

**KEYWORDS**

*Urban tourism; tourism and non tourism mobilities; city competitiveness; Istanbul.*

## ISTANBUL AS A ‘CITY TO PLAY’: ASSESSING THE COMPETITIVE PROFILE OF THE CITY USING A MULTIDIMENSIONAL APPROACH

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Valeria MINGHETTI  
CISSET-Ca’ Foscari University, Italy  
ming@unive.it;

Federica MONTAGUTI  
CISSET-Ca’ Foscari University, Italy  
bfedem@unive.it

**ABSTRACT**

*Cities are places in motion, nodes of dynamic networks of different physical and virtual mobilities (tourists, residents, businesses, capitals, culture, knowledge, etc.) that constantly reshape the urban space, the organisation of tourism and non-tourism practices and the city image and brand. From this point of view, not only the tourism performance of a city depends on the attractiveness of core resources (historic, cultural, etc.) and the quality of tourism-related facilities, but also on the evolution of these networked mobilities. The article analyzes the dynamic competitive profile of Istanbul in comparison to other ten European cities (Venice, Florence, Rome, Barcelona, Bruges, London, Paris, Prague, Seville and Vienna), developed according to a multidisciplinary and multidimensional approach that takes into account the evolution of this system of diverse intersecting tourism and non tourism mobilities. The results obtained show that the approach proves to be effective in designing a dynamic competitive profile of every city and in identifying the factors that drive competitiveness within and between different clusters of cities.*

## 1. INTRODUCTION

Visiting cities is an ever-growing tourism activity in Europe. Also thanks to the enlargement of the European Community, urban tourism flows for different purposes (visit to attractions, events, business, etc.) are expanding at a faster rate than tourism in general (ETC, 2008).

Traditional cultural cities are cities that were not created for tourism development and where tourism has established itself within the changing economic, social and cultural environment. Tourism activities interact with other urban functions as part of a system of overlapping flows and relationships (Laws, 1993).

Besides, cities are places in motion, nodes of dynamic networks of different physical and virtual mobilities (tourists, residents, businesses, capitals, culture, knowledge, etc.) that constantly reshape the urban space, the organisation of tourism and non-tourism practices and the city image and brand.

From this point of view, not only the tourism performance of a city depends on the attractiveness of core resources (historic, cultural, etc.) and the quality of tourism-related facilities, but also on the evolution of these networked mobilities. This implies building a model that explicitly considers all these aspects.

The article analyzes the dynamic competitive profile of Istanbul in comparison to other ten European cities (Venice, Florence, Rome, Barcelona, Bruges, London, Paris, Prague, Seville and Vienna), developed according to a multidisciplinary and multidimensional approach that takes into account the evolution of this system of diverse intersecting tourism and non tourism mobilities.

The approach and the results obtained derive from a research-work carried out on behalf of the Tourism Department of the Italian Government. The aim of the study was to develop a benchmark analysis by comparing the competitiveness of the three most famous Italian art cities (Florence, Rome and Venice) with the other eight given European cities.

After having defined the concept of ‘city to play’ and the role that tourism mobilities and other mobilities have in analysing the tourism performance of a city (section 2), section 3 presents the methodology

used for the analysis and the multidimensional approach developed for monitoring the competitiveness of a urban destination.

Starting from these elements, in section 4 the dynamic competitive profile of Istanbul and of the other cities are described. Four common development and evolution patterns (“clusters”) have been identified, showing how Istanbul positions itself in comparison to the European cities analysed.

Conclusions and indications for future research are given in section 5.

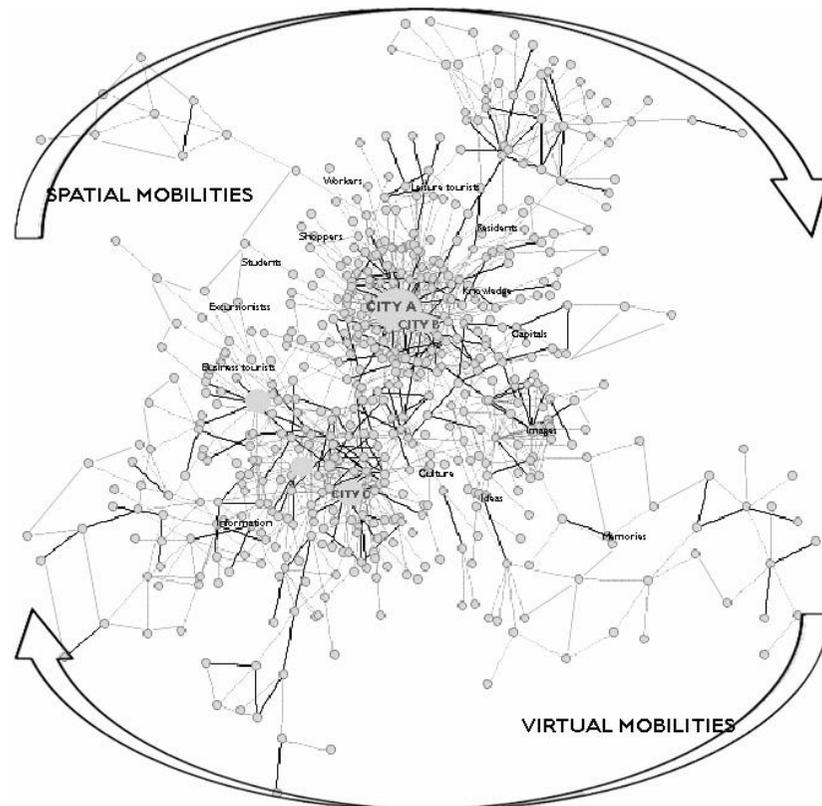
## 2. DEFINING A ‘CITY TO PLAY’: THE ROLE OF TOURISM AND OTHER MOBILITIES

According to recent studies, cities and destinations are transforming themselves from ‘spaces of places’ to ‘space of flows’ (Castells, 2000; Manente, 2000), in nodes of a complex network of relationships among different kinds of spatial and virtual mobilities at local and global level (see Figure 1).

Spatial mobility is determined by a variety of factors, such as increasing/decreasing population, migrations, growth in transport services and travels, changes in urban economic structure and visitor flows, etc. Its evolution also implies that cities themselves are constantly ‘on the move’: infrastructures, business and service centres, hotels, etc. are created or closed down as a consequence of this transformation. How residents, workers, tourists, etc. move within the city is also evolving, according to the spatial reorganization of the city, the location of old and new attractions, etc.

Besides physical mobilities, cities are also characterised by “virtual” mobilities, i.e. capitals, investments, information, knowledge, but also ideas, memories, images (Figure 1). The growth of these mobilities is accelerated by the spread of information and communication technologies.

FIGURE 1  
Cities: from 'space of places' to 'space of flows'



Tourism is a component of this complex system of mobilities. In the last decades, the dramatic development of tourism flows and practices has heavily affected the pattern of urban growth as well as the internal geography of destinations. In this and other ways, tourism mobilities, both physical and virtual, influence the dynamic development of other mobilities. At the same time, non-tourism mobilities (e.g. growth of foreign investments, settling down of creative industries, reorganization of the urban space, success of books or films set

in the city, etc) impact on the development of city tourism (emerging of new leisure segments, expansion of business tourism, etc.). They affect how tourists - or potential tourists - move in the city, how they perceive it, what they do and see there (Bærenholdt et al., 2004).

Consequently, cities can be seen as a dynamic 'place of movement' (Hetherington, 1997; see also Crouch, 2000). They are not fixed and immobile objects, but 'places to play', 'produced through the multiple networked mobilities of capital, persons, objects, signs and information' (Sheller and Urry: 6; see also Coleman and Crang, 2002; Haldrup, 2004). Therefore, the challenge to become a 'city to play' - or to hold this role - and then a 'city in play' relies on the continuous and evolving interaction among tourism and other kind of activities.

The performance of a city depends on the evolution of this systems of diverse intersecting mobilities. How the city moves or is mobilized through various global networks of economic, cultural, fashion, tourism, etc. relationships, affects its competitiveness and image (see also Ritchie and Crouch, 2003: 245). This has a major impact on 'people's decisions to visit the city, to buy its products and services, to do business or relocate there' (Anholt, 2006: 2). On the other side, the growth of the tourist interest in the city and the strengthening of the urban tourist brand affects its attractiveness as a place where to live, work, study, invest and so on.

### 3. TOWARDS A MULTIDIMENSIONAL APPROACH FOR ANALYSING CITY COMPETITIVENESS

#### 3.1. The methodology used

What stated about the role of mobilities interplay has an important impact on measuring the tourism competitiveness of a urban destination.

As "tourist activities are not so separate from the places that are visited" (Sheller and Urry, 2004: 5), and places are continuously 'made and remade by the performances of tourists and workers, image and heritage, the latest fashions' (Sheller and Urry, 2004: 1), capital and information, etc., the competitiveness analysis requires the adoption of multidimensional approach, that takes into account the shifting configurations of tourism and non-tourism mobilities and assesses the

role of each mobility and of a single factor in determining the destination success. The main issue is to identify an alternative to traditional metrics that helps to measure the tourism competitiveness of a 'city to play', as "the mobilities paradigm involves new kind of methods (...) 'on the move'" (Urry, 2007: 39).

From this point of view, the set of cities identified by the Italian Government for the study and analyzed in this paper, represented a good testing field. They are a heterogeneous set of urban destinations – considering their position within the local political, economic, social, etc. networks and the stage in their urban and tourism life-cycle. Visits are generally not motivated by cultural tourism only (e.g. visits to museums and monuments), but also by other activities (events, business and congress, shopping, wine and food tasting, etc.). Their brand is important not only to attract tourists, but also investments, capitals, businesses, etc.

A review of the literature on existing models defining the destination competitiveness (Ritchie et al. (2001), Dwyer e Kim (2003), Enright and Newton (2004); Maggi and Croce (2005); Gooroochun and Sugiyarto (2005); World Economic Forum (2008)) highlighted that the main measures used by these models were not so effective in designing competitive profiles or in identifying the determinants of competitiveness for these cities. The models generally consider the destination, as a tourism attraction, a relatively given and fixed system, a separate object from demand and from other networks of activities/mobilities. They apply a metrics that takes into account a number of comparative and competitive factors essentially based on the amount of resources and attractions, the stock of infrastructure and the characteristics and quality of service facilities available at the destination. The effects on competitiveness deriving from the dynamic interaction between demand and supply and between tourism and non tourism mobilities are only partially considered and investigated.

A four-step research plan was therefore developed with the specific goal. First of all, the profile and the appeal of the cities has been described and analysed, according to their different features (urban, socio-economic, innovative aspects, characteristics of tourism demand and supply, image and brand, etc). Then, a group of variables/indicators has been identified, which contribute to classify

every city and frame different competitive models, according to the aspects investigated above. Starting from these variables, a meaningful set of summary indicators has been selected, suitable to group cities presenting similar or comparable characteristics in a number of competitive clusters. Finally, the competitiveness of each city within and among clusters has been assessed.

The new approach developed aims at integrating the effects of the different kind of shifting mobilities in defining and assessing the competitive profile of the destination. In more detail:

- it provides a dynamic perspective of the city, allowing researchers to assess its actual and future performance according to a number of quantitative and qualitative indicators.
- it analyses the competitiveness of a city according to the competitive set identified. As stated by Enright e Newton, 'specific tourism destinations are not competitive or uncompetitive in the abstract, but versus competing destinations' (Enright and Newton, 2004: 781).
- it takes into account tourists' behaviour and perceptions (activities done/experiences lived while in the city) as a dimension of the destination competitiveness and not only as an outcome of competitiveness.
- it considers the significance and variety of core resources and attractors and not only of their physical amount. 'The mere counting of the number of museums and historical sites (...) may well mask the quality of these attractions- something that is often the primary appeal to visitors' (Ritchie et al., 2001: p.6)
- finally, the approach assesses the role of other mobilities and the city positioning in global networks, as factors defining the city development and potential and then its capacity to attract qualified investors, professionals and tourists (OECD, 2006). Since these elements affect the city brand, this implies integrating traditional competitiveness models with models assessing features, brand equity, and strength of destinations/places brands.

### 3.2. The data collection

In defining the items to be assessed, the indexes adopted by the different approaches analyzed from the literature were taken into account, and in particular those included in the layers of Ritchie & Crouch model (Ritchie & Crouch, 2003). Some aspects were not or partially included since they were considered irrelevant (e.g. climate) or not significant (accessibility) for the group of top urban destinations studied. In the end, more than 90 items were identified, and assessed for each city in two different ways.

Various sources were checked to build the set of quantitative and qualitative variables and indicators to be used to design the different competitive profiles. The desk analysis of secondary sources (e.g. statistical data on tourism demand and supply, visitors' surveys, city development and marketing plans, etc.) was combined with an e-mail survey carried out with a group of about thirty international urban tourism experts and managers of city tourist offices. The purpose of this survey was to appraise the items identified according to the insight they have of the whole group of cities analysed (for experts) or of the city they work for (for tourist office managers), from different point of views.

The adoption of an expert approach mediates between supply-side and demand-side measurements (Wöber, 2006). On the one hand, tourism experts and managers have professional knowledge of the cities analysed, the characteristics and potentialities of local tourism supply and the role of different mobilities. On the other, 'expert judgements are often applied because they indirectly represent the opinions of the consumers' (Gearing et al., 1974 in Grabler, 1997: 148). In addition, since urban tourism experts are asked to judge each relevant aspect for all cities in a row, this methodology allow researchers to obtain a ranking of cities according to each aspect analysed and then to compare its performance.

In order to obtain the desired empirical data, an ad-hoc questionnaire was constructed itemising the factors that were postulated to influ-

ence the city competitive profile. In particular, experts and city managers were asked to give their opinions on the following aspects:

1. the urban and economic profile of the city (current economic role and potential, quality of urban services and environment, level of traffic and tourism congestion, environmental policies);
2. the profile and behaviour of tourism demand (importance of repeaters and same-day visitors for both domestic and international market; variety of socio-demographic segments in both markets; variety of activities done/experiences lived by tourists);
3. the resonance and variety of core resources and attractors (monuments, museums, events, shopping facilities, etc.);
4. the variety/quality of accommodation supply and its capacity to meet the needs of different expenditure profiles;
5. the price competitiveness (tourist prices' perception and general cost of living)
6. the city brand (pulse/vivacity, presence, outstanding attributes and personality)
7. the use of technology in marketing and selling the city (how easy is for a tourist to arrange a stay in the city using the websites of the local tourist board and of private operators)

The 90 items and more were assessed in 13 questions. For each item, experts were asked to give a score to every city using a 5-point Likert scale. The meaning of each scale point was adapted according to the factors/items to be analysed.

### 3.3. The summary indicators

Starting from the analysis of hard data collected from secondary sources and of soft data deriving from the experts' survey, a meaningful set of simple or weighted indicators has been constructed to identify the competitive profile of each city and then grouping them into competitive clusters, having similar characteristics.

The indicators chosen are representative of all the main aspects investigated (urban and economic structure, profile and behaviour of tourism demand, resonance of core resources and attractors, accommodation supply, prices and brand and image). They provide a dynamic profile of the city (not only a picture of the 'state of the art' but also some future perspectives), are those that emphasize better the similarities and differences between cities and help to identify the city profiles and to compare them within and among clusters.

Table 1 shows the nine indicators used, their meaning and how they have been calculated.

**TABLE 1**  
**Competitiveness indicators for cities to play**

Indicator	Meaning	Calculation
Role of International tourism demand	Importance of international tourists on total tourism in the city	Share of foreign arrivals on total arrivals (hard data)
Variety of socio-demographic segments	Capacity of the city to attract different demand segments (e.g. school trippers, 18-24 years old people, etc.)	Weighted mean of scores given by experts to the importance (number and intensity) of each socio-demographic segments on both domestic and international markets.
Variety of tourist activities/experiences offered to tourists	Capacity of the city to offer a varied range of activities/experiences to tourists (i.e. how many activities offered are done by tourists)	Weighted mean of scores given by experts to the importance (number and intensity) of each specific activity/experience offered to both domestic and international tourists
Significance of core resources and attractors	The most important resources/attractors the city is famous for (i.e. the capacity of the city to promote its resources/attractors)	Simple mean of scores given by experts to the significance (variety and resonance) of different kinds of resources/attractors.
Competitiveness of accommodation supply	Capacity of accommodation supply to meet the requirements of clients with different expenditure	Simple mean of scores given by experts to the capacity of accommodation supply to satisfy each expenditure profile listed

	budget (luxury, upper, average, budget, young people/backpackers)	(presence and judgment on price/quality ratio)
Relative cost of the city for tourists	Whether the city is more expensive or cheaper for tourists than for residents (cost for tourists vs. cost of living)	Score obtained by comparing the scores given by experts to the perceived cost of the city for tourists and for residents
Presence of the city	The city's international role and standing in the last 30 years	Simple mean derived from the scores given by experts to the contribution the city has given to the world in the last 30 years, according to a number of aspects (e.g. culture, style, etc.)
Pulse of the city	The appeal of the city, i.e. the presence of a vibrant urban lifestyle as part of city's brand image	Simple mean derived from the scores given by experts to vivacity of city life both at daytime and at night
Potential of the city	The city's future contribution and potential	Simple mean derived from the scores given by experts to the contribution each city might give in the future in different areas (culture, design, lifestyle, etc.) and to the economic and educational opportunities it offers/will offer (potential of the city and foreseen contribution in each area)

Three indicators are demand-related (international market, visitor mix and experience mix), three refer to local supply (resources, accommodation and prices), two to city image and brand (presence and pulse) and the last one to the economic structure and future development of the city (potential). In particular, presence, pulse and potential indicators embed the impacts of other mobilities on tourism and, in particular, the effects of the evolution of the urban space and structure and of local lifestyle on the city identity and the perceptions tourists have of the city.

One indicator out of nine derives from statistical data (the role of international tourism demand). The other indicators represent qualitative variables of city competitiveness, derived from the empirical analysis by elaborating, for each factor identified, the judgements given by experts on a number of correlated items.

#### 4. THE ISTANBUL'S COMPETITIVE PROFILE IN COMPARISON TO OTHER CITIES

##### 4.1. The competitive models identified

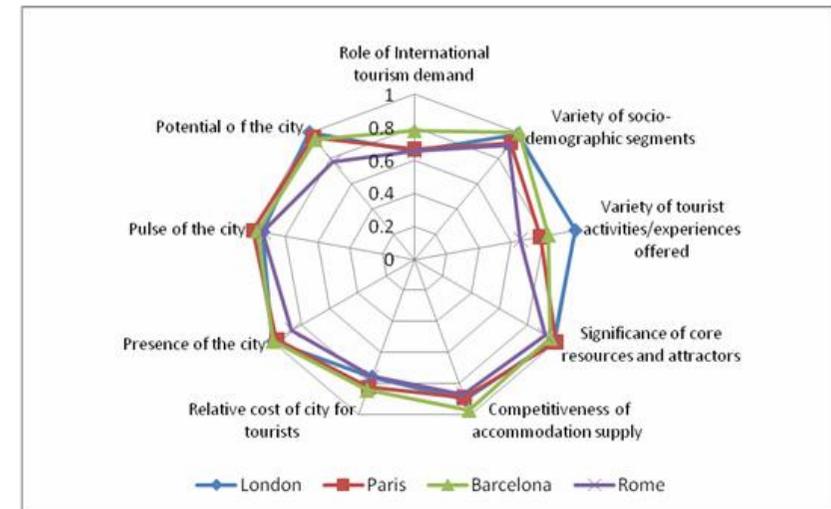
Combining the selected indicators, a spider plot was used in order to describe the competitive profile of Istanbul and of the other cities investigated (see Figures 2-5). Normalised values (0-1) have been calculated in order to obtain a comparable range of values for all quantitative and qualitative indicators. The polygonal area derived by linking these values represents the city competitive profile.

The comparison of different profiles led to the identification of four common development and evolution patterns (clusters), showing how Istanbul positions itself in comparison to the European cities analysed. The distinguishing characteristics of each cluster and of each city within the cluster are briefly discussed herewith.

##### *The 'ultimate' cities*

The first cluster groups four cities, two global metropolitan areas (London and Paris) and two large cities (Rome and Barcelona)(Fig. 2). The shape of the polygonal area characterizing each of them shows that they have a more or less balanced competitive profile. These cities generally compete on many tourist markets (business, conventions, city breaks, cultural tourism, events, etc.) and are characterised by a wide range of significant resources and attractions (monuments, events, link to famous people, business centres, etc.).

FIGURE 2  
The 'ultimate' cities



London and Paris are highly charismatic and lively cities and they will probably strengthen their role in the near future. Here, tourism and other activities are all components of a complex project of urban development.

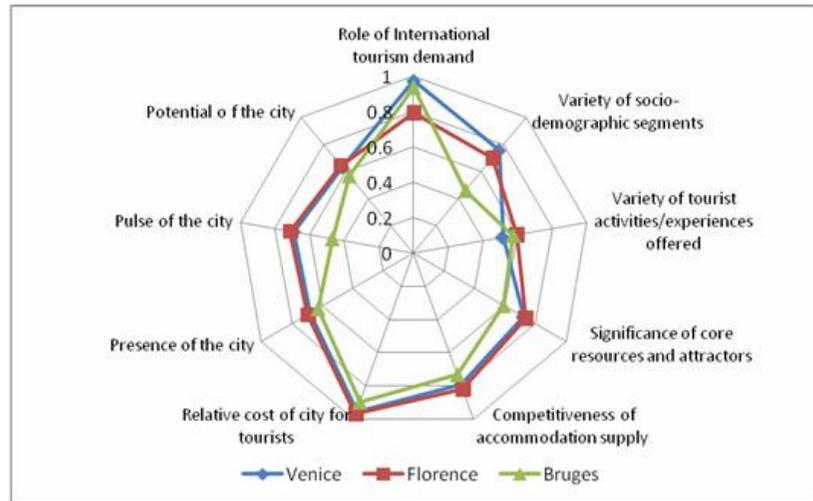
Rome presents a lower performance in comparison to others with regard to two indicators (potential of the city and variety of tourist activities/experiences). Although the 'Eternal city' has acquired a profile similar to London and Paris - thanks to a number of initiatives taken by the Municipality in the last few years -, the process is not complete yet. The issue is whether it will be able to maintain this new role in the near future (potential).

The presence of Barcelona in this cluster is the result of a recent development, which has no roots in the past history but is the result of a strong cultural and economic regeneration and a vast scale re-organization of the urban space begun after the end of Franco regime. That rebirth was acknowledged internationally in 1992 and, since then, continuously fed and mobilised through tourism, economic, cultural, sport, fashion, etc. networks, which allowed the city to be ranked among the big capitals of urban tourism.

### *The 'picture' cities*

The second cluster includes three traditional art cities (Venice, Florence and Bruges), which show a more stretched competitive profile (Fig. 3).

FIGURE 3  
The 'picture' cities

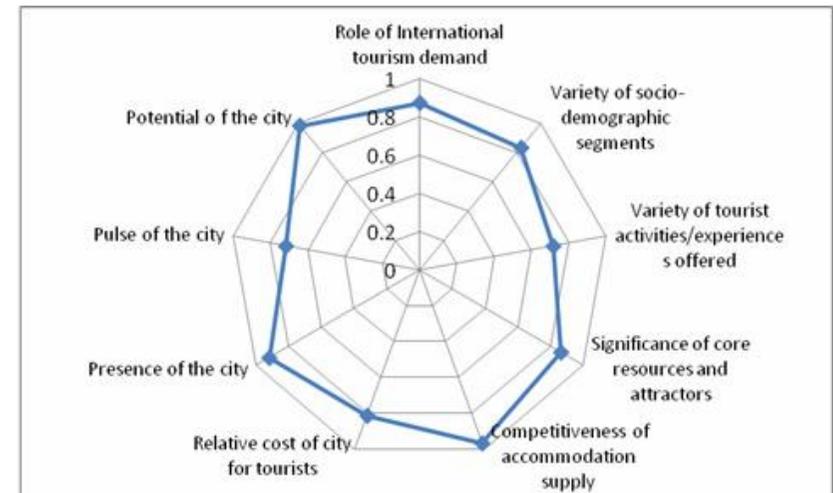


These cities are generally specialized on few segments/products (basically, cultural sightseeing) and tourism seems to play a driver role in their profile in comparison to other urban mobilities. Although they are powerful tourist brands, strongly attracting international demand, their presence in other global networks has not been so significant in the last 30 years and this has probably affected the experts' perception of an almost 'static' urban lifestyle (pulse). Unlike the previous cluster, these are mainly cities able to play their tourist performance and experts don't foresee any change for the future.

### *The new old 'city*

The third cluster includes Vienna only. The city appears characterised by an extensive transformation phase, which creates a unique competitive profile (Fig. 4). While the behaviour of some indicators (variety of segments and experiences, pulse, role of international tourists) highlights a similarity with the profiles of cluster 2, the performance of others (competitiveness of accommodation, presence, potential etc.) suggests an evolution comparable to profiles of cluster 1. This is due to the changes in non-tourism mobilities (internationalisation of the economy, growth of foreign investments, spread of innovative and creative industries).

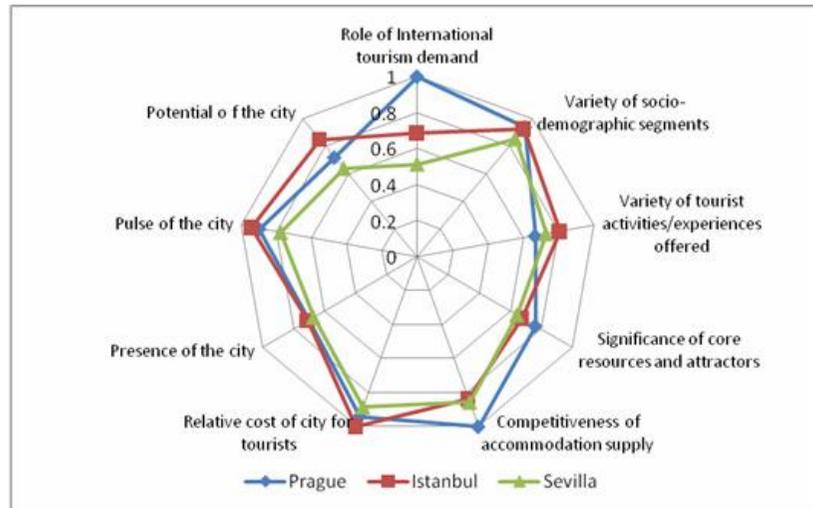
FIGURE 4  
The 'new old 'city



### *The 'young trendy' cities*

The fourth cluster includes Istanbul and other two emerging urban tourist destinations, which present a varied competitive profile: Prague and Seville (Fig. 5). The common points of their performances are low values for the variety of the tourist experiences offered, the significance of core resources and the city presence at international level – which highlight a similarity with cluster 2, but also the high value attributed to the pulse of the city, as for profiles in cluster 1.

FIGURE 5  
The young 'trendy' cities



Generally, all these cities still have a less established role as global tourist destinations, in comparison to cities of cluster 1 and 2. Nevertheless, the rapid development of tourist flows in the last years, especially in Istanbul and Prague, seems to be the result of their perceived 'youth' and liveliness and, in the case of Istanbul, also of the growth of other urban mobilities related to business and culture.

#### 4.2. The determinants of competitiveness: tourism vs. non tourism mobilities

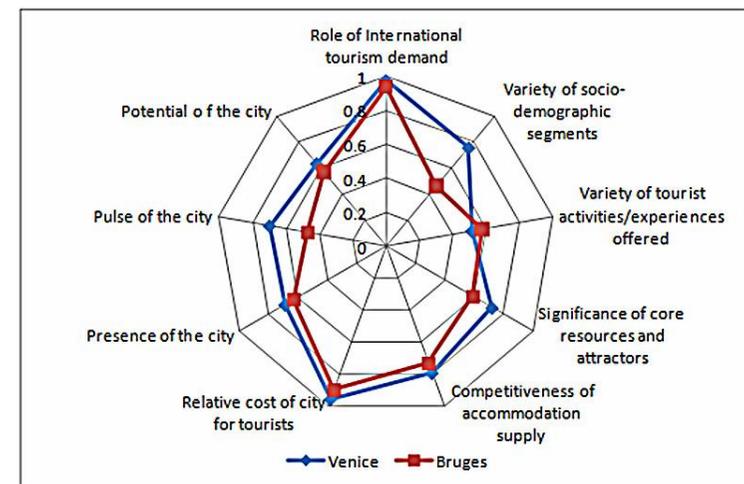
In a dynamic perspective, Istanbul and each city analysed not only competes with the others included in the same group (competition within a cluster), but also with cities grouped in other patterns (competition between clusters).

The main determinants of competitiveness have been analysed, showing the cities where tourism mobilities have a crucial role in their evolution and the cities where the evolution of other non tourism mobilities is generally the driver of change also for tourism.

The first group includes Venice and Bruges. These cities are characterised by a sluggish social and economic environment, where the evolution of tourism trends and behaviour (especially international flows) has an important role in defining the use of urban spaces and the development and costs of services at local level (Fig. 5). Nevertheless, although these cities are acknowledged all around the world for their urban and architectural structure, local tourism resources and attractions seems to be less promoted than in other urban destinations analysed. In addition, the quality of accommodation is not considered appropriate to meet the requirements of clients having different expenditure budget. The

development of new investment and economic opportunities and the settlement of an advanced service industry would be important actions to relaunch these destinations and balance the role of tourism, stimulating, at the same time, the development of new tourism market segments (e.g. business and congress).

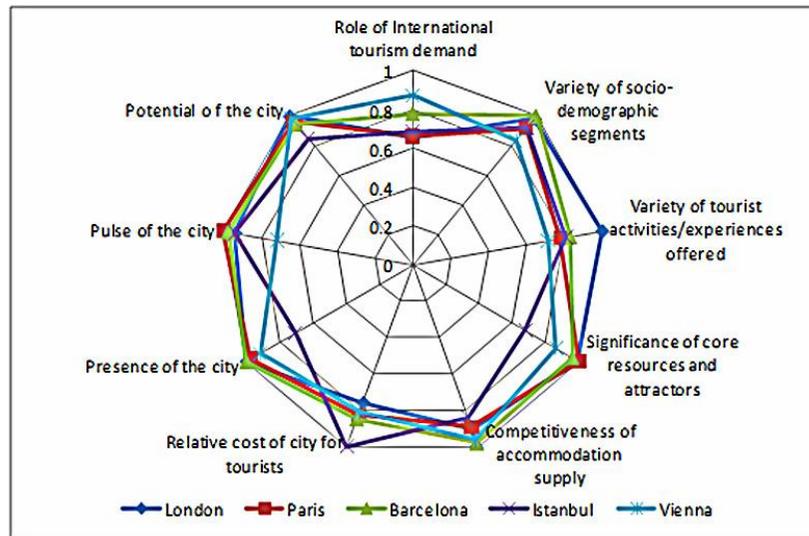
FIGURE 6  
Cities where tourism mobilities drive competitiveness



The second group of cities include Istanbul, Barcelona, London, Paris and Vienna (Fig. 6). The urban, social and economic development that has characterised these cities in the past years is expected to continue in the near future, in particular in Istanbul and Vienna. This

represents and important driver also for tourism, since it can stimulate the creation of new attractions and then of new market segments.

FIGURE 7  
Cities where non tourism mobilities drive competitiveness



According to this approach, Istanbul profile shows that the city will possibly evolve towards a cluster 1 profile, heading to compete in the set with London, Paris, and Barcelona.

In fact, there are many signs of an extensive “mobilisation” of the city through various networks. For example, according to the results of an international survey on leading business cities, Istanbul is acknowledged as one of the most important emerging business locations (Cushman and Wakefield, 2007). The intensive plans developed to renovate and revitalize some urban areas and enhance the local transport network, along with the incentives to real-estate companies interested in investing in hotels and congress venues, are redefining some city spaces. Moreover, Istanbul will be Capital of Culture 2010, and this has stimulated the restoring of the historical heritage and the

development of a marketing and communication plan to promote the cultural identity of the city.

As for Vienna, its ability to compete with big metropolitan areas will depend on how the evolution of the local economic environment (with a strong focus on innovation) and the political role played by the city will contribute to redefine its image and then its identity as a city to play.

In the middle of these two groups there are Rome, Florence, Prague and Sevilla. Here the role of tourism and non-tourism mobilities is more balanced, although the weight they will assume in the near future is not clear yet.

## 5. CONCLUSION

Analysing the competitiveness of a tourism destination and of a city in particular, require a systemic approach that takes into account the complex shifting nature of the network of mobilities interacting within and around the destination. This approach should also embed the relativity of the competitive space of a destination and the circular cause-effect relationships between tourists and destinations.

The proposed methodology offers both theoretical and practical benefits for tourism research and city policy makers.

In its experimental application to the analysis of Istanbul and other European cities, it proves to be effective in designing a dynamic competitive profile of every city, framing a number of competitive models and identifying the role of different mobilities in driving competitiveness within and between clusters. As the spider plots of Istanbul, Barcelona and Vienna demonstrate, this approach shows to be very sensitive to changes in one or more indicators, giving prompt feedbacks about the evolving impact of tourism and non-tourism movements. It also embeds a future perspective, since the performance of the indicators highlight the city’s potential to evolve towards another profile within the same cluster or to another competitive cluster.

This framework also offers practical implications for city policy-makers and stakeholders involved. It provides a user-friendly and effective tool for monitoring the city performance and benchmarking its results in comparison to a set of competing urban destinations.

However, this is not to suggest that, at this stage of development, the results obtained provide an unambiguous tool to analyse the destination competitiveness. Further research will be required to refine the approach and test it with a larger and/or different group of destinations. Additional studies should be devoted to how the factors produced by the dynamic networking between tourism and non-tourism mobilities can combine together at a given moment to create a successful destination.

A note of caution should be added when considering the features of the methodology used. Unlike other models of tourism destination competitiveness, its non-deterministic and relative nature implies that no fixed list of factors and items has been given once and for all. Researchers have to adapt or redefine the set of indicators to be used according to the different kind of destinations, tourist markets, etc. they are analysing. This entails a longer scouting stage and deeper knowledge of the tourist market and the destinations to be studied.

Moreover, the approach requires that researchers adopt a multidimensional and multidisciplinary perspective. This means the ability to identify a number of meaningful aspects and variables from several branch of knowledge and to identify the best indicator to measure each of them.

Considering specifically the method for data collection used, a caveat concerns the use of the experts judgement. While assessing a group of destinations according to a number of different features could be quite an easy task when top urban tourist destinations are considered, difficulties arise with less studied or visited cities or tourist resorts. This might require, for example, using a larger number of experts or selecting a different group of them according to each aspect investigated (e.g. the urban profile, the characteristics of core resources,

etc.). The last solution might create some coherence problems when the results for each city have to be elaborated together.

Despite these caveats, the approach proposed represents the first step towards the development of a more systemic model of destination competitiveness and of a more complete metrics, also applicable to non urban destinations. In its first experiment, it proves to provide reliable and significant results, even in relation to a group of top urban destinations, which could have challenged the traditional approaches in many ways.

Future developments will be focused on better defining the set of information used, and on studying the interactions among the variables in determining the competitiveness of the destination, i.e. the system rules rather than the factors only. Outlined this way, the methodology would permit to foresee with higher likelihood how a given destination will evolve in a specific competitive space and therefore how much it is competitive.

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