LONG TAIL AND DESTINATION MANAGEMENT: THE IMPACT OF MARKET'S DIVERSIFICATION ON COMPETITIVINESS IN TOURISTIC SERVICES. THE CASE OF GARDA LAKE

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Abstract

Increasing global competition is also reflected in tourism. This makes clear the need to (re)define the concept of competitiveness of tourist destinations and its drivers, including consideration of a demand characterized by an increasing variety and differentiation, whose satisfaction requires the aggregation of different components af offer, also multi-local. The article examines these issues reassembling the main contributions of the literature in a larger pattern that includes several factors that determine the quality and hence the competitiveness of Multilocal Touristic Eco Systems, whereas addition to traditional performance indicators, also their abilities to respond the emerging long tail. The empirical case presented is that of Garda's Lake.
Key words: Tourism Competitiveness system, service quality, long tail.

Introduction

The increased diversity of demand for tourist services requires continuous rethinking of the trade-off between specialization and breadth of the offer for the management of the "long tail". For this reason there is the necessity to find the nature of competitiveness in the territory, considered as a fundamental driver both in global competition and in the tourism sector in particular. In this regard, consideration must be that in literature there are different notions of territory and hence competitiveness: on the one hand, the traditional economic literature refers to the territory as a macro system and secondly the literature on territorial marketing considers as a subject of analysis geographical or urban circumstances. Finally, the other still more recent developments in tourism services marketing takes the concept of territory "destination" as micro component of the product / offer. These latter approaches also lead unidirectionally the concepts of marketing management both to territory-city and to - territory destination, thus ignoring the product ecological-territorial connections' investigation. In our work, however, these connections are retrieved by reference to a meso spatial dimension, namely an "eco-territorial system" that can take different levels and size depending on the competitive position sought and that is at an intermediate level between the country system(macro-area) and the touristic destination (micro-area). The ultimate objective of the work is actually to explore "evolved" matching among territorial economy, territorial marketing and marketing of tourism services. It is know that the competition in the tourism sector does not only occur between individual players/locations, but increasingly between multi-territorial systems quality and positioning of individual service components, but on the one the overall "multi-level ecological system"[1].

The latter, in particular, comes from a dynamic balance among different system levels (territories, networks, enterprises and other stakeholders), which requires adequate internal and external governance systems. The competitive quality of multi-local territorial eco-systems (mLTS) is therefore not evaluated as the sum of "individual quality" but as " aggregate quality", the level of which comes from consistency of quality system and quality of individual services. On the other hand, to define the sources of the competitiveness of a region, a territory or a city has become a major issue, as measured inputs (resources) and output of destination management. policies. In this

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[1] Ecosystem is a system in which individual actors (actors, institutions, communities) move through strategic actions both passive and active and pose the different bases to generate value for the governance of interdependence. A system in which value creation takes place in a world of non-zero-sum-based dominated by innovation and common growth . In this regard see Pilotti (2006)

context, the article discusses the main drivers of mLTS's competitiveness and their sustainability in relation to the resources held and activated, in view of satisfacting and creating
of confidence among the different stakeholders to enhance the attractiveness and value and therefore the purchase by consumers, increasingly segmented and discontinuous, compared with an increasingly flexible and accessible offer.
The paper deals with these issues starting from the definition of the competitiveness of territorial tourism system.
Subsequently a synthetic rewiev of the specialized literature of the destination management is effected and particularly of the contributions that dealed with the competitiveness of the tourist destinations highlighting the need of their integration to take account of current changes in global competition, which in fact amend the same drivers of competitiveness.
Such contributions are reassembled (paragraph 3) in an integrated model for the analysis of competitiveness considering a larger concept of destination, which refers to multi-local tourism systems. In the latter part of the work is finally suggested an empirical application of the proposed model with regard to mLTS of Garda's Lake highlighting the need to aggregate the various components through meta-organizers, respecting their excellence by developing inter and intra system co-petition mechanisms for a sustainable governance of the more suitable matching between long tail e fat tail. This means exploring on a meso-system level the more suitable matching for a medium-term growth from a "*long tail*" (long tail as diversification of de-specialized forms of offer and radically different niches of demand) in transition towards a "*fat tale*" (nonlinear and a-symmetric segmentation / distribution and defined as specialized diversification of offer's forms and of simple differentiation of demand's niche)

1. Between the competitiveness of the territories and the competitiveness of tourist destinations

The growing centrality assumed by local systems into the competitive global arena, together with the complexity of the environment, the interdependence between systems and individual actors and the multiplicity of relationships between tangible and intangible resources requires a rethinking of some concepts developed in the literature on destination management. Among them there is certainly the competitiveness and attractiveness of tourist destinations and their drivers. It should be stated immediately that today there is no single definition of competitiveness of tourist destination. This, as we shall see, is due both to the fact that there is no single definition of the level of analysis (nation, region, city, destination) and the change of context and sectoral factors (demand and offer for tourist services) which require a continuous adaptation of system policies and those of the individual components and therefore of its performance indicators. On the other hand, the competitiveness of a tourist destination is a " *complex concept because a whole range of factor account for it. Competitveness is both a relative concept (i.e compared to what?) and is multi-dimensional dimensional (i.e, what are the salient attributes or qualities of competitiviness ?)* (Dwer & Kim, 2003). The search for a new approach for assessing the competitiveness of tourist destinations thus passes necessarily through the analysis of contributions from different disciplines, among them, that of the economic literature, literature of strategic management (international business literature) and that of territorial marketing.
Indeed, in the literature on destination manangement we observe the attempt to adapt the definition of competitiveness of different countries and then to more localized areas (clusters, regions, cities) to tourist destinations, based on the Ricardian theory of comparative advantage and on that of competitive advantages. In particular, the importance attributed to the price differential (related to different production costs) as a source of "Competitiveness in inflencing visitor flows" (Dewer and Kim, 2003) comes from the theory of comparative advantage (Ricardo, 1817). Other ideas to define the competitiveness of a tourist destination are covered by the concept of "constructed advantage" (Foray, Freeman, 1993), developed to assess the competitiveness of nations and later adapted locally by Mothe and Mallory (2003, 2004, 2006) , who argue that in a knowledge economy, social

space is the key, and therefore built advantages, as the creation of new knowledge, the emergence of services to facilitate the exchange and transfer of knowledge, enable us to understand the utilization of new competitive positions by the territories. Turning to the contribution of the International Business Theory, as itis known, it introduces the concept of "competitive advantage", recognizing the changing nature of competitiveness (as opposed to the static comparative advantage). Within this field of study, a significant role is attributed to Porter (1998) that identifies local competitive advantage in the interaction among: factor conditions (skilled labor market and infrastructure), demand conditions, presence of related and support areas, business strategy within their industry, policies to support training, demand adjustment[2]. Recent work by Porter (2000, 2001), provide interesting insights on the importance of social characteristics and of the embeddedness of territories and, therefore, on trust and social resources. A further contribution of literature to define management strategies of competitiveness of tourist destinations comes from the recognition that the competitiveness of a territory is closely related to those firm/ actors involved in it. As regards the contribution of territorial economy to the definition of tourist destinations competitiveness, it is mentioned Camagni (2002), which considers the territory not only as an environment in which businesses operate, but as the local system at the intersection of technological and business externalities as well as economic, social and governance. In this perspective, the sources of territorial competitiveness are ascribed to human capital, social and relational. Hence the notion that territorial competitiveness cannot emerge from the static comparison of the performance of different areas and not as the single sum of the competitiveness of local firms consequentely is not enough to adapt approaches "macro" in local contexts, or micro approaches to larger contexts (territories), but it is necessary to adopt an approach that provides an intermediate level of analysis between the "micro" (firms) and "macro" (nations), a meso-level economic involving also the socio-economic and relational aspects. In this sense, the territory becomes a true resource for development among identity, culture and history for a renewable community. Its value is not static, but dynamic and therefore strengthened through coordinated efforts and projects. The territory generates trade both internally and with external geographic areas in order to create value for the whole community by means of community. This statement builds on contributions that focus on the role of the "relational" variable in local governance (Caroli 1999, Van den Berg (1999); Vesci, 2001) and, in particular, bring back the competitive success of the territories to the ability to manage "global space of flows", rather than the sole use of local resources in atomistic key (Doel and Hubbard, 2002.) In this context the role of connective tissues is assigned to the territories and to relational spaces that is contexts characterized by dense interactions, valuable for the production of economic value (Paiola, 2006). In this direction also fit the most recent literature on industrial districts and clusters localized production (Grandinetti and Tobacco, 2003; Beccattini 1998; Rullani 2000).

2. The competitiveness of tourist destinations among territory, identity and multi-territorial system

The centrality of territorial systems in the global competition is well described in the tourism industry.
In this sector, tourists are increasingly demanding products with identity contents (not just environmental but also social, cultural and historical), require less mediation between sector players (hotels, tour operators, etc.) and territory (holiday as an opportunity for learning), and they want better processes of co-creation of experience and consumption.
Under this circumstances, it is necessary an effective governance of touristic territorial system and own endowed and created resources, through a bottom up process that permit to share with the stakeholders the development, maintenance and sustainability of touristic destination.
These concepts are widely recognized in literature, so we can do some considerations.

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[2] In this sense, Porter is the first who don't use the self-referential dimension of firm, then he is the first to consider the size of the external environment as a factor for the success of firm and, consequently, for the success of territories.

Firstly that in Destination Management literature the definition of territory is not well defined(Burkart, Medlinks, 1974; MacCannel, 1974; Gunn, 1988; Cooper at all., 1993; Swarbrooke, 1995; Della Corte, 2000; Penchlaner, 2002). However, it is well known that a touristic destination is a physical place "approved by the demand", a homogeneous territory with production-delivery vocation of one or more tourism products, configured on the basis of natural or artificial attractions, existing or created ad hoc, that the district actors propose to the market in a unified way, though not always consciously[3]. In other words, the touristic destination is a territory that have fleeting boundaries, but sufficiently shared by supply and demand, which is characterized by one or more attractive factors that allow tourists to perceive it different from other tourist destinations.

The second consideration regard the centrality of territorial dimension in the touristic competition. (Middleton, 1994; Go e Govers, 2000; Flagestad e Hope, 2001).

The literature recognizes that the competition is among destinations rather than among individual firms, and that the actions of individual territorial components (Tourist enterprises or local institutions) do not determine the capacity to attract resources (tourists and new capitals). Instead this capacity is the result of their systemic action integrated with a coherent tourism development plan which is the expression of different territorial interests (Golinelli, 2002).

Given these considerations, we can support that the literature about the definition of territory and its centrality in the competitive processes ignores the need to "aggregate or disaggregate" different territory in a flexible way. The international competition is not limited to the traditional geo-political or geo-territorial areas, but takes place among meta-organized territories, in which value creation takes place in a world of *non-zero-sum-based* characterized by innovation and growth policy (Pilotti, 2006), that are the "Touristic Multi-Local Eco-Systems" (TMLES).

Hence our attempt to propose a descriptive model that considers the drivers of competitiveness of Touristic Multi-Local Eco-Systems. In these systems, "single" territory becomes "ecological" container of the richness and dynamism of the inimitable factors, thanks to its history and diffuse institutions, to the capacity to feed their knowledge with new ways to produce and use, and new ways to connect actors and institutions inside and outside the system. All this creates competitive advantage for the system (Pilotti, 2006).

The transition from a individual (territorial) competitive logic to Multi-Local Eco-System logic, requires the existence of common objectives toward which converge capacity to planning, human and financial resources and moral energies. It is also necessary, the continuing search of an adequate level of consensus (mobilization, consultation, cooperation of the actors) and the ability of the involved actors to set and respect clear rules of behavior and action (Bramanti, 1997).

This is a broader concept of tourism offer that extends the boundaries of the analysis of competitiveness sources towards the competitiveness of tourist destinations.

From this point of view, we propose a synthetic review of principal competitive drivers on destination management considering that in this literature the changes that have altered the sources of territorial competitiveness are recognized, but the models of evaluation of the overall competitiveness of tourism systems were not clearly developed.

Some authors have focused on some drivers of competitiveness of tourist destinations, others have proposed more comprehensive models, but still refer to the "tourist destinations", shifting concepts from the macro to micro, thereby ignoring the externalities arising from inter- connections macro => meso => micro => macro (...) which make the ecology systemic one of the main drivers of competitiveness of multi-local touristic systems. In particular, as regards the tourist destinations competitiveness drivers, these were in turn identified in the resources (natural or created) in territorial policies (Poon 1993) [4], in individual operators policies and in the tourist behavior (Rispoli and Tamma, 1995; Valdani and Guenzi, 1998)[5]. In reference to multidimensional

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[3] Keller P., *Destination Marketing: strategic questions*, in AIEST, Destination Marketing, Reports of 48th Congress in Marrakech (Marocco), San Gallo (CH), Publications of the AIEST, vol.40, 1998

[4] In particular Poon (1993) suggests four key principles that destinations must follow to be competitive: make tourism a lead sector, namely, put the environment first, strengthen the distribution channels in the market place and build a dynamic private sector.

[5] Rispoli and Tamma bring back the " tourist destination quality " to the suppy ability to enter into a dialectical relationship with the turists, responding effectively and efficiently to the needs of destination users, to the "depth" with which the user participates in implementation of the supply, to the "scale" of alternatives that the destination is able to guarantee and to the " choice "of options actually usable by tourists based on its availability for expenditure. Valdani and Guenzi apply a

approaches, examples are the work of Go and Govers (1999) that evaluates the tourist destination competitiveness based on structural and environmental factors and the work of Buhalis (2000) that introduces the capacity of "integration of supply" as factor of competitiveness.

The importance of relationships as drivers of competitiveness of tourist destinations was introduced by Senn (2002) that emphasizes the role of openness to the outside (accessibility and infrastructure system), the innovative capacity of the economic environment and quality of life (services, environment, security).

As mentioned, some of these contributions are collected and incorporated into more complex analytical schemes that consider several factors that properly integrated, describe the competitiveness of a tourist destination. Among these must surely remember the model proposed by Crounch and Ritchie (1993, 1995, 1999, 2003), which have great impact on current theoretical developments.Therefore it is appropriate dwell briefly on the work of these authors, who starting from the model of "diamond" of Porter (1990), consider many factors (nation-specific, industry specific and firm specific), by reducing the tourist destination competitiveness to its sustainability not only in economic and environmental sense, but also in social, cultural and political sense.

In that perspective, tourist destinations competitiveness is influenced both by characteristics of the global macro environment (not directly related to the tourism sector) and those of micro-competitive environment. In this context, the overall tourist destinations competitiveness is influenced by four groups of factors: *core resources and attractors*: (composed of primary factors of destination appeal, that are the fundamental reasons why a tourist chooses a specific destination over another); *supporting factors* (needed to support the tourism sector); *destination management* and *destination policy*.

The destination competitive potential is limited or conditioned by a number of situational factors called situational conditioners which are different from the factors described as yet. The effects of this group of factors determine scale, limits and potential of destination competitiveness by filtering the influences of the other three groups of factors.

This requires an appropriate strategic framework or policy-driven for planning and development of a destination that provides a guiding hand to the direction, form and structure of tourist development, with the aim of creating an environment that provides maximum benefits with minimum negative impacts.

As we have just said this model has experienced a large following, inspiring many further studies on the subject. Among these one may remaind the work of Ritchie, Crounch e Hudson (2001), Faulkner, Oppermann and Fredline, (1999) and Enright&Newton, (2004, 2005) after integrating the model with quantitative and qualitative indicators, have test it by integrating the industry setting factor and the destination attractiveness mainstream factors. However, some condition of Crouch and Richie model has been criticized, in particular: the lack of directionality of relations among the different competitiveness dimensions, of homogeneity among some main variables and the lack of references to demand conditions (Dwyer and Kim, 2003). From this point of view Dwyer e Kim proposed a rationalization model, according to the "resource based" and neo-structuralist model of Crouch and Ritchie, proposing a framework where demand conditions are a primary determinant of the tourist destinations competitiveness.

According to the authors, tourist destinations competitiveness is a function of:
⇒ resources and attractors, which make the destination attractive to potential customers (including natural and heritage resources and support factors);
⇒ destination management (including destination mangement organisation, destionation marketing management, destination policy planning and development, human resources development, environmental management) ;
⇒ situational conditions, that are exogenous factors, but controlled by the mangement (destination location, competitive micro environment, competitive macro environment, safety, securety and price competitiveness);

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psychological perspective: the consumer purchases essentially an experience, an emotion. The destination value increases if the offer components are much stronger and coordinated with the relations.

$\Rightarrow$ demand conditions (tourist preferences, awareness of destination, destionation image).

Dwyer e Kim show that the determination of destionation competitiveness is complex because many conditions, which can significantly influence the competitive performance and residents quality of life, are difficult to control by a destination manager. In this situation the intervention of Destination Mangement Organizer (DMO) in is needed to transform resources into products required by tourists.

Crouch and Ritchie's classification of destination competitiveness factors explains the difference between comparative advantages (derived from natural, cultural and human resources) and competitive advantages (related to financial, legal, informational, relational and implementation resources), and it shows that the development of a tourist destination does not depend only on its natural and artistic resources, but also the expertise and synergies that it is able to activate.

In the same way Dwyer and Kim distinguish the resources in endowed resouces (natural, heritage and cultural) and created resources (tourism infrastructure, special events, range of available activities, entertainment and shopping) and supporting factor (including tourism infrastructure, quality of service, accessibility of destination, hospitality and market ties).

This demonstrates that many destinations tend to build their success valorizing their natural and cultural resources, because that are non-reproducible, non-imitable and scarce resources (Barney, 1986, 1991, Amit and Schoemaker, 1993 ; Dierickx and Cool, 1989; Grant, 1991, Hamel and Prahalad, 1994). However, there are examples of destination that have focused on artificial resources, such as Las Vegas (Chon and Mayer, 1995).

In this territorial context, tourist destination should be on a network where there are involvement and coordination of different interlocutors. Involvement allows various actors to participate in destination decisions, from network perspective and not from hierarchy perspective. Instead, coordination gives a systemic view of the local tourist offer.

Recently Caroli (2009) proposed a model in which the tourist destination quality is determined by its meta-ability to "create value" for the demand. Value generation is realized putting the tourists in a position to co-produce their own experience, thus differentiating it from competitors supply.

To this end, Caroli creates a value chain "à la Porter" that determines the tourist destination quality according to a precise mix of capacity, identified according to activities that the tourist makes during the tourist experience. These capacity are divided into primary and cross-cutting capacity.

The primary capacity generate value directly influencing the tourist's stay, these one including the communication capacity to communicate (satisfy the tourist's information needs); the capacity to give hospitality to the tourists; the capacity to entertain, the capacity to accommodate (accomodation facilities and services) and the capacity to astonish (due to the beauty of the area, special events and innovative structures).

This model recovers some concepts of Pilotti (2001) about territorial economy and it identifies cross-cutting capacity such as the capacity to integrate the most relevant offer components to a tourist destination (internal integration) and these components with the other components of nearby destinations (external integration); and the capacity to plan and to sustain a compatible tourism development with the environment, economy and society of the destination, in which there are competitive economic actors that valorize the attractive factors of destination.

Therefore, Caroli's model evaluates the capacity to create value of tourist destination in terms of benchmarking and future development, following a work of Pilotti and Fiscato (2006).

3. A model for evaluating the quality and competitiveness of Touristic Multi-local Ecosystems

The model for evaluating the quality-competitiveness of Touristic "Multilocal Ecosystems" (TmLES) presented here complements the model of Dwyer and Kim and the model of the Ecology of value (Pilotti, 2001), also introducing the concept of sustainability not as a limitation, but as an approach to strengthen the competitiveness.

The model of ecological value of Pilotti, assumes that the current competitive environment which increasingly demands excellence, flexibility and integration of services, the networking process is

the dynamic bridge between local and global knowledge. The process allows one side to de-localize the knowledge statements in the places of the territory and secondly to re-contextualize knowledge useful and compatible with innovative modernization of the former. In this context it is strategic to control the relations' system you are part of, contribute to the building and be part of a node with an injection of originality and creativity (Vaccà, 1996; Vicari, 1998). To assess the competitiveness of a TmLES a time-space oriented value matrix is identified that resembles the logistic-communication-connective logic.

This system will allow high accessibility and high appropriability of useful and intercepted resources by the home network and the network of networks, operating in terms of mobility, connectivity, communication, quality-learning in the accumulation of new knowledge and useful skills (Pilotti, 2001). This matrix that was developed to highlight the value chain space-time extended of post-Fordist city area, can be applied to the context of TmLES, using key proxies that emerged from the model of Dwyer and Kim (see Figure 1)

Fig. 1: A model for evaluating the quality and competitiveness of Touristic Multi-local Ecosystems
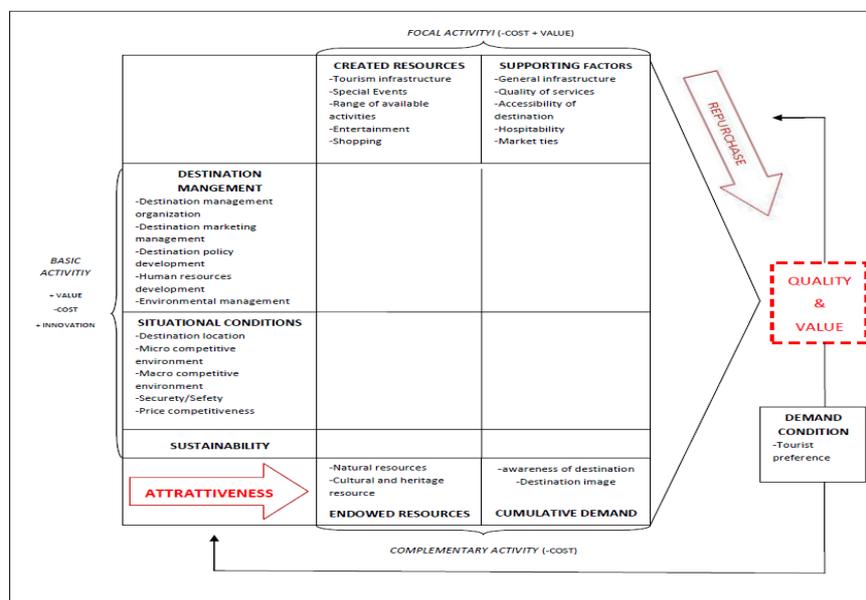

This model is a strategic-ecological model in which it appears as all activities must interact to make a competitive and attractive TmLES. In particular, the matrix shows the basic activities, namely the space-time processes that bring both value and innovation and tend to reduce costs. Among these activities there are: the destination management in relation to all policies in the destination management to improve long-term living conditions of population, maximizing tourist satisfaction, maximizing the profitability of local firms and multiplier the effect of tourist attraction (Buhalis, 2000), situational conditions identified by Dwyer and Kim and sustainability, understood in its broader definition of environmental, the cultural, social and economic sustainability in order to optimize the impacts of tourism by ensuring a sustainable balance between the economic benefits and socio-cultural and environmental costs.

The core activities appears as interdependent as balanced are the activities they are produced by, both in relation to the additional value, both in relation to overall costs'cut that will be measured in their potential to extend the offer of varieties and expansion of the division of labor in the space-time TmLES (Pilotti, 2001). The model also identifies two sets of activities that converge in feeding one or both effects model: attractiveness and competitiveness, these activities, as defined by Crouch and Ritchie first and Dwyer and Kim then, are the main reason that drives tourists to choose a particular destination.These activities are obviously of primary importance on which it becomes necessary to intervene.

In particular, the focal activities are those activities on which you can take action to reduce costs and increase the value for the entire system, creating better results in terms of attractiveness and competitiveness and repurchase. Among these activities there are the created resources, resources identified as closely linked to tourism (tourism infrastructure, special events, entertainment, shopping) and supporting factors that, as already shown by Crouch and Richie, are all factors that contribute to a strong tourist field. Instead complementary activities are those activities that enable it to intervene only in the sphere of cost reduction, which are defined endowed resources, resources of its territory, which are often the true source of competitive advantage in one area, resulting in both poorly imitated, and therefore highly differentiated and immediately usable. The connection and interaction of all activities outlined in the matrix can then create quality and value for TmLES which, in turn, helps to determine attractiveness and competitiveness for the system. You create a virtuous circle between attractiveness-competitiveness-trust-Satisfaction, implemented by the intra-system (Fig. 2). These resources together with the cumulative demand (awareness of destination and destination image) can act to enhance the attractiveness of the system.

Enhancing the value of local resources and territorial expertise creates value and quality for the entire system, which requires adequate governance for the involvement of multiple stakeholders, to define their role and meeting their expectations towards greater cohesion

This implies the system need to meet the best possible interests of various stakeholders (residents, tourists, firms, etc.). The satisfaction of these subjects therefore creates trust, and purchase incentives to invest in territory to increase the attractiveness. The differentiating power and competitive potential are increasingly dependent on intangible elements, in particular the knowledge and trust (Vicari, 1995).

Fig. 2 The links among attractiveness, competitiveness satisfaction and trust in a Touristic multi-Local Eco-System
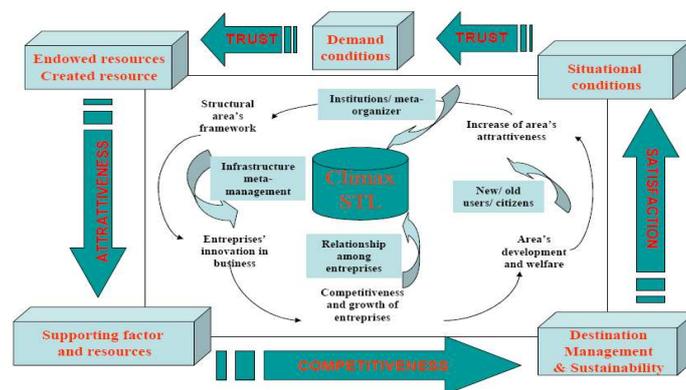

The breadth and complexity of the touristic product/service and the presence of guests and residents on the territory makes the tourist phenomenon involving many companies, but also institutions and actors that in order to compete must take into account needs and interests sometimes different and divergent about identity, cohesion and innovation that the meta-organizers have to make self-containment.

And it should be noted that although there may be differences and conflicts of interests within the TmLES, operators typically have a common dimensional development's interest of the phenomenon, with potential interest in taking cooperative and collaborative attitudes in relation to organizational arrangements and to the production choices of services, in order to accomplish a service of equal quality to that expected by the customer and that can provide competitive advantages compared to services offered by competing systems (Mele, 1997). Thus, the intervention of the meta-organizers aimed to enhance the structural framework of the territory, contributes to the innovation capability of enterprises, which became more competitive and increasing the relationships between them contribute to increase the development and welfare of the whole territory which became more competitive and attractive and places incentives for new investment to strengthen the structural system of "consuming" and "producing" new externalities always shared and (partly) appropriated. This approach, as we shall see referring to Garda TmLES,

allows to take into account the systematic change that is required by international competition to meet growing demand for variety and quality and thus the elongation of the tails of offer and demand. The first thing it refers specifically to the emergence of the phenomenon also in the tourism sector of the so-called "long tail", the second to the demand for multi-tasking (which respond to different expectations and variable in time and space).

These two aspects will be detailed in the following pages, with reference to the case of TmLES of Garda. However, we would say in advance that the "long tail" represents a frequency distribution of demand (behind a branch of hyperbola) with an initial peak of tourists from consolidated few countries that subsequently flattens gradually, including the demand from all other countries According to the model, the latter as a whole should represent a market of larger size than that represented by the traditional countries[6]. In this context a TmLES is even more competitive insofar able to answer to a more segmented demand that is at the same time interconnected by specific nodes that must be gradually identified and activated[7].
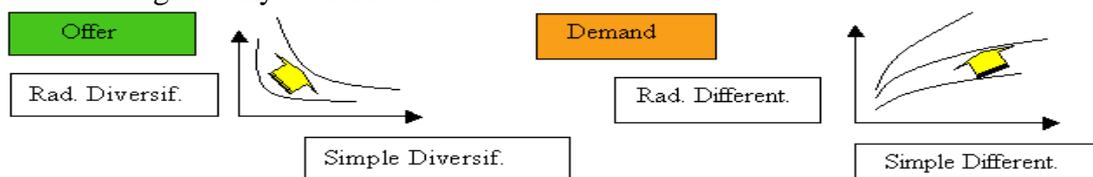
A *matching* between offer and demand, as we shall see, is made more complex by the ongoing transition from local economies focusing on manufacturing economies as tangibles good to intangible-based services supported by externalities of trust, identity and community knowledge between the different actors: residents , users and / or acquired as in the case of tourism.

This requires, as mentioned, an adequate system of matching between all system components to enhance the overall supply, differentiating and amplifying the identity of the individual components. As regards the concept of quality, as mentioned in the introduction, we would consider that this is a broad concept that includes the quality and positioning of individual components, but also (and especially) the overall "ecological multi-local" system, which in turn derives from the connections identified and described in the model.

4. Application of the model Turistic MultiLocal Eco-System (TmLES) of Lake Garda

In this part of the work it is developed empirically the analytical model described above to the case of Multi Local Turistic Eco- System of Garda. This application is the result of a complex research on the structure of offer and demand of tourist services of the multi-regional area of Lake Garda, on the evaluation of strategic behavior of Eco-system, and on developments in relation to institutional and corporate user's changes. Such research weld the traditional macro-sectoral and regional approaches with business and management approaches.

4.1 Garda Eco-touristic system: a framework for synthesis

The Garda system comprises about 40 common (multilocal expression of the three provinces that characterize it) in three different lake shores: that of Brescia, Verona and Trento, that in the last 30 years have greatly diversified their development, learning and adaptation skills to final markets highlighting in particular the most dynamic and more innovative business of the latter two provinces than Brescia. The main features of the Garda system are shown in Table 1:

Table 1: Features of accomodation capacity and touristic flows of Lake Garda TmLES (2008)

	Total Garda	Quota % Verona	Quota % Trento	Quota % Brescia
Hotels	1.080	49	14	37

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[6] In these distributions a population at high frequency (or amplitude) is followed by a population (long tail) at low frequency (or amplitude), which gradually decreases (tail off). For further information on this concept, see Anderson (2006)

[7] For further information on the long tail in tourism see Lew (2008), which explores the relationship between the spread of social networks and the segmentation of the tourist demand.

Beds	63.580	43	17	40
Hotel arrivals	2.366.908	47,28	18,17	34,55
Hotel room nigths	8.656.587	45,44	18,74	35,83

Source: Lakes Observatory, University of Milan-DEAS- database, Province of Brescia, Trento and Verona

4.2 Data base, methodology and tools used

The database on which the analysis of competitiveness of the different shores of Garda Lake is based, is the result of an research desk, who collected and homogenized, existing statistical data from local organizations, from major research institutes and from questionnaires made trough the direct interview and the cawi method to hotel operators and demand[8]. This qualitative and quantitative assessments, referring to a sample of 180 hotel units[9] and 222 tourists[10]. In-depth interviews up to 10 local and multilocal authorities were carried out to local associations of hoteliers of the three shores, which are experts in particular of the determinants of destination management. The respondents were asked to express an opinion on certain factors and resources, assigning a score to each variable from 1 to 5. These assessments have been properly drawn up and grouped into categories of variables identified in our model, resulting in an optical benchmarking the lakeshore more competitive.It should be noted in this connection that the answers have some missing and this has influenced the choice of variables examined/considered in the analysis.
The analysis of competitiveness is based on:

a) *Model for quality evaluation of Multi Local Touristic Ecosystem* (shown in Figure 1) which as mentioned, is a descriptive model. In our case, the considered variables are:
   - *Endowed resources* (Climate, Environment, Welcome country, Culture and lore);
   - *Created resources* (Events, Sport & entertainment, Wellness Spa, Wellness facilities, Sport facilities, Shopping);
   - *Supporting factor* (Transport, Public transport, Road conditions and sign, Touristic sign, Parking, Accomodation facilities, Restaurant, Information centre, Cleanliness);
   - *Situational conditions* (Safety, Price competitiveness, Home nearness, Tuoristic centre nearness);
   - *Cumulative demand* (Destination image, Awareness of destination);
   - *Destination management* (Destination management organization, Destination marketing management, Destination policy development, Human resources development, Environmental management);
   - *Sustainability*

The performance considered are:
   - The proportion of hotel room nights in the period 2000-2008
   - The distribution of hotel room nights by country of origin

b) *The processes' radar*
The analysis process is based on identifying their score on core activities, which have been mentioned above. As we will see, in the processes' radar will be highlighted levels achieved by the average of hotels of the three sides of the lake and the average estimates of demand. In this way you can think in terms of benchmarking and easily determine the strengths and weaknesses relative and absolute of the considered local systems

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[8] The survey was performed from July 2009 to January 2010.
[9] These are mainly hotels of medium-sized in terms of turnover (38% between € 250-500 thousand and 30% between € 500 thousand -1million) in terms of beds(43% between 6-15 beds), which reflects the hotel's distribution in the system of Garda lake (46% of hotel belong to the side of Brescia, 41% of Verona and 13% of Trento).
[10] The sample of tourists include males (46%) and females (54%). The age of tourists is: 25% under 30 years, 22% between 30 and 39 years and 53% over 40 years . The majority of participants are well-educated individuals (48% graduates and 41% university graduates) who went to the lake mostly driven by reasons of tourism (82%), with the family (52%) and friends (38%), and which have remained mainly for short periods (weekends, long weekend). The scarce accessibility to the lake by public transport makes the tourist prefers to reach the lake by car (78%). Overall, tourists interviewed were "loyal" to the lake: the majority of them have already been at lake several times (89%) and therefore have a broad knowledge of the portfolio of resources related to the competitiveness of the destination.

c) *Qualitative evaluation of the intensity, frequency and direction of relations*: based on in-depth interviews with key players of the system.

4.3 Main Results of the analysis

a) the competitive positioning of the three lake shores: through the model for the assessment of Multi Local Touristic Ecosystem's quality

As mentioned above, the analysis of the positioning of shores is based on several aspects. For each of them has been calculated to a summary analysis on each shore, reducing them to the corresponding questions. The latter reported the evaluations of players (firms, institutions and associations) on a scale from 1 to 5. For each of the questions was also calculated the average rating. The average ratings on individual applications of each shore have resulted in an additional average for each single item, thus arriving at a final score.

The results are shown below (the complete table with the scores in the appendix 1).

Table 2: Evaluation of basic activity and focal activity of the three shores of Garda Lake (green score the best, the worst in red)			
	Brescia	*Verona*	*Trento*
Endowed resources	3,540365	3,625098	3,864203
Created resources	3,059314	3,248917	3,176116
Supporting factor	3,001347	2,90754	3,315448
Situational conditions	3,111569	3,230866	3,201652
Cumulative demand	3,27235	4,011715	3,762335
Destination management	3,168156	3,598104	3,447198
Sustainability	3,5232	4,1652	4,5268

Source: Own calculations

In this regard, must be reported the following: the endowed resources, as highlighted above, are considered by many the main attraction for tourists, taking into account variables such as climate, nature and environment, hospitality and friendliness of the people, culture and local traditions has emerged as the most competitive edge is that of Trentino. This is due to the fact that the bank has directed towards positioning environmentalist, healthy and sporty interests to which have a higher friendlyship. This lake shore also stands to become more competitive with regard to supporting factors (identified by variables such as public and private transport, road signs and roads, parking lots, tourist signs, quality of accommodation and restaurants and points of information), for the greater attention to policies on sustainability, particularly as regards water protection and preservation of natural environments and thus indicating greater action policies and integrated system investments.

Our model shows clearly how the Brescia shore is the least competitive, while it is possible to consider the overall Veronese shore as the most competitive especially in terms of resources created (special events, quality of sports facilities, leisure and shopping) and situational conditions highlighted by security, accessibility and price competitiveness' factors.

Also it appears to have better governance in the tourism sector showing the highest value of destination management and a better approach to tourism demand (destination image and awareness of destination), due most likely to the very varied offer that passes through entertainment, gastronomy, music, culture and healthy activities, influenced by the "system theme parks" and "Wine Roads" which are interwoven between shore and the hinterland of Verona. This offer is helped by a better logistic accessibility and it is among the best configured (see aspects already highlighted, Pilotti, 1996)

It should be noted that the three lake shores of the lake also differ with regard to foreign markets which together account for about 70% of total hotel room nights. In particular, as clearly shown by

the graphs in Brescia side 70% of foreign attendance (1.5 million) is concentrated in three markets: Germany, United Kingdom and Belgium, very similar also in the shore of Trentino 72, 5% of foreign attendance (0.97 million) comes from only three countries: Germany, United Kingdom and Ireland. It thus appears, as described earlier, underestimation of the emerging "long tail".

Fig. 2: Foreign room night distribution by origin country. The "Long Tail"
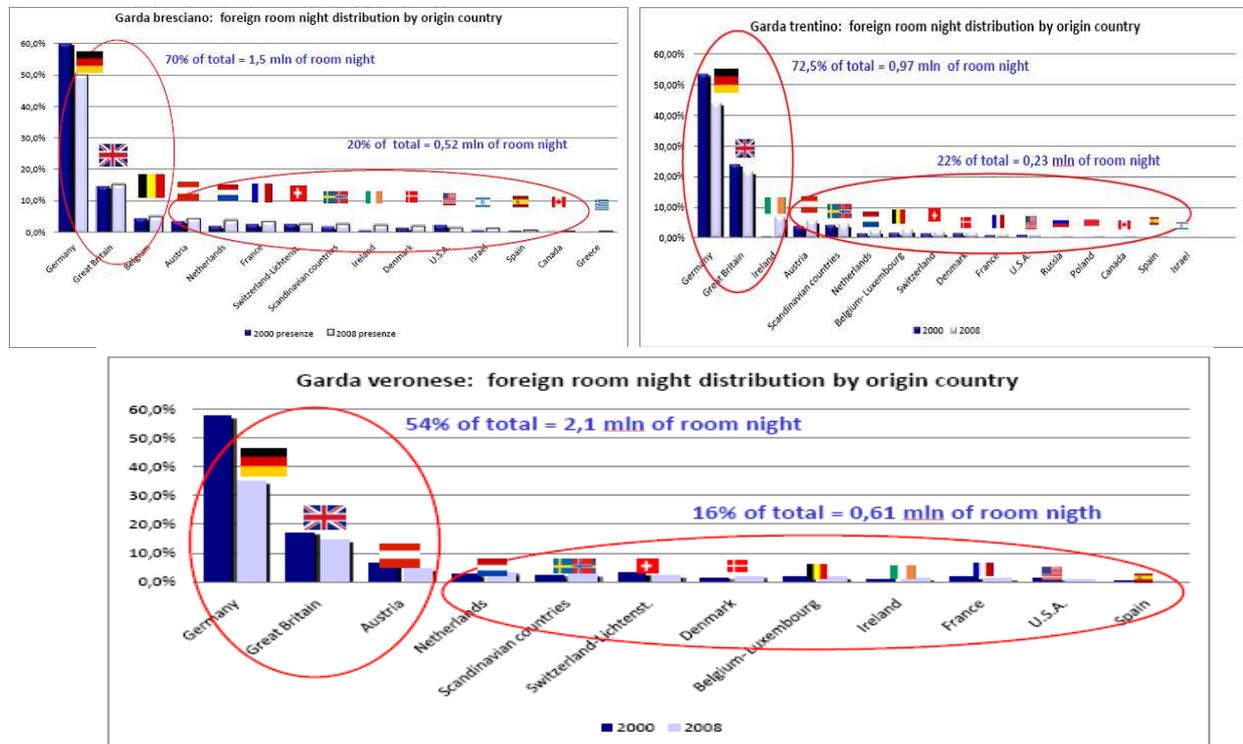
Source: Lakes Observatory, University of Milan-DEAS- database of Lombardy Region, Province of Brescia, Trento and Verona

In contrast, in the Verona shore the first three foreign countries (German United Kingdom and Austria) are "only" 54% of the foreign attendance (2.12 million). On that shore there was a substitution effect in demand through greater attention to countries "emerging and new" country, i.e. the identification of "empty of offer" (business opportunities unattended by competitors) of emerging "long tails" (segments of demand, where competition is currently limited, since individually represent modest market share, but together they represent and will represent significant shares) and its opportunities for placement.

The Veronese shore then absorbed the progressive decrease in attendance from the traditional market (most affected by the crisis), only recently turning to the countries of the long tail. Although still in its infancy, in Figure 2 can also be observed trend towards the transformation of the "long tail" into the "fat tail", characterized by increased size of the various markets that make up the long tail, representing further potential growth of the Verona system . In this sense it is possible to interpret the results of our model, which positions it as the more competitive shore (even given its larger market share and greater elasticity of demand for reference), that is directed towards improving performance, although it has not yet exhausted its potential, as it appears from its performance in terms of TOL and average stay, which are still in line with those of other shores.

*b) the analysis of the three shores through the processes' radar*

Another food for thought also emerges from the comparison of assessments by the demand and operators effectively shown in Figure 3[11]. The analysis is based on identifying their score on the variables described above, suitably standardized.

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[11] We have considered only comparable variables, and among them we took those that the sample interviewed has judged most important.

In particular it is interesting to note that the hoteliers of the Trentino's shore are more self-confidence in evaluating the issues related to services and infrastructure of the system as they tend to underestimate their own facilities and catering services. As for the other two sides a substantially better tourist satisfaction in all areas considered is highlighted, particularly the untapped potential not exploited and exploitable by the hotels of the Verona side is greater, confirming the view expressed earlier, that that shore has a large potential for improvement in terms of competitiveness and obtainable performance.

The main result that emerges is that in many cases we are witnessing greater satisfaction of demand over supply: first, as it is known, assesses the attractiveness of the entire system/product, while the individual operators tend to evaluate with a degree of myopia their competitiveness (compared to intra-system). This potential, which should be investigated thoroughly in order to be exploited in its long term scale, confirms the quality and competitiveness of a territorial system is greater than the sum of the quality of individual components.

Fig.3 : Processes' radar: comparison between the evaluations of demand and hotel supply
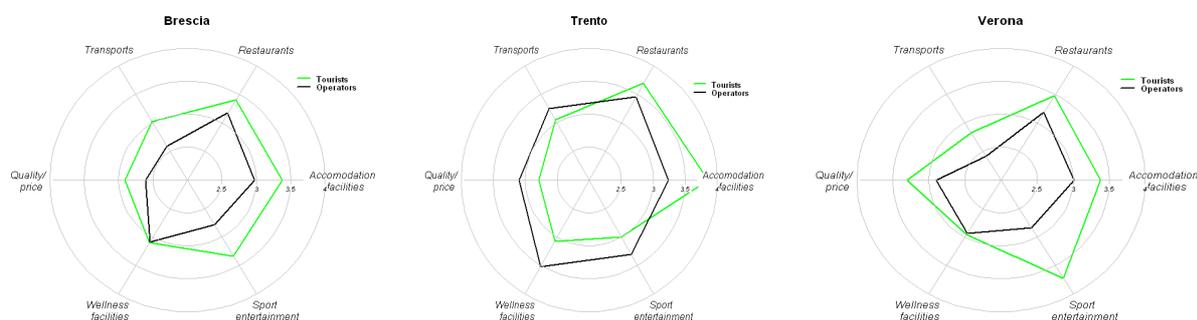
Source: Own survey

c) Qualitative evaluations of relations

Interpreting the qualitative assessments regarding the relations of communication / information, equipment and design that each respondent has with other actors in the system (relations between associations and operators, and between organizations, institutions and operators) other interesting thoughts arise in relation to the role of this factor in determining competitiveness.

From a summary of these assessments it emerged as in the Verona side there is greater connectivity, collaboration and communication among various stakeholders, particularly between hotel operators and associations, there is also a good level of dialogue with local authorities. Even from Trentino's shore it emerged a good level of connections; unlike in the Brescia side, there is a low-level relationships, especially with poor communication between hoteliers and associations. This phenomenon confirms how a strong relational network positively affect the competitiveness of local systems and the need to aggregate the various components into a single multi-local touristic Eco-system (the three lake shores) through specific system meta-organizers which exploiting their excellence, developing mechanisms for coo-petition inter and intra system for sustainable governance of the growing competition that has in the "long tail" an initial and significant event.

5. Conclusion and issues for further research

The proposed model for evaluate the competitiveness of a tourism multi-local system assumes that this eco-system is a active container of economic, relational and cognitive dynamics, as well as it is source of specific factors that are relevant to value creation. The total value of this system is greater than the sum of individual factors, since it incorporates the operated of public and private, individual and collective, institutional and non-profit and non-profit actors and influences their relations, defining the internal and external factors of competitiveness and defining the sources of externalities that gradually reproduce and extend the levers of appropriability (Pilotti, 1997).

Relations system are therefore the basis of the potential competitiveness of tourist multi-local systems, because they establish the capacity to "learn to learn" as an expression of intangible assets that can improve or innovate the adaptation of system actors to environmental, market, technological and organizational evolution of the end users and more generally of all the other stakeholders.

The relationship between resource and users consolidates the system's capacity to produce value from spread externalities and the capacity to compete with other tourist multi-local systems, which differ not only according to endowed resources, but also and mainly according to the quality of active relationships. This approach requires an overall evaluation of the actions, decisions and effects of this subjective and systemic articulation within an economic, institutional and multi-territorial space sufficiently unified and homogeneous, without neglecting the specificities, identity (tangibles and intangibles resource) of each component.

The application of this approach, however limited, to the Garda case has highlighted the potential evaluation of the model, whose implementation, however, requires further investigation. These include in particular the identification of measurable and comparable indicators and over time and space for evaluating objectively:

- The competitiveness of different touristic multilocal systems from a benchmarking point of view not only internal but also external (eg we refer to the degree of symmetry / asymmetry in the division of labor between firms, tourist or otherwise, and the institutional environment of the area;
- the quality of resources and expertise mobilized by the area, in terms of learning skills and innovation and also the allocation of structural resources, such as extra-hotel operation (whose findings are being processing)

This latter approach allows you to implement better integration of the *micro-meso-macro* logic and parallel to increase the knowledge of local contexts, not only from a *static* point of view - in terms of resources and expertise possessed, but also from a *dynamic* point of view - in terms of resources and expertise necessary and compatible and standing (competitive potential) for sustainable development based on territorial vocation and entrepreneurial local system.

This is essential to generate virtuous circles between local and global dimension of tourism in a *Multi-local Touristic Ecosystems*, to sustain their competitiveness to the "external competitors", differentiate their overall offerings, through the continued reconfiguration of its portfolio asset, services, knowledge and relationships as a dynamic ecology.

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Appendix 1

Model variables							
	Brescia	**Verona**	**Trento**		**Brescia**	**Verona**	**Trento**
Endowed resources				**Situational conditions**			
Climate (T)	3,860465	3,880952	4,08	Safety (T)	3,307692	3,194444	3,333333
Environment (T)	3,969466	3,906977	4,333333	Price competitiveness (T)	2,908333	3,29963	2,791667
Welcome country (T)	3,286885	3,361111	3,521739	Price competitiveness (A)	2,60582	2,898352	3,100649
Culture and lore (T)	3,044643	3,351351	3,521739	home nearness (T)	3,368	3,380952	3,391304
Mean	*3,540365*	*3,625098*	*3,864203*	Tuoristic centre nearness (T)	3,368	3,380952	3,391304
Created resources				*Mean*	*3,111569*	*3,230866*	*3,201652*
Events (T)	3,04717	3,333333	3,458333	**Cumulative demand**			
Sport & entertainment (T)	3,336735	3,72973	3	Destination image (T)	3,0121	3,5232	4,00215
Wellness Spa (T)	3,097222	2,96	3,071429	Awareness of destination (T)	3,5326	4,50023	3,52252
Wellness facilities (A)	3,090659	2,931548	3,522727	*Mean*	*3,27235*	*4,011715*	*3,762335*
Sport facilities (A)	2,788462	2,842566	3,305648	**Supporting factor**			
Shopping (T)	2,995638	3,696326	2,69856	Transport (T)	3,022989	2,828571	3,052632
Mean	*3,059314*	*3,248917*	*3,176116*	Public transport (A)	2,592593	2,417582	3,255814
Destination management				Road conditions and sign (A)	2,912088	2,637363	3,078231
Destination management organization	3,5524	3,6585	3,6632	Touristic sign (A)	2,978437	2,760989	3,289037
Destination marketing management	3,32426	3,8563	3,25236	Parking (A)	2,478992	2,332362	2,982143
Destination policy development	2,99236	3,56752	3,34553	Accomodation facilities (T)	3,372881	3,378378	3,851852
Human resources development	3,01556	3,6526	3,4636	Restaurant (T)	3,398374	3,47619	3,689655
Environmental management	2,9562	3,2556	3,5113	Accomodation facilities (A)	2,969925	3,015873	3,238095
Mean	*3,168156*	*3,598104*	*3,447198*	Restaurant (A)	3,170426	3,187831	3,457792
Sustainability				Information centre (A)	2,87013	2,71978	3,214286
Mean	*3,5232*	*4,1652*	*4,5268*	Cleanliness (A)	3,247978	3,228022	3,36039
				Mean	*3,001347*	*2,90754*	*3,315448*

(T= tourists; A= Hotel operators)