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## Enhancement and governance of the Local Tourist Destinations in integrated perspective

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### Abstract

The increased competition between territories following the globalization of the market economy of the last three decades is accompanied by a change in policy for the development of peripheral and marginal areas, where local specificities become potential resources for the local development of virtuous, integrated and sustainable paths. Particularly influential in this change is the paradigm of local development. Local contexts produce tangible and intangible assets which, if properly exploited, can generate external economies which would be of useful action for firms in the territory. The paper focuses on regional marketing and regional tourism and offer management of community type activities (in negotiated or participated government models) illustrating a governance model through the interpretation of requirements and expectations of all local tourist destination stakeholders. It knows how to implement a policy of sharing decisions with all the actors of the network, which is essential for the planning and the promoting of an integrated tourist offer.

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## 1. Introduction

Tourism, and in particular tourism in the less developed regions of the European Union, suffers from a difficult dichotomy: on the one hand to preserve and conserve the resources that a region can offer and on the other to exploit them. For many years the European Union has considered tourism an important economic resource for the economic and competitive development of the Member States and which necessarily must also pass through the enhancement and promotion of tourism in the territory.

In line with what has been stated, both at a Community and national level, minor territories highlight the need to use the "do" system in order to overcome the sectorial connotation of tourism and to return it to a multidimensional vocation that engages the entire territory and population which it composes (Materiali UVAL, 2014).

The task of the territories is to identify an available social capital capable of: promoting the acceptance and permanence of tourists ' Traveller ', defining a differentiated tourism offer integrated in content and values and responding to the current demand for tourist and holiday consumption which is geared more to relationships, to meetings, exchanges, personal and engaging travel experiences. A tourism-called "slow" has mainly a cultural and experiential content divided into a pluri-thematic and multidimensional way. It is able to act as an important driver of economic development especially for inner areas (Calabrò & Della Spina, 2013; Mollica, 1996-1998; Morrison, 2013).

Thus moving away from a strictly economic vision one can identify new sustainable development trajectories in which the territorial identity, local history, social capital, cultural and human heritage become strategic and innovative factors of a truly sustainable development of the local policy (Camagni & Maillat, 2006).

To this day there is a lack of the idea of territory by the local decision-makers. Territorial strategic plans were reduced to programming works which did not adhere to a logic local development system (Calabrò, & Della Spina, 2014a). They were often limited to some public works carried out without that upstream idea of territory and local development. In addition, the same plans are not supported by a serious and effective evaluation but rather of poor quality. The valuation analyzes such as cost-benefit analysis, multi-criteria evaluation of a public work and its financial sustainability are essential elements and must inevitably form the basis of reflection for local administrators.

The territorial needs include a real institutional renewal process that declines functions, skills and programs as well as a systematic revival of a public - private partnership (Calabrò & Della Spina, 2014b) that is capable of intercepting an effective territorial development planning and a concrete implementation of the programs through the use of qualified skills (Calabrò & Della Spina, 2013).

Effective marketing and management applied to these situations should arise, of course, from a careful analysis of the existing and potential tourist demand, which allows to investigate the different needs of its most relevant clusters, according to which product components should be defined in order to adequately communicate the factors of attractiveness of the territory (Cassalia, 2014; Morrison, 2013; World Economic Forum, 2011).

These reasons require the need to consider the management of a Local Tourist Destination (LTD) that refers to the principles of the potential stakeholders. In order to participate actively in the shared definition of strategies and management of a business network, where independent strategies converge towards common objectives, cooperation and synergy between all the stakeholders of the destination becomes fundamental (Crotts, Buhalis, & March, 2000).

According to this orientation the fundamental issue is to activate within the destination a " higher-level " management of the local tourism network and to entrust it to an organisation better defined as Destination Management Organization (DMO). As an organism of destination management it should create, through the coordination and the consent of the different stakeholders, favorable, cultural, strategic and organizational conditions for the sustainable development of tourism destination (Franch, 2002; Laws, 1995).

## 2. Strategic planning and marketing: learn to program development

According to the new guidelines of the European Union metropolitan cities and inland areas have become two of the three policy options for the European strategic program 2014-2020, a real European planning engine

development (Materiali UVAL, 2014).

The territory, therefore, becomes the true resource for development, meaning the action and interaction sedimentation process of the community in the territory.

Programs of economic development of the land area is an activity that today demands a profound reflection not only on the analysis methodology to be applied but also on the same goals of the program, which can not be separated from economic environment. Creating development means: meeting the demands of the territory; transforming instances into bankable projects; defining the project realization times; identifying sources of funding necessary to carry out a truly sustainable local development (Mollica, 1996; Mollica, 1998).

The new active role that local and regional authorities are called upon to interpret in the process of definition and redefinition of territorial marketing strategies consists in assisting, promoting and managing local and regional private actors such as world business trade associations and local social systems (Cassalia, 2014). The essential presupposition to promote the process of development of the territory consists in knowing how to read, to program, to govern, to valorise and to lead it towards a specific output.

The definition of the objectives, strategies and competitive actions with the identification of available economic resources can be usefully brought within the territorial Marketing discipline (Morrison, 2013).

The main elements of marketing applied to a territory are:

- the target market, in other words the population and the objective territory of the action of marketing
- the system of interaction and integration between the various economic actors and the persons responsible for achieving objectives of pre-marketing
- the added value of an area determined by the "ingredient relations system" in providing services and creating opportunities for development.

The legitimate question is: how is this possible?

As summarized in Figure 1, the marketing activities of the territory cannot be detached from a collection of instances and subsequent territorial priorities supported by evaluation of the territorial impact of public and private investment, especially since the "evaluation" itself becomes element of guarantee of the programming process and marketing of an area (Morrison, 2013; Calabrò, Della Spina, & Sturiale, 2013).

The great opportunity that tends to be given to local marketing for local authorities is to put them in a position to:

- Assess the impact of an ex-ante, itinerary and ex post phase produced by investments in the territory
- Program conditions for a lasting and sustainable development
- Groom the land transformation process
- Promote the opportunities and factors that constitute and distinguish each environment in such a way to make it only territorial.

In order to carry out and support the social and economic structure, the definition of priorities by the projects and investments actors is the first step of the process which leads directly to the definition and construction of a network of promoters for the social, economic and institutional life. The process of consultation/negotiation of collective sectoral instances leads to prioritizing and processing them into feasible and bankable actions/projects. The territory becomes the central element of the process of checking the consistency of projects with respect to the development strategy that is shared between all main actors of life in the territory.

Compared to the process of knowledge and verification both vocations and investment projects planned in the area will have to be focused on ensuring the ability of structural investments to bring down the barriers to development and to achieve intervention recipients as well as the necessary consistency between the territorial strategy of intervention and the real future of the territory.

After this stage the actors will have all the information to confirm the consistency and efficiency of investment and to propose new representations of development which is essential for the redefinition of territorial strategies in case the planned investments do not converge with the idea of becoming a territory.

At this point in the process, after the stages of selection / systematization of information, analysis of the territory and definition of the conflicts that arise in the territory, the different visions of development become of great importance. During the definition of the development strategy the information gathered will enable the actors involved to identify, decide and plan where to invest, what to do and how to do it in order to optimize public and

private intervention in the territory.

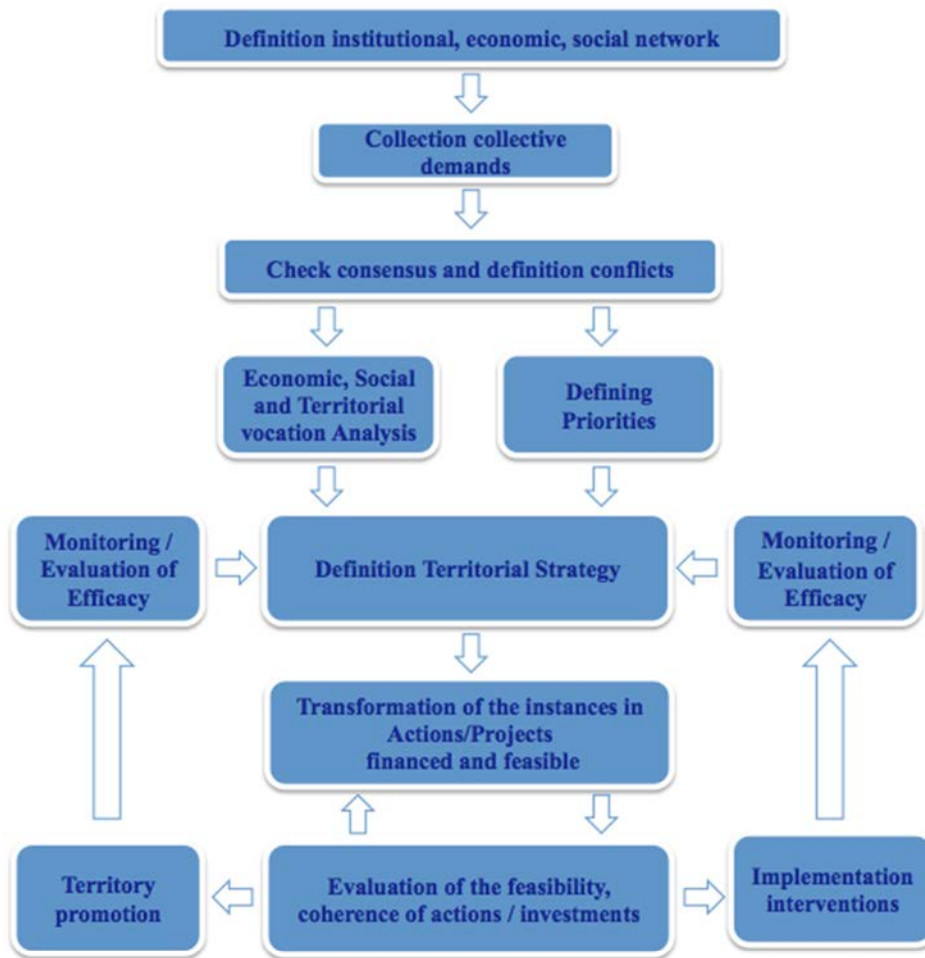


Fig. 1. Analysis and evaluation of the programming process (source: our elaboration)

Programming means to coordinate the intervention of public authorities in order to achieve the objectives set out in the definition of strategies which are closely related to the policy objectives (Boccia, 2002).

Finally to reduce inequality it is necessary to have a proper planning in order to pursue a full and efficient employment of resources, a spatial enhancement of productive activities, a rapid development of consumption and services and a fairer distribution of income.

### 3. A governance model for Local Tourist Destinations

The subject LTD, known with the term governance, reflects a concept with a complex meaning capable of expressing the systemic management of a potential tourist area which is aimed towards the integrated development of resources rooted and present in the specific local system (Calabrò, & Della Spina, 2013) rather than individual tourism managed individually by different organizations .

In whatever way the LTD is defined the problem of management arises as a problem of coordination of the

decisions of a system of actors and the necessary interaction of subjects who express divergent interests and purposes. It aims to identify the methods that facilitate the recruitment of shared decision making, individual operators, consortia between enterprises, Tourist Promotion Agency, commercial traders, public institutions (OECD 2001; Presenza, Sheehan, & Ritchie, 2005).

A correct process of Destination Management (DM) provides an analysis of the elements of competitiveness of LTD compared to competing destinations, with a view to promoting an offer based both on the quality of tourist services and on the development and promotion of local resources.

According to some authors it is the commonly known type DM (government or participated negotiating models) that should process and coordinate different actors operating individually in the territory (Flagestad, & Hope, 2001).

In areas where resources are widespread and the ability of operators to cooperate is often limited, the aim of giving a strategic systematic and tourism integration (Sturiale & al., 2010) can be pursued through planning and managing of a set of actions such as:

- the definition of a strategic program of development of the offer
- image management and marketing activities
- coordination and management of relationships with stakeholders
- the assessment of the economic impact of tourism on the local territorial system in terms of sustainability, coherence and integration of tourism with the tourism policy of the tourism industry.

The territorial governance of the DM process can be summed up to the following specific objectives:

- development of regional strategies through the use of local resources
- development of integrated marketing plans favouring the coordination and cooperation of local actors
- development of local culture by promoting training activities for the entire local tourist operators
- development of an adequate local image which should be the real expression (individual services, tourism products and factors of attractiveness) of the local quality of supply
- development of actions aimed at improving the attractiveness of the offer by promoting truly sustainable tourist development of tourist destination.

### *3.1. Destination Management Organization*

As for governance, as stated earlier, it is necessary to activate within the tourist destination a higher-level of structure named Destination Management Organization (DMO), responsible for management and marketing. It should be able to: transform a place into a tourist destination, outline a somewhat unified and integrated tourism policy and streamline coordination between the various stakeholders (Lazzeretti, & Petrillo, 2006; World Tourism Organization). It is therefore necessary to highlight the key role that the DMO has for the success of the LTD, to stimulate and facilitate the process of developing a tourist destination by interpreting the needs and expectations of all stakeholders, capable of pursuing a policy of sharing decisions with the actors of the network, which becomes essential in order to plan and promote an integrated territorial offer (Franch, 2002; Morrison, 2013).

Therefore, the DMO manages the target undertaking strategic marketing decisions in order to enhance the reputation and image of a destination as well as the quality of services, transforming the attractiveness factors of a destination into competitive products. Ultimately, the DMO can be defined as a destination management organisation, whose main activities are related to two groups of functions that fall under:

1. Destination Marketing Activities Marketing: managing and promoting the commercialization of the destination as an unique and cohesive package towards new markets and consolidating existing ones. In this regard, the DMO performs a number of actions that can be summarized:

- educational tours and familiarization trips, consisting in the organization of tourist packages offered for free to delegations from target markets, aimed to raise awareness of the destination and to encourage the creation of business initiatives (tour operators, travel agents, journalists, opinion leaders, tourist-cultural associations, etc.)
- structured presentations and regional roadshow; "informative seminars/training", which allow to present the tourist destination to a wider interested and motivated audience of experts (travel agents and tourism professionals)

- publications (tourist guides, promotional brochures, flyers, hotel directories, etc.)
- advertising (newspapers, magazines, tourist press, promotional videos, TV/radio, internet)
- promotional activities in trade fairs, exhibitions, events, where one can find current and potential customers
- integrated information system, as the web platform, point of reference for consumers to support local tourism organizations in the development of more effective strategies in attracting tourist flows
- brand management, namely the creation of the brand to strengthen the image, a sign of ownership and perception of the tourist destination by stakeholders.

2. Management Activities of the tourist destination, such as:

- management of points of reception and tourist information
- booking management of available accommodation in the tourist destination
- development and management of human resources needed for the management of the tourism system
- control over the quality of staying, the attractiveness of the destination and the quality of services offered by the local tourism agents
- legal assistance to tour operators in order to access funds
- analysis and research to understand the needs and expectations of the market and the expectations and the needs of the tourism system
- analysis of potential impacts of tourism in order to sustainably manage the destination.

#### **4. The case study: the governance model of the PISL "Slow Life"**

The case study is an integrated project of local development named "Slow Life. Travelling between Culture and Nature in the National Park of Aspromonte, from Tre Pizzi to Limina " (Regione Calabria-ROP 2007/2013), aimed at implementing a local development programme for sustainable tourism, able to bring out the complex relationships among communities and territory, between singular memory and collective identities, between exceptional landscapes and scenery of everyday life. The PISL is designed to increase the attractiveness of LTD "Slow Life" with significant environmental and cultural attractors, and characterized by a strong character of rural life (Calabrò, Della Spina, & Sturiale 2013; Calabrò, & Della Spina, 2006).

The integrated project "Slow Life" has been built through intensive local promotion activities and a partnership project formed by the coalition of six ionic municipalities of the hinterland province of Reggio Calabria, whose geographical area covers a predominantly environmental context of mountain and piedmont type.

The project also included the creation of a DMO "Slow Life", higher-level structure responsible for the management and marketing of LTD, as well as a proposed governance structure in which the coordination and management of LTD is entrusted to a single operational body: a control and management committee (General Coordinator) made up of a representative of the partnership (Gerace Municipality - leader of the coalition of municipalities, Univeristy Mediterranea of Reggio Calabria, Confindustria Reggio Calabria ).

Summarizing, the General Coordinator is the operational core of the DMO, and as the only operator in the promotion and marketing it will take care of the aggregation of tourism and its positioning in the markets through trade actions both in Italy and abroad, online and offline. They following will be tiling organs of the General Coordinator:

- Partnership Assembly, comprising all subjects belonging to the project partnership as for guidance
- Secretariat with the organizational functions of the General Assistance Coordinator, who is concerned with organizational management, institutional contacts and coordination of meetings and local events
- Territorial Laboratories enabled in six municipalities already partners in the phase of preparation of the proposed " Slow Life ". Laboratories that have joined associations, entrepreneurs, technicians, citizens and other entities who are not part of the project partnership.

Particularly regarding individual lines of action aimed to carry out the strategy of the PISL related to the realization of infrastructural projects, aid schemes, marketing and communication, the General Coordinator is responsible for coordinating, providing technical assistance, consulting, coaching, assistance actions to inscribe in a coherent plan of development which aim is to create an organic design of LTD.



The logic behind the PISL structure is that private investments (load-bearing or upon completion) are the heart and the starting point for the structuring of an integrated and organized system aimed at the creation of a LTD. It is therefore essential that the General Coordinator carries out an action of orientation and a selection of initiatives during the planning stage and achieve coordination and technical assistance aimed at the proper use of resources and integrating them with other planned actions, so that individuals move not only in the choice of an internal organization but also in the strategic decisions of management oriented towards a LTD.

The hypothesis to establish and consolidate organization and governance of the DMO "Slow Life" is represented by the diagram shown in Figure 6.

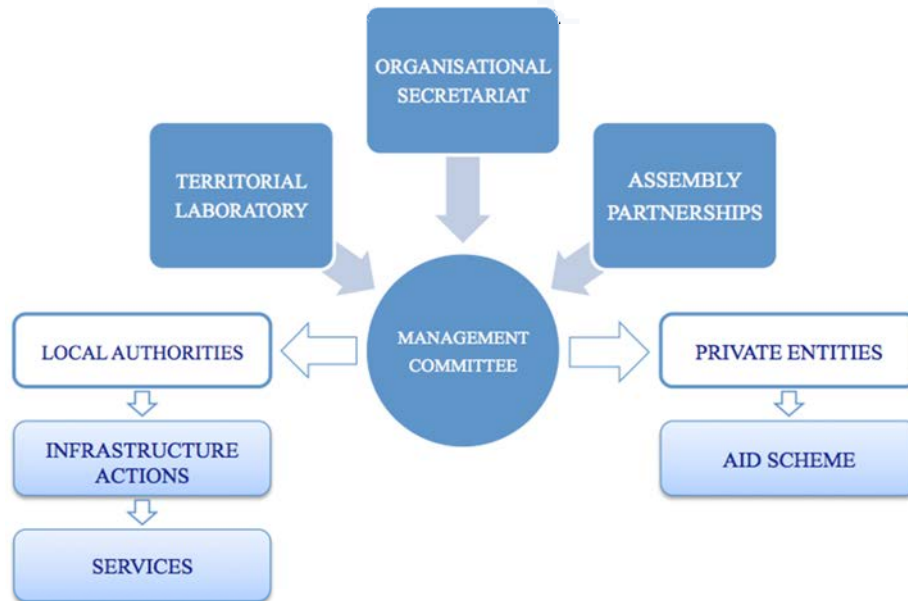


Fig. 2. Organisational structure and governance of the DMO "Slow Life". (source: our elaboration)

## 5. Conclusion

In a background of strong international competitiveness, the concept of "Local Tourist Destination", known in international literature as Tourist Destination Product –TDP, assumed a considerable importance, always more committed to abilities of each purpose of gaining and keeping unvaried its own placement into global marketplace.

The goal of awarding orderliness and integration to touristic supply can be pursued in strategic key through the pianification and the management of the totality of actions, concerning in particular: the definition of a strategic program for offers developing; image management and marketing activities; coordination of relationships with stakeholders; evaluation of tourist economic impacts on local territorial system, in terms of sustainability, effectiveness, coherence and integration of the offer with general policy about interested touristic area.

The sequence able to create value for a territory, in fact, can not be applied only to any proposal elements of the territory's supply, but it has to include all its production participants, with the awareness of operating inside a system in which not only single services - but also their integration – can contribute to create the overall touristic experience.

This document describes possible activities of a Destination Management Organization (DMO) and, through application to a study case, it represents the first attempt to identify required steps for implementing marketing and

management actions for creating a Local Tourist Destination (DTL). Moreover once this is highlighted, within a new competitive scenario, it appears singular the ability of a place to express an offer able to promote all area's resources in an integrated way. On this regard, the paper represents the first step towards the definition of a DMO model, one and only one responsible for DTL management and marketing, which, through a complex process, has the task of and is able to: convert an area into a touristic destination, rough out a tourism policy rather united, shared, integrated and optimized, through the coordination between several stakeholders.

Furthermore, this contribution describe how the management of complex activities among various components of the supply system, must to be leaded necessarily by a single identity / organism, the DMO. This has not the only the task of advertising and promoting an existing area's offer, but also the need of contributing for its definition, stimulating and encouraging the development process of a tourist destination that, once the needs and all stakeholders expectations are understood, should realize a decision policy shared with the network of participants indispensable for significantly planning and promoting the territorial offer.

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