

Observations on the State of Tourism in Italy

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Abstract

In this paper, we analyze the features of the structures and tourist's hotels in the years 2003-2008. In particular, we studied the presence of tourists in hotels. The official statistical data on tourism reported in this article were provided by ISTAT. One of the main economic resource in Italy is the tourism sector. The tourism sector is growing and it is an important source of income for the Italian economy and the world. The growth and spread of tourism causes excessive consumption of natural resources related to intensive building. This inevitably leads to an alteration of the natural habitat. In Italy the system of official statistics on tourism offers a variety of sources, most of which are represented by ISTAT. The tourist's hotel structures in Italy are made up of complementary facilities such as hotels and campsites, tourist villages, bed and breakfasts, etc. The environment is the cornerstone of the tourism product, and it inevitably suffers the environmental changes. Diversification and quality are key competitive factors in the tourism sector. Therefore, the farm is one of the sectors in which investment is convenient. The Italian farm holiday is the fourth largest in Europe after France, Germany and Great Britain. Farmhouses must meet user's expectations; economists say: "experience good user satisfaction".

Keywords: Hotel structures, Tourism, Natural resources, Farmhouses, Customer satisfaction

1. Introduction

One of the main resources for the Italian economy is the tourism. The tourism sector is growing and is an important source of income for the Italian economy and the world. According to data collected by the WTO (World Tourism Organization-World Tourism Organization) in 2006, the tourism market had a turnover of over 700 billion dollars. The predictions are that by 2020 more than a billion and a half travellers will cross the borders of their countries, moving not only themselves, but also a lot of money. The growth and spread of tourism results in a natural habitat alteration, excessive consumption of natural resources, intensive building and risk of loss of cultural identity. In recent years it has spread a new form of tourism called "sustainable". This concept was born at the end of 1980. The tourist facilities and services must be made so in such a way as not to penalize the environment. In Italy the system of official statistics on tourism will use different information sources, most of which are represented by ISTAT. The tourist's hotel structures in Italy consist of facilities such as hotels and campsites, tourist villages, bed and breakfasts, etc. Statistical data provided by ISTAT aim to assess the number of Italian and foreign clients and their average length of stay in tourist's facilities. The data analyzed and reported in this study are referred to Sicily region and to the nation.

Highlights of a correct strategy of expansion of tourism are as follows:

- Tourism and environmental sustainability.
- Diversification and Quality: variables in which to invest.
- Capacity and movement of customers in accommodation.

2. Tourism and Environmental Sustainability

The spread of tourist traffic should be associated with environmental sustainability. Tourism development causes unavoidable changes in the environment (Sinclair et al., 1997). Therefore, the excessive and uncontrolled development of tourism can threaten environmental resources. The environment is the cornerstone of the tourism product which invariably modify it. For this reason, conservation programs and the environment's improvement are topics of high attention (Sinclair et al., 1997). There is no developed tourism without causing effects on the environment, but you have to minimize the negative effects.

3. Diversification and Quality: Variables in Which to Invest

In an increasingly competitive environment, the diversification and quality are key competitive weapons in the tourism sector. In the specific case of the environment, we must act with inspired policies. The farm holidays are the main field in which the tourism industry invests. This represents the fusion of two very different activities: tourism and agriculture. (Hirsch, 1981; Musu, 2000; L. 730 05.12.1985) The Italian farm holidays are the fourth largest in Europe after France, Germany and Great Britain. In Italy the vast heritage of rural buildings led to an increasing demand for holidays in the countryside. This spreading is the answer to return to nature, urban alienation as a reaction. It stimulates the desire for a return to nature, wholesome food and to the life of the fields. The innovative element introduced from the farm is that it offers recreational activities in rural areas (courses in enology, beekeeping, harvesting, handicrafts). In the farm it is necessary to ensure the expectations of users. Economists define "good experience", the end-user satisfaction. Therefore we must promote only what we can effectively guarantee. One must strive to live up to expectations.

4. Capacity and Movement of Customers in Accommodation

In our country the large number of hotels can accommodate a large number of tourist's guests. According to the ISTAT until the year 2008 the number of tourist accommodation B & B has grown up to 76 % of the total of all hotel businesses. The number of tourists recorded in Italy during 2008 was 373.7 million. The average length of stay was 3.91 nights. Compared to 2007, arrivals fell by 0.6 percent and attendance was down 0.8 % (Table 1) (ISTAT, 2007-2008; ISTAT, 2003-2008; Bimonte et al., 2003; Ballatori et al., 1990). These results marked a reversal of the positive development of previous years. In 2008, there was a reduction in the presence of 0.1 % nationally and 2.2 % in foreign countries. The number of Italian tourists in the country grew by 0.5 %. The arrivals of Italian and foreign tourists are reported in Tables 2 and 3. In relation to the demands of tourists, the most recent data show a willingness to move away from the daily chaos of the city to spend time outdoors and farm holiday. Here traditions are more deeply rooted and food is still possible to enjoy authentic regional specialties made with fresh ingredients and unique recipes of the area. The demand for this type of tourism (rural tourism) is also widespread in Italy and foreign. The presence of tourists in the farm has grown significantly in recent years. In addition, the presence of Italian and foreign tourists in the farm are the same (49.5 and 50.5 % for the Italians for foreigners) (Candela et al., 2010; Baldacci, 2006; Bencardino et al., 2007).

The highest attendance was recorded in Tuscany (about 3.0 million) and Trentino-Alto Adige (about 2.0 million), the lowest attendance are recorded respectively in Aosta Valley (27 256) and Molise (8 842). Sicily with a value equal to 332 550 attendances is in fifth place for number of appearances. Of these 32.3 % are registered in the province of Syracuse and 15.4 % in the province of Trapani.

In 2009 international tourism in Italy has reached a historic low with 159.5 million and 41.1 million foreign tourists' arrivals. The 2010 budget was close to the Italian tourism visitor record in 2007 (163.5 million) (Leoni et al., 2010).

The surveys ConIstat (economic data) for 2010, revealed two opposing trends: more movements of foreign tourists, less of Italian tourists (Becheri et al., 2011). It is estimated that in 2010 the foreign tourists rose by 2.4 % and arrivals of 4.6 %, compared to previous years, while those inside were down -3.1 % and -2.6 % of arrivals. Italy tourism is slowly recovering at the end of 2011; foreign travellers' spending has grown by 4-5 % in 2010, exceeding 30 billion euros. The signals come from summer 2011 tell us that it is slightly increasing the share of nationals who are granted a holiday. Who has not travelled, was largely forced by economic reasons (53 %). In the global ranking of the top ten countries for international arrivals, Italy is fifth (43.6 million, +0.9 %). The numbers of the tourism economy in 2010 are as follows: 95 billion euros Expenditure made by tourists in Italy. This has produced a wealth estimated at more than 100 billion euros (7 % of all domestic value added). In 2011 there was a new record; the tourists were over 170 million. The highest quantity of foreign tourists who visit Italy come from Germany (16 %), and the U.S. (11 %). The propensity to spend more proper to the Russians (1382€ per tourist) and Japanese (1531€).

5. Final Considerations

To promote tourism development is necessary to protect and enhance the properties of cultural and traditional territories.

In Italy the system of official statistics on tourism will use different information sources, most of which are represented by ISTAT.

The main points to be put in place to obtain a correct and updated tourism policy are as follows:

- Tourism and environmental sustainability.
- Invest in the quality of traditional products linked to the territory.

- Implement the capacity of accommodation facilities in the country.
- Improve end user satisfaction. Defined by economists good experience.

The farm is one of the tourist areas on which it is worth investing. The new element introduced by the farm is to carry out recreational activities in a natural environment and agriculture. Here tourists can engage in courses of winemaking, beekeeping, harvesting, handicrafts.

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The Italian agritourism is the fourth largest in Europe, after France, Germany and Great Britain. This spreading is the answer to return to nature, urban alienation as a reaction. It stimulates the desire for a return to nature, wholesome food and to the life of the fields. The presence of tourists in the farm has grown significantly in recent years.

The highest number of tourists who resort to this kind of vacation is recorded in Tuscany (about 3.0 million). This region is particularly rich in natural areas. Tourism remains the most important productive sector of the country, with a key role in balancing the external accounts.

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The tourism sector, therefore, requires appropriate policies in order to spread throughout the country.

Such a policy planning is found in the so-called “Agenda 21” (so called because written at the beginning of the twenty-first century), signed by over 170 countries in Rio de Janeiro in 1992 during the UN World Conference on Environment and Development.

In Chapter 28 of Agenda 21, states “Each local government should discuss with citizens, local organizations and private enterprises and adopt its own Local Agenda 21”. Through consultation and consensus building, local authorities should learn and acquire by the local community and industry information necessary to formulate the best strategies. Local Agenda 21 has the target to activate a Local Action Plane through which local and global sustainability can be reached.

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Table 1. Arrivals, Attendance and Average Stay in Hotels (2003-2008)

Years	Arrivals	Variations in % on previous year	Attendance	Variations in % on previous year	Average length of stay
2003	82.724.652		344,413,317		4.16
2004	85.956.568	3.9	345,616,227	0.3	4.02
2005	88.338.564	2.8	355,255,172	2.8	4.02
2006	93.044.399	5.3	366,764,778	3.2	3.94
2007	96.150.083	3.3	376,641,751	2.7	3.92
2008	95.546.086	-0.6	373,666,712	-0.8	3.91

Source: Based on ISTAT data.

Table 2. Arrivals and Presences in Hotels (Expressed in Thousands) and Percentage Changes on Previous Year (2003-2008)

Years	Arrivals						Attendance					
	Italian		Foreigners		Total		Italians		Foreigners		Total	
2003	39.156	-	28.174	-	67.330	-	135.217	-	93.935	-	229.151	-
2004	40.767	4.1 %	29.916	6.2 %	70.684	5.0 %	136.845	1.2 %	97.175	3.4 %	234.020	2.1 %
2005	41.276	1.2 %	30.943	3.4 %	72.219	2.2 %	138.123	0.9 %	102.312	5.3 %	240.435	2.7 %
2006	42.521	3.0 %	33.513	8.3 %	76.033	5.3 %	140.397	1.6 %	107.859	5.4 %	248.255	3.3 %
2007	43.282	1.8 %	34.769	3.7 %	78.051	2.7 %	141.311	0.7 %	113.017	4.8 %	254.329	2.4 %
2008	43.498	0.5 %	33.667	-3.2 %	77.165	-1.1 %	141.187	-0.1 %	110.492	-2.2 %	251.678	-1.0 %

Source: Based on ISTAT data.

Table 3. Arrivals and Hotel Stays in Complementary (Expressed in Thousands) and Percentage Changes on Previous Year (2003-2008)

Years	Arrivals						Attendance					
	Italian		Foreigners		Total		Italian		Foreigners		Total	
2003	8.563	-	6.832	-	15.395	-	69.543	-	45.719	-	115.262	-
2004	8.473	-1.0 %	6.800	-0.5 %	15.273	-0.8 %	67.602	-2.8 %	43.994	-3.8 %	111.596	-3.2 %
2005	8.936	5.5 %	7.183	5.6 %	16.119	5.5 %	68.631	1.5 %	46.189	5.0 %	114.820	2.9 %
2006	9.330	4.4 %	7.681	6.9 %	17.011	5.5 %	69.507	1.3 %	49.003	6.1 %	118.509	3.2 %
2007	9.995	7.1 %	8.104	5.5 %	18.099	6.4 %	71.865	3.4 %	50.448	3.0 %	122.313	3.2 %
2008	10.251	2.6 %	8.130	0.3 %	18.381	1.6 %	70.683	-1.6 %	51.306	1.7 %	121.988	-0.3 %

Source: Based on ISTAT data.