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Article

Exploring the Tourism Competitiveness of a Destination: A Case Study of Georgia

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Abstract: The global expansion of the tourism industry has intensified competition among destinations, necessitating a deeper understanding of their competitive positioning. The aim of this study is to develop a research model that analyzes the competitive environment of a specific tourism destination and its relative position within the market, using Georgia as a case study. The competitive environment is analyzed based on the preferred travel destinations of the leading tourism-generating countries (or segments) of the destination under study. This approach is grounded in the expectation that a destination's competitiveness in the global tourism market may differ from its position within a market composed of destinations favored by its primary visitor segments. To achieve this, the study applies the Segment-centric Geo-competitive Environment of a Tourism Destination (SGE-TD) framework, which consists of three sequential analytical steps: (1) identifying competing destinations that define the study destination's competitive environment, (2) outlining the key characteristics of this environment, (3) identifying leading destinations, and close competitors. This research has both methodological and practical implication. Methodologically, it introduces a structured, target-oriented framework with corresponding analytical tools that can be applied to similar studies. Practically, it provides insights that can inform strategic decision-making in destination marketing and tourism policy.

Keywords: tourism destination; segmentation; competitiveness; TTCI; Georgia; SGE-TD

Introduction

The tourism industry is one of the largest sectors of the global economy, with significant growth potential. In 2019, its contribution to global GDP was 10.3%, declining to 9.1% in 2023, but is projected to rise to 11.4% by 2034 (WTTC; Modi, 2024). Additionally, the industry plays a vital role in employment, accounting for one in every ten jobs worldwide.

The evolving nature of global tourism has intensified competition among destinations. This competitive environment is shaped by dynamic social, economic, and natural factors, as well as the emergence of new destinations in international markets. Consequently, competition conditions continue to evolve, diversifying the set of competing destinations.

In Georgia, tourism has traditionally been a key sector of the national economy and is considered a driver of sustainable development. The industry contributed 8.4% to GDP in 2019 and 7.1% in 2023 (GNTA). Following the collapse of the Soviet Union, Georgia emerged as a recognized tourism destination in the international market, benefiting from increased openness and accessibility for foreign visitors. However, global awareness of the destination remains relatively low. As a result, further development of the industry is closely linked to its competitive performance and strategic positioning in the international tourism market.

The expansion of global tourism and the increasing complexity of its competitive landscape have prompted international organizations, national economies, and research institutions to develop standardized frameworks for statistical accounting, big data analysis, competitive indicators, indices, rankings, and reporting methodologies (WEF, WTTC, UNWTO, IATA, WB, EU, TRUSTYOU).

Academic research on tourism competitiveness has evolved alongside studies on business competitiveness, with increasing attention paid to destination-specific competitive frameworks. As Hefny (2023) notes, “since the early 1990s, research has progressively shed light on the characteristics and framework of destination competitiveness” (for a detailed discussion, see the Literature Review section).

This study aims to develop a research model tailored to analyzing the competitive environment of a specific tourism destination and assessing its relative competitive position. The proposed research design is tested using Georgia as a case study.

The structure of the paper is as follows: First, the thematic literature on conceptual approaches and models is reviewed, exposing the relevance of the applied Segment-centric Geo-competitive Environment of a Tourism Destination (SGE-TD) framework. Next, the study identifies countries that constitute Georgia’s foreign tourism market and segments these tourism-generating countries based on their preferred travel destinations. Subsequently, competitive indicators are selected and analyzed to characterize Georgia’s tourism competitive environment. The study then examines the key features of this environment, including its principal components, driving forces, the competitive positions of leading destinations, and the destinations identified as close competitors to Georgia. Finally, the research findings are generalized and discussed.

From a practical perspective, this study provides insights into Georgia’s tourism competitive environment, highlighting its key components, driving indicators, leading destinations, and close competitors. These findings inform potential strategic approaches to enhancing Georgia’s competitive positioning in the global tourism market.

1. Literature Review

Interest in research on tourism destination competitiveness has grown alongside the global expansion of the tourism industry. Over the past three decades, more than 1,100 articles on tourism destination competitiveness have been published in reputable journals (Haiyang et al., 2024). These studies address various facets of the subject, including theoretical foundations, competitive environment modeling, destination market segmentation, the identification of competitive variables and indicators, and the determination of competitive environments for competing destinations.

The concept of competitive strategy was introduced by Harvard Business School professor Michael Porter in 1979 through his widely recognized Porter’s 5 Forces framework. This model highlights the key competitive forces that a company must consider to strengthen its market position (Porter, 1979). Later, Porter expanded on this idea with the Diamond Model (1990), which evaluates an industry’s international competitiveness. Rugman and D’Cruz (1993) extended the Diamond Model further with the Double Diamond Model (DDM), incorporating competitive strategy on global, regional, and national levels.

Dwyer and Kim (2002) developed a Tourist Destination Competitiveness Model designed to facilitate comparisons between countries and tourism sectors. Initially tested in Australia, this model emphasized key elements of competitiveness from the broader literature while addressing the unique issues associated with destination competitiveness. Their subsequent work refined the methodology, expanding the range of competitive indicators used in the analysis (Dwyer & Kim, 2010).

Ritchie and Crouch (2003) proposed the Tourism Destination Competitiveness (TDC) and Sustainability Model, which focuses on the macro and micro levels of the competitive environment. This model identifies seven key components that influence a destination’s competitiveness and sustainability, highlighting the synergy between comparative and competitive advantages (Ritchie & Crouch, 2003; 2010). This dual perspective of competitiveness is essential for understanding a destination’s market position (Gonzalez-Rodríguez, 2023). A special study was dedicated to systematizing and explaining the definitions popularized in connection with the development of these concepts and models (Mazanec et al., 2007).

Various studies have explored specific components of the TDC model, particularly those related to the supply side of tourism destinations of different levels such as countries, regions, or specific

locations. Their competitive indicators include factors like natural and cultural attractions, infrastructure, and services (Smith, 1988; Marais et al., 2017; Stalmirska, 2021). On the demand side, segmentation researches have focused on demographic, behavioral, psychographic, firmographic, and technographic factors, as well as geographical segmentations based on factors such as population density and climate (Ioannides & Debbage, 1998; Gillian Partin, 2011, Kotler & Armstrong, 2018; Cibinskiene, Snieskine, 215, Lopes, Munoz, Alarcon-Urbistondo, 2018). Many destinations use country of origin as a segmentation criterion to tailor their marketing strategies to specific tourist profiles (Dolnicer, 2008; A. Nella & E. Christou, 2021). Research on diverse aspects of tourists as buyers and territorial classification by their origin and visiting places significantly depends on the specifics of destinations and tourism sectors (A. Nella, E. Christou, 2021).

The competitive environment of a destination is multi-dimensional, encompassing core resources and attractors, supporting factors, destination policy, planning, development, and management. Ritchie and Crouch (2003) categorized these factors into the global (macro) and competitive (micro) environments. The macro-environment includes economic, technological, ecological, political, sociocultural, and demographic factors, while the micro-environment refers to the immediate forces influencing tourism activities within the destination itself (Ritchie & Crouch, 2003).

Some studies have criticized previous research for focusing too narrowly on either comparative or competitive advantages. Gonzalez-Rodríguez et al. (2024) proposed a hybrid approach that integrates both dimensions, offering a more holistic view of destination competitiveness (Gonzalez-Rodríguez et al., 2023).

In terms of research methodologies, scholars have applied classical and innovative analytical tools to assess destination competitiveness. Cracolici et al. (2006) used the Crouch-Ritchie Model to analyze destination efficiency and competitiveness, while Lusticku and Bednarov (2018) explored factors of competitiveness using the Integrated Model of Destination Competitiveness. These approaches provide valuable insights into how competitiveness influences destination performance.

Vobek K. emphasizes that "There is a vast body of literature about competition, competitive advantage, and competitive identity in tourism. Also, there is a dearth of studies linking tourism competitiveness (TC) to tourism performance" (Hosseini et al., 2021). Destinations could be compared by their ability to adapt and maintain competitive positions in the tourism market, as changes in tourism affect destination performance and success" (Vodeb K., 2012, pp. 273-278).

A popular methodology dedicated to the assessment of tourist destination competitiveness through Crouch-Ritchie's model and the Travel and Tourism Competitiveness Index (TTCI) implies the methods of data envelopment and truncated regression with bootstrap (Gonzalez-Rodríguez et al., 2023). Benchmarking is another popular method used in competitiveness assessments. It involves identifying and comparing the strengths and weaknesses of a destination relative to its competitors (Zlatkovic, 2016).

A wide variety of analytical methods were adjusted to the variables and indicators presented in the aforementioned models of tourism destinations' competitiveness. A special statistical tool was developed focused on the tourism decision process, which starts from the demand schedule for holidays and ends with the choice of a specific holiday destination, and was tested in the case of Italy as a tourism destination (Gardini, 2008). Studies have also employed Multi-Criteria Decision Analysis (MCDA) methods, such as ELECTRE I, to evaluate tourism destinations (Botti & Peypoch, 2013). The Importance-Performance Analysis (IPA) model (Tontini, Silveria, 2007), as well as the Importance-Performance-Competitor Analysis (IPCA), has been used to compare destinations and highlight areas for strategic improvement (Albayarak et al., 2018).

Some scholars have further refined the categorization of competitive indicators. Ferreira and Perks (2020) identified three primary themes influencing destination competitiveness: core, facilitating, and supporting indicators. These themes provide a foundation for understanding the socioeconomic dynamics between developed and developing countries. Additionally, the 4 Cs Tourism Destination Competitiveness Matrix (Diamantino et al., 2020) identifies four key

dimensions: Capacity, Competence, Communication, and Creativity. These dimensions are essential for evaluating the competitiveness of destinations, as they address aspects like infrastructure, human resources, marketing, and innovation.

The role of information technologies in tourism competitiveness has also garnered attention in recent studies. Researchers have explored how digital tools and innovations enhance competitiveness in European destinations (Petrovic et al., 2016; Irtyshcheva et al., 2022).

A growing body of literature evaluates the competitiveness of specific countries as tourism destinations. Comparative studies have been conducted on destinations such as Hong Kong (Enright & Newton, 2004), Italy (Goffi, 2013), Greece (Marios, 2015), and Portugal (Mira et al., 2016), Serbia (Milutinovic, Vasovic, 2017), India (Saqib, 2019), Japan (Takatoshi et al., 2022), China (Liu et al., 2022), Georgia (Okroshidze et al., 2024), etc.

Georgia, as a relatively emerging tourism destination, presents a special unique case.

The leading segments of Georgia represented by Armenia, Turkey, and Russia and composing more than 50% of the foreign visitors, make up less than 3% of the global travelers, while the global leading tourism generators —US, China, Germany, and the UK—making up more than 25% of the global tourism market, contribute just less than 2.8% to the Georgian market (DataBank-WB; GNTA.GE). This reality underlines the need for a tailored approach to understanding Georgia's competitive environment, specifically through the Segment-centric Geo-competitive Environment of a Tourism Destination (SGE-TD) framework.

3. The Research Design and Applied Methodology

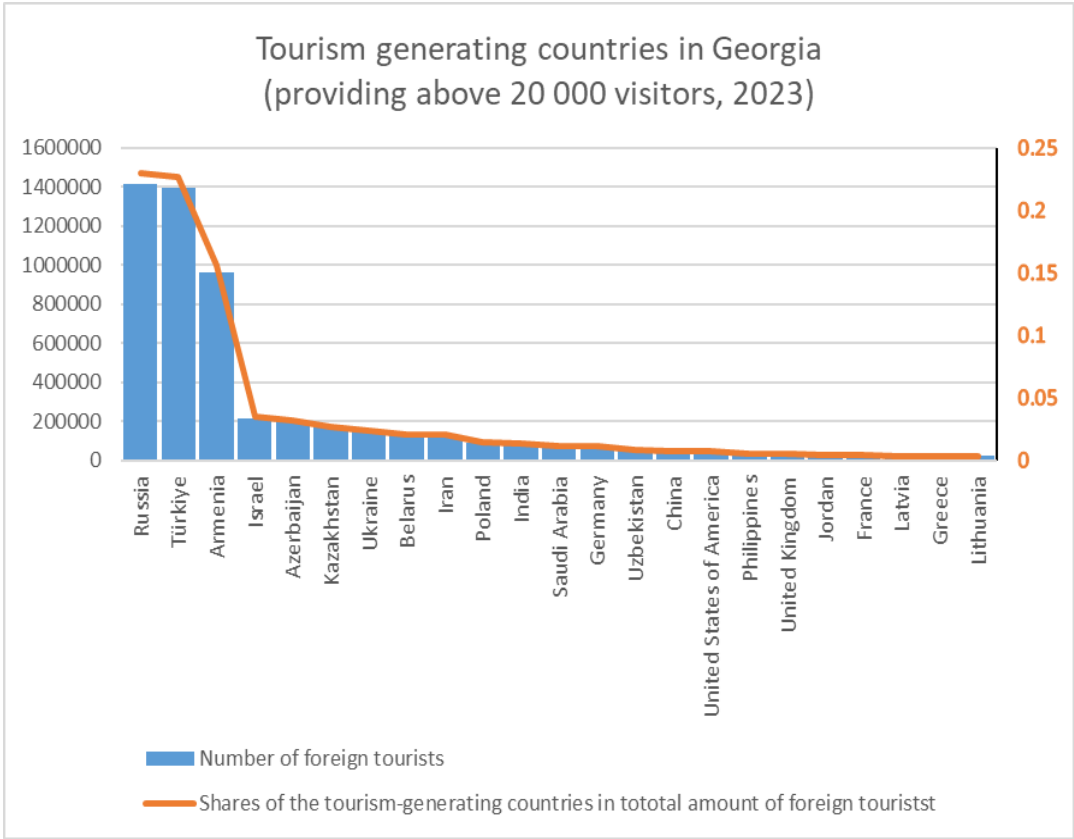
The research design consists of the following steps:

1. Identifying competing tourist destinations for the destination under study (Georgia in this case);
2. Analyzing the identified competing travel destinations composing the competitive environment for the study destination;
3. Identifying the features of the studied competitive environment, focusing on the driving forces and the competitive position of the study destination

Step 1: Identifying Competing Tourist Destinations for the Destination Under Study

To determine the destinations that constitute Georgia's competitive environment, we apply the Segment-centric Geo-competitive Environment of a Tourism Destination (SGE-TD) approach (Khelashvili, 2023). First, we identify Georgia's leading tourism-generating countries, followed by identifying the primary travel destinations for tourists from each of these countries.

For the first task of this stage, it was assumed that tourists from these countries should collectively account for at least 80% of all foreign visitors to Georgia in order to ensure adequate representation. According to the latest statistics for 2023, the number of countries that annually send 20,000 or more tourists to Georgia is 23. The share of tourists from these countries accounts for 87.6% of all foreign tourists visiting Georgia (see Graphic 1), which justifies the use of these country-related data for further analysis.



The stark reality underscores the importance of market diversification, which is essential for strengthening Georgia’s competitive position in its foreign tourism market.

To achieve the objective of the second task of the same step, we determined the top 10 preferred tourism destinations (countries) from each of the 23 segments previously outlined. This analysis revealed 61 tourism destination countries, which collectively constitute Georgia’s geo-competitive environment, as defined by the SGE-TD concept (see Table 1).

Table 1. Top tourism destinations for Georgia’s tourism generating countries.

		Top 10 Destinations										
		1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	
Tourists generating Countries	1	Russia	Turkiye	Thailand	UAE	Egypt	Uzbekistan	Kazakhstan	China	Georgia	Tunisia	Azerbaijan
	2	Turkiye	Greece	Romania	Saudi Arabia	Georgia	Iran	Bulgaria	Germany	UK	Azerbaijan	Italy
	3	Armenia	Georgia	Russia	Iran	Turkiye	Egypt	Kazakhstan	Poland	US	Lebanon	Romania
	4	Israel	Turkiye	US	Egypt	Spain	Austria	Poland	Romania	Cyprus	Germany	UK
	5	Azerbaijan	Iran	Georgia	Turkiye	Russia	Kazakhstan	Saudi Arabia	Romania	Uzbekistan	Bulgaria	US
	6	Kazakhstan	Uzbekistan	Russia	Turkiye	Egypt	Georgia	China	Kyrgyzstan	Azerbaijan	South Korea	Thailand
	7	Ukraine	Poland	Romania	Bulgaria	Turkiye	Czech Re.	Germany	Egypt	Croatia	Russia	Austria
	8	Belarus	Poland	Turkiye	Lithuania	Georgia	Russia	Egypt	Ukraine	Kazakhstan	Bulgaria	Romania
	9	Iran	Turkiye	UAE	Azerbaijan	Armenia	Georgia	Canada	Kuwait	China	India	Russia
	10	Poland	Italy	UK	Germany	Turkiye	Spain	Croatia	Greece	Hungary	Austria	Czech Rep.
	11	India	UAE	Thailand	US	Saudi Arabia	Kuwait	Singapore	Malaysia	UK	Indonesia	Bahrain
	12	Saudy Arabia	Kuwait	Bahrain	UAE	Egypt	Turkiye	Jordan	Qatar	UK	Thailand	Austria
	13	Germany	Austria	France	Italy	Spain	Netherlands	Turkiye	Poland	Denmark	Greece	Croatia
	14	Uzbekistan	Kazakhstan	Tajikistan	Turkiye	Russia	Saudi Arabia	Kyrgyzstan	South Korea	Georgia	Azerbaijan	Latvi
	15	China	Hong Kong	Macau	Thailand	Japan	South Korea	Vietnam	Malaysia	Singapore	US	Cambodia
	16	US	Mexico	Canada	UK	Spain	Italy	France	Puerto Rico	Germany	Dominica	Japan
	17	Philippines	Hong Kong	Japan	Singapore	Thailand	UAE	China	South Korea	Malaysia	US	Taiwan
	18	UK	Spain	France	Italy	Ireland	Greece	US	Turkiye	Portugal	Germany	Netherlands
	19	Jordan	Saudi Arabia	Turkiye	UAE	Egypt	Kuwait	Lebanon	Bahrain	US	Cyprus	Israel
	20	France	Spain	Italy	UK	Greece	Germany	Portugal	US	Belgium	Morocco	Turkiye
	21	Latvia	Lithuania	Poland	Estonia	France	Russia	Sweden	Turkiye	Germany	UK	Greece
	22	Greece	Turkiye	Albania	Italy	Bulgaria	UK	Cyprus	France	Germany	Spain	Netherlands
	23	Lithuania	Poland	Latvia	UK	Turkiye	Germany	Greece	Estonia	Russia	Italy	Czech Rep.

To assess the validity of considering Georgia's international tourism competitive environment (SGE-TD of Georgia) separately from the global competitive tourism environment, a comparison was conducted using two alternative calculations.

The first calculation shows the presence of the top 10 most popular tourist destinations globally in within the list of the top 10 preferred destinations for countries generating foreign tourism to Georgia. The second calculation is similar but includes ranking scores for destination preferences, ranging from 10 for the most popular to 1 for the least popular destination

$$(a) P\%(ps) = (\text{SUM DS}/\text{SUM DG}) 100\% = (79/230) * 100\% = 34.3\%;$$

$$(b) P(rs)\% = [\text{SUM DS}(s)/\text{SUM DG}(s)] 100\% = (453/1265) * 100\% = 35.8\%$$

Where,

P% (ps) - Share of top preferred global destinations among the 10 preferred destinations of the studied segments by presence scores;

DS (ps) - Number of the top preferred global destinations present among the top 10 preferred destinations of the studied segments;

DG - Top 10 preferred tourism destinations in the global market.

The calculation in (b), which incorporates ranking scores for globally popular destinations present in the top 10 preferred destinations of the studied segments, yielded similar results. Both calculations indicate that the preferred travel destinations among Georgia's tourism-generating countries do not align with those in the global tourism market. Approximately 35% of the preferred destinations overlap with around 75% being different.

These calculations validate the consideration of Georgia's SGE-TD as distinct from the global tourism market.

Regarding the selectivity of destinations within Georgia's SGE-TD, it is important to highlight that despite the considerable differences among destinations, Turkey stands out as particularly popular. It is followed by 31 relatively popular destinations (with ranking scores of 5 and higher), including Georgia itself (see Graphic #2, Appendix A).

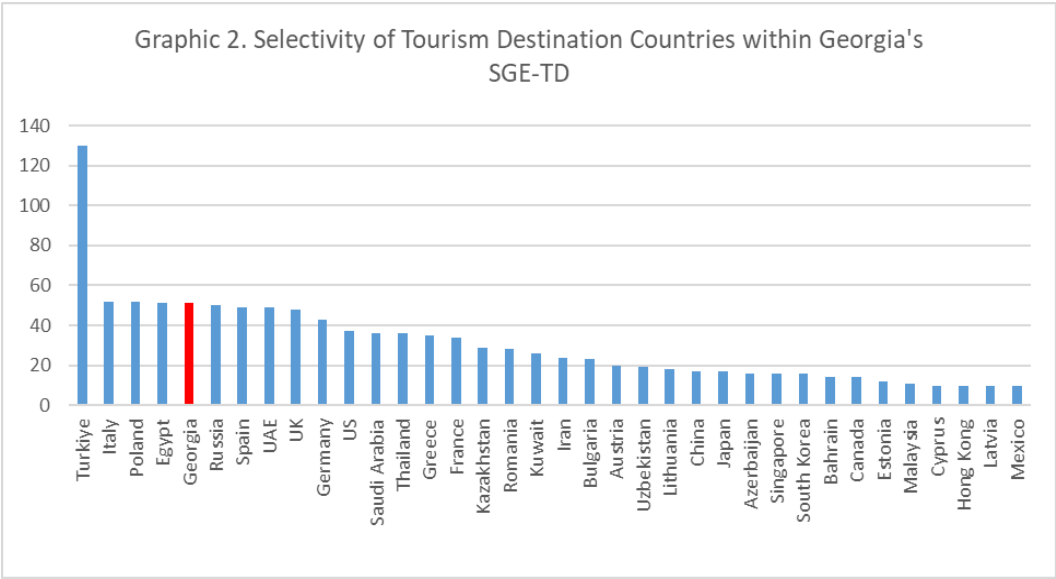


Table 2. Selectivity of the world’s top tourist destinations in Georgia’s tourism-generating countries.

Rank	Score	Top 10 Globally popular tourism destination countries	Top tourism generating countries for Georgia																						
			1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13	14	15	16	17	18	19	20	21	22	23
			RUS	TUR	ARM	ISR	AZE	KAZ	UKR	BEL	IRN	POL	IND	SAU	DEU	UZB	CHN	USA	PHL	GBR	JOR	FRA	LVA	GRC	LTU
1	10	FRA	TUR	GRC	GEO	TUR	IRN	UZB	POL	POL	TUR	ITA	UAE	KWT	AUS	KAZ	HKG	MEX	HKG	ESP	SAU	ESP	LTU	TUR	POL
2	9	ESP	THA	ROM	RUS	USA	GEO	RUS	ROM	TUR	UAE	GRB	THA	BHR	FRA	TJK	MCU	CAN	JPN	FRA	TUR	ITA	POL	ALB	LVA
3	8	USA	UAE	SAU	IRN	EGY	TUR	TUR	BGR	LTU	AZE	DEU	USA	UAE	ITA	TUR	THA	GRB	SGP	ITA	UAE	GRB	EST	ITA	GRB
4	7	ITA	EGY	GEO	TUR	ESP	RUS	EGY	TUR	GEO	ARM	TUR	SAU	EGY	ESP	RUS	JPN	ESP	THA	IRL	EGY	GRC	FRA	BGR	TUR
5	6	TUR	UZB	IRN	EGY	AUS	KAZ	GEO	CZE	RUS	GEO	ESP	KWT	TUR	NLD	SAU	SKR	ITA	UAE	GRC	KWT	DEU	RUS	GRB	DEU
6	5	MEX	KAZ	BGR	KAZ	POL	SAU	CHN	DEU	EGY	CAN	HRV	SGP	JOR	TUR	KGZ	VNM	FRA	CHN	USA	LBN	PRT	SWE	CYP	GRC
7	4	GRB	CHN	DEU	POL	ROM	ROM	KGZ	EGY	UKR	KWT	GRC	MYS	QAT	POL	SKR	MYS	PRC	SKR	TUR	BHR	USA	TUR	FRA	EST
8	3	DEU	GEO	GRB	USA	CYP	IZB	AZE	HRV	KAZ	CHN	HUN	GRB	GRB	DNK	GEO	SGP	DEU	MYS	PRT	USA	BEL	DEU	DEU	RUS
9	2	GRC	TUN	AZE	LBN	DEU	BGR	SKR	RUS	BGR	IMD	AUS	IDN	THA	GRC	AZE	USA	DOM	USA	DEU	CYP	MAR	GRB	ESP	ITA
10	1	AUS	AZE	ITA	ROM	GRB	USA	THA	AUS	ROM	RUS	CZE	BHR	AUS	HRV	LVA	KHM	JPN	TWN	NLD	ISR	TUR	GRC	NLD	CZE
Presence score			1	4	2	5	2	1	3	1	1	8	2	3	6	1	1	6	1	7	2	7	5	6	5
Ranking score			6	13	25	25	14	6	10	6	6	32	12	11	35	6	8	38	8	45	14	39	25	39	22
SUM of Presence scores			80					Sum of Ranking Scores					445												
Max			230					Max					1265												
P%(ps)			34.8%					P%(rs)					35.2%												

Step 2: Analyzing the identified competing travel destinations composing the competitive environment for the study destination;

Following the identification of key components in the competitive environment, such as market segments and their preferred travel destinations, the next step involves:

- (A) Determining relevant competitive indicators for the study;
- (B) Analyzing the competitive environment composed of the identified competing tourism destinations.

To address Objective A, relevant competitive characteristics, indicators, pillars, and indexes are considered. Given the methodology, scope, and content of these indicators—as well as data availability for the studied countries—this study utilizes data from the World Economic Forum’s Travel & Tourism Competitiveness Index (WEF TTCI).

For Objective B, Principal Component Analysis (PCA) was applied to reduce the complexity of the dataset, which comprises five competitive indexes across 61 tourism destination countries. The PCA results revealed substantial data variation. To adequately capture this diversity, three principal

components were selected for further analysis and interpretation based on their contribution to overall data variance:

- PC1 (42.5%)
- PC2 (20.4%)
- PC3 (18.9%)

Together, these components account for approximately 82% of the total variance (see Graphic 3 and Table 3).

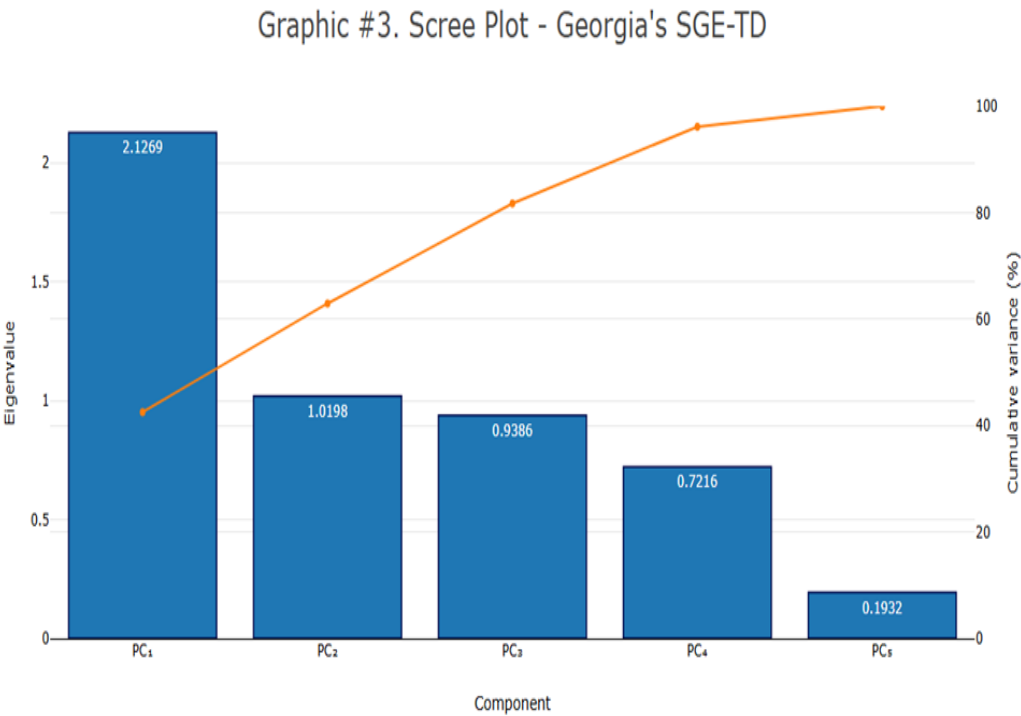
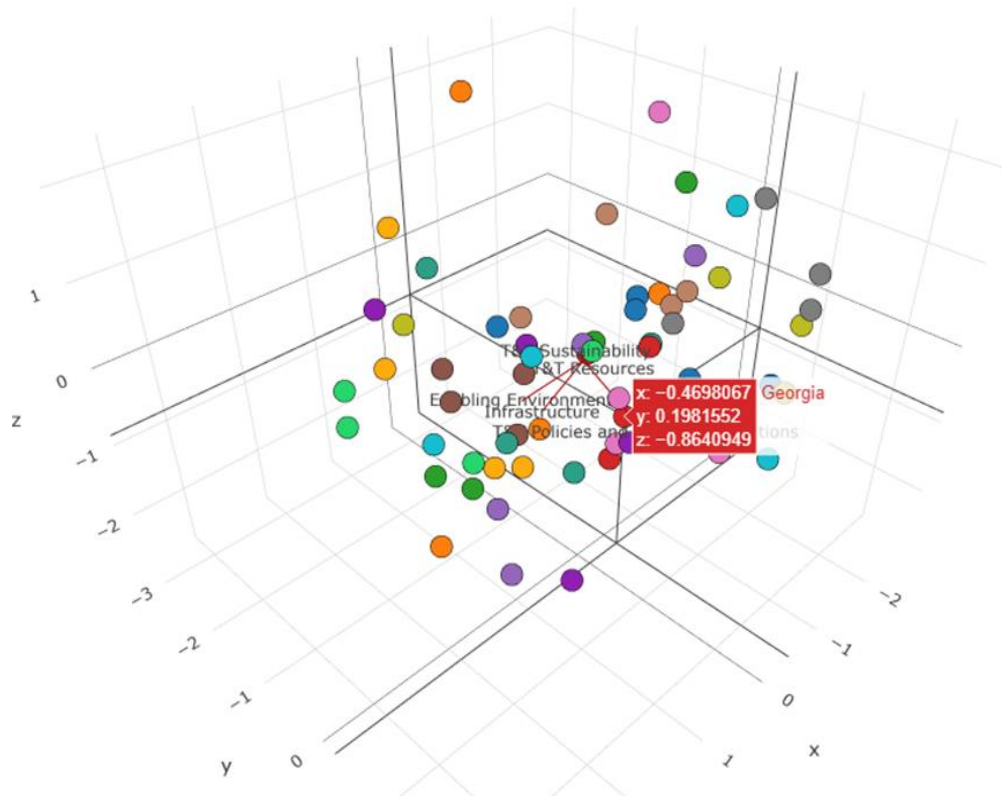


Table 3. Eigenvalues.

ParameterParameter	PC ₁	PC ₂	PC ₃	PC ₄	PC ₅
Eigenvalue	2.1269	1.0198	0.9386	0.7216	0.1932
% of Variance	42.538	20.396	18.771	14.431	3.8634
Cumulative (%)	42.538	62.934	81.705	96.137	100

This high variance coverage demonstrates that PCA effectively identifies the most critical underlying factors, reinforcing its robustness as an analytical tool for assessing competitive dynamics among tourism destinations.

The visualization of this diversity implies a 3D graphical expression (See graphic #4, Tables 4, and Tables 5)



Graphic 4. 3D PCA graphic of Georgia's SGE-SD.

Table 4. Eigenvectors.

		Vector2	Vector3	Vector4	Vector5
Enabling Environment	0.5217	-0.3757	-0.4386	0.1972	0.5962
T&T Policies and Enabling Conditions	-0.1618	0.7367	-0.6203	0.198	0.084
Infrastructure	0.5984	-0.002	-0.3309	-0.2493	-0.6858
T&T Resources	0.4255	0.5	0.3649	-0.5341	0.3879
T&T Sustainability	0.4032	0.257	0.4245	0.7579	-0.1293

Table 5. The covariance matrix.

Group\Group	Enabling Environment	T&T Policies and Enabling Conditions	Infrastructure	T&T Resources	T&T Sustainability
Enabling Environment	1	-0.1686	0.6865	0.099	0.2671
T&T Policies and Enabling Conditions	-0.1686	1	-0.06151	-0.0532	-0.0866
Infrastructure	0.6865	-0.06151	1	0.4719	0.2616
T&T Resources	0.099	-0.0532	0.4719	1	0.3395
T&T Sustainability	0.2671	-0.0866	0.2616	0.3395	1

Step 3. Identifying the features of the studied competitive environment

The principal components identified, along with the corresponding competitive variables and scores of tourist destinations, demonstrate both the general and specific features of the competitive environment studied, as well as Georgia's competitive position within it.

PC1 (42.54% variance) emphasizes the significance of “Infrastructure” (0.60) and “Enabling Environment” (0.52), followed by “T&T Resources” (0.43) and “T&T Sustainability” (0.40). Leading destinations in these categories, with their different contributions in different variables, include the US, the UK, Spain, France, Japan, Canada, and Denmark (Score range between 2.0-3.5; refer to see Table in Appendix B).

Georgia holds a moderate position in this principal component, with a slightly negative score of -0.47, ranking 35th among all destinations. This is due to a negative score in “Infrastructure” (-0.38), partly balanced by a positive score in the “Enabling Environment” (0.37). A Similar balance is seen in relation to the other variables in this vector; Georgia has a negative score in “T&T Resources” (-0.87) and a positive score in “Sustainability” (0.23) (refer to see Appendix B, Score Tables).

Georgia’s primary competitors in PC1 are Slovenia, the Czech Republic, and Hungary, while Kazakhstan and Mexico closely follow. However, when considering this relationship across the most influential variables in PC1 individually, more competing destinations emerge. For instance, in terms of the “Infrastructure” variable, Georgia competes with Slovenia, China, Estonia, Hungary, Romania, Egypt, Malaysia, the Dominican Republic, Lithuania, and Thailand (with scores ranging from between 0.00 and -0.37) (refer to Appendix B, Score Table). (Note: The two variables mentioned in PC1 – T&T Resources (0.43) and T&T Sustainability (0.40) – will be further analyzed in the following PC3, where they play a leading role.)

PC2 (20.40% variance) increases the combined coverage of all variations up to 62.95% (see Table 2 above). This component focuses on “T&T Policies and Enabling Conditions,” which shows the highest score in the list of all other variables (score 0.74). The top countries in this vector are Indonesia, India, Türkiye, and Mexico (scores between 1.54 and 2.44). Additionally, the variable driving this principal component - ‘T&T Policies and Enabling Conditions’ - is significantly influenced by Türkiye, Malaysia and the UAE (scores above 1.5) (see Appendix B).

Georgia possesses a similarly moderate position in the PC2 component, although it holds a relatively high rank (29th) among all destinations. The gained score (0.22) is its only positive one across all three principal components (see Appendix B). This position reflects its relative strength in the tourism policy indicator while leaving room for further improvement.

According to the applied calculation, Georgia’s closest foremost competitors in PC2 are Lebanon, Azerbaijan, and Kazakhstan (scores between 0.21 and 0.24). In the position along the PC2 driving variable, that is “T&T Policies and Enabling Conditions”, Georgia holds a more advanced position, ranked 12th in the whole considered market. In this dimension, the closest competitors are Hungary, Albania, and Poland (scores between 0.98 and 1.07).

PC3 (variance 18.77%) accrues the combined coverage of all variance up to 81.70%, emphasizing the role of “T&T Sustainability” (0.42) and T&T Resources” (0.37). The leading destinations in this line are the US and Indonesia (scores vary between 2.54 and 2.33, respectively) (see Score Table, Appendix B).

In this component, Georgia holds a relatively low position (score -0.86) and is ranked 50th among all destinations. Similar to the PC1 case, controversial scores appear in the driving variables of PC3. In part, Georgia shows a negative score in “T&T Resources” (-0.87) and a positive one in “Sustainability” (0.23). (see page Countries vs PC - Score table, Georgia). Georgia’s lower rank and negative positioning in this component underline areas where the country could enhance its resource base and sustainability efforts. The interpretation of this position is relevant as it identifies areas for strategic improvement.

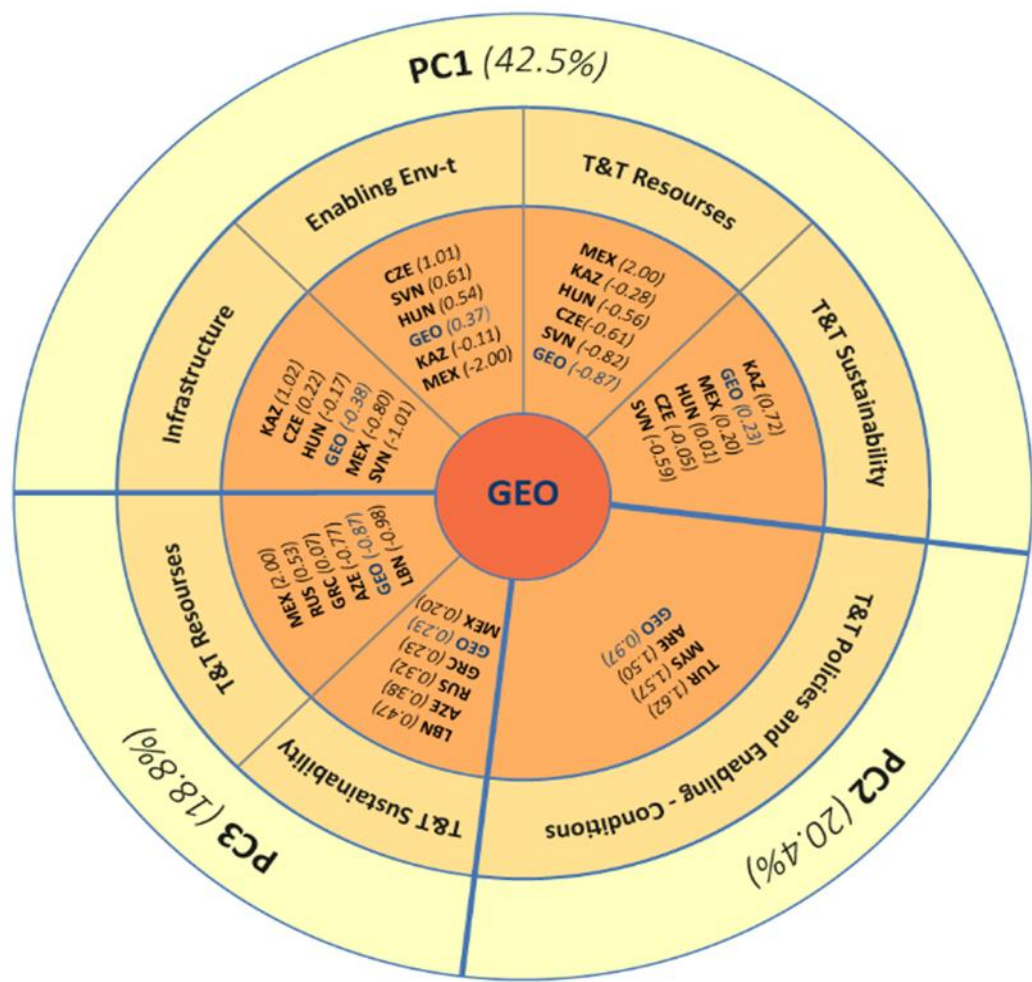
The closest competitors of Georgia in this principal component are Lebanon, Azerbaijan, and Russia (score 0.31 per the latest 2019 data), as well as Greece with an equal score and Mexico (scores between 0.20 and 0.47). (see Appendix B).

4. Generalized Outcomes

The obtained results and the compiled interpretations are summarized in graph #.5 (see Graphic 5, Table 6). It displays the close competitors of the study tourist destination – in this case, Georgia –

across each analyzed competitive variable, which in turn are allocated per identified main principal components of the studied SGE-TD of Georgia.

The Competitive Position of Georgia within its SGE-TD



Graphic 5.

Table 6. Competitive position of Georgia within its SGE-TD.

PC	Contributing (Influencing) Variables	Leading destinations	The closest competitors of Georgia per PC-s	Georgia's scores	
				in PC	In Variables
PC1 (42.54%)	Infrastructure (0.6)	USA (3.43), UK (2.56), ESP (2.34), FRA (2.25), JPN (2.17), CAN (2.09), DNK (2.08)	HUN (-0.24), CZE (-0.27), SVN (-0.44), KAZ (-0.52), MEX (0.53)	-0.47	-0.38
	Enabling Environment (0.52),				0.37
	T&T Resources (0.43)				-8.87
	T&T Sustainability (0.40).				0.23
PC2 (20.40%)	'T&T Policies and Enabling Conditions'	IDN (2.44), IND (2.03), TUR (1.91), MEX (1.54)	TUR (1.62), MYS (1.57), ARE (1.50)	0.22	0.22
PC3 (8.77%)	T&T Sustainability (0.42)	USA (2.54), IDN (2.33)	LBN (0.47), AZE (0.38), RUS (0.31*), GRC (0.23) MEX (0.20)	-0.86	0.23
	T&T Resources (0.37)				-0.87

* Russia data belongs to 2019, per latest report

According to the studied tourism destination, Georgia possesses a moderate position in its SGC-TD per PC1 and PC2 and a relatively low follower position per PC3 (SEE Graphic 5, Table 6). The positive score in PC2 near zero (0.22) suggests that Georgia's "Tourism policies" and "Enabling Conditions" are comparable to the average of other tourism destinations; however, it leaves room for improvement. The negative scores in PC1 and especially in PC3 emphasize the importance of advancing the position, especially in raising the acknowledgment of the country's rich and diversified T&T Resources, as well as in strengthening infrastructure to improve competitiveness. These recommendations align with the PCA results.

Georgia, within its tourism competitive environment, appears to be in tight competition with different destinations, depending on the competitive indicators. In relation to infrastructure and enabling environment, such competing destinations are Kazakhstan and Mexico, while with regard to T&T policies and enabling conditions—Türkiye, Malaysia, and the United Arab Emirates. The largest number of the closest competing destinations appears in terms of T&T Sustainability as well as T&T Resources.

In this study, we selected the ranking positions of destinations that are located in close proximity to Georgia. In particular, three positions above and two positions below Georgia, giving priority to the number of advanced destinations and to the country's promotion in its competitive environment.

The revealed outcomes suggest options for strategies to advance the competitive position in the country's tourism competitive environment, which can be prioritized based on the country's general strategy for economic development and its priorities. The suggestion that these insights can contribute to Georgia's broader economic development strategy also adds value, making the analysis more impactful.

The generalized methodological outcomes of the provided research imply the logic of sequential research stages, a set of conceptual approaches, and optional tools corresponding to each stage (see Table 7).

Table 7. The Generalized Research Structure.

Research Design	Research Methods
Initial step: Selecting the conceptual framework relevant to the study destination	Segment-centric Geo-competitive Environment of a Study tourism Destination (SGE-TD)

Step 1. Identifying competing tourism destinations for the destination under study	1.1 Selecting the leading tourism-generating countries in the study destination
	1.2 Determining the preferred tourism destinations in the selected tourism-generating countries.
Step 2. Analyzing the identified competing tourism destinations composing the competitive environment for the study destination	2.1 Determining relevant competitive indicators for the study
	2.2. Analyzing the competitive environment composed of the identified competing tourism destinations
Step 3. Identifying the features of the studied competitive environment	Identifying the principal components of the competitive environment and competitive position of the destination under study

The suggested methodology and the developed research design can be applied to other tourism destinations and their geo-competitive environments. In addition, the same research design can include more detailed variables of a tourism competitive environment depending on the research objectives and data availability.

Appendix A

**The destinations selectivity by Georgia's tourism generators
(per the ranking scores)**

Türkiye	130	Romania	28	Cyprus	10	Sweden	5
Italy	52	Kuwait	26	Hong Kong	10	Vietnam	5
Poland	52	Iran	24	Latvia	10	Puerto Rico	4
Egypt	51	Bulgaria	23	Mexico	10	Qatar	4
Georgia	51	Austria	20	Albania	9	Ukraine	4
Russia	50	Uzbekistan	19	Croatia	9	Belgium	3
Spain	49	Lithuania	18	Kyrgyzstan	9	Denmark	3
UAE	49	China	17	Macau	9	Hungary	3
UK	48	Japan	17	Tajikistan	9	Dominic.Rep.	2
Germany	43	Azerbaijan	16	Czech Rep.	8	India	2
US	37	Singapore	16	Netherlands	8	Indonesia	2
Saudi Arabia	36	S. Korea	16	Portugal	8	Morocco	2
Thailand	36	Bahrain	14	Armenia	7	Tunisia	2
Greece	35	Canada	14	Ireland	7	Cambodia	1
France	34	Estonia	12	Lebanon	7	Israel	1
Kazakhstan	29	Malaysia	11	Jordan	5	Taiwan	1

Appendix B

ITTC Indexes							PCA Scores				
Tourism destinations	Abbr	Index 1	Index 2	Index 3	Index 4	Index 5	PC ₁	PC ₂	PC ₃	PC ₄	PC ₅
Albania	ALB	4.97	4.92	3.19	1.66	3.87	(1.55)	0.24	(0.88)	0.36	0.19
Armenia	ARM	4.97	4.56	2.72	1.46	4.10	(1.52)	(0.26)	0.05	0.94	0.34
Austria	AUS	5.96	4.55	4.94	3.00	3.94	1.16	(0.47)	(1.31)	(0.34)	0.07
Azerbaijan	AZE	4.96	4.68	3.42	1.95	4.22	(0.79)	0.22	(0.09)	0.88	(0.11)
Bahrain	BHR	4.96	4.39	4.10	1.73	3.96	(0.60)	(0.56)	(0.33)	0.04	(0.66)
Belgium	BEL	5.85	4.14	4.28	2.74	4.30	1.12	(0.91)	0.01	0.56	0.18
Bulgaria	BGR	5.40	4.82	3.48	2.25	4.50	0.02	0.51	(0.20)	1.60	0.28
Cambodia	KHM	4.17	5.02	2.53	1.84	3.89	(2.66)	1.00	(0.11)	0.31	(0.03)
Canada	CAN	5.67	3.91	4.40	4.96	4.52	2.09	(0.21)	1.29	0.02	0.40
China	CHN	5.43	4.30	3.93	6.19	4.54	1.81	1.06	1.44	(0.18)	0.95
Croatia	HRV	5.27	4.17	4.23	2.49	3.76	(0.17)	(1.00)	(0.36)	(0.75)	(0.21)
Cyprus	CYP	5.49	4.65	5.01	1.90	4.08	0.59	(0.30)	(1.24)	0.28	(0.80)
Czechia	CZE	5.77	4.86	4.12	2.17	3.67	(0.28)	(0.34)	(1.87)	(0.33)	0.46
Denmark	DNK	6.04	3.94	5.06	2.72	4.45	2.08	(1.26)	0.04	0.66	(0.35)
Dominican Rep.	DOM	4.37	4.61	3.66	1.78	4.69	(0.59)	0.78	0.91	1.74	(1.14)
Egypt	EGY	4.22	5.02	3.73	2.89	3.75	(1.64)	1.23	(0.51)	(0.75)	(0.58)
Estonia	EST	5.89	4.71	3.79	1.63	4.29	0.25	(0.38)	(0.95)	1.38	0.42
France	FRA	5.71	4.29	5.28	5.58	4.09	2.25	0.29	(0.01)	(1.28)	0.16
Georgia	GEO	5.39	4.88	3.60	1.81	4.17	(0.47)	0.20	(0.86)	1.00	0.20
Germany	DEU	5.88	4.63	4.75	5.00	4.13	1.78	0.59	(0.52)	(0.61)	0.64
Greece	GRC	5.26	4.46	5.07	3.12	4.17	0.99	0.04	(0.39)	(0.16)	(0.81)
Hungary	HUN	5.49	4.92	3.78	2.25	4.10	(0.22)	0.31	(1.04)	0.67	0.31
India	IND	3.80	4.63	3.54	5.49	4.07	(0.80)	2.03	1.52	(1.27)	(0.32)
Indonesia	IDN	4.63	5.10	3.40	4.16	4.86	0.22	2.44	0.97	1.59	0.02
Iran	IRN	4.02	4.33	2.91	3.13	3.99	(1.75)	0.47	1.30	(0.43)	(0.29)
Ireland	IRL	5.72	3.74	4.62	2.88	4.38	1.53	(1.39)	0.68	0.37	(0.28)
Israel	ISR	5.42	3.40	4.35	2.37	4.09	0.70	(2.19)	0.98	(0.28)	(0.46)
Italy	ITA	5.42	4.39	4.88	5.32	4.12	1.64	0.58	0.18	(1.05)	0.12
Japan	JPN	5.70	4.39	4.78	5.92	4.26	2.17	0.73	0.36	(0.84)	0.59
Jordan	JOR	4.81	4.59	3.01	1.89	4.05	(1.40)	0.01	0.07	0.54	0.10
Kazakhstan	KAZ	5.10	4.53	3.05	2.64	4.33	(0.52)	0.21	0.48	0.95	0.44
Kuwait	KWT	4.96	2.97	2.96	1.71	3.60	(1.31)	(3.24)	1.65	(1.10)	0.10
Kyrgistan	KGZ	4.52	4.17	2.00	1.65	3.80	(2.57)	(0.80)	0.88	0.06	0.56
Latvia	LVA	5.42	4.48	3.34	1.46	3.66	(1.21)	(1.02)	(0.97)	(0.14)	0.46
Lebanon	LBN	4.19	4.45	3.42	1.66	4.25	(1.43)	0.23	0.76	0.70	(1.02)
Lithuania	LTU	5.76	4.46	3.66	1.61	4.31	0.16	(0.71)	(0.43)	1.32	0.33
Malaysia	MYS	4.96	5.14	3.67	3.43	3.73	(0.94)	1.15	(1.09)	(0.68)	0.39
Mexico	MEX	3.97	4.30	3.24	5.80	4.16	(0.53)	1.54	2.18	(1.19)	0.07
Morocco	MAR	4.22	4.47	3.10	2.62	3.39	(2.39)	(0.08)	(0.03)	(1.54)	(0.12)
Netherlands	NLD	5.89	4.27	5.02	3.16	4.01	1.39	(0.79)	(0.76)	(0.41)	(0.10)
Poland	POL	5.41	4.89	3.77	3.25	4.03	(0.07)	0.61	(0.76)	0.08	0.54
Portugal	PRT	5.69	4.56	4.75	3.90	4.41	1.64	0.41	(0.21)	0.37	0.02
Qatar	QAT	5.37	3.54	4.45	2.11	3.70	0.11	(2.32)	0.21	(1.06)	(0.49)
Romania	ROM	5.15	4.55	3.77	2.30	4.54	0.17	0.26	0.33	1.39	(0.25)
Russia 2019	RUS	5.28	4.13	4.00	3.75	4.20	0.62	(0.28)	0.68	(0.17)	0.16
Saudi Arabia	SAU	5.34	4.02	4.25	2.97	3.84	0.21	(1.07)	0.03	(0.80)	(0.08)
Singapore	SGP	5.98	4.69	5.63	2.37	4.30	1.85	(0.20)	(1.49)	0.61	(0.75)
Slovakia	SVK	5.45	4.51	3.12	1.95	3.99	(0.79)	(0.56)	(0.39)	0.52	0.68
Slovenia	SVN	5.53	4.95	3.95	1.89	3.90	(0.44)	0.05	(1.53)	0.32	0.20
Spain	ESP	5.57	4.78	5.48	5.47	4.33	2.34	1.36	(0.40)	(0.57)	(0.17)
Sweeden	SWE	5.92	4.27	4.34	3.14	4.30	1.30	(0.59)	(0.15)	0.47	0.34
Tajikistan	TJK	4.29	3.92	2.32	1.66	4.35	(1.78)	(0.64)	1.99	1.04	(0.19)
Thailand	THA	4.61	4.48	3.61	3.86	3.70	(0.94)	0.38	0.21	(1.32)	0.09
Tunisia	TUN	4.13	4.99	2.78	2.16	3.59	(2.78)	0.85	(0.44)	(0.60)	(0.07)
Turkiye	TUR	4.43	5.16	4.21	4.23	3.87	(0.62)	1.91	(0.54)	(0.99)	(0.39)
UAE	ARE	5.54	5.11	5.56	2.72	3.55	0.45	0.33	(2.61)	(1.19)	(0.66)
UK	GBP	5.55	3.96	5.02	5.34	4.56	2.56	0.12	1.22	(0.23)	(0.11)
Ukraine 2019	UKR	4.94	4.63	3.37	2.05	3.90	(1.19)	(0.07)	(0.38)	0.09	0.05
US	USA	5.62	4.10	5.34	5.97	4.93	3.44	0.83	1.49	0.37	(0.23)
Uzbekistan	UZB	4.92	4.06	2.65	1.92	4.00	(1.41)	(0.99)	0.82	0.31	0.42
Viet Nam	VNM	4.82	4.31	3.30	3.22	3.57	(1.27)	(0.37)	0.08	(1.29)	0.39

Comletitive indicators:
Index 1 **Enabling Environment**
Index 2 **T&T Policies and Enabling Conditions**
Index 3 **Infrastructure**
Index 4 **T&T Resources**
Index 5 **T&T Sustainability**
Sources: <https://www.statskingdom.com/pca-calculator.html>

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