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THE USE OF MATRIX DIAGNOSES IN STRATEGIC PLANNING FOR INLAND TOURISM AREAS: A METHODOLOGICAL PROPOSAL APPLIED TO THE INTERIOR OF THE ALICANTE PROVINCE

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Matrices represent an extremely useful technique to organise and structure information in scientific analyses and diagnoses. The best-known matrix and the one most commonly used in social, economic and geographical studies is the DAFO matrix. This technique helps to identify and organise those factors which impact directly on the competitiveness of an enterprise, an economic activity or a territory.

Another increasingly used technique in the preparation of strategic diagnoses is the creation of matrices which relate several factors in order to prioritise actions or investments seeking to achieve higher effectiveness levels. More precisely, the elaboration of five basic matrices is proposed for the planning of inland tourism areas: tourism resource potential-demand interest matrix; current importance of demand segments-future growth expectations matrix; market appeal-competitive position matrix; importance of dysfunctions-ease of resolution matrix; and implementation of tourist activities-environmental impact generation matrix.

TOURISM RESOURCE POTENTIAL-DEMAND INTEREST MATRIX

The creation of this matrix responds to the need to identify the tourist attractions in an inland space which have greater potential and raise more interest among demand. The combination of both factors serves to establish a priority for the resources on which we should preferably act in order to achieve higher demand satisfaction levels and, in short, to make a better use of public investments.

The location of each resource or attraction in the matrix is carried out qualitatively (resource potential) and quantitatively (demand interest) taking into account the following criteria collected in the table below.

Resource potential	Demand interest
Resource uniqueness. Resource adaptation to tourist consumption. Resource rehabilitation and interpretation.	High demand valuation (>100%). Medium demand valuation (50-100%). Low demand valuation (10-50%).

Source: Self-elaborated

In this case, the distribution of resources within the matrix gives rise to three possible situations: priority 1 resources, where actions and investments must promote the tourist exploitation of this type of resources to the full; priority 2 resources, in which actions and investments must try to keep demand interest in this type of resources; and finally, priority 3 resources, where strong investments to put them in value are unadvisable.

CURRENT IMPORTANCE OF DEMAND SEGMENTS-FUTURE GROWTH EXPECTATIONS MATRIX

The creation of this matrix stems from the need to identify the market segments that are more important to present-day inland tourism and those which show greater future growth potential. The combination of these two factors will permit to prioritise actions meant to capture the attention of those segments of greater interest for the area on which planning has to focus.

The population differs considerably in terms of needs, wishes, demand, habits, tastes, attitudes, purchasing power, etc. For this reason, when it comes to define a product, to fix a price, to determine distribution channels, to prepare the communication strategy, the market must be segmented seeking to achieve more efficiency (cost reduction) and effectiveness (to have a stronger and better impact on the potential market) (GÓMEZ GARCÍA, 2009).

Four basic market segmentation criteria are considered in the matrix: segmentation by age (young people, middle-aged people, seniors); segmentation by educational level (primary, secondary or higher studies), segmentation by type of partner (couple, family, group of friends, alone); and segmentation by origin (proximity tourism, national tourism, international tourism).

The location of each segment in the matrix is carried out qualitatively taking into account the criteria listed in the table below.

Current importance of tourist demand segments	Future growth expectations
Considerable volume. Number of overnight stays. High average length of stay. High spending level. Low seasonality. Low environmental impact. Social profitability: employment generation, heritage recovery, etc.	Foreseeable demand segment increase with respect to the other segments. Foreseeable demand segment interest in inland tourism. Foreseeable demand segment interest in visiting the tourist area.

Source: Self-elaboration

In turn, the distribution of market segments within the matrix gives rise to three possible situations: priority 1 market segments (guidelines must help to attract this demand as much as possible); priority 2 market segments (actions must be oriented to maintain this demand's levels); and finally, priority 3 market segments (relevant actions meant to attract this type of tourist demands are unadvisable).

MARKET APPEAL-COMPETITIVE POSITION MATRIX

The construction of this matrix has to do with the need to identify and prioritise actions in each market-product based on two essential criteria: market appeal and capacity to compete, that is, each space would try to attract the most attractive markets and those in which it stands better chances to compete successfully. This methodology was originally developed by the Boston Consulting Group and later adapted to tourism regional analysis by HEATH & WALL (1992) and used in the *Plan de Espacios Turísticos de la Comunitat Valenciana* [Plan for Tourism Areas in the Valencian Region] prepared by the Instituto Universitario de Investigaciones Turísticas (2007).

In this matrix, we have to analyse all present-day tourism products as well as those which are likely to develop in the near future in inland areas (rural-relational, rural-nature, rural-return, residential, cultural, active, oenology, business, golf, congress, health and beauty, industrial, agritourism, etc.).

The location of each market-product in the matrix is carried out qualitatively taking into account the following criteria contained in the table below.

Market appeal	Capacity to compete
Considerable volume. High current growth rate and good future growth prospects. High spending level. Low seasonality. Stable demand. Social profitability: employment generation, heritage recovery, etc.	High market share. Good market knowledge. Satisfactory adaptation of the offer to demand requirements. Good quality level in the offer regarding demand expectations.

Source: Self-elaboration from the Plan de Espacios Turísticos de la Comunitat Valenciana (2007)

The distribution of market-products within the matrix gives rise to three possible situations: priority 1 market-products, in which guidelines must promote their development to the full; priority 2 market-products, where actions must be oriented to maintain the current situation or improve it; and priority 3 market-products, for which relevant actions are unadvisable.

IMPORTANCE OF DYSFUNCTIONS-EASE OF RESOLUTION MATRIX

The creation of this matrix results from the need to identify the problems that affect inland tourism to a greater extent, highlighting those which present a greater ease of resolution. The combination of both factors will permit to establish a priority concerning the dysfunctions on which we must act first, thus optimising the good use as well as the economic, social and environmental profitability of public investments.

The location of each problem in the matrix is carried out in a qualitative-quantitative way (importance of dysfunctions) and qualitatively (ease of resolution) taking into account the following criteria collected in the table below.

Importance of dysfunctions	Ease of resolution
Environmental impacts. Lack of economic profitability in enterprises. Loss of socio-cultural identity. Loss in quality of life among the local population. Tourist demand dissatisfaction. High agent valuation (>60%). Medium agent valuation (40-60%). Low agent valuation (20-40%).	Short- and medium-term resolution. Small investment level. Social acceptance of change.

Source: Self-elaboration

The distribution of market segments within the matrix gives rise to three possible situations: priority 1 dysfunctions (public investments must first and foremost focus on the resolution of these problems); priority 2 dysfunctions (public investments must be oriented to the resolution of these problems, but without that meaning an excessive investment of public funds); and priority 3 dysfunctions (public investments must be oriented to the minimisation of these problems).

TOURIST ACTIVITIES-ENVIRONMENTAL IMPACTS MATRIX

The creation of this matrix based on the one elaborated by BOCH *et al*. (1998) responds to the need to identify impacts on the environment (continental waters, terrestrial ecosystems and atmospheric quality) derived from the implementation and practice of tourist activities in inland areas with the aim of establishing possible prevention and minimisation mechanisms.

In short, the development of matrices plays a determining role in strategic planning processes, either using the well-known DAFO diagnosis or by means of other more specific matrices. Applying the matrices proposed in this article makes it possible to define in a more clear-cut and effective way the priority objectives that need to be achieved through strategic planning for inland tourism areas.