

CULTURAL AND RURAL TOURISM: POTENTIAL SYNERGIES FOR A NEW ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT PATTERN. THE ITALIAN CASE

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Abstract

Thanks to its important naturalistic, historical, cultural and artistic heritage, Italy is one of the countries with the greatest tourist vocation in the world. Consequently, tourism is the most important productive sector in the Italian economy, with an impact just below 12% on GDP. During the long period of economic crisis that affected the major world economies, between 2008 and 2014, some parts of the Italian tourism, including seaside for example, declined. This decline, at an aggregate level, has been however balanced by the development of cultural tourism. About 37% of external demand is attributed to expenditures for holidays in art heritage cities, representing the most dynamic part of Italian tourism. Although with more modest absolute values, agritourism and food and wine tourism are dynamic parts of the Italian tourism too and, sometimes, they are linked with cultural tourism. The aim of this paper is to demonstrate that the development of cultural tourism, agritourism and food and wine tourism can be a single goal of economic policy aimed at creating new growth strategies in order to overcome the effects of the economic crisis. Organizing as a single economic system the different parts of Italian tourism can be the most coherent action in order to cope with the different development needs and potentialities of Italy, whose economic system is traditionally linked to the territorial values².

Keywords:

Cultural tourism, growth strategies, agritourism, art heritage cities.

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Introduction

As one of the world's largest industries, tourism is associated with many of the prime sectors of the world economy, so it is difficult to define it in a simple way but, at the same time, it is easy to understand its role as a leading sector of the various economies linked to it. When we talk about tourism we need to consider a system composed by several elements interacting with broader environments and characterized by strong intrinsic complexity and heterogeneity. Taking into consideration these aspects, it seems plain defining tourism only as the “*the industry that gets people from their home to somewhere else (and back), and which providing lodging and food for them while they are away*” (The Economist 1991). In fact, the tourism industry is much more and is especially something which affects feelings and experiences that become elements that typify this industry and underline the necessity to be peculiar in terms of quality (Fennel, 2003). The tourism phenomenon therefore is strongly affected by aspects needed for the creation of a tourism system. The qualification of tourism activities is strictly linked to the way in which all the key elements are connected and as their connection is perceived by tourists.

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The most interesting aspect of the phenomena is linked to the fact that, to be perceived in a positive way, the tourist experience cannot be separated from the territorial context in which it is conducted. Of course this happens if it is well organized and preserved, gives the product an added value, diversifies and makes destination unique and irreproducible (Sidati, Kastenholz and Bianchi, 2015; Asero and Patti, 2009). In other words, the territorial context takes on an active role throughout the business organization; it becomes not only the “physical context” where the entrepreneurial activities take place, but it is an integral part of the economic activity too and it can contribute to its success. Not by chance, the reputation of a territory is itself an element of quality perception like services and products offered (Calabrò and Vieri, 2016). In this sense, the success of some tourist activities is influenced by the territorial context in which they operate. Among these, we surely include the tourist activities in cultural and rural areas. This is particularly true for the Italian reality whose worldwide image is strictly linked with the concept of “culture” that not only means places of artistic interest but culinary and wine-growing traditions, landscape and craft heritage characterizing the Italian tourism.

Territorial identity is the key element to exploit the basis of the innovative supply and the possibility to stand out on the market. In fact, the ensemble of territorial elements (natural, anthropologic, economic, social and cultural one) unquestionably characterises a tourist area, and all together they represent the area where all the economic activities are able to enhance or degrade are put in place (Salazar, 2005). In this context, people and their territory are the core of the system and all together they are both the territorial identity and the expression of uniqueness.

Such factors can put Italy under conditions to be able to escape from homogenizing pressures of globalization developing activities whose competitiveness is not linked to lower production costs. In particular, the creation of a “local communities system” can give the Italian economy the opportunity to benefit from the integration of two leading sectors of its territorial economy: agriculture and tourism.

1. Tourism in Italy: the role of external demand

According to the World Tourism Organization (WTO) data, on a global level, the year 2015 recorded 1,186 million of arrivals, with an increase of 4.6% compared to 2014. This positive trend confirms a long-term pattern (677 million of arrivals in 2000; 927 million in 2008; 1,087 million in 2013) which showed a substantial slowdown in the most difficult years (2009-2010) of the economic crisis that between 2008 and 2014 affected the world economy. To confirm this, we must consider that the positive values recorded in 2015 founded a match both in the 2016 estimates (+5.1%) and forecasts for 2017 (+5.0%). Taking into consideration the same data source, in 2015, Europe was the most visited area in the world (607.7 million of arrivals representing +4.5%); Italy is the third of the European Countries considering the number of arrivals (after France and Spain) and the fifth in the world.

Regarding the Italian tourist sector, external demand has become very important over time, not only in quantitative terms but strategic too (Alivernini, Breda, and Iannario, 2014). Between 2001-2016, the Italian tourist sector was mainly supported by external demand increased consistently at the expense of the internal one whose weight significantly decreased in the considered period. In this regard, it is important to underline that from 2001 to 2016 arrivals and visits of foreign tourists increased by 55% and 35% respectively, while in 2016 arrivals and visits of Italian tourists were lower with 2% and 1% respectively compared to the 2001 values. As a consequence, in 2016, the weight of external demand became equivalent to the national one that in 2001 stood at 40% plus (Confturismo-Confcommercio, 2017).

In view of the above, for the purpose of this paper, it is of particular interest to disaggregate the external demand for areas of provenance and typology of destinations. As regarding the areas of provenance, it is important to note that out of a total of 55.5 million of foreign tourists arrived in Italy in 2016, about 39 million (70.3%) came from Europe; the remaining part (16.5 million; 29.7%) came from other countries and, especially, from USA (8.3%), China (6.8%) and Japan (5.6%). These numbers, as a whole, represent the 20.7% of the total of arrivals. In any case, it should be noted that 66.9% of arrivals are concentrated in the first 10 countries of provenance, among which Germany is at the top of the total of arrivals with a percentage of 19.9%, followed by USA, France, China and United Kingdom.

Together with the classification of tourist flows according to the areas of provenance, another interesting consideration is how they've changed over time. Always taking into consideration the period 2001-2016 and the above mentioned current ten countries of provenance, it can be observed that, in the face of a rather stable regarding the first three countries (Germany, USA and France that were and are currently in the first three ranked top places), tourist flows from China increased considerably so that China, that was ranked tenth in 2001, was in fourth place in 2016. It should be noted that Russia is not in the top ten countries of provenance. The reason is that in the last three years, the number of tourists from Russia has been halved because of the sanctions applied to this country by the International Community. In any case, this does not mean that we cannot pay particular attention on Russian tourism and, more generally, on tourism from BRICS Countries, especially with a view to the future. And this is because of one of the main consequences of globalization, which

is the birth of “new riches”. The “new riches” can be one of the main opportunities the Italian socio-economic system can take to affect globalization without suffering it.

With regard to the type of destination, in Italy, foreign tourists choose places of historical and artistic interest that, alone, account for 52.1% of arrivals and 38.3% of visits. These data are reflected in economic values that, between 2011 and 2015 show an increase in expenditure in places of cultural and artistic interest of foreigners of about 29.6% (from 10.6 to 13.04 billion euro) (Symbola, 2016). Although places of cultural and artistic interest represent the main tourist attraction for foreign tourists, it should be noted that the tourist interest is not only related to some pillars of Italian tourist attraction like Rome, Florence, Venice, Milan and Naples, but it is also oriented to small cities.

The period 2009-2015 showed very interesting data in this regard. Beside more or less significant increments of arrivals in the main art heritage cities (first of all Florence, +2.5 million and Venice, +1.8 million) there has been a growing movement towards destinations able to combine both historical and artistic attractions and territorial characteristics. We refer, in particular, to hill areas and small cities of high historical and cultural interest, where, in the same period 2009-2015, arrivals increased in a number equal to 42.4% and 40.7% respectively. However, the aggregate data don't account for a very diversified district reality. In fact, more than 70% of arrivals of foreign tourists is concentrated in only five regions, in the north and in the centre of Italy: Veneto (20.5%); Lombardy (14.1%); Tuscany (13.2%); Lazio (13.1%); Trentino Alto Adige (10.6%). In these Regions, in addition to the main cities of high historical, cultural and artistic interest (Venice, Milan, Florence and Rome) there is a high number of small locations of both high historical and cultural interest and landscape and naturalistic values. It is critical, instead, the situation of the six southern regions (Sicily, Campania, Apulia, Calabria, Basilicata and Molise) where, notwithstanding the presence of several areas of a high tourist potential, foreign arrivals are just 9.8%. This is because these regions are either behind in development terms or they may have infrastructural problems.

These trends are the demonstration of the great possibilities Italy has to create in terms of development making a cooperation between the traditional tourism offer and the form of rural tourism (agritourism and food and wine tourism), in order to catch the external demand of tourism. To confirm this, it should be noted that, referring to the expenditure incurred by foreign people in the period 2011-2015, there has been an increase both for farm tourism holidays (from 315 to 437 million euro; +38.7%) and food and wine tourism (from 121 to 192 million euro; +58.7%).

Notwithstanding the above mentioned positive values, it should be underlined that, at present, Italy doesn't seem fully able to seize the opportunities linked to the tourist exploitation of local resources. In this regard, it should be considered that, between 2001 and 2016, the mean residence time of foreign tourists decreased from 4.1 to 3.6 days and the average expenditure was reduced by 34.5% in real terms passing from 1,034 to 677 euro. This means that it seems to exist important growth margins in order to optimize both the opportunities deriving from the above-mentioned trends of foreign tourists arrivals (provenance and destinations) and the attractiveness of Italy which remains one of the main tourism destination in the world. In this respect, it should be considered that the attractiveness is certainly a basic element but it cannot be the only aspect on which to found an activity, because the element for keeping a tourist area productive is that of differentiating supply, offering alternative solutions which exploit new form of tourism and attract new customers (Calabrò and Vieri, 2014).

As aforementioned, one of the consequences of globalization is the birth of “new riches” in New Developed Countries (far East, Latin America) together with the traditional ones in Europe and Nord America. The “rich” consumer has a different consumer behaviour compared with traditional consumer behaviour and his choices are oriented towards goods and services with a high content of image and exclusivity and social distinction. This principle is valid for all categories of consumption: tourism, culture, foodstuff, fashion and personal care. For example, when travelling, these consumers, with a high willingness to pay, ask for a large quantity of dedicated services. This new demand had been caught in different European Countries, i.e Swiss entrepreneurs that put on the market new all-inclusive exclusive holiday packages.

Italy has great potentialities to take this chance not enough exploited up to now. The Italian productive system, traditionally based on small and medium size enterprises with strong territorial links, seems to suffer, in particular the homologation and competitive rules based on production costs of globalization. It follows that in the growing competitiveness context enjoined by the globalization process, the only chance the Italian socio-economic systems have in order not to be marginalized is to work for development system differentiated on a local level and based on the exploitation of territorial resources as a whole (Dolishniy and Kyfyak, 2006).

Italy represents worldwide the image of a country very rich in cultural, artistic, historical and culinary traditions and, more generally, the image of “quality of life”. This concept could be summarized in a “territorial brand” whose keystone is the beauty, already an intrinsic component on international level of luxury products (Calabrò and Vieri, 2015). In this perspective, it is important that the beauty would become a strategy of local sustainable development that can be realized using present local resources.

The principle is: if the demand of beauty and quality exists, catching it is the main aim of national economic policy on a global scale, not individually. Such an approach can give to the Italian socio-economic system the possibility to catch some of the positive elements of globalization that is the opportunity to put on the market goods and services of a high level of quality expressing territorial peculiarities; in this way, the Italian socio-economic system can get out of the limits imposed by globalization such as competition based on production costs, and homologation. It is important to note that in order to catch these opportunities we don't need great investments and infrastructures, but coordinated measures that work together creating synergies on territorial level.

2. Cultural and rural tourism: two drivers of local development

Tourism and agriculture are two sectors showing a lot of common points. First of all, both are strictly linked to the local resources and, in several situations, benefit from each other. For example, it is unquestionable that agricultural and forestry landscapes can be an important tourist resource; at the same time, great market opportunities for food products and agricultural areas affected by tourist flows can derive from tourism, that encourages the movement of people. Another important element that links tourism and agriculture is that both are the fulcrum of a complex element and that together are worth more than 25% of the Italian GDP. Tourist activities in the strict sense account for about 4.2% of GDP, but they are the core of the tourist system, that as a whole accounts for 10.3%.

A similar situation is for agriculture, which is the fulcrum of the agri-business sector that counts for more than 15% of national wealth. An additional factor is that agriculture is the productive activity that more than others shapes the characteristics of the national territory. It is, in fact, classified as rural for 92% and for about 55% is occupied by agricultural firms and is destined to agricultural and forestry activities.

Because of their nature, agriculture and tourism are two sectors that depend on local resources and their integration with the other activities operating in the same area. Together they create a system whose centrality is the territory. These characteristics are already a good condition to integrate tourism and agriculture and give birth to forms of development based on local resources.

As above mentioned, in Italy, approximately 55% of the surface is occupied by farms and about 92% of the surface is classified as rural. More than 2/3 of the Italian rural areas are composed by so called "rural urbanized districts", characterized by a high residential density and a relevant weight of agriculture. In these areas, agriculture plays an important role, not only recognizable in the production of material assets but, especially, in the contribution it gives to outline basic territorial features with a high tourist value. We can say that agriculture can shape the characteristics of almost all national territory, even where it isn't an economic leading sector. In this perspective, within a complex system of relationships, agriculture takes on the main role of promoter of a socio-cultural-environmental context that links the different components of territorial realities, favouring the creation of a system, which is the expression of identity and uniqueness, and whose common objective is the territorial strategic and sustainable management aimed at creating wealth and well-being. In this sense, working in a sustainable way implies a responsible and equilibrate use of territorial characteristics (Cairol et al., 2009).

In many areas of North and centre of Italy, especially where the concentration of foreign tourists is higher, the spread of niche proposals, strongly oriented to the qualitative differentiation, whose competitive potential lies on the respect of territorial identity and on the creation of synergic relationship among different private and public stakeholders, has already represented a strategic answer to the ongoing evolution in the tourist competitive scenario. This has not been the case of the southern part of Italy that, although very attractive, wasn't able to well exploit its resources.

The differentiation in tourism has been realized with the agritourism, in general, and, with Food and Wine tourism in particular (Becheri and Maggiore, 2016). In Italy, in 2015, the number of agritourism firms was of 22,238 constantly growing in the last decade. In this decade, the number of firms increased by 45.1%. 47.0% of agritourism firms are located in the North of Italy, 34.4% in 4 central regions (Tuscany, Lazio, Umbria e Marche); the remaining 18.6% are in the South of Italy. Tuscany and South Tyrol (Alto Adige), with 4,391 (19.7%) and 3,125 (14.1%) firms respectively, represent the part of Italy in which agritourism is historically more significant and developed. Taking into consideration the 5 regions with the highest concentration (more than 70%) of foreign tourists (Lombardy, Veneto, Tuscany, Lazio and Trentino-Alto Adige), they are also the regions where the 53,7% of agritourism firms are located. 83.9% of firms are located in slopes areas, especially hilly areas (51.9%). In the last years, these areas showed the major increase of arrivals of foreign tourists (+42.4% in the period 2009-15). The 82.3% of the national total agritourism firms offer accommodation; in 2015, the number of these agritourism firms was 18,295. Tourist accommodation can offer one or more types of services: bed, bed and breakfast, half board and full board. More than half of firms (10,362; 56.6% of the total nationwide) offer only bed; 39.5% bed and breakfast; 28.2% half board and 20.7% full board.

In 2015, agritourism firms offering food and beverages were 11,207 (+1,3% comparing to 2014), equal to 50.4% of Italian agritourism firms. 8,162 agritourism firms offer the combination food and accommodation; Tuscany is the region where this type of solution is more widespread (1,290 firms) followed by Emilia-Romagna (565) and Lombardy (548). 46.9% of agritourism firms (10,440 firms) together with accommodation offer other kind of activities such as: sports (mountain bike, riding, nature (trekking, bird watching) and new forms of fun like the participation to farm works; cooking classes and folk and cultural initiatives. In 2015, on a total of 11,3 million of presence of tourists (+4.9% respect to 2014), 55.8% of tourists came from abroad (+4.9%), with a turnover of 1.7 billion euro (ISTAT, 2016).

Agritourism proves itself to be a typically Italian reality in which the strict link between tourism and the general management of farm, qualify the sector as a fundamental expression of multi-functionality. It is different from the other forms of rural tourism ruled by other European countries. We must not forget that the opportunity given to farmers to carry out tourism is the result of an environmental policy action, consistent with the rural development programmes, aimed at operating on carrying capacity and originated from the need to avoid the countryside depopulation and to guarantee the maintenance of activities very important to the aim of territorial defence.

The national law governing the sector, provides for agritourism to be carried out in connection and complementarity relationship with agriculture that. However this must be prevalent and aim at guaranteeing the maintenance of soil and environmental defence initiatives through the recovery of rural building heritage, safeguarding landscape peculiarity, encouraging and providing incentives to typical products, quality productions and related food and wine traditions (Gazzetta Ufficiale, 2006). These objectives have been reached through the diversification of the services offered by means of integrated and differentiated tourist packages, focused to better qualify agritourism with regard to the territory in which it is practised. In this sense, it is interesting the recent appeal towards the food and wine tourism, which has enriched the panorama of national tourist offer (Du Rand and Heath, 2006).

Food and wine tourism rests its attraction on the enormous “gastronomic heritage” available in Italy, that in December 2016, boasts of 291 of Protected Designation of Origin (PDO) and Protected Geographical Indication (PGI) and 523 wines with geographical names (European Union, 2017). It should be noted that the largest number of certified products is concentrated in the northern part of Italy. As regards the full set of food and wine certified products, 80% of the value is concentrated in 20 provinces, only three of which are in the southern part of Italy (Caserta, Sassari and Salerno, 16th, 18th and 19th position respectively).

Notwithstanding the non-homogeneous geographical distribution, Italy is, however, the first country in the world considering the number of certified products and the food and wine heritage represents, after art and culture, the parameter of Italian destinations choice (Zecca and Rastorgueva, 2016). According to Bank of Italy data (2016), in 2015, more than 20 thousand foreign tourists visited Italy for food and wine (+5.9% compared to 2014 and +11,6% over 2012), with 1,3 million of overnight stays (+10,4% over 2014 and +34,7% over 2012), representing over 192 million euro (+54,8% over 2012) in expenditure.

The most interesting aspect of the phenomena is linked to the fact that the tourist experience, to be perceived in a positive way, cannot be separated from the territorial context in which it is conducted that, if well organized and preserved, gives to the product an added value, diversifying and making it unique and irreproducible (Sidati, Kastenholz and Bianchi, 2015; Asero and Patti, 2009). Moreover, “where” the tourist fruition is experienced, meaning the territory in all its environmental and social components, influences the overall opinion about the quality of wine holiday higher than purely tourism services. In other words, the territorial context takes on an active role throughout the business organization; it becomes not only the “physical context” where the entrepreneurial activities take place, but it is an integral part of economic activity too and it can contribute to its success.

Not by chance, the reputation of a territory is itself an element of quality perception like services and products offered. It is particularly true regarding the wine sector for which the territorial component has a determining influence both on the specificity and qualitative characteristics and the best presentation on the market in terms of image (Ab Karim and Geng–Qing Chi, 2010). In this regard, it should be noted that Chinese and American tourists consider Italy the best destination for food and wine and German tourists choose Italy for food. (World Food Travel Association, 2016; Osservatorio Nazionale sul Turismo, 2016a).

These considerations show how a mutual thrust mechanism between the agricultural sector and the tourist industry can represent a stimulus for local development (Kotler, 2002). For example, Italy is a country with great wine vocation. The grapevine is a perennial farming that plays an essential role in maintenance and conservation of rural areas. Its positive impact on landscape is explicated in the limitation of soil erosion, the flow of surface water and through the stabilization of the hill areas against the landslides. Together with this important environmental role which is typical of agriculture there are also social and economic implications resulting from the fact that the realization of vineyards implicates the creation of landscapes of immeasurable beauty as result of the skilful work of farmers. They become attractive from a tourist point of

view and, at the same time, they produce an exclusive and distinctive product - the wine - whose organoleptic characteristics, typicality and brand awareness on the market are strictly linked to the context and the production modality, expression of a historical-environmental-cultural value (Castriota and Del Mastro, 2008). As a consequence, a product will be the more unique and typical the more ascribable to the territory of origin (Ciasullo and Festa, 2012).

These elements are so strictly connected that from the care and the beauty of an area derive the social, economic and environmental value of the product (Alant and Bruwer, 2004). Not by chance, for about 60% of food and wine tourists, vineyards contribute to give uniqueness and beauty to a landscape and make unique the quality perception of wine consumption (Pantini, 2014). In this perspective, the wine tourist addresses himself to the wine for its intrinsic treasure and desirability in terms of contents so that wine tourism becomes a type of tourist product and, at the same time, both a way to guarantee wide growth rates and economic development in rural areas (tourist destination) and a business opportunity for wineries (Getz and Brown, 2006; Sparks, 2007). In this context, food and wine tourism can enable wide room for growth in rural areas, in terms of income and economic opportunities, but also employment objectives (Boyne and Hall, 2004).

In spite of above mentioned considerations, Italy has not fully yet exploited all the opportunities related to wine tourism. Out of the total of about 20 million arrivals in the wine tourism section on a worldwide level, only 3 million are those in Italy. This quota seems rather small compared to the potentialities of Italy and this is partly due to the organizational fragmentary nature and rather small companies' size; but to the lack of synergies, synergies and marketing actions should be able to create a strong territorial brand too, that makes food and wine tourism an attractive and competitive resource (Morgan, Pritchard and Pride, 2011). In this sense, a way to overcome the identified obstacles and guarantee a common path towards sustainability and wealth needs should provide individuals a different land use, aimed at the use of new forms of tourism.

The territory should be understood in an educative sense, as a cultural tool which would provide a historical interpretation of its identity by means of gastronomic and oenologic heritage and landscape attractions. The identity becomes the primary component around which all the secondary components (services, infrastructures, business) have to be built and through which the territory, as a whole, will benefit in terms of positive externalities. In this direction, great opportunities can arise from initiatives already put in place but not yet fully exploited such as the Wine Routes, about 154 that involves about 1,450 municipalities and 3,300 farms (Osservatorio Nazionale Turismo, 2016b).

The Wine Routes were born in 1999 and can represent the tool through which wine lands and related productions may be divulged, marketed and consumed in the form of tourist facilities. They were made with the aim to promote the agricultural sector strongly in crisis making it more dynamic and differentiated. In the light of the experience of Wine Routes, Taste Routes were developed through which those territories, who identify themselves in a particular identity or product, join together in order to launch initiatives direct to promote, divulge and market the territories and their products. It is evident that such an initiative, to develop its potentiality, needs starting up a common and shared path towards sustainability and widespread wealth whose foundation is the organization and involvement of all the stakeholder potentially interested.

3. The need of local development strategy based on exploitation of the relationship between cultural tourism and rural tourism

The best experiences of integration between cultural tourism and rural tourism, in Italy, have been realized in the regions with a high level of tourist attractiveness and a good infrastructure endowment. However, it is useful to point out that the possibility to obtain good results in this sense was a result more of entrepreneurship of individuals than the existence of a strategic framework politically determined to support the development of the territorial systems through the exploitation of local resources.

A political strategy following that line is desirable. In fact, during the last global economic crisis (2008-2014), Italy lost about 9,3 points of GDP. In this framework, the results of 2015 and 2016 and the recent (April 2017) IMF outlook do not seem particularly encouraging; according to these valuations, after six years of recession, the GDP growth in Italy was 0.8% in 2015 and 0.9% in 2016 and it is expected to be 0,8% both in 2017 and in 2018: certainly too modest respect to what it would be necessary to give serious thought to a real economic recovery.

It follows that, in the present economic context, Italy has to give the priority to growth and in order to develop economic systems able to produce widespread well-being on a territorial level, it cannot do without the agriculture contribution. For this reason, it is believed that in Italy it is particularly pressing to define an economic political strategy aimed at sustaining recovery and economic growth on a local level. In this sense, the strategy we intend to submit is "win win" and its fulcrum is the interaction among growth factors present locally, aiming to achieve the results "in the context" with diffused shared benefits. For this purpose, the role of Public Institutions is to create the best condition helping the right development of territorial socio-economic systems, not only giving hand-outs. For example, Institutions should provide for the creation of a

territorial brand granted only to those who conform to specific production and supply rules and are willing to create a network developing territorial economy. In this sense, both entrepreneurs producing traditional products and entrepreneurs providing services using local resources should be awarded. One more example, Institutions should give special areas both for recovering and handing down from the elderly to the youth local old trades and set up launch window where local products can be sold through short chains.

Even tourism could help territoriality; in fact, Institutions should vouch for a coordinated tourism policy through the creation of special all inclusive holidays packages providing for tours to companies operating in luxury and quality so that, thanks to special offers, tourists could find it more attractive in terms of prices to buy locally products directly in the place of production rather than in their own countries.

In addition to the creation of a new tourist demand, this approach could also be useful for:

- the possibility for some companies to expedite the internationalization process;
- the opportunity to attract investments: the possibility tourism gives to travellers to keep in contact with products and services that are peculiar of a specific area could open the door to market expansion beyond the local border drumming up for specific products.

Institutions must focus on training too. We must not ignore that any beauty and quality offers of sale, especially set in a more complex systematic strategy, cannot be extemporized; but it requires adequate competences in lingual and cultural field, marketing and business strategy.

The development of “economic communities” established by Public Authorities and shared by interested parties is a fundamental point of this strategy. As above mentioned, Public Authorities should not grant funds but they should build up the best development conditions whose admittance is possible only for companies accepting obligations. The aim is to agree all the members of a territory making them working together in mutual cooperation in order to realize the above mentioned “economic communities”. This aim is not easy to achieve because of the individualism traditionally characterizing the Italian system of doing business in which entrepreneurs have poor inclination to share their strategies with others. In order to develop and implement the new development model, some preliminaries actions need to be considered to:

- 1) identify on a regional scale the valuable characteristics of potential areas that can be exploited in order to attract quality and high spending power tourism (culture, music, historical areas, environment, landscape, foodstuffs and handcraft);
- 2) hold a market survey aimed at estimating the development capacity of emerging markets, the productive capacity and the communication media (including social networks) potentially important to make these areas known to potential demand;
- 3) create the “economic communities” through communication campaigns and company networks;
- 4) include territorial marketing as part of the workers’ training programme;
- 5) make the access to territorial development measures on regional level a condition of aligning all the participants in order to share best practices and create partnerships;
- 6) define operational patterns useful to make easier developing systems oriented to produce and exploit quality and beauty;
- 7) make ex post evaluations of proposed actions (impact in terms of economic growth, occupation, etc.);
- 8) launch pilot projects in order to verify their feasibility allowing, according to the obtained results, a feedback able to translate into practices the tested proposal.

It follows that, in the preliminary stage, the beneficiaries of these actions should be identified in all the participants to “economic communities”, in the aftermath, that is after starting the new development model, the entire community will get the advantages as economic upturn.

Conclusions

Traditionally, Italy is one of the main tourist destinations worldwide. In the last fifteen years the development of the Italian tourism sector has been mainly supported by the external demand that, in that period increased up to match the internal demand. Foreign tourists travelling to Italy really prefer cultural holidays which are no longer aimed at visiting only the

main art heritage cities but they are tending to diversify by including visits in smaller destinations, in internal areas, in locations where the “culture” is represented by food and wine traditions.

The integration between traditional forms of cultural tourism and the most recent new forms of tourism (agritourism; food and wine tourism; tourism in small areas looking for tradition and landscape) goes in this direction. This ongoing process of integration of these different forms of tourism has not involved the Italian regions in the same way. It mainly spread in the part of the Country with a better infrastructural organization as well as more careful to the management and exploitation of local resources.

We must remember that this process is more linked to the entrepreneurship of individual entrepreneurs than to the existence of a specific political strategy aimed at favouring territorial development. It follows that, both the regions where the best results have been realized and the ones that failed to grasp the opportunities linked to the creation of a new tourist demand up to now need to work together in order to seize the opportunities to grow up especially in the current difficult economic period.

There is no doubt that, especially in these last years, the Italian socio-economic system has suffered the effect of globalization without fully catching its positive elements such as market opening and the growing demand of quality products from the new riches. The economic context asks for re-examining and reorganizing production systems paying serious attention to the key role of territorial resources and peculiarities, in order to operate on the globalized market without coming off worst.

Territorial characteristics represents, in this context, the historical and cultural heritage of a territory and are the principle elements of “identity” and “uniqueness”. Italy can work on a global market only by creating an economic development system turning around its “identity” that if well organised and supported by incisive and efficient political actions is able to arouse the market interest from certified goods and services arranged taking into consideration the need to compete on the basis of production costs to goods and services of a high level of quality, expressing territorial peculiarities. In this sense, the contribution deriving from the integration between cultural tourism and rural tourism may be decisive for the development of a new development territorial model based on the exploitation of local resources. To confirm this, suffice to say that the tourist and agri-food systems, together, account for more than 25% of Italian GDP and therefore they account for the bulk of Italy development potential.

If we share the need to adopt development models different by those used up to now, we agree that a real growth is possible only if it is the result of a development process founded on social inclusion and the creation of well-being widespread on a territorial level. In this context, the development model we theorise in this paper is based on the management of an integrated system founded on the creation of networked “economic communities” pursuing a common aim of economic and social development.

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