy to use telecommunication system for tourists	188	4.44	1.64	179	4.14	1.71	-4.41	.000
Sufficient tourism signposting and quality of directions/information in several languages	187	4.10	1.95	179	3.74	1.90	-4.47	.000
Sufficient number of web sites and online information about the destination, attractions and events location(s)	190	4.48	1.79	181	4.03	1.76	-4.85	.000
Businesses make use of online reservations and sales	181	3.97	1.72	171	3.73	1.70	-3.11	.002
Existence of adequate tourism and event management education programs	179	3.84	1.82	172	3.66	1.74	-2.08	.038
Existence of regular training programs for tourism and event related work to enhance service quality	175	3.79	1.86	168	3.64	1.77	-1.63	.102

Results show the Basilicata Region (in general) is less competitive among the majority of destination management and organisation indicators (Table 6), with the exception of two factors. Namely, respondents consider locals from Basilicata Region have greater support from the public sector concerning organising and informing locals on upcoming events and cultural activities compared to Matera. Wilcoxon Signed Ranks Test shows significant differences between the majority of destination management and organisation factors whereas negative Z scores (Table 6) indicating greater competitiveness of Matera compared to Basilicata Region. For instance, the following indicators: people are informed of plans to develop and promote new events and cultural attractions ( $z=-0.06$ ,  $\text{sig.}=0.951$ ); the resident population supports the organisation of

events and cultural activities ( $z=-0.35$ ,  $\text{sig.}=0.738$ ); and involvement of Italy's National Tourism Organisation in the promotion of event and cultural activities ( $z=-0.53$ ,  $\text{sig.}=0.593$ ) were similar.

**Table 6. Destination management and organisation**

	Matera			Region of Basilica			z	Sig (2-tailed)
	N	$\bar{X}$	SD	N	$\bar{X}$	SD		
Tourism/Event managers and employees understand importance of delivering service quality	186	4.28	1.83	162	3.67	1.91	-5.31	.000
Much research into market analysis is informing tourism policy, event planning and destination development	177	4.25	1.75	159	3.64	1.81	-5.64	.000
Research is conducted on nearby markets to compare the delivery of events and cultural product offerings	170	3.86	1.77	149	3.38	1.76	-4.02	.000
The delivery of events and cultural offerings has strengthened recently	184	4.77	1.65	157	4.19	1.67	-5.15	.000
Events and cultural activities are popular year-round	185	4.87	1.61	159	4.13	1.82	-5.92	.000
Tourism managers and employees are efficient in solving organisational problems at the destination	177	3.97	1.68	157	3.50	1.84	-3.91	.000
Tourism managers and employees are efficient in solving organisational problems before and during events	175	4.01	1.74	153	3.31	1.79	-5.53	.000
Tourism/event managers are innovative when planning and delivering new event products and cultural activities	175	3.73	1.75	154	3.36	1.79	-3.04	.002
There is a clear vision among tourism/event managers and employees to deliver creative events and cultural activities	174	4.22	1.80	155	3.66	1.77	-4.84	.000
Managers and employees are responsive to visitor needs	176	3.86	1.66	153	3.43	1.76	-4.38	.000
The future events and cultural activities are supported in stakeholders values	171	4.31	1.64	151	3.94	1.67	-3.96	.000
People are informed of plans to develop and promote new events and cultural attractions	172	3.35	1.74	155	3.39	1.76	-.06	.951
Health and Safety practices are up to standard and well-managed	174	4.08	1.71	153	3.97	1.92	-1.10	.269
Adequate risk assessments and emergency evacuation plans are clear	171	3.58	1.90	151	3.57	2.00	-.17	.862
Public sector recognises the importance of sustainable service sector development	173	3.71	1.77	155	3.40	1.70	-3.00	.003
Public sector informs people of development plans and programs linked to upcoming events and cultural activities	173	3.65	1.81	169	4.21	1.75	-3.16	.002
Public sector recognises and supports the organisation of events and cultural activities	151	3.35	1.67	153	3.97	1.74	-3.21	.003
Private sector recognises and supports the organisation of events and cultural activities	168	4.60	1.71	153	3.97	1.63	-4.71	.000
The resident population supports the organisation of events and cultural activities	174	4.60	1.63	154	4.51	1.62	-0.35	.738
Hospitality of residents towards tourists/visitors	179	5.32	1.60	157	5.03	1.89	-2.68	.007

Foreign investment/available external funding is needed to support growth in the events industry	169	5.17	1.65	152	4.85	1.84	-3.03	.002
Destination/tourism marketing puts emphasis on events and cultural activities in the destination	173	4.70	1.77	157	4.26	1.74	-4.06	.000
Involvement of Italy's National Tourism Organisation in promoting event and cultural activities	156	4.00	1.72	146	4.01	1.83	-.53	.593
Involvement of local and regional Destination Marketing Organisations in promoting events/cultural activities	158	4.34	1.76	147	4.02	1.90	-1.93	.053
Use of technology and social media sites to support marketing of events and cultural activities	175	5.12	1.62	154	4.75	1.79	-4.39	.000

Results in Table 7 suggest almost half of the indicators (of social conditions to improve local wellbeing) display numerous differences when comparing social factors across Matera and Basilicata. Local and regional pride seem to be enhanced through hosting events and cultural activities ( $=5.23$ ;  $\text{sig.}=1.61$ ) and considered the most competitive advantage for Matera, while lack of mentorship and apprenticeship programs to train and involve locals ( $=3.52$ ;  $\text{SD}=1.79$ ) see lower values, which can impact social and human capital. Results suggest residents are proud to host ECoC, but there exists some uncertainty concerning how they will socially benefit, overall. The most competitive social conditions in Basilicata seem to be mutual understanding and tolerance between locals and tourists ( $=4.90$ ;  $\text{SD}=1.80$ ); while respondents noted the lack of a sufficient number of initiatives in place to assist persons/travelers with disability ( $=3.33$ ;  $\text{SD}=1.73$ ).

**Table 7. Social conditions to improve local wellbeing**

	Matera			Region of Basilica			z	Sig (2-tailed)
	N	$\bar{X}$	SD	N	$\bar{X}$	SD		
Destination has clear policies on social tourism to benefit the local population	169	3.67	1.79	163	3.61	1.94	-0.79	.429
Mutual understanding and tolerance between locals and tourists	174	5.09	1.64	160	4.90	1.80	-1.55	.121
Local population is involved and supports event tourism and the organisation of cultural activities	172	4.40	1.75	160	4.18	1.83	-1.34	.179
Local population is benefitting events/cultural activities	170	4.91	1.66	161	4.53	1.80	-3.84	.000
There are adequate tourism, events and cultural education programs at local higher education institutions	165	4.16	1.97	157	3.90	1.87	-2.60	.009
Mentorship, apprenticeship programs exist to train and involve locals	161	3.52	1.79	150	3.47	1.83	-.539	.590
There is a focus on local business strengths and the encouragement of local enterprise opportunities	161	3.89	1.68	154	3.82	1.75	-.626	.532
Plans exist to assist people from underprivileged communities	157	3.65	1.85	147	3.52	1.81	-2.52	.012
Initiatives in place to assist persons with disability	150	3.69	1.87	146	3.33	1.73	-3.98	.000

Local and regional pride is increased through by hosting events and cultural activities	167	5.23	1.61	155	4.61	1.77	-5.17	.000
Venues are co-managed to support local resident use	164	4.35	1.75	152	3.82	1.66	-4.33	.000
Volunteer programs exist to involve residents	154	3.86	1.73	148	3.53	1.66	-2.73	.006
Legacy training and participation incentives exist for locals	159	3.61	1.73	153	3.50	1.65	-1.223	.221
Local population is aware of legacy agendas and benefits of hosting events and cultural activities	165	4.02	1.78	156	3.80	1.80	-.946	.344
Overall local interest in promoting tourism and delivering events and cultural activities	165	4.95	1.62	151	4.38	1.74	-4.50	.000

Table 8 shows overall positive image and awareness conditions for Matera as competitive (=5.57; SD=1.51). The Basilica Region is considered to be the most competitive for its strong sense of security/safety (=5.46; SD=1.50). However, when comparing respondents' opinion of travelers' safety and security, Wilcoxon Signed Ranks Test found no significant difference among responses ( $z=-0.03$ ; sig=0.692). Matera's greatest comparative disadvantage is considered to be political and economic instability (=4.30; SD=1.71), while Basilicata needs to increase international knowledge of the region where current events and cultural activities are taking place (=3.92; SD=1.94) to increase its.

**Table 8. Image and awareness conditions**

	Matera			Region of Basilica			z	Sig (2-tailed)
	N	$\bar{X}$	SD	N	$\bar{X}$	SD		
Overall image of the city and region is positive	185	5.57	1.51	167	4.93	1.74	-4.94	.000
There is political and economic stability	179	4.30	1.71	162	4.05	1.92	-2.29	.022
There is a strong sense of security/safety of visitors in the destination	185	5.49	1.51	165	5.46	1.50	-.039	.692
Fit between event products and attendees preferences	173	4.71	1.48	157	4.45	1.49	-2.23	.025
Fit between image promoted and tourism experiences delivered	181	5.02	1.65	158	4.75	1.58	-2.45	.014
Good international awareness of events locations	174	4.86	1.73	158	4.25	1.79	-4.46	.000
Good international awareness of event products	171	4.53	1.77	158	4.11	1.80	-3.46	.001
International knowledge of the city and region where the events and cultural activities will take place	174	4.76	1.74	159	3.92	1.94	-6.55	.000
New events and cultural activities are being introduced and managed with international appeal	163	4.37	1.91	150	4.15	1.81	-2.09	.037
Events and cultural activities are an effective tool for destination branding	170	4.96	1.77	156	4.67	1.76	-2.59	.010

Social networks/online user-generated content to the image, awareness and knowledge of the city and region	171	5.25	1.64	158	4.92	1.79	-3.06	.002
Contribution of new events and cultural activities to image, awareness and knowledge	173	5.35	1.69	157	5.14	1.71	-2.03	.043

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## Discussion

There are limitations facing this region of Italy. Foremost, transportation connections directly connecting or traversing this part of Italy are minimal. However, strengths associated with such isolation is the nature, ambiance and scenic beauty that travellers seek. Concerning events, the ECoC designation represents a chance to get people involved through volunteering and to learn new skills for developing the industry and attracting new commerce—thus creating social impacts (Deery et al, 2012; Richards et al., 2013; Smith, 2012).

Above, Table 3 clearly shows respondents agreed that inherited resources like the natural environment, the heritage and the climate are relatively competitive—a trend comparable across observed means. As noted, Basilicata has protected areas and national parks. Mean results range from 6.42 to 4.36 for Matera, and from 6.17 to 4.72 for the region. Small coefficients of variation (CV) indicate relatively low data dispersion of most results in both cases. However, mean results related to ‘sufficient available space for events’ show a marginally higher dispersion of data (CV) and some disagreement of respondents when evaluating competitiveness of this indicator (especially for Matera). Table 4 showcases results pertaining to the level of competitiveness of created resources are expected to support both the event and cultural industries. Although Matera (5.94-3.75) and Basilicata (5.85-3.25) ranges seem to be comparable, the latter shows a slightly larger number of values below 4.0. Here, the CVs tend to show marginally high data dispersion in both cases. Particularly, respondents seem to have quite different opinions when evaluating the efficiency of local transportation at a city and regional level. On average, mean summaries do not show significant differences between the results displayed. As noted, quality of food and of services and facilities related to this, quality of accommodation and the capacity of hospitality facilities to absorb the increasing arrivals seem to stand out in the range of indicators of the determinant discussed. Overall, Matera seems to show, on average, a slightly higher competitiveness in terms of availability of venues and lands to use for holding events, forms of entertainment offered especially to adults than those that the wider region can offer.

The scenario of competitiveness of the two cases does not seem to change a lot when focusing on the evaluation of supporting resources (Table 5). On average, Matera seems to show marginally higher findings compared to Basilicata, though in both cases results show lower ranges compared to those recorded in factors previously outlined (Matera: 4.62-3.63; Basilicata: 4.23-3.42) which seem to indicate lower level of competitiveness of supporting resources compared to inherited and created ones. The inefficiency and inequality of transportation shows lower results, on average, to the accessibility of Matera or other areas of the region and the capacity to develop links with major markets. Comparable mean indicator results above 4.0 shed light on the efficiency of local health and medical facilities and the capacity of destinations to inform tourists and enable them to remain connected. Concerning destination management and organisation, the city of Matera has recorded averages slightly higher overall than those for Basilicata (Table 6). There is sufficient room for improvement in advance of the destination hosting ECoC. While residents recognise management and organisation as adequate (just above the competitiveness threshold) considerable variance suggests disagreement in preparedness.

Results are critical of the public sector especially, but do recognise the importance of the private sector and the role of local residents. Forming public-private partnerships are essential towards improving planning, organisation and delivery (Spirou, 2011), but a concern is this can result in social exclusion. Therefore, it is also important to manage local residents (as vested stakeholders) whose input and voice in organisation is essential since they will play a founding role in showcasing hospitality, production of heritage and place appeal— which also corresponds with place image (Alberti & Giusti, 2012; Richards & Wilson, 2007). Comparable indicator averages show marginally high competitiveness across the indicators in Table 7. ‘Innovation’, ‘tourism research and benchmarking’, ‘management responsiveness to ongoing developments’, ‘support of public sector’ and ‘informed local population’ are indicators that scored low values, especially for the Basilicata Region. Furthermore, CVs here seem to be marginally high, outlining a certain variation of data, especially for Basilicata, and as stated above tend to show lower averages and higher variance compared to Matera. Concerning the image and awareness conditions of the destinations here examined, ranges displayed in Table 8 seem to be relatively high in both cases (Matera: 5.57-4.3; Basilicata: 5.46-3.92). On average, means above 4.0 indicate a certain competitiveness of factors contributing to create, enhance and promote a positive image of Matera and Basilicata as tourism destinations and event hosts, and awareness of these in both national and international markets. While this is an important category to manage, the region has benefitted from destination features including the *Sassi* and numerous filmmakers who capture the region’s unique inherited resources.

The quality of new facilities, infrastructures and services at the destination provides essential support; however, these created resources need managed so residents continue using venues and hosting future events. Deery et al. (2012) argue that much focus has been on event infrastructures and activities, but more research considering resident views are necessary. Therefore, an important contribution in this paper is the consideration of social conditions. Table 7 shows that respondents perceive social conditions to improve local wellbeing are higher in the city of Matera compared to the whole region—observed in each indicator measured. High mean results, above 4.0 tend to be comparable in the two cases across indicators pertaining to local support to, enhanced pride, and benefits linked to tourism and event activities and, tourist/local mutual tolerance and understanding. Means below 4.0 and relevant CVs not only suggests uncertainty in valuing improvement or development of initiatives, programmes are being organised to support the local population, especially the underprivileged, of Matera, and across the region. Such data variation indicates perceptions tended to be different.

This study proposed a new determinant, not only because the survey targeted residents specifically, but also because scholars are extending focus on social impacts in urban and regional studies. Smith (2012) and Forte et al. (2015) argue that social impacts, community wellbeing and social capital are important to consider, and events and the host destination should be cross-leveraged. This means vertical and horizontal alliances need to exist, including providers, management, facilities/physical infrastructures, to optimise the quality of experiences, attractiveness of the destination, and the involvement of residents. This is where public sector management and promoting inclusion is also significant. Noted above, private sector investments are necessary to support infrastructure development. However, public policies need to promote social inclusion and community wellbeing so that residents gain new skills and local businesses are supported to ensure economic and social capital is retained locally, during the event, and sustained in the future.

## Future Research

This research offers new insight and scope on competitiveness research. This work aimed to understanding how locals perceive competitiveness elements of their destination to inform future management practices based on identified strengths/weaknesses. The next step in the research process is to conduct a series of surveys and in-depths interviews with destination managers and social/cultural policy makers working on Matera and Basilicata's events and tourism development to disseminate results. Challenges planners and managers face is how to ensure local social impacts are met. To help create a framework for assessment, this paper outlines the importance of involving local residents in research because they offer a critical perspective of destination strengths/weaknesses. In addition, their involvement cannot be looked over, and by amending the Integrated Model to include focus on social conditions to improve local wellbeing, this work brings forward an approach arguing for the importance of considering social impacts in future research. As noted, tourist and visitor stays are temporary, and whilst events associated with the ECoC are expected to increase the destinations appeal and competitiveness, local residents in the city and across the region will be impacted directly, and for years to come. Therefore, plans aimed at ensuring both economic and social sustainability need more consideration in competitiveness studies, and will continue to frame the focus as this study progresses.

This study begins a longitudinal research study focusing on a city and its region ahead of the 2019 ECoC. While it is present how the range of indicators is useful for planners, this work also intends to extend the focus on social conditions and local wellbeing to further understand the results presented. Future research needs to build on the quantitative findings to gain more in-depth insight through qualitative research to better assess how people and the community residents are involved, engaged and benefit from major events. This work is also significant because developing peripheral areas is a challenge, and perspective offered above identifies areas for improvement—to extend where to focus future research during and after ECoC 2019. Campón-Cerro et al. (2017: 252) note the pressures rural destinations face, because emerging “destinations now must operate in extremely competitive markets, forcing destination managers to seek out innovative strategies and sustainable competitive advantage.” To conclude, destination competitiveness studies aim to inform tourism policy, governance and planning that will lend to frameworks for sustainable development, initially by identifying strengths/weaknesses based on local resident insight.

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