Ranking Algarve Tourists Preferences: An Ordered Probit Approach

Serra Jaime
University of Évora, Portugal, jserra@uevora.pt

Correia Antónia
University of Évora, Portugal

Rodrigues Paulo M. M.
University of Évora, Portugal

Abstract

The starting point for tourism development is tourists' preferences. Preferences are the cognitive motivations that drive tourists to a certain destination. There are a plethora of published studies in the field of tourist motivations, such as Dann (1977); Crompton (1979); Witt and Wright (1992); Pearce and Lee (2005) to name a few, who contributed to the understanding of this area of research. However, research which focus on motivations' dynamics overtime is scant if not non-existent. This is even more critical as these preferences assume a dynamics that challenges the need to foresee tourist preferences over the years. This paper aims to rank Algarve tourists' preferences, in a leisure continuum from 2007 up to 2010. Ordered probit models were employed in order to rank and classify preferences by year, taking into account market heterogeneity. Preference turning-points and continuity points are depicted to illustrate the dynamics of tourist preferences. Data were obtained from a survey applied to international tourists who spent their holidays in Algarve. The population of the study is matched to all international tourists visiting Algarve for the purpose of holidays/leisure. Questionnaires were administrated in the airport departures lounge. Over the four years in which the administration of this questionnaire occurred the interviews were made randomly to the most nearby person. A total of 15554 persons were interviewed from which, 2636 questionnaires were collected in 2007; 2187 in 2008; 5938 in 2009 and 4781 in 2010. Results revealed dynamic motivations in several markets. The Algarve reveals a potential to attract new and repeat visitors that goes beyond its main competitive advantage, the sun and sea. Managerial implications of the results are discussed.

Key Words: Travel motivations, tourism demand, tourist preferences, ordered probit regression

Introduction

This paper analyses how tourist motivations over the years moderate the choice of the Algarve as a tourism destination. The Algarve is located in southern Portugal and is one of the most renowned destinations of the whole world. Emerging preferences and huge competition