

CULTURAL TOURISM AND WELL-BEING OF THE LOCAL POPULATION IN ITALY

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Abstract

Italy still retains a prominent role in international tourism, but finds it increasingly difficult to keep pace with the speed of growth in the sector and tends to lose its market share to its traditional European competitors, showing an evident loss of competitiveness. The importance of the development of tourism has often been erroneously overlooked in discussions of the Italian economic recovery. This paper sets out to explore the weaknesses and potential of Italy's tourism system in order to determine ways in which governments and community can benefit from tourism and avoid its negative impacts. Italy boasts a high number of excellent cultural and natural assets, also if these advantages need to be better exploited. Cultural heritage is undervalued both in terms of tourism (number of visitors) and economically (revenue per tourist) with respect to all international benchmarks. A better understanding local government's role in enhancing cultural and sustainable tourism is necessary. A tourist area able to manage its resources efficiently and effectively is also a territory able to meet the well-being of the local population. The destination management, that is a culture of tourism, is a prerequisite to join common goals.

Keywords: Cultural Tourism, Destination Competitiveness, Italy, Local Well-being.

1. INTRODUCTION

Tourism is a vital element of the world economy. It provides employment, tax revenues and development incentives to growing numbers of regional and local economies (Hall and Lew, 2009). Tourism is also an expression of a relevant potential in terms of communication and cultural integration, two important elements in a world that is ever more global. Therefore tourism is a way of bringing people together and of broadening people's cultural horizons.

Italy was the top international tourist destination in the world until the beginning of the 80s, but then began a gradual descent in the ranking, even if Italy remains one of the most visited tourist destinations in the world.

Therefore the purpose of the research is to illustrate how Italian destination can address the challenges to the sector's growth, in order to regain former glory and contribute wellbeing of citizens. The investigation here presented uses an approach predominantly conceptual and qualitative. To support the reasoning, the research makes use of specific literature and of the main statistical sources

acknowledged as being the most reliable nationally and internationally. The research, after a review of literature on “destination competitiveness”, illustrates the main weaknesses of Italian destination and the challenges that central and local governments will face in the near future. Because of their strategic nature, Italian cultural tourism is analysed in particular depth. Italy boasts a high number of excellent cultural and natural assets, also if these advantages need to be better exploited. Finally, the most crucial issues regarding the competitiveness of Italian tourism are summarised.

2. LITERATURE REVIEW ON DESTINATION COMPETITIVENESS

Many are the models elaborated by literature in order to understanding and to managing the multiple and complex factors which influence competitiveness of tourism destination. Tourism destination can be defined as “an amalgam of individual products and experience opportunities that combine to form a total experience of the area visited” (Murphy, Pritchard and Smith, 2000, p. 44). Destination competitiveness has been defined as the ability of a destination to maintain its market position and share and/or to improve upon them through time (d’Hautesserre, 2000). Hassan defines competitiveness as “the destination’s ability to create and integrate value-added products that sustain its resources while maintaining market position relative to competitors” (Hassan, 2000, p. 239). According to another definition (Chon and Meyer, 1995, p. 229), “destination competitiveness is the degree to which it can, under free and fair market conditions, produce services that meet the taste of international markets while simultaneously expanding the real income of its employees (citizens)”.

The conceptual model of destination competitiveness is strictly linked to destination management, a topic developed by the literature especially since the late 1990s. The increasing scientific focus for destination management has been determined by the continuous and growing complexity of the tourist market that has made both the demand and the offer more dynamic and articulated. The mostly dealt issue in this literature concerns the key factors and coordination among the different players of the system in order to guarantee the effectiveness and the efficiency of the destination.

Many of these studies have identified fundamental elements of destination competitiveness (Kozak and Baloglu, 2011).

Buhalis (2000) explains that destination competitiveness can be improved through product development, distribution channels, promotion and communication and especially through policies of pricing.

Heath (2002) asserts that “the key success drivers” in a destination's competitiveness mainly rotate around the establishment of a shared vision and inspirational leadership, clear guiding values and

principles, and strategic emphasis on the people factor. People factor includes different crucial components, such as political will, entrepreneurship, community empowerment and human resources development.

Ritchie and Crouch (2003) recognise that destination competitiveness is based upon a destination's resource endowments (comparative advantage) as well as its capacity to deploy resources (competitive advantage). Their model of these researchers identifies 36 destination competitiveness attributes of competitiveness, grouped into five main factors: core resources and attractors, supporting factors and resources, destination policy, planning and development, destination management, and qualifying and amplifying determinants. The great merit of their conceptual model is to emphasize that the most competitive destination for tourists is that which most effectively creates sustainable well-being for its residents.

According to Dwyer and Kim (2003), the competitiveness destination depends on four main variables: resources, destination management, demand and situational conditions. All these four factors influence destination competitiveness and socio-economic prosperity. The model explicitly recognises that destination competitiveness is not an ultimate end of policy making but is an intermediate goal towards the objective of regional or national economic prosperity.

The models mentioned above underline the importance of managing tourism in the light of local resident's expectations and advantages. The analysis of the main international trends suggests the cultural tourism as direction that Italy would pursuit to guarantee a recovery of tourism competitiveness and an improvement of local well-being.

3. WEAKNESSES OF ITALIAN DESTINATION

During the 1990s and until the start of the new millennium, Italy ranked fourth worldwide. An examination of the world's top tourism destinations reveals that in 2010 Italy ranked fifth in terms of international arrivals (43,626 million) after France, the United States, China and Spain. Italy also ranks fifth on international tourism receipts (38,786 trillion dollars) after the United States, Spain, France and China (UNWTO, 2011, p. 6).

The Italian tourism industry displays some structural and specific weaknesses, such as the scarce development of tourism in the South of the country, the undervaluation of tourism flows linked to second homes, partial and fragmented promotion, the hiring of unqualified labour force (Angeloni, 2012). Each of these aspects deserves some comment.

One historical issue concerns the scarce development of tourism in the South of the country which, despite its historical beauties, presents a poorly diversified supply, and mainly takes the form of seaside resorts frequented for the most part by Italians. Some Italian destinations are totally over-run by tourists due to their popularity, while other areas remain virtually unknown. Many local heritage resources (environmental and cultural) are under-utilised or indeed wasted in the South. There is a strong geographical concentration of tourists in some regions. In 2010, 71.5% of foreign attendance was recorded in 5 regions: Veneto, Trentino Alto-Adige, Lazio, Tuscany, Lombardy, to the detriment of the South. In 2010 only 18% of total tourists visited the South. By analysing the data relative to foreigners, foreign arrivals to the South were just 11.3%. These figures are very worrying, especially considering that the South has three-quarters of the Italian coast and invaluable assets of historical and cultural significance.

A second issue of Italian destination management is the undervaluation of tourism flows linked to second homes. These flows are often unknown and unjustly overlooked by tourism policymakers. According to the Italian National Institute of Statistics (Istituto Nazionale di Statistica, ISTAT, 2011), domestic and inbound tourists spent about 375 million nights in collective accommodation (210 million are the nights spent by domestic tourists and 165 million those spent by non-resident tourists); but if one considers the phenomenon of holiday homes (about 670 million), the final actual figure stands at 1.045 billion. This final figure is the one that should be used to formulate tourism policies, because it has numerous impacts: increasing resource consumption, pollution, traffic, and demand for public and private services. If local governments do not have an accurate perception of the tourism phenomenon, first of all they end up having a vision of the influence tourism has on the local economy. Secondly, they do not plan and provide adequate public services and infrastructure to match the real size of tourist demand.

Another crucial issue for the further development of the sector is the scarcity of staff with specific skills and expertise for each product and tourism experience. Despite recent increases in the qualifications of people working in the sector (from 2005 to 2009, the hiring of people with a university education has doubled), Italian tourism firms still employ a very low number of university graduates (only 2.2% of new hiring in 2009, a rate 5 times lower than in industry and services) and a very large number of people with no specific education required (37% of new hiring in 2009) (OECD, 2011, p. 138).

The specific weaknesses identified above are not sufficient to understand the difficulties facing the sector. In fact, it is equally important to recognise other defects which, although they concern the

system in general, do much damage to tourism too. In particular, it is right to point out three aggravating circumstances: uncontrolled urbanisation, excessive bureaucracy and tax evasion.

Urban sprawl is the result of environmental aggression that has marred the landscape without respecting the laws of nature or what constitutes beautiful surroundings. Also exceptional or natural events like earthquakes, floods landslides, turn out to be even more dangerous and disastrous because of careless (and in some cases illegal) urban development and inappropriate building. Italy has erred through over-construction and ill-planned development, which has resulted in excessive urbanisation of its coast. "In Italy over 43% of the coastline is completely urbanised, 28% is partly urbanised and less than 29% is still free of construction. There are only six stretches of coast over 20 km long that are free of construction and only 33 stretches between 10 and 20 km long without any construction" (Hall, 2006, p. 147). It is easy to imagine the severe stress suffered by the coastal ecosystem: damage to landscapes, soil erosion, endangered species, expansion of waste discharges and pollution into the sea.

Another general problem is bureaucracy, one of the major obstacles to all businesses, including tourism. The complexity of the Italian regulatory framework is not conducive to business. Red tape or administrative, judicial and fiscal bonds hinder foreign direct investment. The time and cost required for setting up a business, the slowness of the processes, the lack of transparency of rules, the inefficiency of public administration, but also corruption scandals and the phenomenon of patronage move foreign investors away from Italy and above all prevent Italian firms from a healthy and regular development.

Finally, the competitiveness of the tourism sector is negatively affected by rampant tax evasion. This is a very serious issue, both because it leads to an underestimation of tourism turnover, and because it causes unfair competition between operators who, like the tax dodgers, do not pay taxes and social security contributions, and consequently have a smaller cost structure. To compensate for this loss of revenue and to ensure coverage of his expenses, the Italian state is forced to apply very high levels of taxation to its citizens and businesses.

Therefore, also in the light of the negative aspects mentioned above, it is not surprising that Italy is often accused of being a very expensive country to visit with a high quality-to-price ratio, especially if compared to other countries. This phenomenon is the result of a number of factors: the application of VAT on tourism services at rates of 10 or 21%, the recent introduction of a visitors' tax (at the discretion of the municipalities), the high costs of labour and utilities (especially electricity, gas and petrol), and the extreme seasonality, which requires operators to charge prices in peak season to compensate them for the lack of revenue in the remaining months of the year.

However, globalisation and Information Communication Technologies (ICTs) have increased the level of competition on the supply side and has increased the level of knowledge and information on the demand side (Smeral, 1998, p. 373). In this scenario Italy cannot ignore is the high price elasticity of tourism demand. Over all in marine segment, “destinations such as Turkey, Cyprus and Greece with their cheaper labor and production costs have an advantage over Spain, Italy and France” (Kozak and Baloglu, 2011, p. 133). As argued by Kozak and Baloglu (2011, p. 137), “one destination might have the potential to serve a variety of products and services, but it might need to focus on improving a specific one(s) which could probably make itself distinctive from other counterparts. An effective positioning strategy may provide competitive advantage to a destination trying to attract more tourists or longer-stay tourists”. In Porter’s terms (1980), when the cost leadership is not a realistic objective for gaining competitiveness, a destination must point to other two organizational strategies: differentiation strategy or focus strategy. To achieve these strategic alternatives, Italy should focus on cultural tourism.

4. CULTURAL TOURISM

Although seaside tourism is one of the most important sectors for Italy, it is now a mature segment, that is subject to the competitive pressures of Mediterranean countries, both traditional and emerging, due to their offer extremely aggressive. Conversely, art and culture play (and will increasingly play) an important role for the Italian destination.

It is difficult to find another country in Europe which offers three famous cities with the international appeal of Rome, Florence and Venice. Even in 2012, Italy ranks first in the Country Brand Index for attractiveness linked to “heritage and culture” but ranks only fifteenth for country brand on the whole (FutureBrand, 2012). Italy is universally recognised as one of the most beautiful countries as regards landscape and artistic-cultural heritage. The country boasts 7,400 km of coastline (68% of which can be used for bathing), 24 national parks and 27 protected marine areas. Italy has more cultural sites inscribed on the World Heritage List than any other country: 44 Italian cultural sites and 3 natural sites have been recognised by UNESCO (United Nations Organization for Education, Science and Culture). In addition, Italy has a rich cultural heritage property of touristic interest, as shown in the following table (Table 1).

This list underlines the richness and variety that the visitor can encounter in Italy. Italian destination is very much appreciated also for its fashion and culinary excellence, with over 80,000 firms operating in the fashion industry alone. Unfortunately, Italy, with some exceptions, has not been able to exploit this wealth economically and has failed to meet the challenge of globalization. Cultural tourism is still a large

part of Italian tourism market, but in recent years the market share represented by this segment has decreased. In 2008 the cities in particular were a popular tourist destination for 38.2% of foreigners and for 22.3% of Italians. In 2011 the percentages drop respectively to 32.8% and to 19.5% (Grossi, 2012).

TABLE 1 - BREAKDOWN OF CULTURAL HERITAGE OF TOURISTIC INTEREST

Churches and Abbeys	7,282
Palaces and Residences	4,109
Castles and Fortifications	2,054
Monuments of antiquity	1,034
Historic gardens	491
Museums	4,340
Libraries	12,375
Places of entertainment	34,000

Source: TCI Research Department (2003), Ministry of Cultural Heritage and Activities (2011) and Grossi (2012)

The strong relationship between tourism and culture would induce Italian policy makers to take more advantage of the tangible and intangible cultural assets of the country, in order to attract larger number of tourists. As argued by Var and Gunn (2002, p. 1), if tourism is to achieve a greater economic impact, it must also strive towards goals of enhanced visitor satisfaction, community integration, and above all, greater resource protection.

At a time when globalisation poses a risk of greater cultural standardisation, it is important for a country to preserve its own identity, which is a key factor also for touristic competitiveness. "Ensuring the greatest possible cultural diversity is not only necessary for mankind's well-being, it is also a prerequisite for economic success in tourism. Meeting the objective in this age of globalisation requires taking a fresh look at the traditional concept of cultural identity" (Keller, 2002, p. 11). Indeed, "culture is becoming more and more a factor of urban regeneration, and also more involved in interurban competition among those cities that see cultural tourism as a means to differentiate themselves and to attract new visitors and prospective residents" (Herrero et al., 2007, p. 304). Italian cultural heritage needs to be protected, strengthened, restored and made safe. Such actions of course require the involvement of all parties concerned: public institutions, private companies, local governments, and each individual citizen. Preventive actions are as indispensable as recovery and restoration actions for enhancing the unique historical-architectural-monument heritage, which has a critical value for cultural tourism.

According to some scholars, it is possible to speak of cultural tourism when culture is "one" motivating factor in the travel experience, even if culture is not the primary but only the secondary or just an occasional motivator (McKercher and Du Cros, 2002). This definition, already very wide, becomes even more extensive because of the gradual expansion of the notion of "culture", perceived as a whole way of life. "This means that culture is about the past and traditions (e.g. history and heritage), creative

expression (e.g. works of art, performances) and also about people's way of living, their customs and their habits" (Smith, 2009, p. 1). The idea and the concept of cultural heritage are changing: in the past, cultural resources were linked to heritage sites and monuments visited by tourists. During the last few years, cultural resources have spread out, embracing immaterial elements of culture, as well as recognition of community identity, valuation of diversity, and the lifestyle of local people. As culture is a dynamic and constantly-changing concept, it is equally difficult to define the boundaries of cultural tourism, which recently has seen expanded its meaning. If for the whole of the 1980s the link between culture and tourism was based on material aspects (monuments, landscapes, natural resources like sun, sea and sand), gradually the definition of cultural tourism widened to include performing arts, events, tastes, gastronomy, creative activities and the intangible heritage of destination (Hughes, 2000; Richards, 2001, 2007, 2011; Richards and Wilson, 2006). Through a conceptual definition, Richards (2001, p. 7) states that cultural tourism covers "not just the consumption of the cultural products of the past, but also of contemporary culture or the way of life of a people or region. Cultural tourism can therefore be seen as covering both heritage tourism (related to artefacts of the past) and art tourism (related to contemporary cultural production)". Smith (2009, p. 17) defines cultural tourism as "passive, active and interactive engagement with culture(s) and communities, whereby the visitor gains new experiences of an educational, creative and/or entertaining nature". Therefore, today cultural tourism includes many popular cultural attractions, like sport, living heritage (McKercher, Ho and du Cros, 2004), and the "everyday life" of "local" communities (Howie, 2000). Compared to the past, this definition highlights the growing importance of a desire on the part of tourists for more interactive and experiential activities. Tourists are demonstrating a growing desire to connect with local people and feel more in touch with local communities. This kind of approach is called also "creative tourism". Unlike traditional cultural tourism, creative tourism provides visitors with the opportunity to connect intimately with local people, to learn new skills, creating something to bring home like souvenirs (for example, pictures, handicrafts or food items). Florida (2005, p. 35) also specifies that people are interested not in places with physical attractions, but rather in the community where they can have high-quality experiences, by the fact that they are exposing themselves to diversity of all kinds. So, intangible factors like atmosphere and quality of life increasingly become attractiveness drivers not only for choices of residence, but also of travel.

The transformation of the cultural resources in tourism factors requires a change of approach, overcoming the statement under which the tourism sector is presented to visitors, who are seen as users or customers, while the cultural sector is something more directed towards residents, who are seen as citizens. Embracing this narrow view means not to understand the strong synergies and the

mutual ties between the two sectors. Only an integration of the two sectors can prevent tourism from damaging cultural resources and actually allow cultural resources to indeed grow through tourism. In fact, on the one hand, tourism represents an important source of income for supporting and strengthening cultural heritage. On the other hand, the cultural development of a territory in many cases becomes central to tourists' decisions on whether to visit it, but also for residents to decide whether to live there. In fact, culture is the major factor in the attractiveness of most destinations, not only in terms of tourism, but also in attracting residents and inward investment (OECD, 2009, p. 19). This convergence of expectations is very important, and should defeat the fear of residents from the negative effects of tourism. In fact, cultural tourists are often people with a genuine interest in the culture of the places, and consequently they are better able to respect the context they visit, in accordance with the principles of sustainable tourism.

Today people look for deeper and more satisfying experiences where they can actually participate and also feel part of the community they are visiting. The Italian district, as specialised areas in typical and particular products (pottery, ceramics, glassware, embroidery, textiles, leather and other handicrafts), can meet these new needs. Also gastronomy and wine, as a depositary of deeply rooted traditions handed down from generation to generation, can well respond to the demands of this type of tourism. Equally exhibitions can be regarded as one of the most successful ways of attracting tourists, above all because temporary and travelling exhibitions are the best mirror of the tastes of globalized society (Boo and Busser, 2006; Getz, 2007, 2008). In this regard, Italy should also promote and sponsor more its many well-known events: the Festival of Literature in Mantua, the Festival of Economics in Trento, the Festival of Spirituality in Turin, the Journalism Festival in Perugia, the Festival of Philosophy in Modena-Carpi-Sassuolo, the Science Festival of Genoa, and the Biblical Festival of Vicenza. Recently Italy discovered the importance of business museums to promote local areas and create events. For instance in Florence, where famous firms are well established (Ferragamo, Piaggio, Alinari etc.), it has been decided to create a platform to give visibility to museum sites and events of every firm, so as to attract tourist flows. These firms, with their history, are an important cultural source. Florence is the capital of big historical trademarks and the creation of network is a way of drawing more attention to all these investments. Consequently, some specific creative industries, most notably film, fashion and design, in turn provide the basis for new tourism products in cities (Richards, 2011, pp. 1236-1237).

If creative tourism is based on the active participation of travellers in the culture of the host community, through interactive workshops and informal learning experiences, the openness of local people is a crucial aspect (Wurzburger et al., 2010). In fact, residents are the best connoisseurs, makers and interpreters of the local culture, and therefore the best equipped to teach and to make it known. It is

easy to deduce that, thanks to this broader view of cultural tourism, there can be no conflict or rivalry between policies for tourists and policies for citizens, because cultural tourist and citizens are people with similar needs. The most important policy implication is that the initiatives of cultural tourism are tools through which government can not only attract visitors, but also retain residents, improving the quality of life of both. In other words, often, policies that are beneficial for residents are also attractive to visitors, and vice versa (OECD, 2009, p. 70).

To identify their common interests and to derive the maximum benefits from cultural tourism, some conditions are required: a dialogue between national and local governments for development long-term strategies, a partnership between commercial and voluntary figures, an informed participating of local communities. Local communities have to learn to work together to develop cultural products for tourism rather than competing with one another. Citizenship can achieve more positive attitudes towards tourism, only if first educated to recognize the value of their heritage and the potential financial benefits. Secondly, citizenship must be placed in a position to empower and control tourism development by an active and aware involvement. Particularly, residents have to become aware of the positive impacts of tourism regarding quality of life from various points of view: higher employment, better restaurant quality, more efficient public transport, new or improved facilities for health, sports and recreation, beautification of public spaces, opportunities to meet interesting people and to improve foreign language skills, development positive environmental values (Gössling, 2002). Obviously, local communities must be given the right to participate in the decision-making about tourism development where they live (Di Foggia. and Lazzarotti, 2012). On the contrary, “tourism developments that alienate locals from their own community are likely to cause resentment and threaten the quality of life for everyone” (Hall and Lew, 2009, p. 182). As Ritchie (1993, p. 379) remembers, “residents of communities and regions affected by tourism are demanding to be involved in the decisions affecting their development”.

The traditional problem of Italy is that tourism has never been considered as an investment to focus on for the development of the country. Thus the lack of culture of tourism, that is a lack of destination management (De Carlo, 2008, p. 53), explains the loss of competitiveness in face to globalization.

To defend, promote, support and capitalize the national heritage, it is necessary to raise awareness among local authorities, whose job it is to carefully and sustainably manage their local treasures, using more advanced models of public governance. In Italy, after the constitutional amendment of 2001, Regions have obtained an exclusive legislative power in tourism matter. However, tourism is a “glocal” industry, which competes internationally with a national offer, and crucially requires a strong and efficient coordination between Central Government and Regions and Local Administrations. A design of

efficient collaboration between State and Autonomous Regions requires clarifying tourism matters for which the National Government must be responsible (for example Italy's strategy on international tourism) and those for which the Regions retain independence (for instance promotion and development of local offer). But, since tourism is a cross-sector, it is important to define roles and responsibility, also in terms of governance, not only between State and Regions, but also between Provinces and Municipalities with reference to the actions of management, communication and promotional marketing of local destinations. In an era increasingly inspired to cooperative federalism, local authorities and associations must be involved in building and enhancing a touristic offer that not only can best bridge the gap with international competitors, but also improve the quality of life of residents. Indeed, local tourism provides a stimulus to take care of territory and to improve the decorum of public spaces; moreover, and most importantly, local tourism provides the resources necessary for accomplishing this purpose. This financing is possible through conveying part of the funds derived from tourism (e.g. sojourn tax) to the upgrading and the maintenance of order, cleanliness and decorum. Tourism development has therefore a function not only economic, but also educational, because it strengthens the awareness of the importance of protecting Italy's heritage. Italy, for its rich cultural history, has so many thousands of churches, palaces and other historic buildings, that it would be impossible, even in more prosperous economic conditions, to maintain them properly without touristic support.

A sustainable tourism is a solution that satisfies citizens, but also tourists. Indeed, when tourists or excursionists visit attractions too inundated by visitors cannot benefit of an enjoyable culture experience and feel disappointed in the quality of the offer (Origet du Cluzeau, 2000).

According to McIntosh et al. (1995, p. 342) tourism development should contain elements of community involvement including: raising the living standards of local people, developing facilities for visitors and residents, and ensuring the types of development are consistent with the cultural, social and economic philosophy of the government and the people of the host area.

The strict links between the well-being of the local population and the satisfaction of the visitors/tourists has been well argued by Müller (1994), who introduced the "magic pentagon" of sustainable tourism. The magic pentagon takes for granted that sustainable tourism reflects a program of actions where five attributes, namely economic health, the well-being of the local population, the satisfaction of the visitors/tourists, the protection of the natural resources and the sustainability of local culture, are all in balance.

5. CONCLUSIONS

This research was aimed to evaluate the current positioning of Italian destination, to identify critical areas of intervention and possible actions to overcome the current problems and to value the idle capacity.

Even if Italy represents for many reasons the most desired destination, often the final choice of international travellers rewards other destinations seen overall as more affordable or more “easy”. As outlined above, the Italian tourism system suffers from a number of weaknesses: lack of integration at level of governance; developmental disparities between the North and the South, with regions of the South appearing poorer in terms of transport infrastructures and quality of services; inadequate personnel training for the global market; difficulty in attracting international investments; extremely fragmented promotional activity abroad; scarce awareness of positive and strong ties between cultural tourism and regeneration of territory. Italy’s cultural heritage could be an important tourist magnet, but the country seems unable to protect and make the most of its treasures.

As argued by destination competitiveness theories, the availability of historical and artistic attractions is a necessary but not sufficient condition to create unique experiences. To offer a unique experience Italy must act on the process of value creation within the destination focusing over all on cultural tourism. In the absence of specific destination strategy that defines the desired positioning (in relation to the wealth of attractions, the resources available, the desired target of customers and the interests of community), the supply tends to focus on a few things already known to the general public, with negative effects on accessibility and quality of the experience of visiting. Cultural tourism offers endless opportunities for adding value to our historic and artistic heritage, both in terms of communicating the identities of our territories and of attracting new resources for their conservation and enhancement.

Tourism management of Italian wealth can create jobs, attract private investments, bring heritage to life again, and produces new and more wealth for local community. But a necessary prerequisite of the re-launch of tourism sector is a radical change in the approach to the problems of tourism: to invest in the culture of tourism, even before in the cultural tourism.

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