



# Attractiveness and Coastal Cities in Southern Italy. Flows and Consumption of International Tourists in Naples, Bari, Cagliari, Messina and Reggio Calabria

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To cite this article: Colloca, C.; Lipari, L. (2022), Attractiveness and Coastal Cities in Southern Italy. Flows and Consumption of International Tourists in Naples, Bari, Cagliari, Messina and Reggio Calabria, *Fuori Luogo. Rivista di Sociologia del Territorio, Turismo, Tecnologia*, 13(3), 157 – 169. DOI: 10.6093/2723-9608/8985

To link to this article: <https://doi.org/10.6093/2723-9608/8985>



Submission date: 09/02/2022

Revised: 07/10/2022

Published: 23/12/2022

## ABSTRACT

**Attractiveness and Coastal Cities in Southern Italy. Flows and Consumption of International Tourists in Naples, Bari, Cagliari, Messina and Reggio Calabria**

Contemporary cities are the result of a combination of individual choices, which are increasingly differentiated in order to respond not only to the needs and expectations of the residents, but also to the requests coming from the rising number of populations temporarily crossing them. It is common knowledge that tourists have assumed a dominant role in cities due to two main factors: on the one hand, the worldwide steady increase in tourism over the past thirty years, with the exception of slight downturns (*i.e.*, the two years after the attack on the twin towers); on the other hand, the economic power exercised by tourism and the consequences it has on the destinations. The urban areas of the south of Europe are not exempted from the dynamics of these social and economic changes.

In particular, this article presents the results of an empiric study of migration flows and international tourism-related consumption in some coastal towns in the south of Italy. The analysis was conducted with the technical support of cartographic representations of data (*Geographic Information System*).

Thanks to the analysis of the data stored in the *Banca d'Italia* archive, the work focuses on two main aspects of the international tourism demand. Firstly, the entity and the features of the flows (according to age, provenance, motivation) will be studied, in order to identify the specific attractiveness of the various destinations. Secondly, the study aims to analyze the dynamics of the consumption behavior patterns in international tourism, with particular attention to daily expenses, such as transport, food and accommodation, entertainment (*i.e.* shows, events, excursions) and culture (*i.e.* museums, theatres).

The aim of the study is to problematize the principal changes in the international tourism demand highlighting new trends emerging in Mediterranean towns, in particular in the South of Italy.

A lack of horizontal and vertical subsidiarity has been noted, including the deficiency of government and governance measures, which would allow these towns to plan a more effective tourism offer, consolidating the idea of the territory as a heritage and a project. This deficiency has led to the outlining of a tourism offer that mainly tends to rhetorically emphasize some scarcely significant traits rather than focus on the identity of the places themselves.

## KEYWORDS

Mediterranean cities  
Tourism  
Attractiveness  
Consumption  
GIS

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# Attractiveness and Coastal Cities in Southern Italy. Flows and Consumption of International Tourists in Naples, Bari, Cagliari, Messina and Reggio Calabria<sup>2</sup>

## 1. The socio-territorial complexity of coastal cities.

The article begins with a historical-sociological, territorialist analysis to highlight how much the relationship between coastal locations, particularly in the Southern Mediterranean, and touristic practices has changed between the 18th and 21st centuries. Subsequently, remaining central to the interest in this relationship, the results of empirical research on international touristic flows and consumption in some coastal cities in Southern Italy from 2009 to 2019 are problematized, the analysis of which was conducted with the support of cartographic data representation techniques (*Geographic Information System*). Southern Italy is a privileged "scenario" for studying the dynamics of tourism and the different responses of the territories to the global tourist demand. The focus is directed at the main changes in the international touristic demand by highlighting the new trends that characterize Mediterranean cities and, more in detail those of Southern Italy, through the analysis of data from the Bank of Italy's archive. On the one hand, the study is oriented to analyze the numerosity and composition of flows (by age group, origin, reason for travel) in order to detect the specific attractiveness of destinations; on the other hand, the dynamics of consumption behavior patterns of international tourists, with attention to the average daily expenditure, articulated in the different items that compose it: transportation, accommodation, food, entertainment (shows, excursions) and culture (museums, theaters). The essay concludes with some reflections on tourism in Southern Italy's coastal cities between rhetoric, critical issues and hypotheses for territorial planning.

Reflecting on tourism, moreover, evokes the need for an articulated territorial vision. Attention needs to be paid to the connections and synergies between issues that are too frequently treated separately, such as environmental protection, land consumption, urban rent, the real estate market, mobility, quality of life, tertiary professionals and services, touristic demand and communication. Of course, it has not been possible here to argue all these issues, but on some of them an attempt has been made to propose a socio-territorially oriented problematization, in order to point out that the touristic offerings of some coastal cities (Naples, Bari, Cagliari, Messina and Reggio Calabria) are dependent on a certain way of seeing and conceiving the city and landscapes. These are local realities that would need to develop a strategic design with general interest objectives that do not neglect the relationship between socio-cultural, economic and environmental elements. Many cities, especially in the South, seem to have lost the relationship with the land and landscape on which they are settled, which generates a constraint for sustainable development of tourism, but also of other practices of socio-economic action. What is needed is an overall vision that puts territories and the environment at the center as decisive infrastructures also for the development of tourism; an overall vision that, with reference to the cases under study, seems rather latent and deficient.

The 53rd *Censis Report on the Situation of the Country 2019* delivers a picture on tourism in Italy as a «great container of employment and a fundamental driver for the national economy» (Censis, 2019, p. 168), it highlights a close link between tourism and culture and reiterates the importance

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2 Received: 09/02/2022. Revised: 07/10/2022. Accepted: 30/11/2022. Although the essay is the result of joint reflections by the two authors, paragraphs 2, 6 and 7 are attributable to Carlo Colloca; paragraphs 3, 4 and 5 are attributable to Licia Lipari. Paragraph 1 is the outcome of joint work.

of food-and-wine and the sea in the potential orientation of supply and demand. It should give pause for thought about incoming processes to Italy, especially after the coronavirus emergency. It will take time for touristic demand to generate economic and employment values similar to those before the pandemic, but they will probably be able to grow only if there is the ability to spread an image of efficiency and safety, to propose itself with a well-structured organization of services and with a high professional quality of operators, capable of generating opportunities for touristic supply, even in coastal contexts, connected with moments of production (for example the convention industry). So, a management of the touristic offer that can reconcile the quantitative dimension with the qualitative one, making use of professionals whose skills know how to enhance the environment and contain the undesirable impacts of tourism.

It would also be necessary to break free from the habit of travel as an inescapable deadline and an obsessive ritual of consumption. This is the effect of the transformation that travel has undergone in post-industrial society, so from being an adventurous experience it has become a package planned in detail by the tour operator, with the risk of becoming as alienating as assembly line work was in the past (De Masi, 2018, pp. 30-31).

## **2. Vacations on the Mediterranean coasts: places, people and cultures.**

It is difficult to trace a precise date to indicate when the Mediterranean became a destination for summer vacations: it can be assumed that it happened in the period between the two world wars of the twentieth century, and then it takes shape as a mass phenomenon from the 1950s and 1960s onward. It must be said, however, that a «collective awakening of the sense of shore» (Corbin 1990, p. 81) - which seems to re-establish the relationship between the man and the sea, as it had been in the ancient world - can be traced back as early as the mid-Eighteenth century, when 'going to the beach' was reinterpreted from a therapeutic point of view, unlike the Sixteenth and Seventeenth centuries, when a Judeo-Christian representation prevailed that identified the sea with a dangerous place and a source of misfortune.

English physicians would be among the first to prescribe cold bathing in seawater as a remedy for states of mental and physical distress. The custom of spending winter vacations there will continue well into the mid-Nineteenth century: Empress Eugenie, wife of Napoleon III, was prescribed by her doctor to spend a period of rest in Antibes on the French Riviera. These were the same years in which the famous Casino opened in Monte Carlo, and Nice became the winter "branch" of the Parisian Belle Epoque. Slowly from being an exclusive fashion of the aristocracy, the practice of cold bathing will also spread among the bourgeoisie, aided by the advent of railroads. At the beach, location longly thought as a landscape to be contemplated from shady avenues, people would also go swimming.

With reference to the southern Mediterranean, «the tourist attractiveness of the coastal landscape [...] attracted the interest of urbanized populations well before the tourists of the Grand Tour». Already in the late republican and imperial period, there are «phenomena of summer mobility of the urban population, particularly to the Phlegraean Fields, to Pozzuoli and Baia, in search of recreation and entertainment, with the process of urbanization of the Campania coast and the birth of a new building typology, the maritime villa» (Mazzino, 2009, pp. 160-161). Since the early 19th century, it is mainly the British people who favor the Mediterranean: not only the merits of cold water are thought of, but above all the benefits derived from the quality of the air and the sun's rays are extolled. The French Riviera of the Côte d'Azur, Liguria and Versilia became the main destinations (Löfgren, 2006, pp. 165-166). Poets George Byron and Percy Bysshe Shelley chose Portovenere, Lerici and Viareggio to immerse themselves in the Tyrrhenian Sea.

The vogue for winter vacations on the Mediterranean spread around 1925, when writers and wealthy U.S. businessmen began to frequent the French Riviera mainly in the summer months,

staying at the elegant *Hotel du Cap*, also in Antibes. The climate of those years is well described by Francis Scott Fitzgerald in his novel *Tender is the Night*, which can be taken as a reference for the transformation of the Mediterranean's tourist offerings, namely it became the "beach of Europe" and no longer for isolated travelers alone. It is interesting to note that on the boost of literary travel in the mid-Eighteenth century – i.e., the Goethe's *Journey to Italy* - a culture of vacations to "see the world" or "get away from it all" also developed in the nineteenth century, which found a destination on the Mediterranean coasts, also to delve into the ancient histories of the peoples who inhabited them (Brilli, 2006). People passionate about archaeology, wearing colonial helmets and with rudimentary tools, following the traces left by historians and poets, began to rummage and dig up countryside and hills that slope down to the sea. It happens to those who came to Italy to find the traces of Magna Graecia. Just to name a few: the Frenchman François Lenormant (1881; 1883) whose works inspired the Englishmen George Gissing (2004 [1901]), Norman Douglas (1915). They all wrote travel narratives born out of a desire to learn about southern Italy and, in particular, its coasts, as well as expressing the seductive power of places. Alexandre Dumas (1999 [1841]; 1999 [1865]; 2000 [1865]-who set three of his works in the city of Naples-when he left Città del Golfo in 1864 coming back to Paris, he wrote that: «he was seized with tenderness and affection for this idle and heedless Sultanah whose life is all a party and whose only occupation is happiness». It is with the mid-nineteenth century, especially the 1950s and 1960s, that seaside tourism becomes established in the southern Mediterranean, aided by the spread of mass motorization as well (Colleoni, 2019, pp. 51-58). The tourism of the "3 s" takes shape: sun, sea, sand. A tourism with little interest in the natural and cultural values of places, while the main involvement seems to be represented by a real cult for the body and tanning. This is the period of the boom, from one hand of the second houses inhabited only in the summer season and from the other hand of the of towns increasingly inhabited by the elderly and children, for the obvious advantages of the mild climate and healthy air (Secchi, 2006). The landscape remains in the background, with negative effects on its preservation and conservation, as exposed below. This dive into the past of "doing tourism" highlights how much, in contemporary society, the destination of travel, even to the southern Italian coasts, is increasingly the amalgamation of locations, people and communities, as opposed to an almost exclusive magnetism of places and landscapes, typical of tourism between the Eighteenth and Nineteenth centuries. Today it seems central to enhance a continuous cross-reference between socio-cultural and territorial components, and the same goes for fostering consumption. The quality of a food product, for example, - in addition to its hygienic, chemical-nutritional and organoleptic aspects - lies in the ability to propose it in its links with the territory, with local history, with the characteristics of processing, and with the quality of life that characterizes that place. This is the "origin quality", basic aspect of some systems, codified at the European level, used to promote and protect agri-food products<sup>3</sup>.

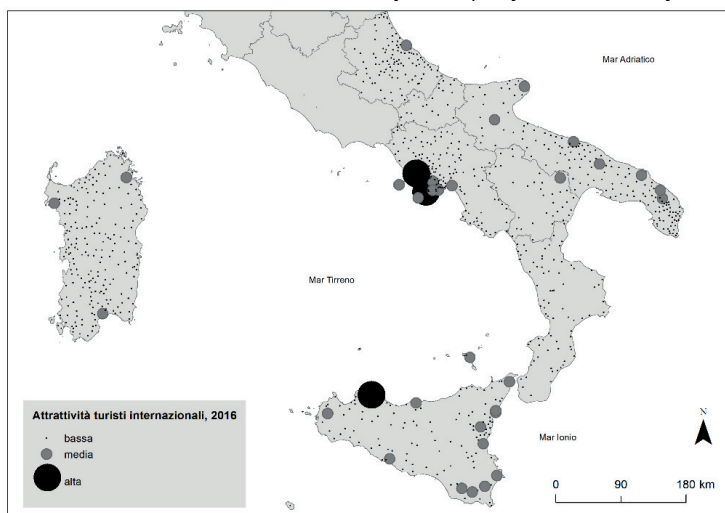
### 3. Composition of the international flows in Southern Italy: an overview

The ability to attract tourist flows has become a relevant condition for both traditional and emerging destinations in order to maintain a good position in a global scenario with increasingly competitive traits (Ritchie, Crouch 2003; Russo *et al.*, 2013). Moreover, the numerous practices of historical and artistic heritage recovery, image renovation, and conversion of use for recreational and cultural purposes of abandoned and functionally emptied urban spaces are implemented by contemporary cities with the main purpose of attracting both new residents and new temporary populations of consumers, including city users and tourists (Mazzette, 2013). Among the latter, international flows have gained great importance not only because of their increasing numbers but especially because they have a greater spending capacity (UNWTO, 2016). With attention to

<sup>3</sup> Think of the trademarks: PDO, Protected Designation of Origin; PGI, Protected Geographical Indication; TSG, Traditional Specialty Guaranteed.

Southern Italy in the period between 2009 and 2019, the number of arrivals has increased significantly (from about 4 million 500 thousand to 8 million 900 thousand) compared to the Center and North<sup>4</sup>. Despite this, however, it must be remembered that in both referred years the South receives a share of international arrivals below 15% of the Italian total, in contrast to the 60% arriving in the North and 25% in the Center. It is not the lack of endowment of tangible and intangible resources that influences this gap, but rather a weak capacity of territories in their management and activation (Casavola, Trigilia, 2012). Faced with a highly competitive global scenario with a high degree of complexity, Southern Italy, as we have seen in the previous paragraphs, manifests the fragilities related to a modernization process most often characterized by planning and re-development interventions distant from territorial specificities<sup>5</sup> (Perna, 1994; Salvati, 2000; Lipari, 2019). This is followed by a marginalization in the global dynamics of which tourism, especially the international one, it is a representation. A number of factors then influence the degree of competitiveness of southern destinations, including the lack of transportation infrastructure that limits accessibility to destinations and an often sloppy professionalism in service (SVIMEZ, 2006; Doxa *et al.*, 2008; Lobina, 2016). With reference to presences in 2019 there was a decrease of 4.6% compared to 2006 although the average stay of international tourists is 9 nights - greater than Italy's 7 nights - as the South is a favorite destination for beach tourism, usually characterized by longer stays (Savelli, 2013). The complexity of the analysis of international tourism in Southern Italy emerges from this overview. From the distribution of arrivals, with the exception of Foggia in Puglia and Matera in Basilicata, there is a greater number of attractive destinations located along the coasts. This is dictated by the greater ease of accessibility and, as already specified, the seaside vocation of touristic development in the South<sup>6</sup> (fig. 1).

Fig.1 – Attractiveness of international tourists<sup>7</sup> By municipality in Southern Italy. Year 2016.



Source: our processing of Bank of Italy data, Italy's International Tourism.

- 4 In the text, tables and graphs, references are made only to tourists staying overnight for personal reasons--vacation or otherwise--and for work/business reasons excluding border workers, in accordance with the classification used by the National Observatory of Tourism in Italy ([www.ontit.it](http://www.ontit.it)).
- 5 For insights into the socioeconomic and political processes that affected Southern Italy see Perna, 1994; Salvati, 2000; Lipari, 2019.
- 6 In 2016, 33.5 percent of international overnight tourists indicated the sea as the main reason for their vacation, followed by those who indicated art (27.1 percent).
- 7 To measure attractiveness, an index was constructed based on the number of arrivals in individual municipalities. The low-grade class includes municipalities with at most 50,000 arrivals per year; the medium grade class includes municipalities where there are more than 50,000 arrivals to a maximum of 500,000; the high grade class includes municipalities with more than 500,000 arrivals.

Only three cities exceed 500,000 arrivals per year: Palermo in Sicily and Naples and Sorrento in Campania. Along the Adriatic coast, Bari emerges (with more than 300 thousand arrivals in 2016), followed by the Sicilian destinations of Syracuse, Catania, Taormina and Agrigento, Alghero in Sardinia and Lecce in Apulia (more than 200 thousand, see Tab. 1). The top ten destinations are characterized by a general increase in arrivals compared to 2006 that exceeds 50% in the cases of Syracuse (+210%), Sorrento (+79.6%) and Agrigento (+71.5%). Presences also follow a positive trend with the exception of Lecce (-59%), Catania (-41.0%), Taormina (-25.2%) and Bari (-13.3%).

Tab.1 – Attractiveness of international tourists: top ten destinations in Southern Italy. Absolute values and ratios, years 2009 and 2019.

	Arrivals 2019 (*1.000)	% Variation of ar- rivals 2019/2009	Presences 2019 (*1.000)	% Variation of pre- sences 2019/2009
Napoli	2.271,6	76,7	8.711,1	50,3
Palermo	1.108,2	162,2	5.458,0	115,6
Sorrento	776,1	182,3	3.541,6	200,4
Catania	625,3	103,2	2.812,4	-5,9
Bari	542,8	11,5	2.714,3	30,2
Siracusa	402,7	232,8	2.108,0	220,4
Taormina	335,1	169,6	1.269,9	30,5
Positano	251,6	252,4	990,4	221,9
Amalfi	250,4	191,8	1.097,4	207,5
Olbia	247,3	149,3	1.308,2	64,2
South and Islands	8.952,3	95,2	76.411,6	53,9
Italy	64.512,9	49,2	398.963,1	29,5

Source: Our elaboration on Bank of Italy data, *Italy's International Tourism*.

#### 4. Coastal cities and international tourism

The composition of flows shows a marked heterogeneity in the attractiveness of Southern Italian destinations to international tourists. With a focus on coastal cities, five representative cases of different degrees of attractiveness and patterns of touristic development were compared: Naples, Bari, Cagliari, Messina and Reggio Calabria. These cities are united by their mercantile and cruise vocation<sup>8</sup>. Naples is among the highly attractive cities of the South (over 1 million arrivals) and among the most sought-after destinations in Italy (Lipari, 2019). Among the alleys of the historical center, the tourist is immersed in an urban dimension where «the past [...] overflows the rational riverbanks», bestowing both a magnetic and a contradictory charm (Chambers, 2007, p. 98). Bari and Cagliari are united by the regeneration processes that since the 1990s have been aimed at image renewal, enhancement of cultural resources and strengthening of transport infrastructure (Zito, 1993; Madau, 2009; Mininno, Novembre, 2011; Amendola *et al.*, 2016). While the positive effects of these interventions are tangible, the two cities still hold less international visibility than other Mediterranean cities (Cassano, 1997; Salaris, 2011). Messina and Reggio Calabria are cities that face the same coasts, those of the Strait. They share a more

8 From the cruise traffic data, except for Reggio Calabria which still holds a more recent history in the sector, Naples, Bari, Cagliari and Messina in 2018 ranked among the top twenty cities in terms of passengers handled. Naples and Bari recorded more than 500,000 passengers per year, also gaining a good ranking among the top Mediterranean ports, while Cagliari and Messina exceeded the 300,000-passenger threshold (Tourism Answers, 2019).

recently built urban plan because much of the historical and artistic heritage was destroyed by the 1908 earthquake and World War II bombings (Coco, 2011; Ziparo, 2016). However, the cities follow different tourist routes. Messina benefits from the cruise industry, which has allowed it to gain visibility in the international touristic scene. Reggio Calabria, on the other hand, holds a still marginal position that is confirmed by the low share of international tourist arrivals in 2016 (under 50,000 per year) with a significant drop since 2006 (-68.3%, see Table 2). Looking at the trend of arrivals in the medium term, a general increase emerges, especially for Bari and Cagliari (over 20% compared to 2006). This figure seems to confirm the positive impact of the policies implemented in the two cities to enhance their touristic image and accessibility. On the contrary - in line with the trend of southern destinations (tab.2) - presences follow a negative trend, with the exception of Naples (+7.8%). If the scenario for Reggio Calabria is linked to the city's weak attractiveness, for Messina the lack of *ad hoc* policies aimed at strengthening and managing tourism risks making the city of the Strait uncompetitive with respect to important neighboring destinations (including the Aeolian Islands and Taormina) and, therefore, destined to become a place of transit of flows and not of permanence (Lipari, 2019). With attention to the profile of international tourists, some differences emerge both by age group and country of origin. The composition of arrivals by age group shows how in general the South, compared to Italy, is marked by greater attractiveness to younger tourists (age groups of 15 to 24 and 25 to 34) and to those over 65 (Table 3). Comparing the distribution in the five cities by age group with the same distribution of Southern Italy, it emerges that Naples and Reggio Calabria stand out for a higher share of international tourists aged 15 to 24 respectively: 43.8 % and 43.7% compared to 37.6% in the South). Messina is the only city that stands out for its attractiveness to both tourists aged 35 to 64 (60 %) and those over 65 (12.1%). For Cagliari and Bari, there is a similar distribution to Southern Italy.

Tab.2 - Composition of international tourist arrivals by age group. Absolute values and percentages. Year 2019

	Arrivals (*1.000)	Age classes		
		15-34 (%)	35-64 (%)	65 and over (%)
Napoli	2.271,6	47,7	47,9	4,4
Bari	542,8	49,2	38,7	12,1
Cagliari	235,2	34,1	54,4	11,5
Messina	79,0	41,7	52,0	6,4
Reggio Calabria	23,8	59,9	39,5	0,6
South and Islands	8.952,3	36,2	55,6	8,2
Italy	64.512,9	31,3	61,2	7,5

\* Row percentages.

Source: our processing of Bank of Italy data, Italy's International Tourism.

Analysis of the attraction pool in 2016 shows that southern Italian destinations are the favorites for tourists from Germany, the United Kingdom, France and Spain. These account for 60% of the total arrivals<sup>9</sup>.

The comparison with the five cities shows that Naples and Reggio Calabria present the same catchment area as Southern Italy, with a predominance of arrivals from the same four countries, while Messina differs only in the presence of Spain replacing France. As for Cagliari and Bari, unlike the other cities, they present a catchment area of arrivals exclusively from countries on

9 In detail from Germany come about 1.9 million tourists; from the United Kingdom about 1.4 million; from France about 1.2 million; from Spain about 700 thousand.

the European continent. In Cagliari, the component from overseas is replaced by the Swiss component, while in Bari it is replaced by the Greek and Spanish components.

## 5. Consumption behaviors and specific attractiveness of destinations

In the tourist experience, consumption in terms of entertainment and leisure includes other complementary activities - such as shopping, food, interest in art and culture - through which being immersed in places from both a material and a symbolic and perceptual point of view (Hannigan, 1998; Di Vittorio, 2010; Colleoni, Guerisoli, 2014). Therefore, the analysis of consumption allows from one hand to understand the specific attractiveness of destinations and, on the other hand, to identify the behaviors widespread among international tourists by highlighting the aspects they favor during their vacation.

With attention to daily consumption in 2016 for southern destinations it is possible to detect a lower per capita spending than in whole Italy (83 euros compared to 98), a trend that is confirmed in the five coastal cities under consideration (tab. 4). This figure may be influenced by the lower average cost of living compared to Central and Northern Italy, a tangible aspect especially with regard to food goods (Bank of Italy, 2009).

Looking at the composition of daily spending, this differs from Italy mainly on accommodation, with a 5 percentage points higher share (48.6% vs. 44.3%). Given the prolonged stay in southern destinations (of about 9 nights), it is not surprising that among international tourists there is a tendency to favor a comfortable vacation style that involves a willingness to devote more attention to accommodation.

*Tab.3 - Composition of per capita daily expenditure of international tourists by item type. Absolute values and percentages. Year 2019.*

	Total daily expenditure (€)	Shopping (%)	Culture/leisure (%)	Food (%)	Accommodation (%)	Transportation (%)
Napoli	111	17,9	7,8	22,5	42,0	9,8
Bari	50	15,6	5,9	20,6	46,0	11,9
Cagliari	80	10,8	3,9	13,6	67,1	4,5
Messina	60	12,0	5,3	9,4	70,1	3,1
Reggio Calabria	99	22,5	6,7	23,8	26,7	20,3
<i>South and Islands</i>	<i>85</i>	<i>15,0</i>	<i>9,1</i>	<i>16,6</i>	<i>51,9</i>	<i>7,5</i>
<i>Italy</i>	<i>105</i>	<i>14,6</i>	<i>7,2</i>	<i>22,2</i>	<i>47,0</i>	<i>9,1</i>

*\* Row percentages.*

*Source: our processing of Bank of Italy data, Italy's International Tourism.*

A heterogeneous scenario emerges from the comparison among coastal cities. Compared to the Southern Italian context, Naples stands out as the only destination where higher spending shares are detected on three items: cuisine, shopping and cultural and entertainment offerings confirming a high attractiveness on international tourists. Bari holds the record in 2016 for the highest spending budget share in the area of culinary offerings (26.7% vs. 19.4 percent of Southern Italian destinations) while Cagliari for accommodation (50.9% vs. 48.6%). Two different specific attractiveness profiles emerge for the two cities of the Strait: Messina stands out for shopping, culture and entertainment, while Reggio Calabria for more structural aspects of the tourist vacation, namely the accommodation and the share devoted to transportation. From an overall look it is



possible to say that a composite touristic offer, as found in the Naples scenario, follows a greater attractiveness for international tourists also increasing their propensity to spend (Lipari, 2019). The analysis of international touristic flows describes a South with critical aspects compared to other macro-areas of the country. Despite the endowment of historical, cultural and landscape capital, in 2016 the southern part of Italy holds only three destinations capable of attracting more than 500 thousand arrivals. In particular, coastal cities are still very much tied to the development of forms of beach tourism, which is highly seasonalized and more exposed to strong competition from some Italian and foreign Mediterranean destinations (Alverini *et al.*, 2013, Emanuelli, Lobosco, 2017). The fragmented nature of policies in tourism exposes Southern Italy to marginalization on the international scene, combined with a lack of transportation infrastructure that undermines its accessibility.

## **6. Tourism in the coastal cities of Southern Italy between rhetoric, critical issues and hypotheses for spatial planning.**

What has emerged so far allows for some more general reflections, even going beyond the reasons for the fragility of the touristic offerings of the five case studies - with a few exceptions, e.g., Naples - as well as advancing some hypotheses for containing the decline of the most peripheral coastal areas and initiating their redemption.

It is necessary to assume that institutional, economic and social actors will mature the ability to foster greater connections between the territory as heritage and the territory as a project, showing skills in recognizing the characteristic elements of a place and the different populations that live there, as well as in promoting projects with attention to the consequences of an excessive flow of visitors that can make the relationship between guests and hosts problematic. This is the challenge that awaits coastal landscapes as settings for sustainable tourism offerings.

The aura of Italy's Mediterranean coastal territories is the result of the amalgamation of a number of elements, e.g., a glorious ancient past - made of myths and legends - the epopee of the protagonists of the Grand Tour, the uniqueness of the landscape, naturalistic and archaeological resources, a specific food-and-wine sector and the healthiness of the climate. Together these factors generate an alchemy capable of fueling fascinating local narratives and stories that emphasize the identities of places, making them particularly attractive. The feeling is that this "socio-cultural and environmental capital annuity" is running out, particularly for certain coastal areas in the South of Italy: this is also evident from the analysis of the five cases mentioned above. The reasons for these critical issues can be traced to a multiplicity of factors. First of all, in the intangible and material infrastructural deficiencies: the hospitality, in fact, also passes through the care of a culture of respect for rules and the ability to know how to transmit a concrete sense of hygiene and order. Having a greater awareness of touristic culture means working to ensure that the tourist is considered a customer to be cherished and valued, not exploited. Then there is the sphere of transportation, which evokes problems in the horizontal traversal of the peninsula, favoring almost exclusively vertical routes; while in local contexts, especially in the south, there is a lack of bicycle lanes, car-sharing and bike-sharing, appropriate traffic signs and the possibility of widespread use of credit cards. And again, there is a rarefied seasonally adjusted offer to be recorded<sup>10</sup> which forces many territories into a temporally too circumscribed protagonism, as well as the unprofessionalism of some of the personnel involved in touristic services, who frequently improvise in activities that represent a secondary involvement (also as a result of deseasonalization).

10 The tourist offer must also consider the "interstitial tourist", that is who is in search of "still free intervals in the universe of travel, whether they are spatial or temporal" (Urbain, 1991, p. 226). The "interstitial tourist" prefers to move "out of season", taking holidays when colleagues are working; looking for little-known destinations; routes among the least beaten down and forgotten exoticisms (Savelli, 2004, pp. 22-23).

Added to these factors is the rhetoric in exalting the *Genius Loci* of some places, which is reduced in the staging of one's social-self in the presence of the tourist, to the point of triggering processes of "folklorification" that are not an expression of the real experience of a community, but rather fulfill two antithetical functions, namely to please the expectations of guests by proposing an image of "authenticity" or to reproduce traits that are also characteristic of other territories, so as to "reassure" the tourist who knows how to orient himself. Finally, the growing competitiveness in the tourism market of Dalmatian coastal territories, North Africa and the Middle East should be emphasized.

There is a coastal tourism that is characterized by overly globalizing traits; it seems to be aiming at a certain uniformity of offerings valid for different locations. It is enough, in fact, that three basic elements are present: sun, sea and the beach.

In fact, although we are in a phase of post-industrial tourism - characterized by an increasing fragmentation of vacation styles - the typical enjoyment of mass tourism is still widespread in many areas of the globe including the Mediterranean, as revealed by the analysis of the case studies.

This homogenizing approach in touristic supply, with reference to the coastal areas of Southern Italy, has coincided with an unprecedented consumption of land and landscape, resulting in spatial transformations with a strong environmental impact. To indicate this process of artificial homogenization, countless neologisms have been coined: "rapallization", "marbellization", "balearization", all of these are examples of «building processes without urbanization» (Battigelli, 2007, p. 29) that have affected coastal areas, even in Southern Italy. Rarely guided by a planning process, they have fostered uncontrolled development, interested exclusively in the combination of marine horizon research and real estate income. An urban tsunami (Forman, 2010, p. 265) has been consuming, which has favored a cementification of the coastlines, with poor quality infrastructure and predominantly tourist-residential character. This process of litoralization has been matched by an exodus from inland rural areas, as well as a rift between those and the coastal areas. The resulting critical implications affect environmental as well as identity and socio-economic aspects. Such processes can also be seen in the five case studies. These are densely populated areas where landscape and nature values are significant; the urban framework is historically consolidated and evolved and, as a result, obsolescence phenomena and transformation processes under the banner of the aforementioned cementification are observed.

Restoring the «state of nature along the coast has become an important element of any good regional planning project» (Mumford, 1999, p. 333). There is a need to recover the awareness that coastal landscapes are a cultural and natural heritage, so it is necessary to connect landscape protection with measures to promote the well-being of settled communities, in the spirit of the European Landscape Convention, adopted by the Committee of Ministers of Culture and Environment of the Council of Europe on July 19, 2000, and signed in Florence the 20<sup>th</sup> October 2000. It would be necessary to overcome a constraining vision of landscape assets, in favor of protection tools for active landscape management, sanctioning the shift from a conformist-vinculative approach to one based on the construction of a coherence framework, against which potential transformations can be assessed, according to an extensive consideration of the landscape, that is not limited to emergencies and exceptional values (Marson, 2016).

It is a matter - to quote the well-known typology proposed by Max Weber (2003 [1922]) - of imagining the coastal cities of Southern Italy as «consumer cities» where the needs of touristic populations in search of consumption exclusively aimed at relaxation can be met, without neglecting, on the other hand, the needs of those who nurture the expectation of a combination of training and work activities with moments of leisure, such as sports, events, art, shows and shopping. In both cases, it is a matter of diversifying a cognitive-experiential offer that involves local cultures and, therefore, the relationship with the sea and, consequently, the relationship with the goods and services that can be derived from the touristic offer.

The non-establishment, if only partially, of this "type" of city has been affected in the South by

the prevalence of an economy based on “redistribution rather than the market”, thus an «*un-balanced modernization*, that is, a gap between the improvement of material living conditions (such as conditions of income, consumption, access to educational and social benefits) that has moved forward rapidly and the socio-cultural and political infrastructure that has instead lagged further behind» (Trigilia, 2012, pp. 136-137), which has affected the responsible use of resources. In order to find a successful innovation in the coastal touristic offerings (and not only in that), it is necessary to start again from the places and socio-cultural and political-economic specificities, as happened in the past with the industrial districts of the *Made in Italy*. It is a matter of anchoring to the cultures and knowledges of the territories, but also to the «ways of relating to the environment that allows the self-reproduction and the continuous enrichment over time» (Magnaghi, 2015, p. VIII).

## **7. To conclude: toward a territorialization of policies.**

It is necessary to think of strategic policies that strengthen the factors capable of indulging the touristic vocations of the coastal territories of Southern Italy, investing in the definition of brands so that the link between standardization and commercialization can be overcome, but without jeopardizing the resources, especially the environmental and cultural ones, while also avoiding the risks of saturation and dissipative use of places. Designing business formation in the area of cultural heritage and coastal tourism can be linked to the development of the green and blue economy. In this direction also goes the increased attention to the strengthening of intangible infrastructure (e.g., broadband internet connection or the wi-fi) and material infrastructure (airports, roads and ports), as well as the training of professional profiles specialized in cultural and environmental tourism, also to meet a more demanding and selective demand in the use of leisure time. The establishment in coastal areas of parks, nature oases and protected areas must be followed by the role of local tourism development personnel who know how to design and implement their services.

Messina and Reggio Calabria are proper examples of the aforementioned dynamics, where the increased touristic attraction triggered by cruise tourism (especially to the benefit of Messina), leaves the cultural tourism that could result from it fairly untapped. In the scenario of Messina, it is a matter of enhancing the Regional Museum that holds the works of Caravaggio, who, during his stay in Sicily, also, and above all, left his traces in this city. In the scenario of Reggio Calabria, it is worthy of consideration the time it took to reopen the viewing of the Riace Bronzes: it took ten years and the Archaeological Museum (not considering the impact of the Bronzes), is among the most important museum on the Magna Graecia and it could be imagined as a destination or starting point of a route that passes by the Ionian ridge and leads to the archaeological parks of Locri Epizephyrii and Sibari. It would be a worthy experience for the tourist, at first for the scenic beauty, as well as for the many local realities worthy of a visit along the longer than two hundred kilometers of path. Reggio Calabria also suffers from inefficient transportation infrastructure, particularly its airport risks the closure.

A “creative tourism” could also be triggered as a subset of the broader cultural tourism (Pearce, Butler, 1993, Richards, Raymond, 2000; Galvagno, Giaccone 2017) - the enhancement of resources such as monuments, places of historical and artistic interest, can be associated with an experiential offering of active consumer participation in the creation of the “touristic product”. This involves and implies the capacity of learning knowledges and getting involved in workshops, both practical and creative, promoted by local communities, in order to live authentic experiences through which lasting social relationships with natives’ people can be established. For example, let just reflect on what could imply the involvement of tourists in the very ancient swordfish fishery, an activity that is still practiced from May to early September in the Strait of Messina and

which has been handed down for generations and that still has an economic importance for some families on the Messina and Calabrian shores.

What is needed, then, is active land management for the benefit of the landscape and the touristic economy, those are aspects that cannot be separated from each other. In coastal areas, the settlement pattern is characterized by divergent dynamics (Hadley, 2009) that should be contained and stitched together. On one hand, there are local opportunities at the origin of settlements and infrastructures related to the sea (port-cities, landing cores, sighting, and defense structures). On the other hand, it is possible to find settlements and structures that are the result of an agrarian territorial organization that benefited from the marine climate, but leaned inland, locating places along the coast that could serve as centers of exchange. Over these processes, the divergence has been accentuated in recent times, when vast portions of coastal areas have been invested by industrialization - which has identified locational advantages for many productive activities on the coasts- and especially by tourism, particularly in its coastal nature. New settlement fabrics were formed, similar to enclaves intended to, almost exclusively, fulfill functions of tourist-receptive nature. Coastal areas increasingly characterized by fragmentation, porosity and discontinuity have taken shape. The sea and the coastal strip resources are seen from an exploitative perspective and, as a result, virtuous and self-sustainable processes (related to agriculture in the coastal area, fishing, production and exchange of local products) are often marginalized, if not suppressed, by the new processes of touristic or productive colonization.

So that Mediterranean coastal cities continue to put forward their "seductive repertoire", there is a need for a territorialization of policies that can capture problems and opportunities of individual places, through an integrated assessment methodology that can identify critical heritage conditions, indicate measures to improve landscape management, and provide guidelines for redevelopment projects for the benefit of tourists and local communities. Of course, this approach is conditioned by the effects that the coronavirus will have on various contexts in Italy and elsewhere. In the post-pandemic period many socio-cultural, economic and political issues, capable of significantly affecting the morphology of touristic supply and demand, will have to be addressed.

To conclude, to deepen the study of the attractiveness of Southern Italy in relation to an increasingly varied tourist demand, from a methodological perspective it could be useful to expand research through the use of qualitative techniques of social research. This would allow us to grasp aspects, otherwise elusive, on the development of the tourism phenomenon, on the one hand, and allow us to think about tourist attractiveness taking into account the socio-territorial heterogeneity of the South, on the other hand.

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