

## Research Article

Alba Caicedo-Barreth\*, Enrique Santos Pavón, Luís Lima Santos

# Competitiveness of Guayaquil towards bleisure tourism

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**Abstract:** Guayaquil is proposed as a tourist and business destination, aiming to stand out as a digital city, with a suitable airport, a convention centre and high-level accommodation capacity. The city receives many domestic and international tourists, although not always as the main destination of their visit. One of the tourist markets offered by the city is that of business, due to the important economic activity that takes place here, being the venue of congresses and international events. This has allowed the city to gain significant value in the business tourism sector, providing constant and profitable growth. However, the lack of study of the international market, specifically the millennial business sector, is affecting Guayaquil's competitiveness compared to other destinations that have already recognized the differentiated profile of visitors from this age group, and that consequently offer a fusion of business and leisure tourism. This research was carried out during the second semester of 2018, evaluating the market of the new bleisure trend in Guayaquil. The results evidence the limited supply directed to this market segment, the lack of exploitation of business tourism and the continued lack of capacity of the tourism sector to satisfy the bleisure market. The conclusions focus on how tourism competitiveness can be achieved in business cities that also encompass places or activities where visitors can have a relaxing time.

**Keywords:** Competitiveness; Bleisure; Tourism; Guayaquil; Tourist

\*Corresponding author: **Alba Caicedo-Barreth**, University of Seville, España & University of Guayaquil, Ecuador. E-mail: [alba.caicedob@ug.edu.ec](mailto:alba.caicedob@ug.edu.ec)

**Enrique Santos Pavón**, University of Seville, Facultad de Turismo y Finanzas. E-mail: [esantos@us.es](mailto:esantos@us.es)

**Luís Lima Santos**, Polytechnic of Leiria, School of Tourism and Maritime Technology, CITUR – Centre for Tourism Research, Development and Innovation, Portugal, E-mail: [llsantos@ipleiria.pt](mailto:llsantos@ipleiria.pt)

## 1 Introduction

The natural, cultural and architectural richness of Ecuador has enabled it to become a popular destination among international tourists over the years. Natural and cultural tourist destinations are the most recognized (Richards & Munsters, 2010), being preferred by Europeans (Centre for the Promotion of Imports from developing countries, CBI, 2018) and consumed in the world (World Tourism Organization, UNWTO, 2018), but there has also been a growing promotion of business tourism in recent years worldwide (Marques & Pinho, 2020; Rogerson, 2015; Tsui, Balli, Tan, Lau, & Hasan, 2018). Therefore, Ecuador's main cities such as Quito and Guayaquil have become the venues of meetings, conventions and events for the executive sector, with an international focus.

As the economic capital of the country, Guayaquil is a business city and has a strategic location for imports and exports, due to its two entrances to trade: the international airport José Joaquín de Olmedo and the seaport. Thus, this city is recognized as a commercial and business centre; a business destination that contributes 21.6% of the country's gross domestic product (GDP) due to the important commercial activities that take place here. This city is affiliated with the International Association of Congresses and Conventions (ICCA), and in 2018, was accorded the status of the leading destination city for business travel in South America for the third consecutive year by World Travel Awards (Salcedo, 2018)

Guayaquil is developing as a digital city (El Telégrafo, 2019; Municipalidad de Guayaquil, 2019) and has a qualified airport, a convention centre with constant occupancy and high-level accommodation capacity. Consequently, it welcomes both domestic and foreign tourists, being the venue of congresses and international events, giving it significant value in the business tourism sector and providing constant and profitable growth.

The term 'competitiveness' arises from an economic point of view, referring to the measurement of the development of regions, sectors or countries by expressing numerical indices that allow comparisons to be made

between them (Black, Hashimzade, & Myles, 2013). In the case of destination competitiveness, Kubickova and Martin (2020) have identified four characteristics: long-term performance productivity, control over local resources and assets, better control of natural resources to attract tourists and constantly evolving. Although there are diverse definitions worldwide (Crouch & Ritchie, 1999; Enright & Newton, 2004; Gomez-Vega & Picazo-Tadeo, 2019; Lopes, Munoz, & Alarcon-Urbistondo, 2018; Mihalic, 2000; Romao & Nijkamp, 2019; Salinas Fernández, Serdeira Azevedo, Martín Martín, & Rodríguez Martín, 2020; Zhang, Gu, Gu, & Zhang, 2011), whenever tourism competitiveness is mentioned, it is the World Economic Forum (WEF) that has established the measurements and indices with the greatest credibility and acceptance by various countries. Competitiveness is not based on a single factor and it is not a permanent indicator. Rather, it encompasses a set of components that allow tourism to start up, the necessary conditions to becoming a true competitive destination diverge according to tourists' preferences.

According to ICCA, business tourism generates more income than leisure tourism (Guayaquil es mi destino, 2018). The requirements of the millennial generation have given rise to the creation of new trends, such as 'bleisure', a portmanteau of English origin, fusing 'business' and 'leisure'. This trend, which has been increasing in recent years, refers to millennial businesspeople taking advantage of a business trip to enjoy leisure activities at the destination (Lichy & McLeay, 2018), influencing the development of urban tourism in large business cities.

According to the World Economic Forum (2016), bleisure tourism is growing. AR Hotels & Resorts (2015) include it in their offers, highlighting preferred bleisure destinations for business travellers such as London, Frankfurt, Tokyo, Barcelona, and Calpe. Moreover, IE Business School (2015) recognizes Madrid and Barcelona as bleisure cities and its *High-value city tourism report* mentions that half of those who travel for work add tourism activities to their travel, while 67% enjoy leisure time during their work trips.

For Spain, business tourism generates 20,000 million euros a year (Hosteltur, 2019) and tourists spend 34% more than conventional travellers (Nexotur, 2018), although Lichy and McLeay (2018) have clarified that there is no standard bleisure traveller, the key characteristic being seeking a balance between work and pleasure. Cities like Barcelona, Madrid, and Seville have reduced the tourism seasonality by encouraging the bleisure trend, the main market segments being technology, finance, health, public administration and education (EC Brands, 2019).

At present, the Public and Municipal Company of Tourism of Guayaquil is evaluating how to take advantage of millennial business tourists as a market niche, boosting Guayaquil as a bleisure destination (El Telégrafo, 2019). However, the scarcity of studies on Guayaquil as an international tourism market is affecting its competitiveness relative to other destinations that already offer a fusion of business and leisure.

Therefore, we present as the research question for this study: Which of Guayaquil's attractions are the most appropriate for millennial business travellers? To address this question, the objective of this article is to diagnose the potential of Guayaquil as a bleisure tourism destination through identifying suitable and preferred attractions for millennial business tourists. The relevance of this study encompasses the data provided in this area to stimulate the tourism sector in Guayaquil. The analysis presented here may prove useful to local providers and the local government in order to provide a better tourist product offer to the business segment and to plan decision making. The fieldwork was carried out in the second half of 2018.

## 2 Review of the Literature

### 2.1 Business Tourism

According to Martín (2011), business tourism refers to a leisure activity, the product of mobility carried out for work reasons outside of one's habitual residence, to accomplish various commercial agreements or to attend events (e.g., congresses, fairs, conventions) without obtaining any remuneration at the destination. Furthermore, Muñoz et al. (2016) have cited Flamarich and Duro, who classify the components of business tourism as shown in Figure 1.

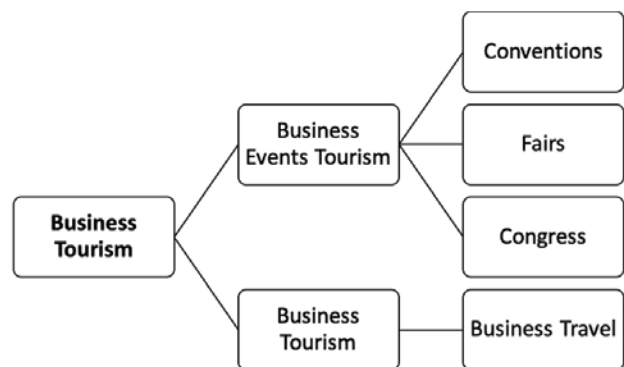


Figure 1. Business tourism classification

García (2016) describes business tourism as vital for the tourism market, characterized by high demand, continuous innovation and need for services, and permanent training of providers, due to the common exercise of the activity.

As business continues to expand, business travellers are growing in number and have become an important segment of travellers and the tourist market (Cazanova, Ward, & Holland, 2014; Gustafson, 2012; Wang & Beise-Zee, 2013). Although tourism was originally defined as travel outside of one's usual environment and without remuneration, business travellers are now being integrated into tourism studies. Business tourists comprise two segments: the individual tourist, who travels to a city to develop his/her business activities; and group business tourism, characterized by participating in congresses, conventions and fairs in the place of destination.

## 2.2 Bleisure Tourism

Lichy and Mcleay (2018) claim that individuals who combine their work duties with leisure can be called 'bleisure travellers' and report that there is a lack of studies regarding these particular hybrid trips (p. 517). However, authors such as Cohen (2011), Smith and Carmichael (2007), Unger, Uriely and Fuchs (2016), and Uriely and Reichel (2000) have all focused on the business traveller experience in their research.

Chung, Choi, Yoo, and Kim (2020) note that bleisure tourism has emerged from the fusion of business and leisure owing to the blurring of the boundaries between them. Martín (2017) has also remarked that hyperconnected workers intertwine their personal and working lives, enabling them to enjoy themselves on business trips. For Carlson Wagonlit Travel (CWT, 2016), a trip can be described as bleisure if it meets at least one of the following conditions: a) flight to the destination on a Saturday; and (b) return from the destination on a Sunday, as most meetings are held on work days.

In this way, meetings, incentives, conferences and exhibitions (MICE) have among their attendees a new important segment for tourism: those business travellers who decide to use some of their time to visit the destination. Some studies have come close to studying bleisure, engaging in topics such as the business travel experience (Unger *et al.*, 2016) and the activities undertaken during business trips (Smith & Carmichael, 2007), although Lichy and Mcleay (2018) quote other authors (WEF, 2015, 2016) and describe bleisure travellers as professionals who combine their business trips with leisure time.

In their report 'A quantitative look at the bleisure phenomenon', CWT Solutions Group (2016) also mention the term 'bleisure' as the blending of business and leisure travel, where the traveller adds days of personal time to his/her business trip. As an analysis of the business trips booked by the company in 2015, this document reveals about 1.9 million business travellers. Other ciphers indicate that 20% of business travellers perform bleisure, mostly at the end of their trips, although one third do so at the beginning and 20% during the trip. Further, the document states that the majority of travellers are women, mostly aged between 20 and 25 years. Moreover, most trips are intercontinental and the greater the distance between the city of origin and the destination, the higher the likelihood of this type of tourism taking place.

Understanding the profile of bleisure tourists is important in order to adapt tourism services according to the needs and characteristics of this market segment, whose main target is the millennial entrepreneur (Lichy & McLeay, 2018). Lichy adds that bleisure travellers are motivated by internal factors (push theory according to Kim, Oh, & Jogaratnam, 2007) or external factors such as destination attributes (pull theory, according to Correia, Kozak, & Ferradeira, 2013; Yoon & Uysal, 2005).

Explaining what motivates different types of travellers to combine business and leisure is not a field that has received much attention in theories, according to Lichy and Mcleay. Thus, these authors identify different types of bleisure travellers based on their travel interests: 1) experiential learners, 2) escapers, 3) holiday workers or holiday-makers, 4) participants in altruistic knowledge (usually senior academics), and 5) research-active trailblazers.

Every classification mentioned has its own motivation: for the first group, learning (Pearce & Lee, 2005; Ritchie & Crouch, 2003; Werry, 2008); for the second, seeking autonomy and to escape (Lo & Lee, 2011); for the third, tangible outcomes such as language qualifications and intangible outcomes such as cultural awareness (Lichy & Mcleay, 2018); for the fourth, altruism, engagement and willingness to learn (Paraskevaidis & Andriotis, 2017); and for the fifth, building one's social network (Barros, 2006) and enhancing one's reputation (Lichy & Mcleay, 2018).

As far as motivation is concerned, previous studies have revealed that experiential learning is one of the main trends that travellers prefer and that can take place through bleisure (Lichy & Mcleay, 2017). Experimental learning increases the learner's previous beliefs or knowledge and helps to resolve conflicts between modes of reflection, action, feeling and thought (Kolb & Kolb, 2005)

## 2.3 Millennial Tourists

Although generational borders are difficult to define, Generation Y, also known as millennials, are those people born between the years 1980 and 1995 (Bencsik, Horváth-Csikós, & Juhász, 2016; Berkup, 2014); currently, they are between 25 and 40 years old. This group has been described as the age of technology due to the great contributions they have made in digital communications, reflecting socio-cultural changes in the population (Sa'aban et al., 2013).

Bravo, Catalán and Pina (2020) state that millennials represent a dynamic group in tourism, not only in terms of their access to and handling of 24/7 technology but also for their ways of enjoying new experiences. These authors also describe Generation Y as well informed and highly consumption-oriented, having sophisticated tastes in shopping. Chen and Li (2020) claim that they constitute a traveller group who like exploring a greater number of destinations and 'spend more time on tours'; further, they are trend followers and consequently require easy access to information before and during their travel. Ketter (2020) regards the European Generation Y as a relevant economic force in tourism and quotes Garikapti et al.'s study (2016) 'Millennials focus on experience, the here-and-now and save-for-a-rainy-day attitude'. Finally, Travel Pulse (2020) have recently remarked that Generation Y are a group wishing to travel soon due to the current COVID-19 pandemic.

For Lavín et al. (2017), the tourist profile of this segment can be identified by the search for different alternatives (according to budget and taste), previous bookings through sites or digital applications, ranking sites of greatest interest and disposition to being connected to different social networks through technological devices during the trip, allowing them to share their experiences.

## 2.4 Competitiveness

The term 'competitiveness' was initially limited to economic aspects. Porter (1990) is well known as one of the pioneers in this field and recognized for conceptualizing a model called the 'Porter Diamond', a study detailing the competitiveness of 10 countries, with four immersed factors: the factor conditions of production, demand condition, related sectors or supporting industries and a component referring to firm strategy, structure and rivalry. Porter also mentions two exogenous factors – government and chance – involving laws, political structures and unforeseen environmental events. For Porter, a

company, sector or country is competitive when the four elements act in a balanced way even if they are not all at 100%; nevertheless, if one is deficient it affects the whole system and therefore the result is global competitiveness.

Salinas Fernández et al. (2020) quote different authors who have sought to measure competitiveness, although without a general consensus (Mazanec & Ring, 2011; Navickas & Malakauskaite, 2009). Among them, Kozak and Rimmington (1998, 1999) claim that a destination's competitiveness can be measured through mixed methods, gathering hard data from secondary sources and soft data from surveys among tourists, agents and experts.

Secall (2003) mentions competitiveness as the ability to achieve objectives over the average measurement of the sector in a sustainable way, through financial, social, and environmental returns, generated from the interaction between the community and public institutions to obtain the satisfaction of the tourist. Abreu-Novais, Ruhanen, and Arcodia (2015) agree with Secall and define competitiveness as the capacity of a destination to reach aims, considering three dimensions: resident population, destination attractiveness, and sustainability (Abreu-Novais et al., 2018)

Rodríguez-Antón, Rubio Andrada, Alonso-Almeida, and Celemin Pedroche (2016) group the approaches of Porter (1990), De Keyser and Vanhove (1994), Hassan (2000), D'Hautesserre (2000), and Hong (2009), posing tourism competitiveness as 'the ability of a geographical area, endowed with specific attractive characteristics, to compete with other geographical areas because it has extraordinary resources or manages them efficiently' (p. 413). For other authors, the human factor is the fundamental element of destiny, because it brings competitive advantages, with the education and training of these individuals being the pillars of this differentiating element (Lillo, Ramón, & Sevilla, 2007).

The evolution of the definition of competitiveness has been evident. Hong (2008) notes that initially, competitiveness referred to comparative advantages (Ricardo, 1817), but now it implies competitive advantages (Porter, 1985). The comparative advantages in question encompassed resources: natural, cultural, human, knowledge, and technology. By contrast, competitive advantages refer to stakeholders, strategic planning, maintenance, tracking development, efficiency of operations, and accessing resources. All of these have been recognized as indices and have created different mechanisms to quantify competitiveness, thus today, the competitiveness of tourist destinations must be measured through many factors according to one's approach.

One organization dedicated to the promotion and evaluation of tourism is the World Travel and Tourism Council (WTTC), which since 2001 has compiled eight major groups of indicators of the competitiveness of tourist destinations: price competitiveness, human factor, infrastructure, environment, technology, human factor in the tourism industry, openness, and social development. These are aligned with International Monetary Fund (IMF) indicators to measure the competitiveness of different countries' economies (Flores, 2008).

One of the most widely studied approaches is the economic one, where the satisfaction of the visitor and the available offer are considered. The most relevant authors in this field are Dwyer and Kim (2003) and Vengesai (2003), while Heath (2003) adds the importance of human resources, strategic planning and dissemination strategy.

Dwyer and Kim's study has been applied to Korean, Australian, Serbian, Croatian and Slovenian destinations. The model encompasses both supply and demand; further attributes are measured in a quantitative, multi-dimensional, abstract and inaccurate manner (Berdo, 2015; Gomezelj & Mihalič, 2008; Knezevic Cvelbar, Dwyer, Koman, & Mihalic, 2016). Dwyer and Kim (2003) argue that the attributes of competitiveness depend on four factors. The first is resources, in this case, consisting of original resources (natural and cultural), resources created (tourism infrastructure, events, activities and other forms of entertainment) and support resources (support infrastructure, quality of service, accessibility of destination, community hospitality, and market relations). The second factor is the management of the destination, which includes the organizational management of the destination, marketing, politics, planning and development, human resources, and the environment. Contingency factors represent the third factor, involving micro-environment, location, macro-environment, prices, and security. Finally, the fourth factor refers to demand conditions, which means the tourist's awareness of the destination, his/her perception, and preferences.

Vengesai (2003) presents a mix of components, based on intrinsic destination resources and activities, plus environmental experiences – both physical and social – and supporting services, which provide the unique destination brand as a combination between competitiveness and attractiveness. As a result, three things are generated: the image of the destination, tourist satisfaction, and organizational presentation.

Within the sustainable approach, which considers economic profitability, social welfare and environmental care, are the contributions of the following authors: Abreu-Novais *et al.* (2016), Buhalis (2000), Dupeyras and

Maccallum (2013), Hassan (2000), Hong (2008), Jimenez and Aquino (2012), Ritchie and Crouch (2003), and World Economic Forum (2013).

For the World Economic Forum (2013), the pillars of a destination's competitiveness are based on three macro factors: tourism regulation, tourism environment, and resources. The tourism regulatory framework includes policies, ordinances and laws, environmental sustainability, safety, health and hygiene, and the prioritization of the tourism industry. The second component includes air, land, tourism and telecommunications infrastructure as well as price competitiveness. The third factor, no less important, comprises human resources, relationship with the tourism industry, and natural and cultural resources.

Dupeyras and Maccallum (2013) mention four categories: indicators to measure development and impacts, indicators to monitor quality and competitiveness, indicators to attract people to destination, and indicators of policy responses and economic opportunities. The following are also identified as key elements for establishing these indicators: governance, product development, quality of services, price competitiveness, accessibility/connectivity, destination branding, natural and cultural resources, and human resource development.

Crouch and Ritchie (1999) present five dimensions: support resources, attraction factors, destination management; organization, destination planning and development; and competitiveness constraints. The first group includes infrastructure, accessibility, enabling resources, hospitality, enterprise, and political will. The second component refers to favourable physical and geographical aspects, climate, culture, history, activities, events, entertainment, superstructure, and market relations. The third group comprises organization, marketing, quality of service and experience, information and research, human resource management, finance and venture capital, visitor management, resource management and crisis management. The fourth factor refers to the definition of the system, philosophy, values, vision, positioning, development, competence analysis, collaborators, evaluation, and audit. The fifth and final factor is the location of the destination, security, cost-value ratio, interdependencies, image, reputation, and load capacity of the destination.

Hassan (2000) focuses his model on developing competitiveness strategies for the tourism industry, therefore, its factors of tourism competitiveness are oriented towards sustainability, involving the following four determinants: comparative advantage, including macro- and micro-environmental factors; demand orientation, the ability of destination to respond to market changes; industry struc-

ture, that is, the existence of tourism organizations; and environmental commitment.

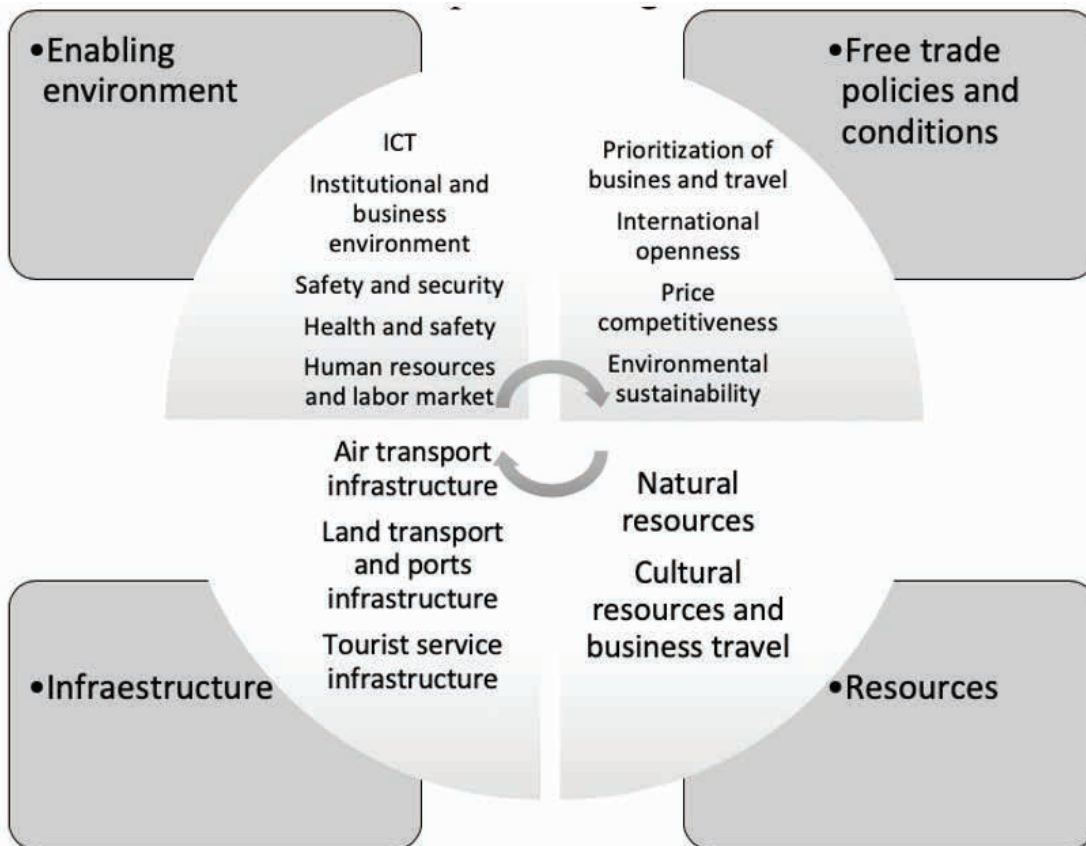
For Hong (2008), competitiveness depends on six factors and 23 attributes. In the first section, there are endogenous factors, including exogenous comparative advantages such as natural and cultural resources. The second aspect refers to the endogenous comparative advantages contained in human resources, knowledge and technology. The third group of attributes belong to competitive advantages, which are investors, strategic planning to generate market linkages, resource maintenance, resource allocation tracking, growth and development, performance effectiveness and facility. The fourth factor comprises tourism management with training, responsibility for resources, marketing, organization, regulation, business integration, information provision and services. The fifth component refers to the conditions of the global environment, where destination opportunities such as events and changes in the superstructure are mentioned. The sixth factor is called domestic environment conditions and contains accidental and expected events.

Rodríguez-Antón et al. (2016) mention as a synthesis that in the models of Crouch and Ritchie, Dwyer and

Kim, the WEF and Hong, tourist resources, the environment and the management of the destination are present; however, the heterogeneity among the definition of what encompasses each one predominates, with the WEF providing a clear definition of indicators to measure the competitiveness of a destination.

The *Travel and tourism competitiveness report* (WEF, 2017) presents the Travel and Tourism Competitiveness Index, which the WEF has dictated since 2006, using the measurement of factors and policies involved in the sustainable development of a destination. For the calculation of the index, 14 pillars are used, with 90 individual indicators using a scale of values between 1 and 7, but it should be emphasized that over the years, the way in which the indicators are calculated has changed. The data are compiled through hard data, standardized to be comparable with the results of the WEF's Executive Opinion Survey. The four basic aspects or dimensions of the calculation are plotted in Figure 2:

Based on this literature review, the present study approaches competitiveness as the ability of resources supported by infrastructure, technology and policies to answer demand needs; thus, this research focuses on the



**Figure 2.** Dimensions of competitiveness  
 Note: Based on the 'Travel and tourism competitiveness Report' (2017)

dimension of resources in Guayaquil as a potential bleisure destination.

### 3 Methodology

The aim of this paper is to diagnose the potential of Guayaquil as a bleisure tourism destination through identifying suitable and preferred attractions for millennial business tourists, facilitating the city's competitiveness as a destination.

As a starting point, the study described had four phases. The first phase consisted of literature review concerning the keywords of the research. In the second phase, the first fieldwork took place, involving observing Guayaquil's tourist offer. The observation sheet was applied during weekends and encompassed the name of the attraction, category, type and subtype as attraction, location, accessibility, hours and days of attention, resources, activities to do, prices and suitable or not for millennials. In the third phase, secondary data concerning the tourist demand of the city were reviewed. The fourth phase consisted of applying surveys and interviews to carry out the analysis of supply based on demand to compare the potential competitiveness of the city as a bleisure destination.

The study was non-experimental and adopted a mixed-methods approach, gathering qualitative and quantitative information (Hernández-Sampieri, Fernández, & Baptista, 2010). The dimensions of the study were: the ability of resources, infrastructure, technology, and local policies to support demand needs. The quantitative part was applied for the statistical analysis of millennial business visitors, focused on evaluating their interests as consumers of bleisure.

Theoretically, analytical methods were used to observe each part of the problem and its components, while inductive methods were applied to business visitors in Guayaquil. In terms of working methods, bibliographic research and fieldwork were applied, applying surveys to people visiting Guayaquil to participate in congresses and other events. Furthermore, interviews were conducted to acquire information from experts in business tourism and urban tourism sector in the city, through a question bank for each person interviewed. The questionnaire included open queries, aimed at both corporate event and congress organisers, applying indicators such as strategies, tourism development, market segment, organization of MICE events and specializations in the MICE sector, personalized tourist packages, tourist profile and tourist offer. The

questionnaire served to determine the current state and potential of the business tourism market in Guayaquil.

In order to apply a survey, it is necessary to establish a sample, thus, out of 692,704 foreign visitors in 2017 (Guayaquil is my destination, 2018), a population sample was created with 5% error and 95% reliability, comprising 384 survey participants in total.

The questionnaires were submitted under construction validity, corroborated in their content by the modality of expert criteria and reliability was obtained through the test-retest technique with a pilot sample of 50 people.

The survey comprised 15 questions, with Likert scales and numerical characteristics addressed to millennial business tourists. The required indicators were gender, age, marital status, work activities, place of residence, average stay, average lodging cost, influence decision on the trip, preference of activities to be carried out, preferred payment forms and preferred medium to choose a supplier.

### 4 Results

In order to determine the appropriate tourist attractions to the *bleisure* tourism, the observation procedure focused on those free access or opened spaces with opening hours until late of night. Average visits per visitor in most of them is one hour and a half. Among the leisure offer are music, natural areas with flora and fauna, culture including gastronomy and social areas, urban and natural landscapes and local football knowledge. Prices are set according to services (from lower to higher), although religious architecture is free to visit.

In the review of previous research on tourist demand in Guayaquil, we took the information of the Tourist Observatory for the Sustainability and Competitiveness of Guayaquil (Observatorio Turístico de la ciudad de Guayaquil – OTCG, 2018), which dictated the study of the visitor profile of the city. A summary of its main results is given below.

There was gender equality among visitors: the domestic visitors were between the ages of 29 and 39 (32.76%), while foreign visitors were generally aged 18 to 28 (36.66%). The monthly income of foreign tourists was above USD \$900 (60%), while in the case of domestic tourists, 78% received less than USD \$1,000. The main reasons for travel were leisure and recreation (33.99%), and work (29.87%). The organization of the trip was in 86.50% of cases carried out by the visitors themselves, while the search for infor-

mation about the city was carried out over the Internet in 51.86% of cases.

Domestic travellers prefer being accompanied by family (25.68%) or co-workers (29.70%), while foreign tourists prefer travelling alone (52.51%). The average stay was two nights for foreigners (25.53%) and three nights for domestic visitors (30.77%). A total of 46.54% moved around the city by taxi and 41.28% of accommodation within the city comprised hotels. The average daily spend of 36.82% of visitors was \$40 to \$60. The payment method used in the city was cash in the case of 75.61% of respondents. The attractions visited included the Malecón Simón Bolívar (35.46%) and the Barrio Las Peñas (19.71%).

Finally, the report expressed the level of visitor satisfaction with the main mass events organized in the city. From a list of 13 events, the highest ranking were Raices Food Fair, Comic Con, The Funka Fest, and the International Orchid Conference.

On the other hand, our survey applied to foreign business tourists in Guayaquil revealed that most businesspeople came from the United States (18%), followed by Spain (12%), Canada (10%), China (9%) and Mexico (7%). The average number of visiting days were three days (34%) and two days (26%); the main reason to travel was business meetings (29%), followed by congresses (18%) and fairs or conventions (17%). As additional factors that influenced visits to the city, the largest percentage (38%) pertained to products, services and tourist places.

For the following questions, a scale from 1 to 5 was presented, where 1 meant not interested and 5 very interested. Almost half (46% of them) mentioned that the activity they would like to do after their business day is visit the main attractions. For this reason, the following question asked about the types of tourist attractions people would like to visit, with the largest percentages on the scale (43% to 45%) being museums, churches, parks, squares, and quays. When asked what kind of tourism he or she would like to do, 30% mentioned cultural tourism and 26% answered others options (e.g., sports or gastronomy). Based on the previous observation, the night activities he or she would like to do were evaluated on a Likert scale from 1 to 5 and among the options presented, the Mercado del Río (49%), Puerto Santa Ana (48%), Las Peñas (47%), and Plaza Guayarte (42%) were the highest ranking.

In terms of accommodation preference, location prevailed (29%) over services, booking facilities, price and other factors. When consulting tourists if after completing their business, they had the time to participate in tourist tours, 88% gave a positive response. In terms of available days for tours, weekends (39%) and Fridays (32%) were

most popular. In terms of hours, after noon until 18:00 (38%) and after 18:00 (34%) were most commonly cited.

Looking at the budget for tourism activities, 43% indicated \$201 to \$500 and 39% between \$101 and \$200. As the group of respondents were from Generation Y, we decided to ascertain whether they would be interested in putting together a package tour, to which 89% gave a positive response. Thus, the next question was how they would like to prepare their package, 50% mentioned through a web application; furthermore, 80% would prefer to make the purchase and payment of the services with a credit card. The preferred means of finding out about offers and personalized tourist packages were social networks (59%).

Angelo Calderón, an expert in business tourism events, was interviewed in December 2018 (Interviewee 1). His answers regarding the MICE events and their relationship with business tourism are presented in Table 1.

The owner and manager of a travel agency in Guayaquil was also interviewed (Interviewee 2). His answers are summarized in Table 2.

In order to provide a list of attractions appropriate to millennial business tourists, at the end of the data collection process, observations were combined with previous secondary tourist demand information and our surveys and interviews. Thus, in Table 3 we present the selected attractions for this group. It should be noted that the attractions not included were considered not to meet the expectations of this market niche.

## 5 Discussion

The WEF (2019) states that Ecuador is in the 70<sup>th</sup> position in terms of world competitiveness, based on these four aspects: a) enabling environment; b) free trade policies and conditions; c) infrastructure; and 4) resources. The components reaching low values are business environment, air infrastructure, ground infrastructure, but the lowest value is cultural resources and business travel, as can be seen in Figure 3.

Guayaquil does not have preliminary data relating to the competitiveness index of the city, thus we will analyse the results based on what we deemed the main dimension of competitiveness: the ability of resources supported by infrastructure, technology and policies to answer demand needs. Moreover, even though this study does not focus on the other dimensions, we will discuss their influence as supporting elements of the attractions.

The above-mentioned Guayaquil's attractions offer to business travellers the opportunity to have leisure and



**Table 1.** Interviewee 1

Topics	Answers
Situation of events and business market in Guayaquil	The events and business market in Guayaquil are being developed and strengthened; you can observe the work of the public enterprise and the convention bureau, the product of them being the three awards received.
Specialists	The training of specialists is important and experience in the sector would add significant value.
Frequency of events	A large number of events are held. The city has a calendar of the largest events.
Places where most events take place	Simón Bolívar Convention Centre, renowned hotels in the city.
Characteristics of the business tourist	Always connected to the world of technology, needs constant innovation and seeks new experiences and sensations in events.
Types of recreational activities to offer to tourists	Cultural, artistic and recreational activities that link the city’s history, culture and nature.

**Table 2.** Interviewee 2.

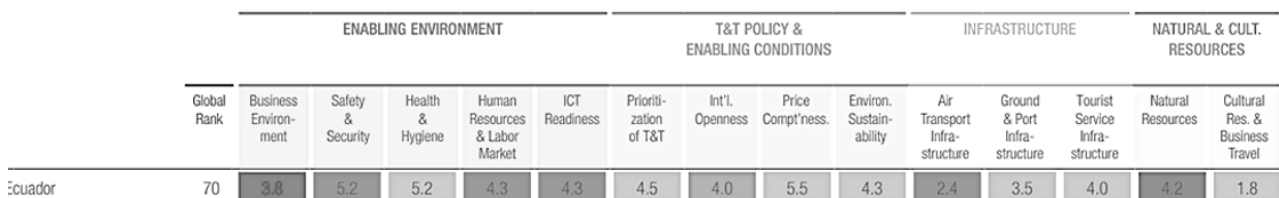
Topics	Answer
Profile of the Generation Y business tourist	Businesspeople who visit the city for business in one way or another carry out tourism in the city, have considerable spending power and search for new experiences and adventures. They represent a new market segment in the city.
Demand growth	There is now a high demand for foreign tourists requesting tourist packages from the city. The more MICE events there are, the more tourists will visit the city.
Personalized package tours	They are required by business tourists; night activities are the most requested.
Ways to capture this segment	Through tourism marketing on social networks and websites. To offer innovative tourist alternatives in tourist packages.

fun with free access, suitable access times and short visiting periods. Some of those attractions include innovative features such as La Bota Theatre, including cultural elements like mini-plays with drama or comedies genre and Guayarte Square with its gastronomic and bohemian environment during the evening and night. Both options allow ‘bleisure travellers’ to have more diversification in Guayaquil.

The data revealed that resources in Guayaquil can be suitable for businesspeople visiting the city. As Marques

and Santos (2016) note, urban tourism destinations are best able to attract this group of visitors, thus Guayaquil provides appropriate leisure experiences with entertainment in open spaces such as Malecón del Salado, Malecón Simón Bolívar, Guayarte, and Las Peñas, which Chen and Li (2020) claim facilitate life satisfaction for visitors through reducing their sense of crisis and other negative feelings.

The WTTC’s statistics reveal that business travel spending represents 22.5% of direct travel (WTTC, 2018),



**Figure 3.** Competitiveness of Ecuador according to the WEF (2019)

**Table 3.** Analysis of the natural and cultural tourist attractions of Guayaquil

Name	Time of visit	Resources	Activities	Prices	Suitable
Metropolitan Cathedral of Guayaquil	30 minutes Monday to Sunday from 07:00 to 19:00	Neo-Gothic style Religious architecture Statue of the Apostle Santiago, frontispiece, set of stained glass windows and altars	Tour of the cathedral Masses for believers	Do not apply	Yes
San Francisco Church	30 minutes Monday to Sunday from 08:00 to 18:30	Religious Architecture History	Tour by the church	Do not apply	Yes
Malecón Simón Bolívar	2–3 hours Monday to Sunday from 06:00 to 00:00	Guayas River Gastronomic, historic and recreational areas	Walking tour around the boardwalk. Photograph	Free access	Yes
Market of the River	1 hour	24 local and international food options in a Gastronomic space, where 550 dishes are offered, whether traditional, innovative, influential or traditional/innovative	Gastronomic tasting	Free access Prices of products vary according to the place	Yes
Gardens of the Malecón	45 minutes Monday to Sunday from 07:00 to 22:00	Trails ideal for children and adults Venue of events and fairs especially related to the nature offered by this part of the Simón Bolívar Pier	Observation of more than 350 species of flora and fauna of tropical sites Walking tour	Do not apply except when events are taking place	Yes
La Perla	20 minutes Monday to Sunday from 17:00 to 22:00	The biggest Ferris wheel in South America Panoramic view of the city Photo shop, souvenir shop, mechanical games, snacks for sale	Enjoy the experience offered Photograph of the panoramic view	\$3.49 \$4.98	Yes
Cerro Santa Ana	2 hours Every day	Squares, gazebo, museums, chapels, bars, cafes, art galleries, lighthouse, craft shops	Climbing up 444 steps of the hill Santa Ana Visit to the viewpoint Hiking and tasting of the gastronomy	Free access Prices vary according to location	Yes
Las Peñas	1–2 hours Every day	Calle Numa Pompilio Llona with 20th century architectural style Dwellings dating back 400 years Cultural view of colourful and romantic appearance Art galleries	Tour in Las Peñas neighbourhood Photography of the cultural environment Observation of heritage dwellings	Free access Prices vary according to tourist service	Yes
Puerto Santa Ana	1–3 hours Every day	11 restaurants, hotels and bars View of the modern architecture of the city facing the Guayas River The Point Building, an icon of the place	Gastronomic tasting and leisure activities	Free access Prices vary according to service	Yes

**Table 3 continued.** Analysis of the natural and cultural tourist attractions of Guayaquil

Name	Time of visit	Resources	Activities	Prices	Suitable
Malecón del Salado	1 hour Monday to Sunday from 06:00 to 00:00	Walking tour next to Estero Salado and food establishments, rest area, squares, quays for river walks, local crafts, etc.	Tour along the boardwalk River tours Food tasting Micro theatre	Free access Prices vary according to activity	Yes
Guayarte Square	1–2 hours from 12:00 to 23:00	52 places to eat Urban art, gastronomy, culture and recreational activities	Walking Photography Mini theatre, live show Gastronomic tasting Observation of urban art	Free access Prices vary according to the location	Yes
Julio Jaramillo Popular Music Museum	1 hour 10:00 to 17:00	Black and white photographs, records, cassettes, musical instruments, magazines, clothes of musicians and other representatives of Ecuadorian music Statues referring to lizards, typical of Ecuador	Tour of the museum Observation of the historical objects in the musical field that exist in the place, besides knowing the history of the life of Julio Jaramillo	Do not apply	Yes
Astillero Football Teams Museum: Emelec and Bar- celona	1 hour 10:00 to 17:00	Historical photographs and videos Historic t-shirts Traditional songs of the teams. Multimedia resources	Tour of the museum Observation of the historical elements of the equipment	Do not apply	Yes
Sala de Teatro La Bota- Malecón del Salado	1–2 hours 18:00 to 00:00	Micro theatre, artistic show, stand-up, dancing, plastic arts, among others	Enjoy the art of the La Bota room In addition, snacks and drinks offered in each room	Prices vary according to performance	Yes
Bosque Protector Cerro Blanco	Better on week- ends 700 endemic species of flora, 295 species of fauna	Endemic species, 700 species of flora, 295 species of fauna Camping areas	Four routes of trails: guided and self-guided, as well as nurseries Ecotourism Bird watching Camping	\$12–\$24 \$15–\$30 \$20–\$40	Yes

with expected growth of 3.1% annually according to UNWTO (2011). Therefore, enhancing activities and products for the consumption of businesspeople may not only be profitable and attractive to destinations, as Rogerson (2015) states, but also create the necessary loyalty to gain recognition as a bleisure tourism city.

As noted earlier, Rodríguez-Antón *et al.*'s (2016) definition of competitiveness encompasses the ability of a destination to compete through its remarkable resources and management. The diversity of leisure activities (e.g., cultural, historical, creative) in Guayaquil provides businesspeople the opportunity to relax after their demanding meetings or events in the city. Abreu-Novais *et al.* (2018) have also identified local people as contributors to competitiveness. In this respect, Guayaquil's population is

multicultural, has hosted thousands of foreign people visiting for business and can be characterized as friendly with tourists.

The MICE segment can facilitate extraordinary economic development. Most cities focusing on MICE are in Asia, Europe and North America (Global Traveler, 2020; Smart Meetings, 2020), but cities such as Buenos Aires are also earning \$23,500,000 annually thanks to this trend; so Guayaquil has the potential to attain significant profit in this area. As a member of the ICCA since 2015, the city has many opportunities to host significant international events (Guayaquil is my destination, 2018). Consequently, it is also worth noting the types of bleisure travellers hosted by Guayaquil; according to Lichy and Mcleay's (2018) classification, they can be described as working

vacationers, who come to work but also try to have fun and enjoy themselves.

The WEF (2019) regards infrastructure as a macro factor and in the previous secondary data review, the accessibility of Guayaquil in terms of its seaport and international airport was identified as facilitative of a tourism environment and resources. According to the interviewees, nowadays the specialization of providers is evident, as a result of the growing of event and business venues in the city. Hotels and Convention Centres receive most of the conferences and fairs.

On the other hand, Bravo et al. (2020) remark that satisfaction brings loyalty, a social tourism website is essential to reach that satisfaction for Generation Y; surveys supported the higher importance of searching information or book a service through the site. Adding the opinion of Carvalho, Márquez, and Díaz-Méndez (2018), business tourism revenues depend on significant tourists references (e.g., relevant opinions on websites and social media). Guayaquil as a destination is well provided with information and communications technology (ICT) (e.g., free Wi-Fi spots and mobile phone charger totems in the main tourist attractions), so the city can meet the Millennials' needs, these being people for whom technology plays a key role (Ketter, 2020).

Crouch and Ritchie (1999) attach relevance to tourism management. Guayaquil's local government has established 130 ordinances and regulations to benefit the development of the city in the economic, tourism, ecological, and cultural fields (Guayaquil is my destination, 2019). Thus, the city provides the necessary enabling conditions to foster tourism, further supporting the role of the Municipal Public Tourism Company. Guayaquil's current policy is to position Guayaquil as an event and business destination.

It should be noted that it is necessary to enhance tourist information and marketing strategies towards this type of tourists and to continue working to provide specialized services for this group of people, who have considerable purchasing power but not regular enjoyment schedules like other tourists, due to their primary activity being visiting for business, fairs or events.

In terms of Ricardian theory (1817), Guayaquil encompasses the comparative advantages of becoming a bleisure destination, because there are natural, cultural, human, knowledge and technological benefits of doing so. According to Porter's perspective (1990), Guayaquil can attain these competitive advantages because it is an economic centre where all the following elements exist: stakeholders, strategic planning, maintenance, tracking development, efficiency of operations, and access-

ing resources. The COVID-19 outbreak and associated effects have proved the economic resilience of Guayaquil, supported in its population's continued working style, although as a business tourist destination it is still awaiting reactivation.

## 6 Conclusion

According to our analysis, we conclude that business tourism in Guayaquil is taking advantage of the nomination of MICE destination and although Guayaquil is not at the same level of competition as other destinations recognized worldwide in the field of bleisure, this destination currently represents the ideal environment for the implementation of this form of tourism. Leisure activities exist in this destination and can be offered to businesspeople who are mostly part of Generation Y, also called millennials.

The previous research reviewed in the theoretical framework provided the guidelines for this research and through our fieldwork, it was possible to determine that there is a suitable offer to the demand of various attractions of the city, mostly those related to cultural aspects. These thus provide the basis for the implementation of new tourism products focused on this market.

It is necessary to propose a bleisure tourist product in Guayaquil that allows the attractions and services of the city to be combined and advertised more selectively towards a more culturally interested tourist with considerable purchasing power and differentiated schedules. The actual businesspeople travellers require accessibility, connectivity, acquisition of products online, high quality service and other innovative aspects as added value to the traditional offer.

As limitations of this study, it should be mentioned that we focused on resources, but other dimensions may be studied more deeply in future studies to contribute to the field of competitiveness in the context of Guayaquil. Moreover, it is necessary to delve into hard data to obtain more specific quantitative information that allows the position of the city relative to other world destinations to be determined.

**Alba Caicedo-Barreth** is a doctoral candidate at the University of Seville. She is also a full professor of Tourism at the University of Guayaquil. Her main research areas are cultural tourism, cross-cultural management and competitiveness. Furthermore, she has been admitted as a collaborator at the Centre for Tourism Research (CITUR). She has

published some papers on cultural tourism topics. ORCID ID: 0000-0002-7192-7546.

**Enrique Santos Pavón** is a full professor of Geographical topics at the University of Seville. He is part of the Physical Geography and Regional Geographical Analysis Department, with research interest in tourism, geography, landscape, tourism planning and coast. He has published books and papers on geography, tourism planning and sustainability topics. ORCID ID: 0000-0002-7903-0506.

**Luís Lima Santos** holds a PhD in Economic and Business Sciences – Financial Accounting. He is a full professor of Accounting at the School of Tourism and Maritime Technology, Polytechnic of Leiria, with research interests in hospitality management accounting. He is also a full researcher at the Centre for Tourism Research, Development and Innovation and co-author of books on hospitality management accounting. He has published papers on issues regarding financial accounting, hospitality management accounting and public accounting. ORCID ID: 0000-0002-6652-7601.

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