

MAIN CHARACTERISTICS OF TOURISM ACTIVITIES IN SICILY

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Abstract: *Main characteristics of tourism activities in Sicily.* This paper tries to present some main characteristics of tourism activities in Sicily. The methodological flow follows both quantitative and statistic methods in order to reveal the main features of this field of economic activity in Sicily. Beyond the statistical values, the article outlines the importance of the cultural and historical heritage for the local, national and international touristic fluxes. The scientific approach is made on different scale of resolution in order to illustrate the reality of this current activity from the southern part of Italy.

Rezumat: *Principalele caracteristici ale activităților turistice din Sicilia.* Lucrarea prezintă câteva dintre cele mai importante caracteristici ale turismului sicilian. Designul metodologic cuprinde metode cantitative și statistice în vederea ilustrării celor mai importante caracteristici ale activității turistice din insula italiană. Dincolo de abordarea statistică, lucrarea prezintă și importanța moștenirii culturale și istorice pentru dinamica fluxurilor turistice. Introspecția analitică se realizează la diferite niveluri scalare pentru a reda, în mod obiectiv, specificul activității turistice din sudul Italiei.

Key words: *tourism, cultural heritage, touristic fluxes, Sicily, Italy.*

Cuvinte cheie: *turism, moștenire culturală, circulație turistică, Sicilia, Italia.*



1. CHARACTERISTICS OF SICILIAN TOURISM

The succession of historical, natural and political events have shaped the region of Sicily gradually contributing to the construction of its landscape; but all this was due thanks to the initiative of different groups of people who have populated it, leaving the sign of their culture in the organization of its territory and cultural identity. Due to its geographical position, it became a crossroad for the most important sea commercial routes in the Mar Nostrum. As a result of this, the island was often the background of events that marked history such as migration of people and territorial conquests that over the time changed the structure of society bringing new forms of organization, different production techniques, new languages spoken and religions; these different contributions penetrated to the inland from the coastal fringes. Sicily was often an element of balance between opposing forces.

Sicily is legitimately included in the Italian national tourism market with a number of tourists yearly of 4 million people. Compared to the other 19 regions of Italy, Sicily ranks at the 10th. Place for tourism arrivals, (2nd if compared only with other regions of southern Italy) and preceded by the Veneto, Trentino Alto Adige, Tuscany, Emilia Romagna, Lombardy, Lazio, Campania, Liguria and Marche. The main sources of statistics on tourism are the official data from Istat, the National Tourism Observatory, Enit (National Tourism Agency), the Italian Touring Club, in addition to those provided by private companies. This study aims to analyze the fundamental characteristics of tourism in Sicily with reference to the most recent statistics provided by ISTAT at the regional level and by the “Osservatorio regione siciliana”. In this regard, not all data considered refers to 2010 as some research centers are still backdated to the 2009. The use of different sources and the reference to several years has produced conflicting results, but sometimes it is considered useful to highlight important aspects of tourism.

The tourism sector represents also the most important industry in Sicily. Over the past ten years the added value of the tourism sector has grown at an average annual rate of 7.6%, while the service sector sales, the industry and agriculture grew respectively at an average of 5.2%, 4% and -1.1%. The Sicilian territory has a significant historical and artistic heritage, of which 38% consists of archaeological sites, 25% of movable property of considerable historical interest, 22 % of assets of historical and architectural interest, 9% of environmental goods, resources that are distributed throughout the region. The figure becomes especially interesting when read in light of the recent discussions on tourism in Sicily, which indicates a sharp increase in the propensity of consumers to the cultural holidays. The ability to enhance the potential growth of tourism depends not only on structural factors, environmental resources and heritage language but also by the existence and quality of some characters commonly referred to as factors of social capability. First:

- The availability, more or less widespread, the relationship between tourism businesses and institutions of local governance based on trust and cooperation.
- The formation of human capital through institutions of vocational training and universities that help creating the skills and expertise not available internally (EURISPES, 2004).

2. QUALITATIVE ANALYSIS OF TOURISM IN SICILY

The international statistical sources place Italy not only among the top countries of destination for tourists in the Mediterranean, but in the whole world. This flux level is considerable and constitutes a significant contribution to the composition of the total arrivals and presences in Italy (M. Sanna-Scarpelli, 1997), Tourists who visit Sicily are Italian, 3.8% of foreign origin, in line with the trends of the regions of Southern Italy and in sharp contrast to the rest of the country. These results lead to a reflection: the presence of better transport infrastructure closer to the rest of the regions of Europe leading to a positive balance of tourism for the tourists coming from abroad, while the balance of the tourist regions of south and away from the fast efficient systems connecting with the rest of the world has a less positive balance. As a confirm the north-east part of Italy recorded the highest attendance rates of both domestic (37 %), foreign (46.3%) and global (40.9%) tourists, compared to results recorded for the lower undoubtedly areas of southern Italy (table 1).

Table 1: Tourists in the Italian regions (%)

	NATIONAL	FOREIGN	TOTAL
PIEMONTE	2.5	2.5	2.5
LOMBARDIA	6.3	7.5	7.8
VALLE D'AOSTA	1.2	0.6	0.9
TRENTINO ALTO ADIGE	8.7	14.1	11,0
VENETO	11.8	23.0	16.5
FRIULI-VENEZIA GIULIA	2.7	2.8	2.7
LIGURIA	5.4	2.9	4.4
EMILIA ROMAGNA	13.8	6.4	10.7
TOSCANA	9.8	12.6	11
UMBRIA	1.9	1.4	1.7
LAZIO	6.6	10.7	8.3
MARCHE	5.5	1.4	3.8
ABRUZZO	2.8	0.7	1.9
MOLISE	0.3	0	0.2
CAMPANIA	5.8	6.4	6,0
PUGLIA	3.9	0.9	2.7
BASILICATA	0.7	0.1	0.5
CALABRIA	2.5	0.6	1.7
SICILIA	4.0	3.8	3.9
SARDEGNA	3.7	1.6	2.8

(source: ISTAT, 2010)

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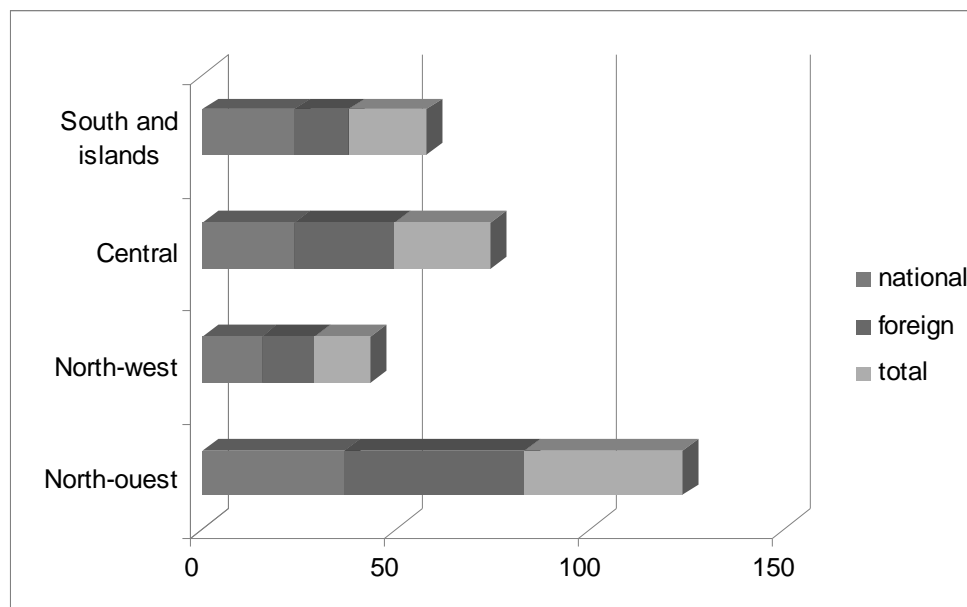


Figure 1: Distribution of tourists in the Italian macro-areas (%)
(source: based on ISTAT)

An examination of domestic and foreign arrivals in Sicily since 1985 reveals a significant increase in flows over the period considered. In recent years foreign flows on the island have kept a steady increase in the order of 5.10%, while arrivals from the side of the national average increase was 2.7%. Based on these trends, we can highlight two cyclical components and two trends. Summer months are those that ensure a strong increase in arrivals in Sicily (domestic and foreign), while increases in the autumn periods are milder, confirming a greater exploitation of the calling sea. In terms of domestic arrivals, the trend shows a strong seasonality of flows mainly concentrated in the summer months, with strong reductions in winter except for the Christmas and Easter period. Since 1985 to nowadays a strong arrest in arrivals was recorded in coincidence with the killing of Falcone and Borsellino (1993-1994) where the image of Sicily, particularly internationally, suffered a significant deterioration with a greater identification with the mafia and insecurity. The average length of a stay in Sicily is 3.4 days, exactly like thirty years ago. A simple comparison at a national level indicates tourists in Sicily remain less night than in other parts of Italy, where the average stay is 4.3 days. However, this comparison should be corrected taking into account the type of local tourism (fig. 2).

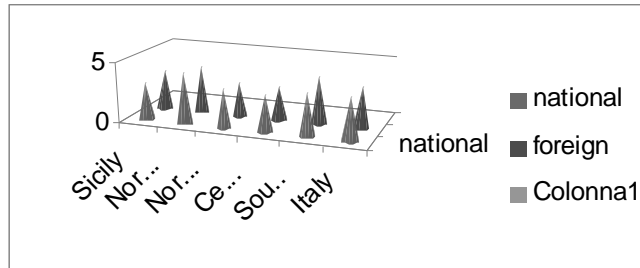


Figure 2: Average length of stay of domestic and foreign tourists
(source: based on ISTAT)

Tourists in Sicily are mainly oriented towards the choice of hostels or three stars hotels. However, 5 star hotels are mostly preferred by foreign tourists (14.3% and 26.1% national foreign). The foreign tourist comes mainly from a European Union country (74.2%). The flow of direct foreign tourist in Sicily is characterized by predominantly French, German, American and Swiss (fig. 3). Eastern Sicily has a capacity attractiveness differentiated by type of foreign country of origin, France stands (38%), followed by the United States, the United Kingdom, Switzerland, Belgium, Sweden, Germany, until you get to Japan (2.3%).

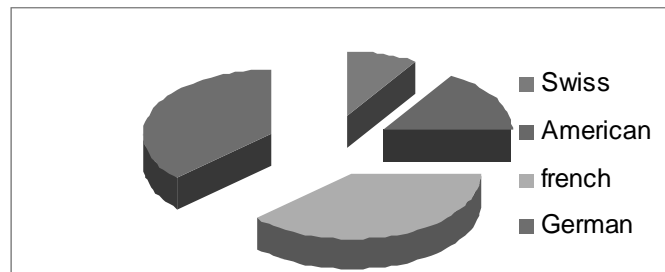


Figure 3: Settlement of foreign tourist presence in Sicily
(source: based on ISTAT)

Among the preferences of the tourists in Sicily, there is a high prevalence of seaside locations, followed by cities and other localities. The destination of Sicilian tourists is still undersized compared to the potential demand. The basic resources can be considered the Sicilian monuments, parks, natural and artificial, the natural resources (sea, mountains etc). These are the real tourist attractions that make this region a real outdoor museum. Sicily, according to ISTAT data, has about 4.1% of the national beds with 868 shops (about 2.5% of national total). Just for comparison, Sicily has a bid of one-sixth of that of Emilia, a quarter of the Venetian and twice that Valdostana. Compared with the other regions in Italy, Sicily ranked 15th for beds offered and 14th for the range of accommodation. The accommodation facilities are mainly characterized by 3 and 4 star hotels, while those with lower rates are the 5 stars. In addition to those that provide ordinary hotel services there are campsites, tourist

villages, farms. Sicily has about 115 facilities in camps and villages and 65 farms overall, these structures have a lower incidence than the national envelope. Sicily has the lowest average size of campsites and holiday villages with 39 000 beds against the 194 000 and 64 000 in the Veneto region of Sardinia.

Even as regards the number of beds offered by the accommodation system in Sicily (39 thousand) remains below the national average of Tuscany against the 154, 000 in Umbria, or 110,000 in Calabria. Researches made by the Regional Tourism Institution shows that the hotel development in the provinces of central Sicily may be called 'the Cinderella' of regional tourism, expressing just 13.4% of Sicilian hotel heritage. An area rich in archaeological, historical and natural beauty relegated to the margins of tourist consumerism, in its most qualified, unable to emerge to express all their potential. In Sicily, the relationship between supply and hotel population is disastrous.

This region is the third largest by population and ranks 18th in the hotel offer average Italy. In terms of geographical distribution of 55.9% of hotel establishments are concentrated in eastern Sicily (Messina, Catania, Ragusa, Syracuse) and 30.6% in the west (Palermo, Trapani) and the remaining 13.4% in the central (Caltanissetta, Enna, Agrigento). This distribution has led to a movement of attendance equal to 56.4% in hotel eastern Sicily, 32.9% and 10.6% in western Sicily in the central scene of the tourist. In Italy, Sicily is among the first regions of the South for concentrations of natural and cultural assets has to date, despite the positive trend of recent years, a location is not proportional to its potential. It must be concluded that compared to the sizing of its accommodation facilities to the dynamics of the potential demand is still much can be done, especially on the basis of the estimated outlook.

3. CONCLUSIONS

Our study tries to present the main characteristics of tourism activities in Sicily. Both quantitative and statistic methods are used in order to reveal the main elements of tourism activity. It is revealed the importance of the cultural and historical heritage for the local, national and international tourist fluxes. Different scales of resolution are followed scientifically in order to illustrate the reality of this current activity from the southern part of Italy.

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