

Introduction

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The Tourism Industry Today

Tourism has experienced continued expansion and diversification over the last six decades, becoming one of the largest and fastest-growing sectors in the global economy, according to the United Nations World Tourism Organization (UNWTO, 2012). In spite of sporadic shocks, international tourist arrivals have recorded a virtually uninterrupted increase: from 277 million in 1980 to 1,138 million in 2014. The UNWTO estimates that international arrivals worldwide are expected to reach nearly 1.8 billion by the year 2030 (Tourism Towards 2030), resulting from an increase of 3.3 percent a year on average from 2010 to 2030. This shows how crucial the potential impact of tourism on individual destinations and companies is expected to be in the forthcoming years.

Many factors, such as (1) development of mass transportation and motorization; (2) introduction and implementation of information and communication technologies (ICTs) applications in the tourism sector; (3) world's gross domestic product (GDP) increase coupled with the growth of disposable income to be allocated to travel; (4) improvement of security and rights for tourists; and (5) the process of globalization, have significantly contributed to expand the market for tourism activities (Mariani and Baggio, 2012; Mariani et al., 2014a, 2014b).

The abovementioned and other factors vastly contribute to shaping a different institutional landscape and economic environment for a number of commercial players, such as hotels, airlines, destination management companies (DMCs), and travel intermediaries, such as travel agents and tour operators, conference venues, congress, convention and exhibition centers, convention bureaus, professional conference organizers (PCOs), and event planners. Moreover, firms in the tourism sector are confronted with increasing managerial challenges and have to deal with a competitive, turbulent, and fast-changing environment (Baggio et al., 2013; Mariani et al., 2013; Mariani et al., 2014b), wherein the adoption of new ICTs has contributed to modify the value chains of the supply side and generated a paradigm shift on the demand side (Buhalis and Law, 2008; Mariani et al., 2014b).

Purpose of This Book

The growing importance of tourism as a socioeconomic phenomenon, together with the understanding that even apparently profitable tourism firms and destinations endowed originally with the best natural and cultural assets cannot survive the escalating international competition without good managerial practices (Crouch, 2011), has provided a significant momentum for the development of tourism management as a discipline over the last thirty-five years.

In order to enrich the ongoing debate, the European Institute of Advanced Studies in Management (EIASM) organized the EIASM International Conference in Tourism Management and Tourism Related Issues. The first four editions of the conference proved very successful, with more than 250 papers submitted. After an accurate double-blind reviewing process, a very limited number of articles were accepted for presentation at the conference.

This book provides an overview of state-of-the-art research in tourism management, by including 12 chapters from a diverse group of international academics, namely some of the best papers that have been presented at the aforementioned conference (in particular the second and third editions). More specifically, the volume displays three key distinctive features.

First, it recognizes the relevance of tourism as a major economic driver, especially during periods of economic crisis.

Second, it contributes to the advancement of managerial knowledge and practice in the fast-growing tourism sector, by addressing a wide range of research questions with a specific focus on the role of performance and strategies at the destination and company level, and sustainability.

Third and last, the volume is the outcome of the collective intellectual efforts of a number of international scholars, with dissimilar geographical roots and backgrounds. They cultivate original research on tourism management from a variety of theoretical perspectives, by adopting different epistemological paradigms and research methodologies or techniques, and multiple methods (theory building, experimental, and inductive case-based inquiries).

The Book's Audience

This book provides a number of relevant perspectives within the tourism management field and brings about fresh empirical evidence of such fast-changing business dynamics as those pertaining to tourism activities. While the scientific body of literature mostly available in the form of journal articles on performance, strategies and sustainability is growing substantially, the books related to tourism have generally dealt with the aforementioned topics by relegating them to a few chapters in standard textbooks. This book instead is a collection of chapters, built upon robust research. As a consequence, it targets a wide range of readers: tourism scholars and

academics, practitioners and managers willing to explore new issues and topics in the tourism sector, and students at the undergraduate and graduate level in tourism programs. Courses on tourism management are likely to use most of the materials contained in this book as supplementary readings and to provide real examples from tourism around the globe. It is important to notice that the contributions discuss issues for a wide number of countries; so there are no special “geographic” limitations.

The Research Object: Performance, Strategies, and Sustainability

State-of-the-art research recognizes the importance of performance, strategies, and sustainability in tourism management at both the individual company and destination levels.

The importance of the aforementioned themes can be easily assessed by a simple Google search. For instance, a quick run using circumlocutions such as “tourism strategy” yields some 135 million results, and a search using terms such as “sustainable tourism” generates some 16 million results.

While the use of terms such as “strategy” and “performance” physiologically generates more results, as these words have a long and established use in the tourism sector at both the policymaking and individual business levels (very much like in many other sectors), the “sustainability” aspect has been gaining momentum only in the past two decades.

For many years, the prevailing paradigm in management studies has been focused on one aspect: any business in any industry should achieve a sustained competitive advantage, outperforming rivals (Porter, 1985) with the aim of maximizing its profits. Kim and Mauborgne (2005) more recently have argued that companies can succeed not by battling competitors, but rather by creating “blue oceans” of uncontested market space through innovation strategies. Unlike competition-based strategies assuming an industry’s structural conditions to be a given, and that firms are forced to compete within them like sharks in a “red ocean” (what strategy scholars term as the structuralist or environmental determinism view), they maintain that innovation strategies can create a leap in value for the company, its buyers, and its employees, while unlocking new demand and making the competition irrelevant.

Globalization processes intensify international competition between destinations and companies. At the destination level, competition is becoming more relevant (Karlsson et al., 2010) as new emerging destinations are undermining the market share of more established destinations (UNWTO, 2015) The same applies to tourism companies, which are confronted with an increasing number of rivals and a profound change in the intrinsic structure of the supply and demand side due to the massive incorporation of ICTs (Buhalis and Law, 2008; Mariani et al., 2014b).

More and more firms also realize that globalization generates new opportunities for collaboration among enterprises willing to compete internationally (Mariani and Kylanen, 2014; Mariani et al., 2014a). This is the reason why networks and inter-organizational relationships are becoming more relevant for small and medium co-located companies (Baggio et al., 2010). Additionally, tourism firms remain in acute interdependence and complementarity of offerings (Wang and Fesenmeier, 2007), which opens ways for collaborative value creation (Selin and Chavez, 1995). A tension between collaborative and competitive behaviors emerges, making strategies of tourism firms much more complex than those in broad management literature (Kylanen and Mariani, 2012; Wang, 2008). This tendency is particularly relevant in tourism destinations wherein competing tourism businesses have also to cooperate with the aim of marketing a tourism destination and strengthening its brand image in order to attract more customers in the area (Kylanen and Mariani, 2012; Kylanen and Rusko, 2011; Mariani and Kylanen, 2014; Wang and Fesenmeier, 2007). In this context the role played by Destination Management Organizations (DMOs) such as Convention and Visitors Bureaux (CVBs) is irreplaceable for a destination to increase its competitiveness (Pike and Page, 2014; Mariani et al., 2014a, 2014b).

Furthermore, in the second half of the 1980s the concept of sustainable development was introduced in *Our Common Future*, also known as the Brundtland Report, conducted by the World Commission on Environment and Development (1987: 41). The report defined sustainable development as “development that meets the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs. It contains within it two key concepts:

- the concept of needs, particularly essential needs of the world’s poor, to which overriding priority should be given, and
- the idea of limitations imposed by the state of technology and social organization on the environment’s ability to meet present and future needs”.

Since the Brundtland Report, a significant number of studies in social sciences have tackled the importance of environmental and ecological issues in different industries. It is however starting from the first half of the 1990s only that tourism studies have been conducted on the theme of sustainability (Bramwell and Lane, 1993), with the creation in 1993 of a scholarly outlet specifically dedicated to the subject: the *Journal of Sustainable Tourism*.

Later and starting from the second half of the 1990s, tourism management literature has recognized that economic actors (be they individuals or organizations) should be concerned not just with financial performance but also with social and environmental/ecological performance. This is the intrinsic meaning of the triple bottom line (TBL) framework introduced by John Elkington (1997). While the TBL perspective has not necessarily been referred to explicitly in the tourism management literature until 2000, the importance of striking a balance between financial, social, and environmental aspects has been always paramount in tourism studies (see Butler, 1999; Hunter, 1997; Lawton, 2009; Molina-Azorin et al. 2009).

Interestingly, more and more destinations and companies in the tourism sector are looking for a “green way” to manage their activities as they are becoming

increasingly aware of the fact that environmental performance is crucial, and it can be used also to gain a better reputation. Accordingly, environmental management systems (EMS) have been developed over time in many sectors (Alberti et al., 2000; Bansal and Hunter, 2003; Buysse and Verbeke, 2003; Gadenne et al., 2009; Henriques and Sadorsky, 1999; Wagner, 2007) and have been analyzed, also in an emerging stream of sustainable tourism literature (Blanco et al., 2009; Chan and Hawkins, 2010, 2012; Williams and Ponsford, 2009). Building on influential, early theoretical contributions on sustainable tourism (Butler, 1997; Hunter, 1997), scholars have been developing normative frameworks in order to help managers implement an approach balancing long-term performance with sustainability (Castellani, 2010; Farrell and Twining-Ward, 2005). Furthermore, detailed empirical evidence has been provided on the hypothesized tension between sustainability efforts and tourism firms' performance (Buckley, 2012; Pulido-Fernandez et al. 2015).

Structure of This Book

As the result of a joint effort of a group of international scholars, this book's chapters include original research on tourism management from a variety of theoretical perspectives and display different epistemological paradigms and mixed research methodologies and techniques.

The volume blends strategies, performance, and sustainability issues as intertwined aspects in a number of the cases analyzed. For instance, strategies at the tourism destination level can affect the strategies and performance of individual companies operating within the destination. Equally, the presence of a profitable hospitality and tourism industry can improve the competitiveness of the tourism destination. Moreover, ecological sustainability can be adopted by tourism companies and destinations as a strategy to differentiate their offer. A competitive advantage can thus be achieved because tourist markets interested in sustainable tourism products/services/destinations might be willing to opt for sustainable products/services/destinations and pay a premium price for them. This demonstrates how interlinked all these concepts are and how they influence each other.

The first eight chapters analyze strategies and performance (and their multiple and complex relationships) without necessarily explicitly addressing the environmental dimension of sustainability but focusing on sustained competitiveness. The last four chapters embrace a wider definition of sustainability by explicitly illustrating and assessing the environmental dimension and its impact on sustained competitiveness.

We briefly describe the contents of the chapters as follows.

Chapter 1, "The Separation of the Naïve from the Reevaluated Destination Image by Using Benefit Segmentation and the Analysis of the Resulting Perceptions," by Ourania Vitouladiti, contributes to the increasing body of research on the tourism destination image (TDI), by separating and comparing the naive image, that is, the destination image held by tourists before the trip, with the reevaluated image, that is, the destination image held by tourists upon completion of the trip. The

chapter suggests that the visit affects image perception among and within the tourist segments, which are structured according to the benefits the tourists sought. The cognitive characteristics appear to be affected in a negative way and this generates guidelines for the strategy and performance of the destination, especially in terms of destination marketing and investment priorities.

The objective of chapter 2, "Forecasting Tourism Flows from the Russian Federation into Mediterranean Countries," by Kirill Furmanov, Olga Balaeva, and Marina Predvoditeleva, is to investigate the trends in outbound tourism from the Russian Federation to the countries of the Mediterranean region. After discussing a number of forecasting quantitative analysis techniques, the authors provide short-term forecasts of Russian travelers' tourism flows to Mediterranean countries, namely Cyprus, Egypt, France, Greece, Israel, Italy, Spain, Tunisia, and Turkey. The authors suggest that the idea of jointly modeling tourism flows to different destinations might have a wide range of implications and should be tested on data from other destinations and countries of origin. The results may be used not only for forecasting purposes but also to provide insights into the processes that drive tourism demand, for example, studying the substitution effects between destinations. This aspect has potential in order for individual destinations to craft better destination marketing strategies and increase their performance in terms of tourist arrivals and tourism expenditure.

Chapter 3, "Entrepreneurship and the Discovery and Exploitation of Business Opportunities: Empirical Evidence from the Malawian Tourism Sector," by Aravind Krishnan, investigates how entrepreneurs from the Malawian tourism sector discover and exploit business opportunities. After recognizing that Malawi, like other sub-Saharan African countries, displays a difficult business environment and poor promotional and marketing efforts, the chapter examines the role and importance of prior experience and business networks in the opportunity development process. Interestingly, it seems that the entrepreneurial team might have a negative impact on a new venture's prospects and performance by leaving entrepreneurs to navigate the troubled waters of the external environment alone: indeed after helping set up firms, several members of the entrepreneurial team left to create their own firms or pursue personal interests.

Chapter 4, "Saint Petersburg as a Tourist Destination: Searching for the Gastronomic Brand," by Valery Gordin and Julia Trabskaya, analyzes gastronomy as one of the components of destination brands. The authors examine the possibility for a territory that lacks its own strongly defined cuisine to create a gastronomic brand in order to increase its appeal as well as performance in terms of inbound tourism flows. The research was conducted in St. Petersburg, Russia, and illustrates how this location can serve as a test case for creating a gastronomic brand in a city that lacks its own pronounced cuisine or typical local food products. The results of the research show that a possible method of building a gastronomic brand for such a destination is to build on its cultural and historical heritage and assets.

Chapter 5, "Internal Features and Agglomeration Externalities for the Hotels' Competitiveness in Emilia Romagna," by Cristina Bernini and Andrea Guizzardi, investigates to what extent hotels' productivity and efficiency are affected by internal firm characteristics and agglomeration externalities related to the municipality

in which the hotel operates. The authors estimate a stochastic frontier model in which localization and urbanization indicators are introduced in both the production frontier and the inefficiency model. As a case study, a large sample of hotels operating in Emilia Romagna, Italy, is considered. The results provide support for positive agglomeration externalities on both the production frontier and on technical inefficiency. In particular, inefficiency is determined to be related primarily to the tourism product offered by the destination, the presence of large enterprises, and the concentration of accommodation activities, whereas no urbanization diseconomies have been detected.

Chapter 6, "Tourism Destination Competitiveness and Firm Performance through a Financial Crisis: An Empirical Analysis of the Italian Hotel Industry," by Lorenzo Dal Maso, Giovanni Liberatore, and Marco Fazzini, aims to investigate whether Italian regional tourism destination competitiveness affects the performance, that is return on assets (ROA), return on sales (ROS), and earnings before interest, taxes, depreciation, and amortization (EBITDA) margin of firms operating in the Italian hospitality industry. In this study, the relationship between a tourism competitiveness index composed of 18 pillars and corporate performance indicators, before and after the outbreak of the financial crisis of the year 2007 is investigated. The findings reveal that there is a relation between hotels' profitability ratios and regional competitiveness; this is also true during an economic downturn. However, the negative coefficient reported by the return on assets reveals that managers are not able to use company assets efficiently to generate profit during crisis periods. This is mainly due to hotel managers' price discount policies. In fact, the higher the competitiveness of a destination, the higher the competition resulting in price wars and lower level of profitability for hotels regardless of the change in local destination competitiveness. Nevertheless, the results support the need for local authorities to increase local competitiveness to generate long-term destination attractiveness.

Chapter 7, "The Role of Institutions in Interorganizational Collaboration within Tourism Regions: The Case of Poland," by Katarzyna Czernek and Wojciech Czakon, identifies those tourism collaboration barriers that resulted from maladjustment of formal and informal institutions in Poland together with its transition from a communist to a market economy in the early 1990s. By leveraging the new institutional economics' framework, the chapter further explains development problems in post-Communist transition countries where informal institutions lag behind the formal ones. The empirical study focuses on collaboration strategies in a tourist region comprising five municipalities located in the south of Poland: Szczyrk, Wisła, Ustroń, Brenna, and Istebna.

Chapter 8, "The Role of Partnerships in Staging Tourist Experiences: Evidence from a Festival," by Marcello M. Mariani, elaborates on the concept of experience economy by providing insights on the relevance of partnerships between DMOs in order to stage memorable tourism experiences. More specifically, it describes how a cooperative venture including spatially co-located Italian DMOs has led to the development of a brand-new tourism product able to unify and corroborate the image of a wider destination. The case analysis focuses on the Pink Night festival, a thematic event conjointly organized and promoted by municipal DMOs located in

one of the most popular Italian coastal destinations: the Riviera di Romagna. The chapter enriches traditional tourism experience frameworks by suggesting that the partnerships and collaborating strategies between DMOs can empower the absorptive capability of the tourist experience, thus contributing to reinforce the entertainment and educational aspects of the tourist experience itself. Last but not least, the chapter links the experience staged by a set of destinations to their comprehensive image.

Chapter 9, “Toward a Sustainable Tourism,” by Malgorzata Ogonowska and Dominique Torre, reviews in a novel way the work on sustainable tourism and illustrates empirical examples in a brand new research framework. Building on the observation that tourism sustainability can be adopted by tourism companies and destinations as a strategy to vertically differentiate their offer, the chapter suggests that the sustainable tourism literature might probably split in future years into two different streams. The first could consider the dynamics of the development of sustainability in the supply of tourism services. These dynamics involve two segments—one offering traditional services, and the other offering sustainable services—and two types of clients. With the increase in size of the second segment, the dynamics will change into one pooling offer of services able to fulfill sustainability requirements and maintain the quality of traditional offers. The second direction will develop around the redefinition of the actors involved in the tourism industry.

In chapter 10, “Sustainable Tourism Development through Knowledge Transfer,” by Lucie Petrickova and Jana Kalabisova, attention is devoted to innovation vouchers. Innovation vouchers are aimed at small and medium enterprises (SMEs) looking to buy output from knowledge providers. It enables them to focus on their own entrepreneurial activities while research organizations supply the necessary knowledge for business innovation. Cooperation strategies based on such an approach subsequently strengthen their competitiveness. In addition, this tool has a variety of other benefits, such as the elimination of barriers between academic and business spheres. This type of cooperation is supported by the public sector at the regional level in the Czech Republic. The chapter presents the results of such a project, supported by the Business Development Agency of the Karlovy Vary Region. The aim of the project was to carry out an internal and external analysis of an examined provider of accommodation services and to propose a suitable strategy based on innovation of product, process, and services with respect to the long-term goal of the provider—increasing number of guests during the low season. The chapter gives a detailed description of the knowledge transfer from the Institute of Hospitality Management in Prague, acting as a knowledge provider, to a provider of accommodation services representing the business sector. A proposal for the innovation process is devised as a result of the knowledge transfer.

Chapter 11, “Entrepreneur’s Experiences, Motivations, and Sustainability of Tourism,” by Ornella Papaluca and Mario Tani, analyzes seven tour operators, three socially oriented and four traditional ones, selected from the members of the Italian Association of Responsible Tourism. The aim is to look at the influences that different motivations and different past experiences can have on the factors considered by these operators in creating their travel packages. The findings show that when a player has a stronger social orientation as the main driver of starting his enterprise, he will try as well to create stable relationships with local area

stakeholders. Cooperating year after year can support a sustainable development process in the local area, taking into account not only individual goals but those of all stakeholders. However, even the entrepreneurs with a motivation tightly linked to sustainable development are usually unable to effectively engage a broad set of stakeholders in their product design phase. The analyzed cases show that those players who have started up their enterprises after some experience in social activities or in the third sectors do try to understand the consequences of their actions. However, they do not actively monitor sustainability while designing the bundle of services while the others try to include sustainability among the things they are factoring in the design phase. Focusing on these operators without these previous experience, we find that an approach to sustainability does not manifest in the control phase but is present in the design phase.

Chapter 12, “The Adoption of Environmental Management Systems by Shelters” by Sophie Gorgemans and Josefina Murillo-Luna, focuses on high-mountain shelters and set out two objectives. First, it explores the determinants of environmental management systems (EMS) implementation and certification and the environmental impact of shelter activity. Second, and after illustrating some experiences undertaken in Europe in this regard, the authors focus on the Spanish case to empirically investigate two aspects with opposite effects on this decision: the motivations that could serve as a stimulus for implementing environmental practices in shelters and the barriers or obstacles that could hinder these efforts. The findings show that although the implementation and certification of EMSs is a new subject for Spanish shelters the pioneer Aragonese shelters show an active commitment to environmental management, as is evident from the practices that they have already adopted to protect the natural environment. They show a proactive approach trying to meet the demands and requirements of a broader group of stakeholders, instead of a reactive approach that merely seeks compliance with environmental legislation and avoidance of penalties. As far as barriers are concerned, the first notable result is that some of the barriers that theoretical literature recognizes do not seem to represent an obstacle for the adoption of environmental practices by shelters, especially the internal barriers related to human resources and the external barriers arising due to the lack of guidance and certifiers or verifiers. It could explain the willingness of shelter guards to implement EMSs. Among the internal barriers, the high cost of investment associated with the implementation of EMSs in terms of financial resources is remarkable. It confers a high opportunity cost to EMS investment decisions, and in the opinion of the shelter guards there are other activities that require more immediate attention. With regard to external barriers, the shelter guards agree on the excessive bureaucracy and high cost associated with the implementation and certification process, in addition to the excessive time required.

Conclusion or Further Research Agenda?

Through the study of a variety of cases, situations, and contexts described and discussed in the book, several common themes emerge. The first one is the importance

for any tourism destination (be it a country, a region, or a municipality) and any tourism company to leverage managerial and marketing strategies and tools that might enable them to cultivate and maintain a sustained competitive advantage in the current economic environment. This has been termed by the strategy management scholar Richard D'Aveni as "hypercompetitive," (that is an environment where a competitive advantage is threatened constantly over time (D'Aveni, 1994).

Second, performance, which is a multifaceted construct, cannot be confined just to the economic dimension but should also incorporate the environmental dimension. In a world where natural and environmental resources are subject to progressive and sometimes irreversible consumption and deterioration, any industry, and tourism in particular, cannot overlook ecological issues. The recognition that it is not possible to push for growth at all costs anymore is paramount, especially in the tourism sector, and it is driving companies to embrace sustainability, go green, and adopt EMSs.

Last, the effectiveness of management, marketing, and development strategies and tactics at both the tourism destination and individual company level should rely on sound cooperation between the public and private stakeholders within a destination and across destinations. Public sector and industry stakeholders as well as the education sector must pool minds, efforts, and financial and non financial resources and recognize the relevance of industry leaders in order for tourism destinations and companies to achieve higher competitiveness and improve the financial, social, and environmental performance of the destination.

Many of the aforementioned themes need more investigation, and this book provides a first crucial step in contributing to lay down a challenging research agenda for tourism management studies.

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