

FILIPPO GRASSO

**ANALYSIS OF LOCAL RESOURCES
AND ENHANCEMENT OF TOURISM PROMOTION IN A SICILIAN RESORT**

Keywords: Sicily, tourism, local economy

Słowa kluczowe: Sycylia, turystyka, gospodarka lokalna

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For people like me (...) the economy is a social system, created by and for people
P. Krugman, *Barbarous Relics*, January 9, 2013, New York Times

Economy and tourism development in some environments

We cannot but agree with winner of the Nobel Prize in economics about applying the concept expressed in the context of tourism economic studies. In an era marked by strong changes in financial and ethical behaviour that seriously undermine the local community and the ongoing economic crisis, which stops all forms of territorial development, tourism becomes a leading sector of the economy development of conditions in small local communities. In fact, offer specializations established in tourism market segments are more rooted in the areas that had first started this process and have established themselves in new areas, with increasing refinement, as if seeking further specificity quality within broader sectors. On the other hand, we note, however, that this does not lead to fragmentation of the tourist demand, but rather to its enlargement, through the possibility to intercept and solicit needs and interests, more or less latent, which stimulate people to visit places, do activities and experience new emotions. The heart of this process of specialization is the territory. Or rather, the fusion of an original idea of holiday you want to propose to the guest (put into practice by the companies that create specific services), and the place where this experience is to be proposed. This is because holiday is less and less a moment of simple recreation or relaxation; it is increasingly an experience through which one can assert one's identity, plunge in search for oneself, one's values and passions, choosing as a holiday destination the place deemed appropriate to achieve this end. The territory inevitably participates with its identity landscape, culture, lifestyle, kitchen and craft and it is essential, together with the

specialization of services, to the creation of uniqueness that is the real cornerstone of a specialized offer. In recent years some areas have decidedly undertaken reorganization and an offer relaunch, leading tour operators, and in some cases commercial and institutional providers, to look more deeply into their potential, even the unexpressed, to identify those with a greater degree of feasibility and introduce important innovations in creating their offer – in structure and organization – and in its communication.

The very idea underlying a company or an area positioning on a niche product, requires a continuous evolution that constantly combines company and environment characteristics and, additionally, of people who live and work there, with trends, lifestyles and ways of being and thinking in advance of individuals as tourists. Equitable management of resources – time, budget and environment – social awareness, quality of experience, local communities, slow life, desire for discovery, technology, sustainability, knowledge and well-being, are becoming the trails to reach a long-term vision of tourism development.

That is an innovative and sustainable vision, finding its centre of gravity in the approach of kilometre zero (recently introduced by the Sicilian Region by a special law of January 25, 2013) when it firmly centres 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 know-how. Sports, entertainment, art, gastronomy, and wellness can take many forms and defined style arising from the combination of the quality and type of experience (know – interact – do – learn) with the different possible forms (cycling, paragliding or boat sailing, Renaissance or Baroque, wine, saffron or truffles, treatment or care of oneself) which originate from the same local spirit and/or personal passions of those who run businesses.

Tourism phenomenon development in the destinations

Long considered as a light activity, easy and nice to think, tourism is, in fact, a matter of great complexity. Tourism consumes land and it is an opportunity but also a problem for communities, because tourism does not actually sell anything, does not offer a product that you take home. Tourism offers an emotion, a unique emotion the tourist carries home after the trip. If every time we have a guest we can enliven this emotion through our culture and expertise, but also our passion in what we propose, then the result will be certainly great. The local tourism system of governance lies in this logic as an opportunity for a tourism proposal integrated between supply and demand. It is so far the focus of tourism on a human scale taking into account a continuous cultural exchange with local communities to exploit the resources of their areas.

In some areas, tourism does not bring wealth, but it is a cost to the community. And there it makes a sense to levy taxes, not necessarily in the areas, which need to be developed. A mapping of tourist values in the island is required for making Sicily a unique and diversified supply, creating integrated tourist routes: sensory, emotional and devotional. These

are all emotions which our cultural heritage can transfer at any time of a tourist day and to anyone travelling. They are different emotions because there are different people. Tourism is a sensational mix of emotions.

What is increasingly becoming clear is that, in the dynamic context we are experiencing, the presence of a variety of services, despite their diversity, also of good quality, is not enough to connote a tourist destination as a “product”. To the extent that they continue to remain autonomous products, the access to which is left to the individual and free initiative of the consumer, they only partially interpret the need of tourist satisfaction.

What tourists perceive about a destination is the set of services that are guaranteed and proposed. This means that showing this set stretch marks, both in the case of lack of some services qualifying for the stay, and in the case of inadequate pursuit of common objectives by all suppliers, through some processes integrating production functions, tourists do not benefit from a full compliance with his expectations. That is lacking a systemic dimension of local tourism. Cooperation among companies is clearly something that the tourist needs.

Tourists perceive the destination as an integrated offering, something “unique” to which they relate and assess the ability of guaranteeing satisfaction wherein all major components are co-ordinately and synergistically expressed for them. Where some of these do not express an ability to tune with other components of the offer, tourists draw less satisfaction, which translates into a perception of the destination as inadequate to its real potential. To give some examples, it is the case of a trading system that does not tune with tourists’ times, the offer of events is not integrated with the offer of accommodation, and transport services are not adequate in terms of time or means, for tourism users, insufficient information and booking services (slow tour).

Statistical reflections about the dynamics in a resort town in Sicily: Taormina

The statistics supplied by official sources note that in years 2011–2012, in Sicily there were 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 reduction of the beds (–0.5%). 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.

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 worth noting that the presence of Germans with +8.33% (1,197 admissions), Japanese with +63.82% (978 appearances) and Sicilians with 2,975 visitors show an increase of 7.13%.

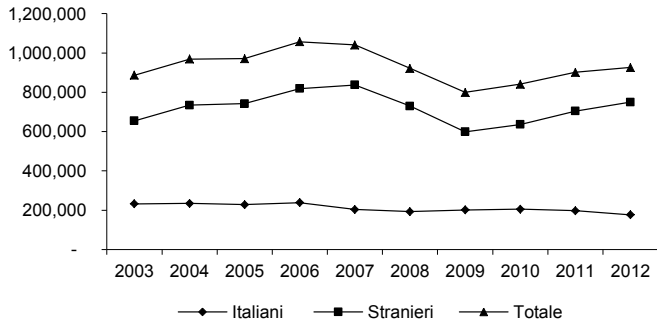


Figure 1. Total presences, 2003–2012

Source: tourist bureau, Taormina.

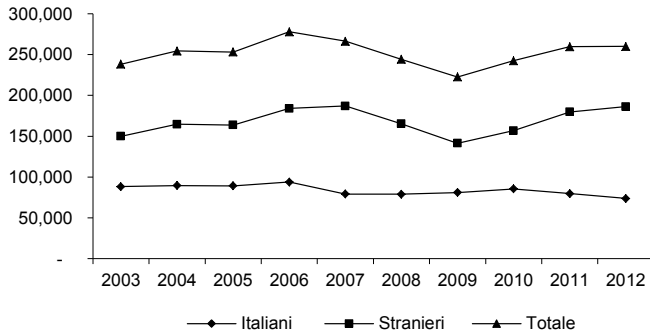


Figure 2. Total arrivals, 2003–2012

Source: tourist bureau, Taormina.

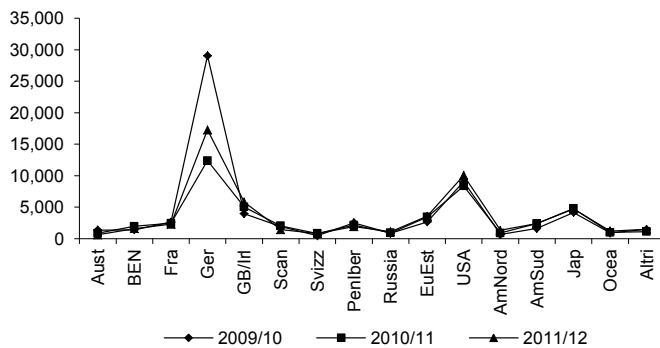


Figure 3. Foreign movement, 2009–2012

Source: tourist bureau, Taormina.

We can say that in a landscape of global crisis, year 2012 closed with a flattering +2.77%, as compared to 901,279 to 926,260 overnight stays in 2011.

These tables, while representing the ability of the target to be more present on the international market, should be a stimulus to resume a constructive dialogue with the national market.

The data of the year analyzed for the single market show that all the Euro countries, always connected with the Catania airport, have a positive sign. The analysis by the category of accommodation shows that there are 5, 4 and 3 star hotels, which represent almost 90% of hospitality as a whole, that is for enshrining the medium-high segment of the market as a reference target for the city of Taormina.

Also the other accommodation facilities record +9.34%, although with 51,457 nights they are just 5% over of admissions.

The average length of stay is also increased – stays are longer than 3.50 days, due of course to the growth of the foreign market.

Taormina is still an attractive destination even during off season to consolidate the tourist season, although the issue of seasonal adjustment and diversification of tourism is not yet present. Taormina needs to rediscover its vocation as winter tourism and conference centre.

Conclusions

It is impossible to build an integrated and sustainable tourism without a specific project that implements events of major tourist attraction and generates at the same time a beneficial effect and a stable economic impact on the territory. We need to reinforce actions for local and district tourism strategy and governance which should not be too fragmented and self-referential.

It is necessary to rethink tourism with a view to raise the island's economy to be exploited by inserting it in a network of synergies highlighting its specifically cultural, economic and strategic values.

We need to promote the growth of tourism aiming at seasonal adjustment, thus starting a process of diversification of products that are accessible at different times of the year, through a series of actions that strengthen the competitiveness of the offer, including the inland areas.

We must encourage the development of sustainable and responsible tourism initiatives by networking small municipalities together with all the quality resources available in each territory. It is desirable to establish a one-stop service to the tourists, to integrate web space in a communication plan, optimize social media to improve all the possibilities available to the user.

It is necessary to enhance the role of Sicily as the beating heart of the Mediterranean, a place of exchange and encounter among the most heterogeneous cultures, religions, tradi-

tions and worldviews. Just think of the Sicilian School and the perfect and unique synthesis of cultures that was the Arab-Norman Frederick II world, a place of cohabitation of three great monotheistic religions, and privileged point of contact between scientists, mathematicians, philosophers, writers, musicians and poets.

Cultural planning will have, as a landmark, the concept of “classicism”, expressed by the most interesting and innovative forms of expression of contemporary life. Music, literature, quantum physics, dance, multicultural and multidisciplinary initiatives in the name of contamination and cross-disciplinary, development of stable orchestras but also private art sceneries, new model of use of public spaces, initiatives to bring together creative Sicilian environments with the rest of the world.

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Summary

In today’s hyper-competitive tourism scenery, the success of tourist destinations is subject to the formulation of an offer system fulfilling the needs and desires of specific “cluster” of tourists. The territory thus becomes an element of tourist attraction.

The strategy of market segmentation recognizes that few holiday destinations are globally enjoyed and desired by tourists, therefore, rather than trying to attract all the targets, it is essential that efforts are specifically directed to the needs and desires of specific targets. This paper deals with territorial economic development that increasingly depends on the model of interaction between local development and global market and on the ability of different stakeholders to create synergy for an efficient local tourist system. We take as a study model an excellence town like Taormina, where tourism is slightly affected by the crisis, while the analysis of statistical data observed shows its strong untapped potential in the field of local economic growth.

ANALIZA LOKALNYCH ZASOBÓW I WZMOCNIENIA PROMOCJI TURYSTYKI W SYCYLIJSKIM KURORCIE

Streszczenie

Dziś, w realiach hiperkonkurencji w turystyce, stopień sukcesu miejscowości turystycznych zależy od stworzenia systemu ofert, który zaspokaja potrzeby i pragnienia określonej grupy turystów. Region staje się zatem częścią składową atrakcji turystycznych.

Strategia segmentacji rynku bierze pod uwagę fakt, że niewiele jest miejsc, które są powszechnie pożądane przez turystów, stąd, zamiast próbować przyciągnąć wszystkich, istotne jest, aby wysiłki były skierowane na zaspokojenie potrzeb określonych celów. Artykuł opisuje rozwój ekonomiczny regionów, który w coraz większym stopniu zależy od modelu interakcji pomiędzy rozwojem lokalnym i globalnym rynkiem oraz zdolności poszczególnych interesariuszy do osiągnięcia synergii w celu stworzenia efektywnego lokalnego systemu turystycznego. Jako model badań posłużyło wspaniałe miasto Taormina. Kryzys w niewielkim stopniu wpłynął tam na turystykę, podczas gdy analiza danych statystycznych ukazuje duży niewykorzystany potencjał ekonomiczny.

