



Differentiation and Positioning as Competitiveness Strategies in International Real Estate Markets

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Abstract. International real estate markets have become increasingly competitive due to globalization, digital transformation, and the growing demand for transparent, sustainable, and trustworthy investment environments. Despite these developments, limited research has examined how differentiation and strategic positioning based on regulatory trust mechanisms contribute to competitiveness in international real estate markets, particularly in emerging border regions. This study analyzes the relationship between differentiation and positioning strategies and the competitiveness of the real estate sector, using Baja California, Mexico, as a reference case. A qualitative, documentary, and analytical research design was adopted, integrating an extensive review of scientific literature, institutional reports, and expert knowledge from leading real estate organizations. The study identifies the principal structural factors affecting international competitiveness, including regulatory certainty, institutional coordination, technological innovation, investor confidence, and market positioning. Based on these findings, a strategic model centered on the Trusted Developers Registry Distinction is proposed as a mechanism to transform regulatory compliance into a source of competitive differentiation and international positioning. The proposed model demonstrates that competitiveness in international real estate markets depends not only on structural and economic conditions but also on organizations' ability to generate trust through certification, governance, transparency, and value-added differentiation. This research contributes to the literature on international competitiveness by integrating regulation, institutional trust, differentiation, and positioning into a unified strategic framework while providing practical guidance for policymakers, real estate developers, and investment promotion agencies seeking to strengthen international market attractiveness.

Keywords: International competitiveness; Real estate markets; Differentiation strategy; Strategic positioning; Institutional trust.

1 Introduction

The international real estate sector has become a strategic driver of economic growth, foreign direct investment (FDI), and regional development. Globalization, digital transformation, and increasing investor mobility have intensified competition, requiring organizations to move beyond traditional advantages such as location and price toward differentiation strategies based on innovation, transparency, and value creation. [1], international competitiveness increasingly depends on the ability of territories and organizations to generate sustainable value through innovation and institutional quality. Likewise, [2] emphasize that global real estate markets are evolving toward models where transparency, sustainability, and digital transformation constitute essential competitive factors.

In this context, competitiveness depends not only on tangible resources but also on organizations' capacity to generate trust and credibility. [3] highlights that regulatory quality, governance, and institutional certainty significantly influence investment decisions by reducing uncertainty and transaction costs. Similarly, recent empirical evidence indicates that innovation generates greater organizational value when integrated with governance structures capable of enhancing market credibility and long-term competitiveness, rather than functioning as an isolated technological capability ([4] & [5]).

From a strategic management perspective, differentiation and positioning represent complementary mechanisms for creating sustainable competitive advantages. [6] Argues that organizations achieve superior competitiveness by developing distinctive value propositions that competitors cannot easily replicate. Consistent with this perspective, [7] reports that organizational reputation, regulatory compliance, and customer confidence have become decisive factors influencing the international positioning of real estate firms.

This interpretation is further supported by institutional theory, which explains that organizations enhance their legitimacy and long-term competitiveness by aligning their practices with regulatory frameworks and governance standards [8]. Likewise, signaling theory suggests that certifications, quality distinctions, and other credible signals reduce information asymmetry, allowing investors to identify trustworthy organizations in uncertain environments [9]. In international real estate markets, these mechanisms strengthen investor confidence and improve competitive positioning.

Despite growing research on competitiveness, governance, and foreign investment, limited attention has been devoted to examining regulatory certification as a differentiation and positioning strategy in international real estate markets, particularly within emerging border regions such as Baja California. Previous studies have generally analyzed competitiveness and regulation separately, overlooking how both dimensions can be strategically integrated to generate sustainable competitive advantages.

Given its strategic location along the United States–Mexico border, Baja California offers significant opportunities for attracting international investment; however, challenges related to regulatory fragmentation, institutional coordination, and investor confidence continue to limit its international competitiveness ([3] & [1]). Addressing these challenges is therefore essential to strengthen the region's positioning in global real estate markets.

Accordingly, this study analyzes the relationship between differentiation, positioning, and competitiveness in international real estate markets using Baja California as a reference case. Furthermore, it proposes the Trusted Developers Registry Distinction as an innovative mechanism capable of transforming regulatory compliance into a source of institutional trust, competitive differentiation, and international positioning. By integrating concepts from strategic management, institutional governance, and market positioning, this research contributes to expanding the literature on international real estate competitiveness while providing practical guidance for policymakers, developers, and investment promotion agencies.

2 Research Method

This study adopted a qualitative, applied, documentary, and analytical research approach to examine the strategic factors influencing competitiveness in international real estate markets and to develop a model that strengthens differentiation and positioning strategies. Qualitative research is particularly appropriate for understanding complex organizational phenomena by integrating theoretical knowledge, documentary evidence, and professional expertise into a comprehensive analytical framework ([10] & [11]).

The research is applied because it seeks to provide a practical solution to the limited international competitiveness of the real estate sector through the design of the Trusted Developers Registry Distinction, conceived as a strategic mechanism to enhance investor confidence, market differentiation, and international positioning. [10], applied research aims to generate knowledge capable of addressing practical organizational problems while contributing to theoretical development.

From a methodological perspective, the study combines documentary research with expert knowledge systematization. Documentary analysis involved the systematic review of scientific articles, specialized books, reports from international organizations, institutional publications, and technical documents related to competitiveness, internationalization, governance, regulation, and real estate markets. Documentary research enables the construction of robust conceptual frameworks by critically examining existing evidence and identifying emerging patterns and theoretical relationships ([12] & [11]).

Complementing the documentary review, the study incorporated the systematization of expert knowledge obtained from professionals affiliated with Grupo BajaEstate, Remax Grand, and Bustamante Realty Group. The integration of tacit and explicit knowledge strengthens organizational learning and supports the development of innovative strategic models [13].

The collected information was analyzed through qualitative content analysis, allowing the identification of recurring categories, strategic variables, and conceptual relationships. Content analysis facilitates the systematic interpretation of documentary evidence while improving analytical rigor in qualitative research ([14] & [12]). Comparative analysis was subsequently employed to contrast international competitiveness models, governance practices, and differentiation strategies implemented across different real estate markets, facilitating the identification of transferable strategic practices ([12] & [15]).

2.1 Research Quality

The credibility of the study was reinforced through the triangulation of documentary evidence, institutional reports, and expert knowledge. Transferability was supported by detailed contextual descriptions, whereas dependability and confirmability were ensured through methodological consistency and systematic interpretation of documentary evidence ([16] & [10]).

Dependability was ensured by maintaining methodological consistency throughout the five research phases, while confirmability was reinforced through the systematic interpretation of documentary evidence supported by recognized academic and institutional sources ([16] & [10]).

2.2 Ethical Considerations

Although the study did not involve human experimentation or the collection of sensitive personal information, ethical principles were observed throughout the research process. Documentary sources were cited in accordance with APA 7th edition, and the professional experience incorporated into the study was used exclusively for academic purposes. The findings are presented objectively, ensuring transparency in the interpretation of documentary evidence and expert contributions.

3 Results

3.1 Documentary Review

The documentary review identified three strategic dimensions that define competitiveness in international real estate markets: international competitiveness, market transformation, and

investor behavior. The reviewed literature describes an evolution from competition based primarily on physical assets and location toward approaches that incorporate differentiation, institutional quality, and trust as relevant competitiveness dimensions.

Regarding competitiveness, the literature indicates that sustainable competitive advantage is increasingly associated with organizations' capacity to innovate, adapt to dynamic international environments, and create value through strategic differentiation [6]. Argues that competitiveness depends on the development of distinctive capabilities capable of generating superior value, [3] emphasizes that regulatory quality and institutional governance significantly influence the international attractiveness of investment destinations.

The documentary analysis identified several transformations within global real estate markets. Recent reports published by [2], identify digitalization, sustainability, environmental, social and governance (ESG) criteria, and nearshoring as the principal forces reshaping investment patterns. Likewise, [7] reports that strategic location continues to be an important factor when combined with technological infrastructure, regulatory certainty, and connectivity.

A third strategic dimension concerns the changing profile of international investors. Contemporary investors prioritize long-term stability, regulatory transparency, governance quality, and reliable information when evaluating investment opportunities. [3] Institutional trust reduces perceived investment risk and facilitates capital allocation toward destinations characterized by legal certainty and efficient governance. Consequently, trust emerges as one of the principal intangible assets influencing investment decisions within highly competitive international markets.

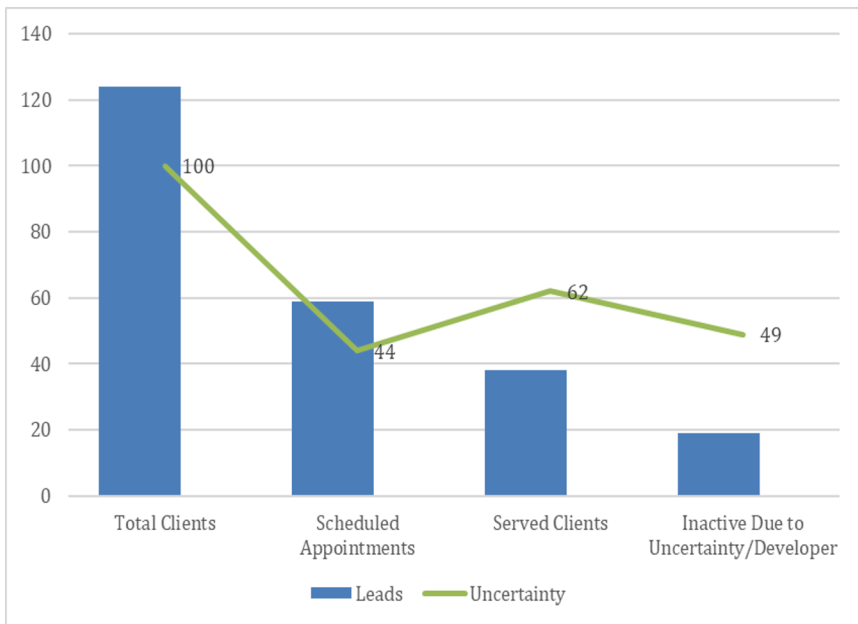
3.2 International Real Estate Market Context Analysis

The analysis of the international real estate market context allows identifying structural problems, emerging trends, and strategic opportunities that affect the competitiveness of the sector. Among the main problems, legal and regulatory uncertainty stands out, which affects investor confidence; in this sense, [7] notes that the lack of regulatory clarity and its heterogeneous application increase risk, especially in emerging markets. Added to this is excessive red tape and bureaucracy, which raises costs and limits efficiency, with institutional efficiency being a key factor for attracting investment, according to [3]. Likewise, weak oversight of developments, limited application of standards such as NOM-247-SE-2021, and technical deficiencies (land use, soil mechanics) generate structural risks and foster phenomena such as speculation and gentrification. Finally, insecurity and the lack of property certainty reinforce the investor's risk perception.

At the same time, the analysis identified significant opportunities derived from current international trends. The accelerated adoption of PropTech, digital platforms, artificial intelligence, and data-driven decision-making is transforming property development, commercialization, and investment management. Similarly, the growing relevance of ESG principles and the relocation of productive activities associated with nearshoring have increased the strategic importance of border regions such as Baja California [5].

Based on these trends, strategic opportunities emerge: the strengthening of efficient and digitalized regulatory frameworks to generate certainty; the implementation of certification schemes, such as registers of trusted developers, that allow differentiating projects and reducing uncertainty; the leveraging of technological innovation for the internationalization of the sector; integration with industries such as tourism and services for the development of specialized products; and the articulation of public and private actors to improve governance and the international positioning of the real estate market.

The integration of professional experience from Grupo Baja Estate, Remax Grand, and Bustamante Realty Group complemented the documentary evidence by providing practical information on factors associated with international competitiveness. The systematized expert knowledge identified investor confidence as one of the principal factors reported by professionals during commercial transactions. The empirical evidence also indicates that, although real estate organizations generate a considerable number of qualified leads, approximately 40–50% do not result in completed transactions because of uncertainty associated with legal, regulatory, and institutional conditions. Figure 1 summarizes the key performance indicators reported by the participating real estate organizations, illustrating the relationship between lead generation, customer progression, and losses associated with market uncertainty.



Note. Own elaboration.

Figure 1. KPIs of Baja Estate Real Estate Group, Remax Grand, and Bustamante Realty Group.

The expert analysis also identified five strategic dimensions consistently associated with competitiveness: institutional trust; regulatory certainty; territorial positioning; professionalization; and technological integration. In summary, the results confirm that the competitiveness of the real estate sector does not depend exclusively on lead generation but on the capacity to transform trust into investment decisions. Therefore, the reduction of uncertainty is positioned as a fundamental strategic axis for improving conversion rates and strengthening positioning in international markets.

3.4 Identification of Strategic Variables

The documentary review and the systematization of expert knowledge allowed the identification of five interrelated strategic variables associated with competitiveness in international real estate markets: regulation, innovation, technology, institutional articulation, and strategic positioning. These variables were consistently identified across the documentary sources and expert evidence analyzed during the study.

The integration of the documentary review and the systematization of expert knowledge allowed the identification of five interrelated strategic variables associated with competitiveness in international real estate markets: regulation, innovation, technology, institutional articulation, and strategic positioning. These variables were consistently identified across the documentary sources, institutional reports, and expert evidence analyzed during the study (see Table 1).

Table 1. Strategic Variables Identified in the Documentary Review and Expert Knowledge.

Strategic Variable	Main Evidence	Associated Competitiveness Dimension
Regulation	Documentary review and expert knowledge	Legal certainty and compliance
Innovation	Scientific literature	Value creation
Technology	Institutional reports and expert knowledge	Digital transformation
Institutional articulation	Documentary review	Governance and coordination
Strategic positioning	Documentary review and expert knowledge	International competitiveness
Strategic Variable	Evidence Identified	Main Focus
Regulation	Documentary review and expert knowledge	Regulatory compliance and legal certainty
Innovation	Scientific literature	Organizational differentiation and value creation
Technology	Institutional reports and expert knowledge	Digitalization and PropTech adoption
Institutional articulation	Documentary review	Public–private coordination and governance
Strategic positioning	Documentary review and expert knowledge	International competitiveness and market differentiation

Note. Prepared by the authors based on the documentary review and expert knowledge systematization (2026).

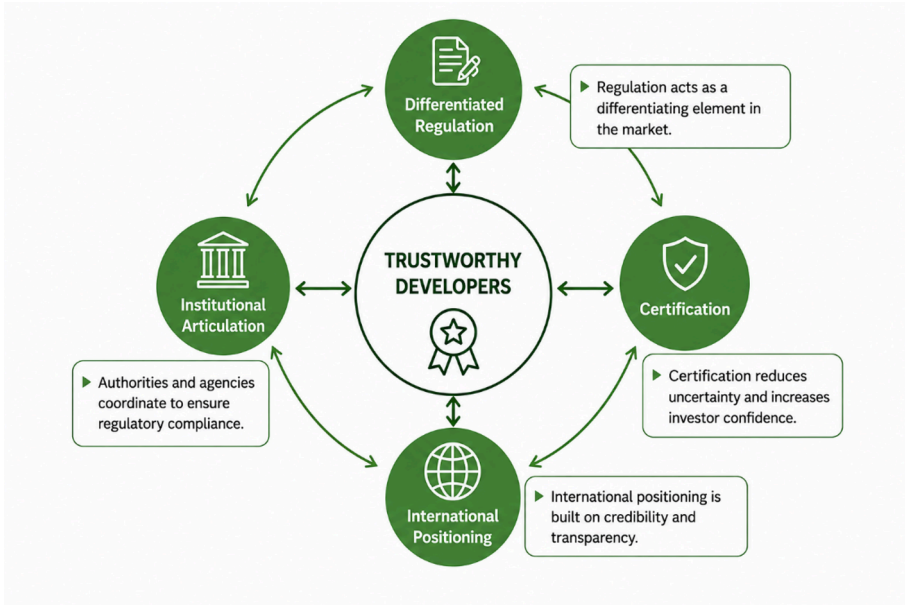
3.5 Strategic Model Development

Based on the documentary review and the systematization of expert knowledge, this study proposes the Trusted Developers Registry Distinction as an integrated strategic model for international real estate markets.

The proposed model is structured around regulatory compliance, institutional coordination, certification mechanisms, investor confidence, and strategic positioning. These components were identified through the documentary review and expert knowledge systematization as recurring elements associated with competitiveness in international real estate markets.

The model operates through five sequential components: regulatory compliance, institutional articulation, certification, investor confidence and competitive differentiation and international positioning (see Figure 2).

Figure 2 illustrates the proposed strategic model and the sequential relationship among its five components. The model synthesizes the strategic variables identified during the documentary review and expert knowledge systematization into an integrated framework for international real estate markets.



Note. Own elaboration.

Figure 2. Trusted Developers Registry Distinction.

4 Discussion

The findings indicate that competitiveness in international real estate markets has evolved beyond traditional factors such as location and pricing toward organizational capabilities that strengthen institutional trust, governance, and strategic differentiation. The integration of documentary evidence and expert knowledge suggests that organizations capable of reducing uncertainty through transparent governance and regulatory certainty are better positioned to attract international investment. This interpretation is consistent with [6], who emphasizes that sustainable competitive advantage arises from distinctive organizational capabilities, and [1] highlights institutional quality and innovation as essential drivers of global competitiveness. Consequently, competitiveness should be understood as a multidimensional construct in which governance, transparency, and institutional credibility complement conventional economic factors.

The evidence presented in Figure 1 reinforces this interpretation by showing that uncertainty remains a major obstacle to converting qualified leads into completed transactions. Rather than indicating insufficient market demand, the observed conversion gap reflects the importance investors place on regulatory certainty, institutional trust, and transparent governance when evaluating investment opportunities. As noted by the Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development [3], high-quality regulatory frameworks reduce investment risk by strengthening legal certainty, [17] demonstrated that robust institutional environments improve governance and investor confidence. These findings indicate that commercial success depends not only on market demand but also on organizations' capacity to create reliable institutional conditions.

Among the strategic dimensions identified, regulation emerged as the principal mechanism supporting institutional trust and investment confidence. Beyond ensuring legal compliance,

effective regulatory frameworks enhance transparency, credibility, and market stability, thereby facilitating foreign investment and strengthening competitiveness ([3] & [17]). Likewise, innovation contributes to competitiveness by creating organizational value through new business models, digital services, and customer-oriented solutions; however, its effectiveness depends on its integration with transparent governance and regulatory certainty. In this regard, [2] emphasize that innovation is a defining characteristic of competitive real estate markets, [18] demonstrated that organizations combining innovation with ESG principles achieve greater financial performance and long-term resilience than those relying solely on technological initiatives.

Technology emerged as a strategic enabler of competitiveness by improving operational efficiency, market transparency, and information accessibility through PropTech, artificial intelligence, and digital platforms. However, the findings indicate that digital transformation creates sustainable organizational value only when supported by reliable governance and regulatory frameworks capable of reducing information asymmetry and strengthening stakeholder confidence [17]. Thus, technology enhances competitiveness by facilitating more transparent, traceable, and informed investment decisions rather than functioning as an independent competitive advantage.

Institutional articulation also plays a critical role in strengthening international real estate competitiveness. Effective coordination among public institutions, regulatory agencies, and private organizations contributes to more transparent and predictable investment environments while reinforcing governance and institutional legitimacy. [8] Argues that coherent institutional frameworks enhance organizational legitimacy and long-term competitiveness, [17] demonstrate that institutional collaboration strengthens governance practices and investor confidence. These findings suggest that coordinated governance constitutes a strategic capability that supports regulatory effectiveness and improves international market attractiveness.

The results further indicate that strategic positioning increasingly depends on organizations' ability to project institutional trust, regulatory compliance, and governance quality. Rather than relying exclusively on traditional marketing strategies, competitive positioning reflects the integration of regulation, innovation, technology, and institutional articulation into a coherent value proposition. This interpretation extends [6], perspective on competitive advantage and is consistent with Shen et al. [19], who found that governance quality and institutional transparency positively influence investor confidence and long-term property values.

One of the principal contributions of this research is the development of the Trusted Developers Registry Distinction as an integrated framework that transforms regulatory compliance into a mechanism for competitive differentiation and international positioning. Unlike previous approaches that examine governance, certification, and competitiveness separately, the proposed model integrates these dimensions through institutional trust. Consistent with signaling theory, Connelly et al. [9] argue that credible signals reduce information asymmetry and facilitate stakeholder decision-making, while institutional theory emphasizes that legitimate governance structures strengthen organizational credibility and competitiveness [8]. Accordingly, the proposed framework positions institutional trust as a strategic capability that supports differentiation and enhances investor confidence in international real estate markets.

Beyond its theoretical contribution, this study expands the literature on competitiveness and business strategy by demonstrating that institutional trust represents a strategic organizational capability rather than merely a desirable market attribute. The proposed framework integrates regulatory governance, certification, institutional articulation, and strategic positioning into a

unified model that supports sustainable competitive advantage [6]. Argues long-term competitiveness depends on developing distinctive capabilities, while recent evidence confirms that governance quality, sustainability practices, and institutional transparency strengthen investor confidence and organizational performance ([19] & [20]). From a practical perspective, the framework provides policymakers, regulatory agencies, and real estate developers with a strategic roadmap for reducing investment risk, improving market transparency, and strengthening the international positioning of emerging regions.

5 Conclusions

This study achieved its objective of analyzing the relationship between differentiation, strategic positioning, and competitiveness in international real estate markets using Baja California as a reference case. The findings demonstrate that competitiveness extends beyond traditional market factors and increasingly depends on organizations' ability to strengthen institutional trust through regulatory certainty, governance, technological innovation, and strategic differentiation. By integrating documentary evidence with expert knowledge, the research identified five strategic variables that collectively influence investor confidence and international market attractiveness.

The study confirms that regulatory certainty, institutional articulation, innovation, technology, and strategic positioning operate as complementary dimensions that reinforce one another rather than functioning independently. Among these variables, institutional trust emerged as the central element linking regulatory compliance with competitive differentiation, highlighting its strategic importance for attracting international investment. These findings suggest that organizations capable of reducing uncertainty through transparent governance and credible certification mechanisms are better positioned to compete in increasingly globalized real estate markets.

The principal scientific contribution of this research lies in the development of the Trusted Developers Registry Distinction as an integrated strategic framework that transforms regulatory compliance into a source of competitive differentiation and international positioning. Unlike previous approaches that have generally examined governance, certification, or competitiveness independently, the proposed framework demonstrates how these dimensions can be integrated through institutional trust into a unified strategic model. Consequently, this study expands the literature on international competitiveness by introducing institutional trust as a strategic capability capable of strengthening organizational legitimacy, investor confidence, and long-term competitiveness within international real estate markets.

From a practical perspective, the proposed framework provides policymakers, regulatory agencies, investment promotion organizations, and real estate developers with a strategic roadmap for strengthening transparency, improving governance, and reducing perceived investment risk. The implementation of structured certification mechanisms such as the Trusted Developers Registry Distinction may contribute to enhancing investor confidence, increasing market credibility, and improving the international positioning of emerging regions seeking to attract sustainable foreign investment.

This research presents certain limitations that should be considered when interpreting the findings. The study is based on a qualitative documentary approach complemented by expert knowledge from organizations operating in Baja California, which limits the generalization of the proposed framework to other geographical contexts. In addition, the strategic model has not yet been empirically validated through quantitative analyses capable of measuring its direct impact on investment conversion, organizational competitiveness, or international positioning.

Future research should focus on empirically validating the proposed framework through quantitative and mixed-methods studies conducted in different international real estate markets. Comparative analyses across countries and regions would contribute to assessing the adaptability of the model under diverse institutional environments. Furthermore, future studies could examine the integration of emerging technologies such as artificial intelligence, blockchain, and digital certification systems into regulatory governance models to further strengthen institutional trust and sustainable competitiveness within international real estate markets.

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