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LOCAL GOVERNANCE, RESOURCES AND TOURISM PROMOTION: THE CASE OF TAORMINA

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ABSTRACT. Only a few holiday destinations today are competitive in the global tourism markets. We take as a case study the Sicilian town of Taormina, which, as an international touristic destination, shows a strong untapped Potential for a relationship between tourism and local economic growth. We explain this factor as dependent on the model of interaction between local development and global markets, and on the ability of different stakeholders to create synergy for an efficient local tourist system. We examine the characteristics of a quality tourist destination through the lens of the local government system. We highlight the role of local governance in regulating relations with foreign tourist markets*.

JEL Classification: M31, O18, O20, L 84

Keywords: marketing, territory, regional analysis, tourism.

Introduction

In an era marked by changes in financial and ethical behaviour seriously undermining the local community, and putting at risk its economic performance, tourism may become a leading actor for development in small local communities.

Specialized offers established in tourism market segments are most rooted in the areas that had first started this process, and have since established themselves in new areas, with increasing refinement, as if seeking further specificity and quality within broader sectors. The heart of this process of specialization is the territory, or rather, the fusion of the holiday with the place where this experience must take place. This is because a holiday is less and less a time of simple recreation or relaxation, and is increasingly an experience through which those on holiday can assert and explore their identities, go in search of themselves, and probe their values and passions, in the place they deem favourable to achieving these ends. The territory inevitably participates, with its characteristic landscape, culture, lifestyle, culinary style and crafts, and it is essential, together with the specialization of services, that creating this perception of uniqueness is the real cornerstone of a specialized offer (Thrane, 2007).

In recent years 2010-2013, some locales have decidedly undertaken a reorganization, leading tour operators to look more deeply into their potential, even unexpressed potential, the

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better to introduce important innovations in creating an offer – innovations in structure, organization, and in how the offer is communicated.

Equitable resource management – time, budget and environment – along with social awareness, quality of experience, involvement of local communities, desire for discovery, technology, sustainability, knowledge and well-being, are becoming the paths to reach a long-term vision of tourism development (Gnoth, 2002; Quintiliani, 2009).

We see an innovative and sustainable vision in the so-called "kilometre zero" approach, when it firmly focuses on the territory, and proposes it to tourists as an interactive container of history, art, culture, cultural and gastronomic traditions with which they can compare and enrich their knowledge and experience. Sports, entertainment, art, gastronomy and wellness can take several forms, their contours arising from the combination of the quality and type of experience that originate from the same local spirit, and from the personal passions of those who run such a business.

1. Tourism phenomenon development in the destinations

Long considered as a light activity, tourism is in fact a matter of great complexity. Tourism consumes land and presents an opportunity to communities, but is also a problem for them. Tourism offers an emotion, a unique emotion the tourist carries after the trip. In some areas, tourism fails to create wealth, and poses a cost to the community. A mapping of tourist values in the island is required, for being that Sicily has a unique and diversified supply, creating integrated tourist routes – sensory, emotional and devotional – is essential. What is increasingly clear is that, in the dynamic context we find ourselves in, the presence of a variety of services, despite their diversity and excellent quality, is not enough to connote a tourist destination that is a "product." To the extent that destinations can become products, the access to which is left to the individual consumers, there is a loss of the opportunity for the thriving that would be created by a more organized approach.

What tourists perceive about a destination is above all the set of services they are able to take pleasure in. In case of inadequate services and pursuit of common objectives by all suppliers, through some processes integrating production functions, tourists do not benefit from a full compliance with expectations (Goh and Law, 2011; Baidal, Sánchez and Rebollo, 2013; Paço *et al.*, 2012).

Tourists perceive the destination as an integrated offering, a "unique" to which they relate and assess the ability of guaranteeing satisfaction, wherein all major components act co-ordinately and synergistically. Where some of these components are not in tune with others of the tourist supply side, tourists draw less satisfaction, which translates into a perception of the destination as inadequate, compared to its real potential (*Table 1, Annex 1*).

Table 1. The weight of sea tourism in Italy (%) – comparision 2008-2012

Years	Italians	foreigns	total
2008	47,4	26,1	37,6
2009	51,9	26,6	41,5
2010	47,6	27,6	38,4
2011	50,2	30,6	41,4
2012	44,5	23,7	34,7

Source: entrpreise and tourism, unioncamere, Italy 2013.

2. The systemic dimension in Taormina

According to official sources, Sicily has 1,327 hotel establishments and about 3,322 other accommodation facilities for a total of 4,849 establishments with an increase in the number (+1.7%), but a slightly reduction of the beds (-0.5%) in 2011-2012. On the island of Sicily, more than 4 million visitors are recorded and 14 million overnight stays with an average stay of three days, a little below the national average, according to Sicily Region.

For the city of Taormina, the month of December 2012 as well as November 2012 show a negative result with -12.90%, both for Italians (-19.16%) and foreigners (-6.99%), but absolutely marginal in the overall economy of the destination, representing the month with 10,861 nights just over 1% of the total annual movement.

It is worthy of note, the presence of the tourist flow of Germans with +8.33% (1,197 admissions), Japanese with +63.82% (978 appearances) and Sicilians, who with 2,975 visitors show an increase of 7.13% in 2013. We can affirm that in a landscape of generalized crisis, year 2012 closes to the destination with a flattering +2.77%, as against 901,279 to 926,260 overnight stays in 2011.

The other accommodation facilities record +9.34%, although by 51,457 nights is just over 5% of admissions. It increases the average length of stay, which exceeds the 3.50 days, due of course to the growth of the foreign market.

Taormina needs to rediscover its vocation as a magnet for winter tourism, and as a conference centre. Data for 2013 confirm the partial overcoming of the crisis, showing a positive result with an increase of 6.52% compared to 2012. The increase is due to the foreign market, which grew by 9.30%, compared with last year, while the Italian market recorded a decline of 5.29% (*Table 2*).

Table 2. Density accommodation in Sicily

Class	number excercises			mumber beds		
	2012	2013	var.%	2012	2013	var.%
5 stars	31	31	0,0%	5.936	5.919	-0,3%
4 stars	355	357	0,6%	55.420	55.951	1,0%
3 stars	521	528	1,3%	45.926	46.167	0,5%
2 stars	182	177	-2,7%	5.728	5.584	-2,5%
1 star	124	120	-3,2%	2.686	2.627	-2,2%
Residence hotels.	150	148	-1,3%	11.560	11.441	-1,0%
Total hotel	**1.363**	**1.361**	**-0,1%**	**127.256**	**127.689**	**0,3%**
Camping and resorts	102	101	-1,0%	32.776	31.829	-2,9%
landlord	990	1.050	6,1%	14.924	15.648	4,9%
Rural tourism	499	517	3,6%	9.404	9.712	3,3%
Bed & Breakfast	2.124	2.310	8,8%	13.346	14.335	7,4%
Other excercices	66	65	-1,5%	4.066	3.993	-1,8%
Totale other hotels	**3.781**	**4.043**	**6,9%**	**74.516**	**75.517**	**1,3%**
Total General	**5.144**	**5.404**	**5,1%**	**201.772**	**203.206**	**0,7%**

Source: Department of tourism, Sport and performance, observatory tourist region of Sicily, 2013.

During the winter season, November – March, there has been a decline of 3.31% of Italians and a -18.29% to +2.39% of foreigners; in the traditional tourist season April / October to +8.24% of foreigners is a -5.44% of Italians, for a total increase of +5.73%; in the summer season in June / September at a +6.73% foreigners corresponds to a -1.57% of Italians, for a total of +5.05%.

And here are major figures about tourist flows in Taormina in 2013; there were 986,642 overnight stays in tourist facilities in Taormina over the past year, an increase of 60,382 units equal to +6.52% when compared to 2012. The average stay of the Italians was 2.31 days compared with 2.39 in the previous year, while for foreign tourists was 3.88 compared to 3.96 in 2012; the average stay overall total has risen from 3.52 in 2012 to 3.48 in 2013.

In the first half of 2014, tourism in Taormina 28,354 records a matter of nights, a decrease of 13.81% over 32,898 overnight stays in the first half of 2013. It is noted positively the flow of tourists from Scandinavia: Sweden in the first half with a +455.86% +590.48% Norway, Denmark +100.19%. The recorded presence of foreigners is due not only to the policies of seasonal adjustment, but to cultural and artistic events, including the specific services and the prices charged by tourist accommodations (*Table 3*).

Table 3. Annual flow of tourists in Sicily

month	**provenance**	**totals**					
		arrivals			**presences**		
		2012	**2013**	**%**	**2012**	**2013**	**%**
1	**2**	**3**	**4**	**5**	**6**	**7**	**8**
January	italians	94.865	90.441	-4,7%	248.437	209.588	-15,6%
	Foreigns	23.404	25.341	8,3%	77.615	99.840	28,6%
	totale	118.269	115.782	-2,1%	326.052	309.428	-5,1%
February	italians	111.747	111.264	-0,4%	254.661	220.890	-13,3%
	Foreigns	32.276	33.473	3,7%	104.324	115.388	10,6%
	totale	144.023	144.737	0,5%	358.985	336.278	-6,3%
March	italians	153.749	162.645	5,8%	349.530	304.441	-12,9%
	Foreigns	72.004	92.539	28,5%	208.020	286.267	37,6%
	totale	225.753	255.184	13,0%	557.550	590.708	5,9%
April	italians	217.218	191.954	-11,6%	493.488	410.775	-16,8%
	Foreigns	202.544	194.411	-4,0%	565.808	551.149	-2,6%
	totale	419.762	386.365	-8,0%	1.059.296	961.924	-9,2%
May	italians	223.921	229.766	2,6%	534.854	520.560	-2,7%
	Foreigns	252.863	300.837	19,0%	774.638	913.738	18,0%
	totale	476.784	530.603	11,3%	1.309.492	1.434.298	9,5%
June	italians	314.108	285.890	-9,0%	961.821	837.278	-12,9%
	Foreigns	218.181	244.897	12,2%	804.907	893.989	11,1%
	totale	532.289	530.787	-0,3%	1.766.728	1.731.267	-2,0%
July	italians	329.285	314.987	-4,3%	1.315.952	1.168.143	-11,2%
	Foreigns	223.108	248.520	11,4%	998.691	1.120.889	12,2%
	totale	552.393	563.507	2,0%	2.314.643	2.289.032	-1,1%
August	italians	459.352	447.145	-2,7%	1.957.568	1.794.954	-8,3%
	Foreigns	211.912	236.918	11,8%	929.282	1.032.095	11,1%
	totale	671.264	684.063	1,9%	2.886.850	2.827.049	-2,1%
September	italians	257.031	258.439	0,5%	893.796	872.570	-2,4%
	Foreigns	281.433	311.535	10,7%	960.205	1.093.854	13,9%
	totale	538.464	569.974	5,9%	1.854.001	1.966.424	6,1%
October	italians	152.947	157.160	2,8%	393.519	407.590	3,6%
	Foreigns	199.291	222.861	11,8%	662.780	732.477	10,5%
	totale	352.238	380.021	7,9%	1.056.299	1.140.067	7,9%

1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8
November	italians	110.561	116.342	5,2%	260.815	290.179	11,3%
	Foreigns	42.911	47.843	11,5%	144.733	178.525	23,3%
	totale	153.472	164.185	7,0%	405.548	468.704	15,6%
December	italians	124.208	83.175	-33,0%	268.885	231.929	-13,7%
	Foreigns	30.128	24.598	-18,4%	94.772	92.281	-2,6%
	totale	154.336	107.773	-30,2%	363.657	324.210	-10,8%
Total	**italians**	**2.548.992**	**2.449.208**	**-3,9%**	**7.933.326**	**7.268.897**	**-8,4%**
	Foreigns	**1.790.055**	**1.983.773**	**10,8%**	**6.325.775**	**7.110.492**	**12,4%**
	totals	**4.339.047**	**4.432.981**	**2,2%**	**14.259.101**	**14.379.389**	**0,8%**

Source: Department of tourism, Sport and performance, observatory tourist region of Sicily, 2013.

The rich and varied tourist offer enables the foreign tourist to choose from the wide range of proposals that the tour operators' packages present. However, lacking road and rail links, and taking note of a now chronic and endemic shortage of choice regional policies, it is a thorny problem to build integrated and sustainable tourism. What is needed to address this problem is a specific project implementing events of major tourist attraction, generating at the same time beneficial effects and stable economic fallout on the territory. We need to reinforce actions for local and district tourism strategy and governance. We must rethink tourism with a view to raising Sicily's economy by inserting it in a network of synergies highlighting its specifically cultural, economic and strategic value.

3. Innovative district models for tourism to enhance local economic growth

We have seen that the territory has returned to be the answer for both entrepreneurs and policy makers. As a new system of governance of the territories could improve spatial policies, especially in the tourism sector, this paper shows that it is indispensable to any other priority a comprehensive "innovative district model", which relates to the strategic development visions, the real economy of the territories and social characteristics. For a new competition between local economies, innovative districts models must interact with strategic services of scale that become a central factor in the tourism industry, thereby for the local economic development. In fact, tourism plays a vital role in socio-economic development. The tourism development strategies of the territories should be the basis of decisions by the public and private sectors, to be able to aggregate different subjects and different products, according to logic of dialogue, which presupposes the sharing of objectives and actions.

For the development of tourism, we can identify some interventions finding their full social and economic integration for the development of the area. First the "tourist districts" (Sicily L.n.10/2005.) proposed as new models of territorial policy development, including integrated territorial also belonging to more provinces that will be promoted by public bodies, Sicilian local authorities and even private parties. The formulation of tourist districts allow for the possibility of acquiring a legal role to access to finance and community funds. Monitoring annually the guidelines is an indispensable condition; to implement partnerships towards a full realization of the legislation will, providing the design, the agreements on the territory and the establishment of the technical tables. The tourist district becomes a vital strategic tool for the revitalization of the area and sets the conditions for a more efficient relationship between private and public entities (Andergassen *et al.*, 2009).

The tourist district, therefore, exceeds the tool of the "local tourist system" meaning it such as a geographical fact where tourism and cultural system match in a single brand for the best joint. The implementation of measures to classify tourism through the creation of landmarks, directions and reception points welcoming the tourists.

Among the main purposes of the tourist districts, we can identify a support for the activities and processes of aggregation and integration of tourism enterprises, the implementation of measures for qualifying urban and regional tourism in places with a plenty of tourist accommodation, the establishment of information and host points, even computerized, for the tourist (Smeral, 2003). Promoting a computerized marketing of our tourist district for optimizing its commercialization in Italy and abroad as well as encouraging accommodation, services and infrastructure to improve tourism, are also two important aims.

The realization of the “Charter of Regional identity and places of memory” (by Sicily region’s Tourism Department) consists in including GPS maps in navigation systems to guide tourists towards their final destination. That is places of myth and legends, sacred sites, places of historical events, places of historical personalities and culture, historical places of work (antique crafts); historic sites of taste, places of narrative literature and television (circuit of myth: using a network for the televising of events and promotion of the territory).

The "shopping natural malls" (article 9 of the Sicilian Regional Law n.10/2005) are associations mostly comprised of small and medium-sized commercial, handicraft and service enterprises that aggregate for a common regional marketing to increase their attractiveness and improve the image and livability of the area where they operate in view of their brand of quality.

Another undoubtedly important aspect is the realization of "social farms" as business creation to promote and socially include disadvantaged individuals or for social rehabilitation. The social farm appears to be an economically and financially sustainable agricultural enterprise that integrates with the provision of cultural services, tourism, welfare, education, training and employment for the benefit of vulnerable people, in collaboration with public institutions (Dodds and Butler, 2010).

The "social farm" is associated with the educational "biological farm" to promote the culture of organic farms that will also respond to the need for adequate nutrition education given to adolescent and youth groups to counter the phenomenon of childhood obesity. To promote bilateral meetings a course called "Educational Tour" can be fostered by the participation of foreign partnerships, involving local actors of tourism (tour operators, travel agents, journalists and specialized circuits foreign operators). The aim is providing opportunities for promoting the territory and thus enabling marketing activities through scheduled meetings, tourist packages targeted to specific customer groups with the possibility of financial exchanges (Garrod and Fyall, 2000).

Conclusion

To conclude, we must encourage the development of sustainable and responsible tourism initiatives by networking small municipalities together with all the quality resources to be found in each territory. It is desirable to establish one-stop service to tourists, to integrate it into a communication plan reaching across the Web to social media optimization (Talluri and Van Ryzin, 2006).

Long-term competitiveness depends on the local capacity for adaptation to changes. Moreover, cultural planning will have, as a benchmark, the concept of “classicism”, demonstrated by the most interesting and innovative forms that classicism can be expressed in contemporary life. To that end, all the following must be brought to bear: music; literature; quantum physics; and, multicultural and multidisciplinary initiatives in the name of cross-disciplinary models of public space use. Initiatives that bring creative Sicilian environments together with the rest of the world will bear fruit.

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Annex 1.

Table 1. Tourist presence in Sicily, year 2012

	Italian		**Foreigners**		**Total**	
District	n.	var %	n.	var %	n.	var%
Agrigento	365.292	-17,1	289.124	1,2	654.416	-9,9
Caltanissetta	158.231	-8,7	19.766	12,7	177.997	-6,8
Catania	654.839	5,9	425.990	-0,0	1.080.829	3,5
Enna	58.259	12,7	19.571	-4,5	77.830	7,8
Messina	448.452	-8,0	775.210	-1,0	1.223.662	-3,7
Palermo	819.778	3,4	879.690	16,2	1.669.468	9,6
Ragusa	224.623	-1,1	146.171	-9,4	370.794	-4,6
Siracusa	183.454	19,2	150.240	65,4	333.694	36,4
Trapani	648.046	-9,6	277.588	-20,9	925.634	-13,3
Sicilia	3.560.974	-2,8	2.983.350	3,1	6.544.324	-0,2

Source: Tourism Observatory Sicilian Region, 2013 (last official number).

Table 2. Time series of presences tourists in Sicily, 2006-2013

Presence in Sicily						
year	italians	diff. %	foreigners	diff. %	**total**	**diff. %**
1996	6.319.429	-	3.908.938	-	10.228.367	-
1997	6.374.608	0,9%	3.955.276	1,2%	10.329.884	1,0%
1998	7.159.088	12,3%	4.045.378	2,3%	11.204.466	8,5%
1999	7.452.384	4,1%	4.588.773	13,4%	12.041.157	7,5%
2000	8.214.924	10,2%	5.199.692	13,3%	13.414.616	11,4%
2001	8.024.235	-2,3%	5.392.240	3,7%	13.416.475	0,0%
2002	7.946.932	-1,0%	5.289.306	-1,9%	13.236.238	-1,3%
2003	8.123.447	2,2%	4.965.249	-6,1%	13.088.696	-1,1%
2004	8.331.311	2,6%	4.934.718	-0,6%	13.266.029	1,4%
2005	8.629.420	3,6%	5.117.243	3,7%	13.746.663	3,6%
2006	8.872.589	2,8%	5.719.909	11,8%	14.592.498	6,2%
2007	8.474.855	-4,5%	5.949.274	4,0%	14.424.129	-1,2%
2008	8.313.258	-1,9%	5.478.502	-7,9%	13.791.760	-4,4%
2009	8.294.070	-0,2%	4.986.537	-9,0%	13.280.607	-3,7%
2010	8.219.532	-0,9%	5.275.959	5,8%	13.495.491	1,6%
2011	8.597.133	4,6%	5.430.528	2,9%	14.027.661	3,9%
2012	7.923.119	-7,8%	6.295.326	15,9%	14.218.445	1,4%
2013	7.268.897	-8,3%	7.110.492	12,9%	14.379.389	1,1%

Source: Tourism Observatory Sicilian Region, 2014.

Table 3. Consistency accommodation on Sicily 2012-2013

Class	number exercises			beds		
	2012	2013	var.%	2012	2013	var.%
5 star	31	31	0,0%	5.936	5.919	-0,3%
4 star	355	357	0,6%	55.420	55.951	1,0%
3 star	521	528	1,3%	45.926	46.167	0,5%
2 star	182	177	-2,7%	5.728	5.584	-2,5%
1 star	124	120	-3,2%	2.686	2.627	-2,2%
Residences	150	148	-1,3%	11.560	11.441	-1,0%
Total hotels	**1.363**	**1.361**	**-0,1%**	**127.256**	**127.689**	**0,3%**
Camping and tourist resort	102	101	-1,0%	32.776	31.829	-2,9%
Rooms beds	990	1.050	6,1%	14.924	15.648	4,9%
Farms and Rural Tourism	499	517	3,6%	9.404	9.712	3,3%
Bed & Breakfast	2.124	2.310	8,8%	13.346	14.335	7,4%
other exercises	66	65	-1,5%	4.066	3.993	-1,8%
Total others hotels	**3.781**	**4.043**	**6,9%**	**74.516**	**75.517**	**1,3%**
Total general	**5.144**	**5.404**	**5,1%**	**201.772**	**203.206**	**0,7%**

Source: Tourism Observatory Sicilian Region, 2014.

Table 4. Consistency accommodation on Taormina, 2012-2013

Years categories	2012			2013		
	exercises	rooms	beds	exercises	rooms	beds
5 star	11	658	1.484	11	652	1.473
4 star	25	1.357	2.773	26	1.358	2.788
3 star	26	748	1.439	26	709	1.362
2 star	15	290	541	11	223	410
1 star	5	51	87	4	47	79
Residences	5	64	222	5	64	222
Total hotels	**87**	**3.168**	**6.546**	**83**	**3.053**	**6.334**
Camping and tourist resort	1	3	12	1	3	12
Farms and Rural Tourism	3	38	84	3	38	84
Bed & Breakfast	47	146	305	55	168	353
Private housing	19	117	330	23	126	353
Total other hotels	**70**	**304**	**731**	**82**	**335**	**802**
Total general	**157**	**3.472**	**7.277**	**165**	**3.388**	**7.136**

Source: Sicilian regional tourist service, Taormina, 2014.