

Sustainable Hospitality & Tourism Management (M4X01925_BIRM)

- Abdi Rahman

RADU GRECU

1815350

Using a country of your choice, illustrate how sustainable tourism is organised and managed, identify linkages and identify the engagement of other organisations/stakeholders

Definition of sustainable tourism is: “Sustainable tourism development requires the informed participation of all relevant stakeholders, as well as strong political leadership to ensure wide participation and consensus building. Achieving sustainable tourism is a continuous process and it requires constant monitoring of impacts, introducing the necessary preventive and/or corrective measures whenever necessary.

Sustainable tourism should also maintain a high level of tourist satisfaction and ensure a meaningful experience to the tourists, raising their awareness about sustainability issues and promoting sustainable tourism practices amongst them.”

The Province of Rimini was awarded with the first European Sustainable Tourism Prize, “Carmen Díez de Rivera” for its LIFE-Environment Project “Strategies and Tools towards Sustainable Tourism in Mediterranean Coastal Areas”. The award from the EU is divided into public and private initiatives for sustainable tourism. Some objectives include new management systems, planning and managing tourist destinations and implementing new management of tourist destinations in accordance with their environmental, social, cultural and economic values.

Therefore we are facing a tourist traffic strongly unbalanced towards the coastal tourism. It seems appropriate to define this phenomenon as a seaside tourism monoculture for the leading role that the tourism assumes in the productive system. Such a type of destination is characterized by a mass tourism originating an economic system characterized by tourism monoculture. In Italy, ever since the early fifties, the growth of the industrial system, the greater availability of cars, and the more organized job structure, within the Fordist productive model, allowed a greater number of individuals to enjoy their summer holidays (Conti and Pasini, 2000; Ioannides and Debbage, 1998). The age of the mass paid leaves was then introduced and the most successful destination in Italy became the tourist resorts of the Adriatic Coast Riviera. Rimini accounted over one million tourist presences back in 1951 (Dall’Ara 2002). The bathing vacations boom involves in different times all the

Mediterranean. In addition to sociological and anthropological researches on tourism, the academic reflection has been focusing on the study of tourism as a product; it is not by chance that perhaps the most famous model in the evolution of tourist destinations, the life cycle model (Buttler, 1980; Agarwal, 2002), has been drawn from studies on the production cycle.

This analysis aims to underline the evolution and new conflict areas within a mass tourism destination typified by a seaside tourism monoculture. An outline of the Rimini model will be attempted, which characteristics mark a certain type of Mediterranean seaside resort, identified by a remarkable complexity of relations and, often, by strong conflicts. The history of these destinations has produced a number of stratified interests, either private or public, so that they constitute a strong spur for the modernization and diversification of the tourist system itself. Multipolar destinations, thus, according to a geographical interpretation (Lozato - Giotart, 1999). In the particular case of Rimini, the seaside monoculture has created the paradox of delaying the evolution of the destination from unipolar to multipolar, crystallizing for about one hundred and fifty years the Rimini tourism system and preventing a really sustainable development, in the sense of an environmental, economical and social equity.

The evolution of Rimini from small town with an established economy based on agriculture and handicraft, to European capital of summer seaside tourism, has occurred through a series of phases that have determined the town's present structure. The analysis of this evolution enables us to emphasize the causes of the evolution of the Rimini system, by means of the formation, consolidation and crisis of the tourist system based on the seaside tourism monoculture. This system has determined until today the evolution of the Riminese territory, going through different political phases almost undamaged whose only crisis broke out during the eighties. The seaside tourism monoculture crisis and the overcoming of the derived model still seems to be the unsolved problem. The first nucleus of the future tourist industry was born in 1843 with the opening of the Stabilimento Privilegiato dei Bagni Marittimi, twenty years after the establishment in Viareggio, Italy's first seaside resort. Rimini in those years accounted for about 30.000 inhabitants. It was situated in the Stato Pontificio, under the Pope's dominion, in a backward economic reality based on agricultural incomes.

In 1922 Rimini was under Fascist control, but the change of regime did not invert the direction of the seaside-estate development. It was a period of very high taxation levels. In the early thirties one third of the inhabitants fed themselves on the town soup-kitchen (Conti and Pasini, 2000). The fragility of the monoculture had reached its apex: most industries were nearly abolished, the tourist season was short and, in spite of the increased number of people who went on holiday, only a few benefited from the tourist industry.

It is possible to identify 1989 as the year in which this tendency started inverting itself, the slow passage from the old tourist model of the seaside tourism monoculture to the tourist town and to the Local Touristic System. What accelerated this process, which had already begun during the eighties, was an assumed environmental crisis such as that of the mucilage. This was a typical example of the paradox of our mass media society that attracted the attention of Europe and provoked, besides the hysteric reactions of those who had decreed the death of the Adriatic Sea, a general acknowledgement of the untenability of the Riminese tourist mode. An analysis of this passage through the lens of the three constitutive elements

of the idea of sustainable development (environmental, economic and social sustainability), would suggest the necessity of change in the tourist model.

From the point of view of the environmental impact, real or alleged, the mucilage crisis marked a point of no return on the perception, on behalf of observers, of the psychological and physical destination carrying capacity (Inskeep, 1991). In fact, although tourist presences collapsed and went back to the levels reached before 1989 only in the last few years, the bathers began to use the beach again from the summer 1990. Yet the idea of environmental risk started playing a part in the debate on the future of the destination. All problems related to the administration of water purifiers and of the cleaning of the swimming water have become a priority and the matter of environmental decay generally fed to a large extent the first antitourism demonstrations in the nineties (Dall'Ara, 2002). At the same time, a seasonal and often irregular employment, with fewer prospects of winter job, with the stagnation of arrivals and the consequent cut in profits for the operators, marked a change in the perception of the economic and social sustainability of the tourist model. In support of the effort toward innovation attempted by the Provincial Administration, lies the fact that even operators are aware of the advantages in terms of appearance and of tourist presences coming from the adoption of policies focused on sustainability (Aguilò, Alegre, and Sard). It is not by chance that the Provincia, if on the one hand has stimulated the adoption of good practices in the sustainable administration of tourist enterprises, on the other hand has been able to create the premises for the integrated promotion of the Riminese territory, by means of the creation of the Agenzia per il marketing di distretto (the district marketing agency).

The new subject arose from the cooperation with the category associations, included in the board of directors¹⁵. The promotion of the territory on a regional scale is the strategic starting point for the building of the Riminese and province integrated tourist system, so as to plan the deseasonalization and the diversification of the tourist supply. The agency, thanks to the institutional and financial support coming from both the Government and from the Emilia Romagna Region, has widened both its range of action, and its available resources in a 3 years period, also tanks to an accurate choice made by the province, that means to equip the agency with the greatest ability of action, to transform it into the local reference for all tourist promoting activities¹⁶. The marginal propensity to innovation showed by the local entrepreneurial class is one of the factors capable to restrict the new articulation on a wide range of actions of Riminese tourism. Aware of it, the Agency has set a sum of about 3.700.000 euros in order to retrain private tourist enterprises like hotels, public shops and tourist service. Some modernization projects for about 36 millions euros are financed.

The Federico Fellini Airport is also aiming at a relaunching, thus attracting those Tour Operators that are rediscovering the Riminese territory. A further perspective of development could be represented by the negotiations in favour of the internazionalisation of the airport, which could become the official landing of San Marino State and could attract new Italian and foreign airlines. The Riminese tourist industry is facing the passage from an idealized static equilibrium, based on the position incomes coming from 160 years of a hospitality culture focused on the seaside tourism monoculture, to a new open system, where new actors and different tourist products play, with different views on the possible future of the destination.

The new arrangement as proposed by the Local Tourist System could represent a sound starting point. The real strategical innovation in the last few years seems to be the integration between tourist products and the creation of a unitary

tourist promotion system, such as the Local Touristic System. By means of the action of new institutional actors, such as the Agenzia per il Marketing di Distretto, the Rimini system is trying to replace itself in the national and international tourist market, working toward the ideal condition for a definite passage from seaside tourism monoculture to wide range tourist system. In this phase of transition, the weight of tradition and of power arrangements in the old tourist model gives rise to unavoidable conflicts owing to the replacement of old and new actors in the market. Even at an institutional level, new normative laws are innovating the old administration model that has determined poor cooperation between the different levels of political decision, creating the area system of Riminese tourism. In spite of such problems, the new integrated approach to tourist promotion and the reinforcement of local tourist system seems to bring about a new approach towards a more competitive tourist destination.

CONCLUSION:

This article tried to outline how one of the greatest tourist destinations in the Mediterranean has reorganized itself in the mass tourism market. The aim was to analyse the local touristic development model along the 160 years of its history. Among the prerogatives of the tourist Rimini model, the seaside tourism monoculture has been the central thread of the town events and of the surrounding territory: such a monolithic view of the tourist demand has gone through a very difficult period with the transformation of tourist consumer models, far from the summer holidays model, and therefore different. The structure of the Riminese tourist field, based on small and medium-sized entrepreneurs, has been a strong point for a long time, and in the last fifteen years has gone through an important renewal crisis, aiming at the retraining of its structures and at higher service standards.

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