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The Sustainable Competitiveness of Tourism in Europe

Antonio Magliulo

Rome University of International Studies

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Introduction

- The European Commission has recently approved the *Programme for the Competitiveness of Enterprises and SMEs* (COSME).
- This is just the most recent decision. For a long time the Commission has considered tourism a key activity for reinforcing the sustainability and the competitiveness of the entire European economy.
- My research question: how can we enhance the sustainable competitiveness of tourism destinations in Europe?
- Structure: A) Target; B) European Policy; C) NECSTouR Model

A. The Target

- What is the sustainable competitiveness of tourism destinations?
- Which are its main determinants?
- How can we measure it?

Tourism Destination

- A tourism destination is a physical space endowed by attractions (the pull factor)
 - *Corporate*: They are similar to companies (theme park)
 - *Community*: it is a cluster in Porter's sense, that is «geographic concentrations of interconnected companies and institutions»
- Community Destinations are territorial communities and have far more complex characteristics
 - They have variable boundaries. Scholars speak of a "sense-making phenomenon from a demand perspective".
 - They offer different goods and services
 - They are exposed to asymmetrical information

Tourism Destination/2

- Destination is the tourism product that consumers demand and evaluate: whether a theme park or an art city.
- In corporate destinations, a business strategy can more easily be identified
- In community destinations, we instead have a major coordination problem: who can transform a heterogeneous set of goods and services into a homogeneous product to be offered to tourists, and how can they do it?
- The big problem of coordination aims at creating an integrated product
 - Neither hierarchy and market nor a central planner

The relationships between competitiveness and sustainability

- We often intend:
 - competitiveness as the ability to increase the well-being of residents and
 - sustainability as the choice to ensure the same opportunity to future generations
- Competitiveness as efficiency for present generations
- Sustainability as equity for future generations

Competitiveness

- EU Regional Competitiveness Index 2010

“We can define (systemic) competitiveness of a territory as the ability of a locality or region to generate high and rising incomes and improve livelihoods of the people living there.”

Sustainability

- In the Brundtland Report approved by the United Nations in 1987, it is said that economic development is sustainable if it meets the demands of the present generations without affecting the possibility of future generations to meet their needs.
- In 1988, WTO set the idea out for tourism: tourism development is sustainable if it meets the demands of the residents and visitors of today without affecting the options of the residents and visitors of tomorrow

Drivers and Measurements

- “If you can’t measure it, – a famous aphorism of contemporary business economics declares – you can’t manage it”. “Science is measurement”, reads another famous motto coined in 1933 by the Econometric Society.
- The World Economic Forum publishes an annual report on the competitiveness of the national economic systems constructed on the basis of 14 pillars
- The same technique has been used to prepare a Travel & Tourism Competitiveness Index.

Travel & Tourism Competitiveness Index: C without S

- The drivers of competitiveness include sustainability, but restricted to the environmental sphere.
- It seems that they are talking about competitiveness without sustainability (or with limited sustainability).

Insight Report

The Travel & Tourism Competitiveness Report 2013

Reducing Barriers to Economic Growth and Job Creation

1. *Policy rules and regulations*
2. *Environmental sustainability*
3. *Safety and security*
4. *Health and hygiene*
5. *Prioritization of Travel & Tourism*
6. *Air transport infrastructure*
7. *Ground transport infrastructure*
8. *Tourism infrastructure*
9. *ICT infrastructure*
10. *Price competitiveness in the T&T industry*
11. *Human resources*
12. *Affinity for Travel & Tourism*
13. *Natural resources*
14. *Cultural resources*

S without C

- There are also scholars who have sought to measure the sustainability of tourism development using analysis techniques that had originally been prepared and experimented in other areas:
 - the carrying capacity, namely the maximum number of tourists a destination can host without risking its territorial assets and
 - the ecological footprint, namely the human consumption of natural resources with respect to the amount of resources available (renewable).
- In these cases, we are dealing with sustainability without competitiveness

The idea of sustainable competitiveness

- According to Ritchie and Crouch, the competitiveness of a destination depends on two factors:
 - the "assets" (resource endowments)
 - the capacity to use them (resource deployment)
- The tourism "assets" are the sum of various resources: natural, cultural, intellectual and infrastructural. Assets that can be looked after and optimised or destroyed.

Sustainability as driver of competitiveness

- Assets are important for future generations, but also for present generations.
- A destination that protects the environment, improves the quality of life of its residents, protects the local identities and reduces wastage of energy resources is not only more sustainable in the future, but also more competitive in the present.
- More and more tourists will choose and reward sustainable destinations.
- As Ritchie and Crouch wrote: “Competitiveness without sustainability is illusory”

In brief

- Destination is the real tourism product
- The sustainable competitiveness of tourism destinations is the capacity to generate high or growing well-being for residents and tourists, whilst safeguarding the destination's assets.

B. The European policy of tourism

- Some important steps:
 - October 2007: Communication of the Commission “Agenda for a Sustainable and Competitive European Tourism”
 - December 2009: Entry into force of the Lisbon Treaty
 - June 2010: Communication of Commission « Europe, the world’s No 1 tourist destination –”
- The beginning of a new policy

The new action framework

- The European Commission adopted for tourism a Target as well as a Strategy.
- The target is ambitious: “Europe must remain the world’s No 1 destination, able to capitalise on its territorial wealth and diversity.”
- The strategy is based on several actions aiming at reinforcing the sustainable competitiveness of European tourism destinations

4 Priorities/1

1. Stimulate competitiveness in the European tourism sector;
 - *Promoting diversification of the supply of tourist services (pilgrimage routes)*
 - *Developing innovation in the tourism industry (ICT)*
 - *Improving professional skills (Leonardo)*
 - *Encouraging an extension of the tourist season (Calypso), also to strengthen the feeling of European citizenship*

4 Priorities/2-3-4

2. Consolidate the image and profile of Europe as a collection of sustainable and high-quality destinations (brand Europe);

3. Maximise the potential of EU financial policies and instruments for developing tourism.

4. Promote the development of sustainable, responsible and high-quality tourism (NECSTouR and EDEN)

EU sustainable competitiveness

“The sector's competitiveness is closely linked to its sustainability, as the quality of tourist destinations is strongly influenced by their natural and cultural environment and their integration into a local community.”

C. NECSTouR

- In June 2009 three European regions - Catalonia, PACA and Tuscany - founded NECSTouR (Network of European Regions for a Sustainable and Competitive Tourism), a non-profit association that brings together regions, universities and businesses working in the European tourism industry.
- The aim is to promote sustainable competitiveness of tourism destinations through social dialogue among stakeholders (multilevel governance) and measurement/monitoring of tourism phenomena (awareness)

NECSTouR/2

- NECSTouR sets out the idea of sustainable competitiveness into ten major objectives - taken from the European Agenda - which can be measured using a set of statistical indicators to be prepared on the basis of data already available from the research institutes and administrative headquarters of large and small destinations.
- A broader vision of sustainability

10 objectives/pillars

- limit the environmental impact of transport
- increase the quality of life of residents
- increase the quality of employment
- reduce the seasonality of tourism flows
- protect the cultural heritage
- protect the environmental heritage
- protect the identity of destinations
- reduce and optimise the use of natural resources and water in particular
- reduce and optimise energy consumption
- reduce and manage waste

Objectives and indicators of sustainable competitiveness

PILLARS/OBJECTIVES	INDICATORS
1. To limit the environmental impact of transport	a. CO ₂ emissions (index number) b. km ² cycle paths/km ² municipal territory c. no. ecological public transport vehicles/total public transport vehicles
1. To increase the quality of life of residents	a. arrivals/km ² b. presences/residents c. (residents + presences)/km ²
1. To increase the quality of employment	a. employees in tourism according to genre/total employees in tourism b. seasonal employees in tourism/total employees in tourism c. unemployed tourism workers/tourism workforce
1. To reduce the seasonality of tourism flows	a. sum of presences in the three busiest months/sum of presences in the three least busy months b. average TO of the 3 busiest months/average TO of the 3 least busy months c. average hotel prices during the three busiest months/average hotel prices during the three least busy months

Actions

- Best practices
- Contribution to the elaboration of European policy
- Training
- Research

Criticism

- The ten objectives are certainly drivers of sustainable competitiveness.
- Those listed, however, are just some of the factors of competitiveness and sustainability of a territory.
- A destination may have achieved the ten objectives and not be competitive suffering economic decline.
- Competitiveness also depends on other factors. It depends, for example, on image, safety, prices ...

Criticism/2

- The indicators proposed by NECSTouR are useful and interesting. But there are a great many indicators for some objectives, whilst few for others and not all are true indicators.
- Add an eleventh pillar - price competitiveness - and select the indicators more.

Conclusions

- To enhance the sustainable competitiveness of tourism destinations we need:
 - A multilevel governance to promote social dialogue among stakeholders in order to build an integrate tourism supply and therefore
 - To better understand that visitors wish to live an experience in the destination
 - Sustainability is a driver of competitiveness
- Europe is moving (slowly) in the right direction