



MUSEUM NETWORKS AND SUSTAINABLE TOURISM MANAGEMENT. THE CASE STUDY OF MARCHE REGION'S MUSEUMS (ITALY)

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ABSTRACT

Over the past twenty years, research on cultural tourism has sought to find a balance between tourism development and cultural heritage conservation. However scholars have not focused on the enhancement of local cultural heritage as an asset to raise awareness of new cultural destinations and to prevent overcrowding in just a few cultural cities.

After a discussion of literature on heritage tourism management, this paper presents the results of a survey on museum networks in the Marche Region of Italy. Research suggests that museum networks have an important role in promoting local cultural heritage, but that they are not yet able to exploit economies of scale, to then ensure the museums' survival and development as well as their contribution to sustainable tourism.

KEY WORDS

Cultural heritage, sustainable tourism, cultural tourism, heritage tourism, local museums, museum networks

ECONLIT KEYS

L31, L38, Q01, Z11

1. INTRODUCTION

The most distinctive feature of Italian cultural heritage is the deep relationship between museums and the local context: squares, roads, monuments, countryside and artworks preserved not only in museums, but also beyond museum doors – in churches, convents, monasteries, and other historical buildings and open spaces. Italy's competitive advantage in cultural heritage comes not only from the masterpieces preserved in the most important and biggest Italian museums, such as the Uffizi Gallery in Florence or the Academia Galleries in Venice. In actuality, it is primarily in the continuity of cultural heritage, in the all-encompassing, pervasive material evidence of humanity and its environment (Toscano, 1998). For this reason Chastel (1980) called Italy a “threefold natural museum”, where the collection, the historical building where it is preserved and the town in which it is located are mutually linked in an exemplary manner as three different aspects of the same museum. Hence, the characteristics of Italian cultural heritage could be synthesized in 3 Cs: capillarity, contextualization and complementarity (Golinelli, 2008) (Figure 1).

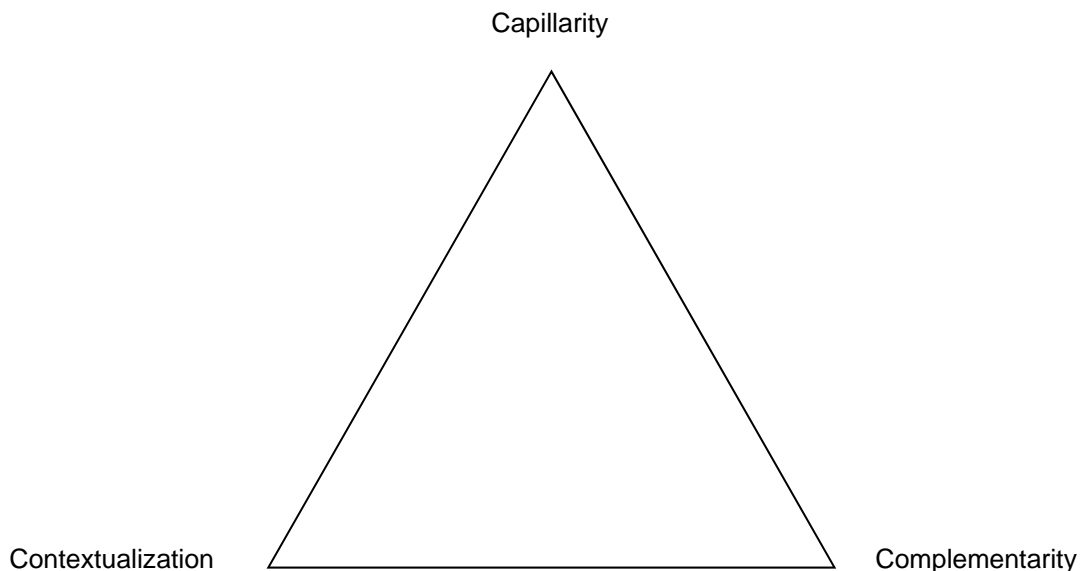


Figure 1. The competitive advantage of Italian cultural heritage in 3 Cs.

Consequently, when defining the criteria and standards for museum management and development, the Ministerial Decree of 10 May 2001 forecasts a section about the relationships between the museum and its context. Indeed, according to Italian

law, museums are required to broaden their mission in order to include locally preserved heritage.

Most of these museums – especially local ones – provide a focus for community identity and a valuable resource for education, but are not yet heritage attractions and cannot be considered as the basis for local tourism development. Local museums are small and almost unknown, have scant financial and human resources, restricted opening hours and not many visitors. Consequently, they attract little investment, resulting in a vicious circle that needs a systemic solution to ensure local cultural heritage survival. Therefore, when considering local museums' sustainable development, the phrase "the greater the use, the greater the wear and tear" (Cossons, 1989: 193) should be changed to say "the less use, the greater the wear and tear".

While sharing the assumptions that cultural heritage is an inimitable and irreplaceable resource (Barney, 1991) and the enhancement of cultural heritage should create long-term value according to a multidimensional and multi-stakeholder approach, this paper explores aspects of sustainable heritage tourism development that have not yet been taken into account by scholars and policy makers.

According to the resource-based approach, the research examines the capability of museum networks to enhance the distinctive features of Italian cultural heritage and overcome the management issues of local museums. Analysing the results of a survey on a sample of Marche Region's museums¹¹, the paper aims at understanding the network capability of local museums and their possible contribution to heritage tourism and local development, answering the following research questions:

- What are Italian local museums' weaknesses?
- Which goals have local museums already achieved through network organizations?
- Are museum networks able to provide facilities and services that can ensure the museums' survival and development as well as their contribution to local sustainable tourism?
- Which benefits have museum networks not yet explored?

2. LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1) FROM CULTURAL TOURISM TO HERITAGE TOURISM

Since the 1970s, due to pay increases, higher education and the expansion of the “new middle class”, cultural tourism has become one of the most significant and fastest growing components of tourism across Europe as a whole². Since then literature on tourism management has been captivated with the idea of cultural tourism, investigating and clarifying its components, goals and perspectives. Analysing different definitions, Hughes (1996) concluded that:

Cultural tourism includes visits to historic buildings and sites, museums, art galleries, etc. and also to view contemporary paintings or sculpture or to attend the performing arts (Richards 1994). The former is also distinguished as “historical tourism” (Smith 1989) or “heritage tourism”. Prentice (1993), however, also uses the term “heritage tourism” to include natural history attractions and the performing arts. The second form of cultural tourism may be classified as “arts tourism” though this term is used by Myerscough (1988) to cover museums and art galleries as well. Moreover, the purpose of “cultural” tourists may be to experience “culture” in the sense of a distinct way of life. Aspects of this have been described as “ethnic tourism” (Smith 1989). As such, most tourism is “cultural” in that visits will usually involve some exposure to aspects of other cultures. (Hughes, 1996: 707)

Considering the increasing attention on heritage tourism, Palmer defined heritage as “the buzz word of the 1990s” (1999: 315). Heritage tourism, as part of the broader category of “cultural tourism”, has become the major pillar of the tourism strategy of the European Commission and its emergence “has spawned a veritable plethora of studies dedicated to the analysis of the heritage phenomenon and the reasons for its spectacular growth” (Richards, 1996: 262). In particular, a narrow definition, considering heritage as all the cultural traditions, places and values that people, through policy makers, are proud to conserve, has been drawn more broadly, associating heritage with a “special sense of belonging and of continuity that is different for each person” (Millar, 1989: 13) or “an invention itself invented by

societies intent on finding legitimacy through history” (Dominguez, 1986: 550). In addition, a supply-side approach, based on specific site attributes (Garrod and Fyall, 2001: 1050), has been opposed in favour of a demand-side approach, based on tourists’ motivations and perceptions (Poria, Butler and Airey, 2001; Poria, Butler and Airey, 2003).

First of all, literature on heritage tourism management has focused on heritage marketing (Thorburn, 1986), analysing tourism demand, postmodern cultural consumptions, the role of cultural heritage in the quest for authenticity (Richards, 1996; Timothy and Boyd, 2003; Pine and Gilmore, 2007) and the impact of heritage “exploitation” on local context and communities (Herbert, 1995). In this perspective, crossing anthropological and managerial issues and revisiting MacCannell’s studies (MacCannell, 1973; MacCannell, 1976), some scholars have focused on the relationship between authenticity and sustainability (Cohen, 2002), examining the concepts of objective authenticity (Chhabra, 2012) and perceived authenticity (Chhabra, Healy and Sills, 2003) and discussing the risk of commoditization of culture and touristification of places (Korstanje, 2012a; Korstanje, 2012b; Korstanje and George, 2012).

Moreover, according to a supply-side approach, many academic textbooks concentrated on Heritage Visitor Attractions management (Leask and Yeoman, 2009; Timothy and Boyd, 2003) and heritage tourism management in less-developed nations (Timothy, 2009).

Concerning the Italian context, since the end of the 1980s scholars have pointed out “the lack of heritage management in a country that has Europe’s largest potential supply of heritage attractions (Irish Tourist Board 1988)” (Richards, 1996: 269). In particular, literature on cultural destination management has stressed the lack of coordination between “actors in charge of heritage management and those in charge of tourism development at the local level” (De Carlo and Dubini, 2010: 33). Moreover, research has considered the reputation of an area, analysing the relationship between cultural heritage and its location (Siano and Siglioccolo, 2008; Siano, Eagle, Confetto and Siglioccolo, 2010).

However, little academic attention has been paid to exploring the relationship between heritage management and sustainable tourism development (Silberberg, 1995; Garrod and Fyall, 2000; du Cros, 2001; Caserta and Russo, 2002; Aas, Ladkin

and Fletcher, 2005; McKercher and du Cros, 2008). In this perspective, scholars have investigated the carrying capacity of tourism, stressing the negative effects of tourism on heritage (traffic, pollution, congestion, etc.) and concentrating on the conservation aspects of heritage tourism – e.g. the physical use and overuse heritage. In order to prevent destruction or near-destruction of historical landmarks as well as of the natural environment, they have tried to find a balance between tourism and cultural heritage management, between tourist consumption of extrinsic values and conservation of intrinsic values. Therefore, interest has been shown in assessing the conditions that must be met in order to secure heritage tourism sustainability, such as pricing decisions – e.g. “token” pricing strategies, timed tickets, limiting parking space, etc. (Garrod and Fyall, 2000). Furthermore, research has analysed the decline in “high-paying” demand segments, increasingly substituted by visitors with lower quality expectations, and its consequences on heritage use and preservation (Caserta and Russo, 2002). As suggested by Montella (2003) the results of excessive and indiscriminate crowding and cultural heritage physical consumption have resulted in significantly higher costs than benefits, especially for public expenditures. Moreover, they have distorted the perception and configuration of cultural items and their context, contributing to the increasing deterioration of most Italian local heritage sites far away from the “superstar” museums and cultural cities.

Given this context, the possibility of taking advantage of the new and increased tourist demand in search of “authentic” local culture should be analysed (Cicerchia, 2009), raising awareness of new potential cultural destinations in the tourism market, and then reducing negative externalities and diseconomies arising from the concentration of tourism flows towards a few cultural cities.

2.2) THE ROLE OF MUSEUMS IN HERITAGE TOURISM

According to the ICOM definition museums are non-profit institutions which operate in the service of society and its development for the purposes of education, study, and enjoyment (ICOM Statutes, 2007). Existing for the public benefit and utility, in the 21st century they have to face a double challenge: on the one hand, they must reach a wider and more diversified audience, reflecting the complex demographic composition of contemporary society; on the other hand, they must

ensure that the value of cultural heritage is understood and that cultural capital increases.

Being not only *about something* but also *for somebody* (Weil, 1999), and then growing into places of learning rather than of mere conservation, they should satisfy all different audiences, their expectations and their information, comprehension and experience needs (Doering, 1999; Castle, 2002; Fyfe, 2006).

Museum visitors are becoming far more aware and discerning, active and autonomous, eclectic and diverse (MacDonald, 1993; McLean, 2005): people have achieved a higher degree of education and have much more confidence with technologies, multimedia, and interaction. Consequently, museums can no longer be exclusive institutions addressed to selected visitors, leveraging on positional values (Hirsch, 1977), but need to target new important issues like service-centricity, one-to-one marketing, relationship marketing and lifelong learning (Alcaraz, Hume and Sullivan Mort, 2009). It is necessary to recognize that the output of a museum is not only the physical accessibility to the cultural capital – the straightforward display of its collections –, but also a complex experience, which has to develop within the historical and geographical context (Kotler, 2001). Service in museum terms does not mean merely preparing exhibitions, planning educational activities, running museum bookshops or gift shops, or providing food services:

it includes dealing promptly and reliably with questions, complaints and requests for facilities from the public, with matters which are unplanned, uncontrolled, and quite possibly inconvenient (Hudson, 1985: 10).

Moreover, the *mise en valeur* of cultural heritage should identify and explicate its complex value – historical, artistic, aesthetic, etc. (Throsby, 2001).

Finally, considering the role of addiction and increasing marginal utility in cultural consumptions (Stigler and Becker, 1977), from a marketing point of view we should remember that the appreciation of a museum does not damage other cultural institutions, but rather involves the visit of other museums.

Therefore, sharing a sustainable approach to heritage tourism management, in order to promote the tourism development of new potential cultural destinations, local museums are required to innovate their services.

In this perspective the field research analyses the capability of networks to overcome museum weaknesses and to change them from being unknown destinations to becoming the main attractions of a cultural itinerary.

3. METHODOLOGY

This paper analyses the network capability of Italian museums through a qualitative research on Marche Region's local museums. The research was organised in three steps: 1) the analysis of Marche Region's laws and planning documents; 2) the selection and analysis of data from the "Regional Museum Information System"; 3) a survey on a sample of 61 local museums.

3.1) THE ENHANCEMENT OF MARCHE REGION'S "DIFFUSED MUSEUM" THROUGH REGIONAL RULES AND ACTIONS

In the Marche Region actions to enhance local cultural heritage turned a corner in 1998, when all movable and immovable heritage property, both public and private, of archaeological, naturalistic or cultural interest, was connected with local museums, to functionally organize a diffused museum system (article 1, paragraph 4, Regional Law n. 6 "New rules on preservation and enhancement of Marche's cultural heritage and organization of the diffused museum within a system")³.

R.L. 6/98 began a process of gathering information, enhancement and promotion of cultural institutes, including for tourism. European Community funds, available through the "Docup Marche 2000-2006"⁴, in conjunction with the law, accelerated the creation of network experiences, aimed at obtaining funding for the structural restoration and functional adjustment of local cultural heritage, to promote the enhancement of the diffused museum's areas. However, both the Cultural Annual Report of the Marche Region (Righettini, 2006) and research carried out by the University of Macerata through the analysis of some local museums (2007) described the lack of management in cultural institutes and the need for enhancement and museum services' development: during the 1990s Community and Region interventions supported the improvement of museum facilities, and also promoted a "network building" capability, solely for the reduction of installation costs (for

infrastructure projects), not in order to decrease normal management costs and to obtain economies of scale.

Considering these limitations, the “Por Fesr Marche 2007-2013”⁵, approved by the European Commission with the decision C(2007) 3986 (17 August 2007), shifted the focus of cultural actions from conservation to enhancement and from single institutions to territories (Priority 5). As the first results of the application of European cohesion policy confirm, it seems that the programme pays more attention to the productive vision of the cultural system, its enhancement for social development and integrated cultural actions.

Finally, in 2010, with Regional Law n. 4 (“Rules on cultural heritage and activities”)⁶, the Marche Region decided to organize unified and integrated services to support cultural institutions and areas, as well as to promote territorial or thematic networks and systems, in order to guarantee sustainable management and the development of cultural institutes (article 16).

3.2) THE MARCHE REGION’S MUSEUM INFORMATION SYSTEM

In 2007, the Marche Region set up the “Regional Museum Information System” as a permanent and dynamic tool to plan and monitor interventions in museums (R.L. 4/2010, article 20). By means of a special self-evaluation form the data base gathers information about conditions in museums relating to the eight areas of the abovementioned M.D. of 10 May 2001.

The first on-line self-evaluation campaign was carried out in 2008. This first process registered 260 museums (Osservatorio Cultura Marche, 2008). Considering that many museum organizations did not participate in the project at that time, there could be more than 300 museums in the Marche Region.

Regarding the museum features, the first campaign reported that 68% of the 260 registered institutions were local (municipal), 2% belonged to other public institutions (provinces, universities, etc.) and 30% were private (15% of the private museums were church-owned).

Regarding the types of collections in the museums, the campaign found the following:

- 44% art;

- 14% specialized material, e.g. wine labels;
- 13% archaeology;
- 12% ethnography;
- 6% natural history and science;
- 4% history;
- 4% territory;
- 3% technology and science.

A full 60% of these institutions had no mission statement, 77% had no regulations whatsoever, and 87% had no independent balance sheet.

As far as staff is concerned, only 38% had actual employees, 65% did not have any directors and 71% did not employ any custodial staff. Moreover, 85% did not utilize evening security services, and 48% possessed cultural objects that had not yet been inventoried.

Concerning weekly operating hours, only 32% were open for more than 24 hours a week and 24% between 6 and 24 hours; 27% of the registered museums had no fixed opening time.

The first museum evaluation registered 22 museum networks distributed throughout the 4 provinces as follows:

- Province of Ancona: 3;
- Province of Ascoli Piceno and Fermo: 6;
- Province of Macerata: 6;
- Province of Pesaro and Urbino: 7.

In addition to confirming the distinctive and critical features of the regional museum system highlighted by the University of Macerata in 2007, these data are an exemplary illustration of the fragmented and heterogeneous museum situation in the centre of Italy, where there are many public, local and small museums, in many cases almost unknown, which mainly own historical or artistic collections, have scant resources and a blurred identity. Facilities and supplies are not the only weaknesses; museum performances – e.g. conservation and visitor services management – must be considered as well.

In 2011 the institutions that participated in a self-evaluation were differentiated between museums, which offer a public service, and collections, which are not open to the public. Later, in 2012, the Region also established criteria to finance

development activities in order to enhance the quality of museum services through two actions:

- a premium for 11 institutions possessing all the minimum equipment and performance requirements to improve public services, especially communication tools, e.g. ICT, labels, road signs, etc.;
- regional financial support for museum/collection security, e.g. fire system certification, anti-intrusion system, etc.

Considering cultural policies, the Regional Plan for Cultural Heritage and Activities (2011-2013) envisaged exhibitions, cultural events in Italy and abroad, meetings, seminars, researches, studies, publishing projects, etc. Other actions are planned to innovate the museum system, to promote its cultural, social and educational mission and the development of services for fostering integrated tourism – even if they do not include the participation of local authorities.

3.3) *THE NETWORK CAPABILITY OF MARCHE REGION'S MUSEUMS*

The local survey explored the strengths and weaknesses of Marche Region's museums, focusing on the network capability and the benefits of network organizations, in order to identify possible opportunities that have not yet been exploited.

Between February and March 2011, a semi-structured questionnaire was submitted to 61 local museums, a representative sample of the heterogeneity and complexity of the regional museum system, concerning the types of collections, property and capillary distribution.

Fifty-nine percent (59%) of the interviewed museums consisted of local institutions (57% were civic and 2% were provincial), 21% were ecclesiastical, 8% private, 3% university museums and 2% national.

Considering the types of collections in the museums, the survey registered the following:

- 41% art;
- 18% specialized material;
- 17% archaeology;
- 10% ethnography and anthropology;

- 7% natural history and science;
- 3% history;
- 11% territory;
- 1% technology and science.

As far as the distribution of the sample is concerned: 6 museums are in the Province of Pesaro and Urbino, 10 in the Province of Ancona, 11 in the Province of Fermo, 15 in the Province of Ascoli Piceno, and 19 in the Province of Macerata.

The research consisted of a wide range of questions, primarily, although not exclusively, quantitative, which examined both museum management (services, relationships with visitors and other stakeholders, marketing strategies, etc.) and their participation in museum networks, as well as their achievements and benefits.

Regarding museums' visitors, 50% of the interviewed museums have less than 2,500 visitors per year; among these institutions, 23% register between 1,000 and 2,500 visitors, while 13% oscillate between 500 and 1,000 and 14% have less than 500 visitors. As far as the remaining 50% is concerned, 21% register between 2,500 and 5,000 visitors per year, 16% between 5,000 and 10,000 and 13% exceed 10,000 visitors (Figure 2). This last range includes museums in some of the most important cultural towns of the Region, such as Fermo or Macerata, or museums which have had over 15,000 visitors for important cultural events, such as the civic museum of Civitanova Marche during the Festival "*Tutti in gioco*" (Everyone in play).

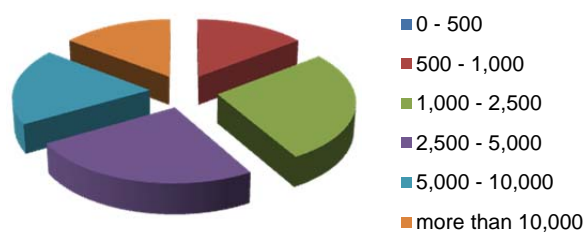


Figure 2. Number of visitors per year.

Concerning staff, 40% of the interviewed museums have volunteers, 18% have employees with open-ended contracts, 13% have employees with fixed-term contracts, 16% have employees with other kinds of contracts, and 16% make use of external employees. Moreover, people with an open-ended or a fixed-term contract

are very often public employees who also deal with other offices and activities (libraries, education, cultural events, etc.) and are not actual museum employees (Figure 3). For eight of the 13 museums making use of voluntary workers, the volunteers are not an additional help for museum professionals, but the only human resources in the museum.

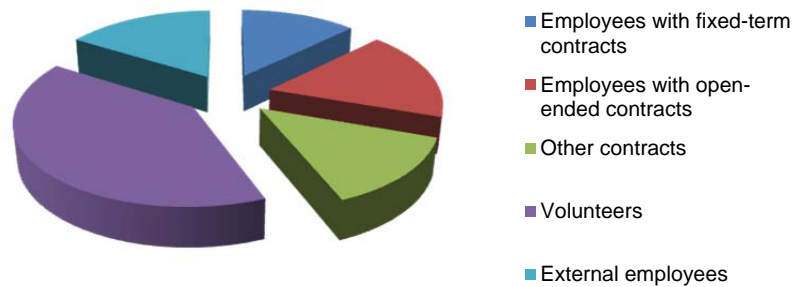


Figure 3. Staff composition.

Considering these data we can conclude that the interviewed museums are a representative sample of the regional museum system, not only because of the variety of their collections, but also due to the lack of management skills. If we analyse the relationships with visitors and other local stakeholders, only 18% of them have a service charter (in many cases not yet available to the public) and only 6% hold periodic meetings with local stakeholders.

As far as network capability is concerned, the large majority of those interviewed (82%) answered that they participate in museum networks. However, when asked about the network management of museum services, 56% of the interviewees answered that they do not respect the same opening hours as other organizations in the same network; only 20% of them have the same opening hours and 24% did not know. As regards the pricing policies, only 33% of the interviewees sell cards to visit many museums (43% of them only have single tickets and 24% did not answer).

Focusing on network marketing strategies, the interviewees revealed a weak network visibility. Even though more than half of the museums (61%) have a museum corporate identity for brochures and booklets, the percentage decreases if road signs are taken into consideration (31%). When analysing the museum setting, 30% adopt the same design for boards and labels, 21% for museum furniture, display

and renovation and 20% for museum signs. Finally, less than 2% have a uniform for front-office staff (Figure 4).

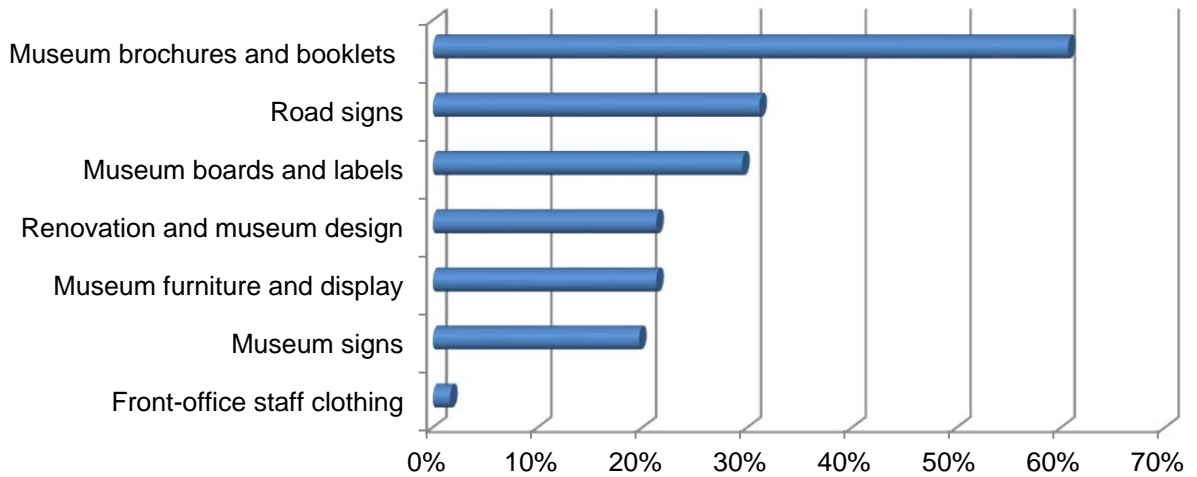


Figure 4. Museum networks' corporate identity.

Moreover, in 62% of the museums, visitors can find information about other museums in the network, but only 34% of them have a guide or catalogue of the network's other museums.

Using a five-point Likert scale², museums were asked to score perceived benefits of network organization. Even though the score never achieves 4 points (good), the highest score concerns museums' visibility (3,50), followed by inter-institution cooperation (3,30), service quality (3,18), staff involvement (3,07), and visitors' increase (2,98). Least positive are the full use of the personnel's productive capacity (2,21), and economies of scale (2,47) (Figure 5).

² The format of the five-level Likert scale was the following: 1. not at all; 2. not much; 3. average; 4. much; 5. very much.

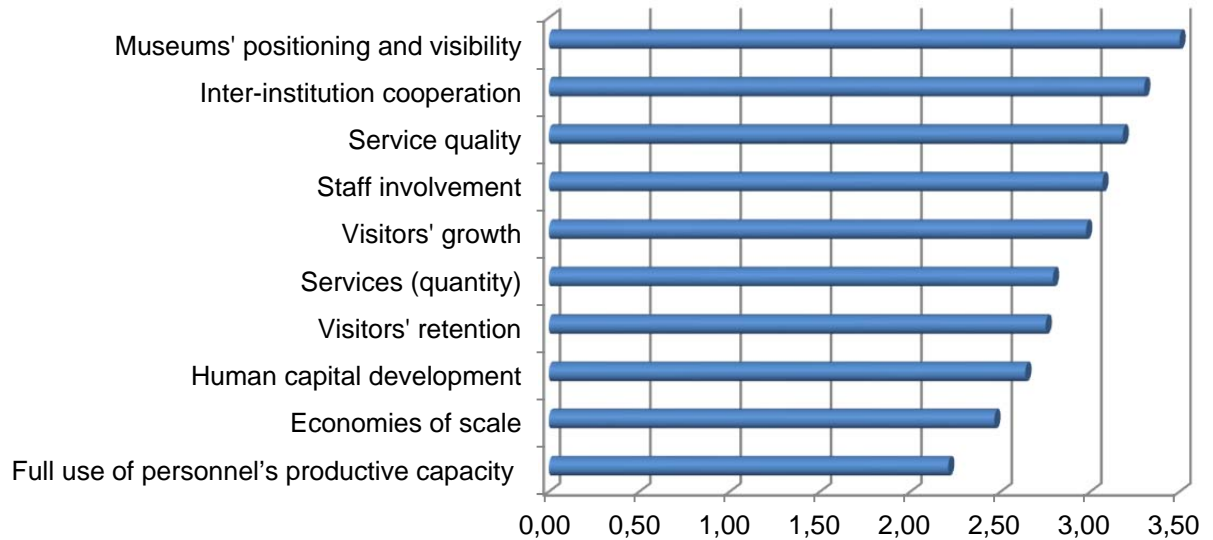


Figure 5. Benefits for museums.

As far as the benefits for the local context are concerned, museums gave a positive – though not optimal – answer concerning territory promotion (3,33) and citizens' awareness of cultural and environment protection (3,21). Lower scores were given to social cohesion (2,84), start-up for new economic activities and entrepreneurship (2,40), employment increase (2,37), and the development of activities in other sectors (2,23) (Figure 6).

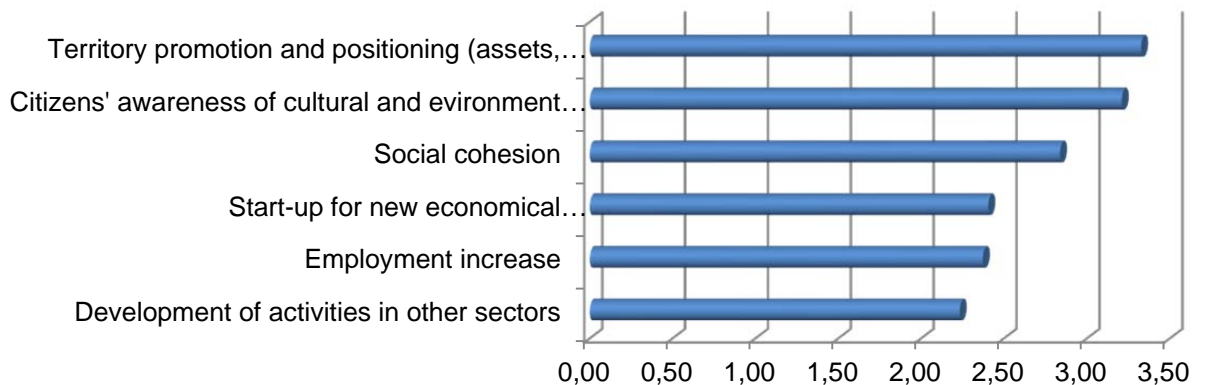


Figure 6. Benefits for the local context.

When asking which strategies cultural networks currently follow to enhance participant museums and their deep relationship with the local context, interviewees gave the highest score to guided tours and special openings during local cultural events (3,88). They also assigned average importance to the presentation of the local cultural offerings (3,50), the presentation of the diffused museum, links between

museum items and local context, history of museums and their collections, and the organization of tourist cultural tours (3,38), followed by the presentation of the network's museums and how to find them (3,23) and the organization of events in association with local cultural institutions and firms (3,15). Not much value was given to the updating of information and education tools (2,85), to the promotion of scientific research and publications concerning the network's museums and collections (2,80), the explanation of the original use value of cultural items (2,62) or the presentation and marketing of local products (wine and food, craft, etc.) inside museums (2,18) (Figure 7).

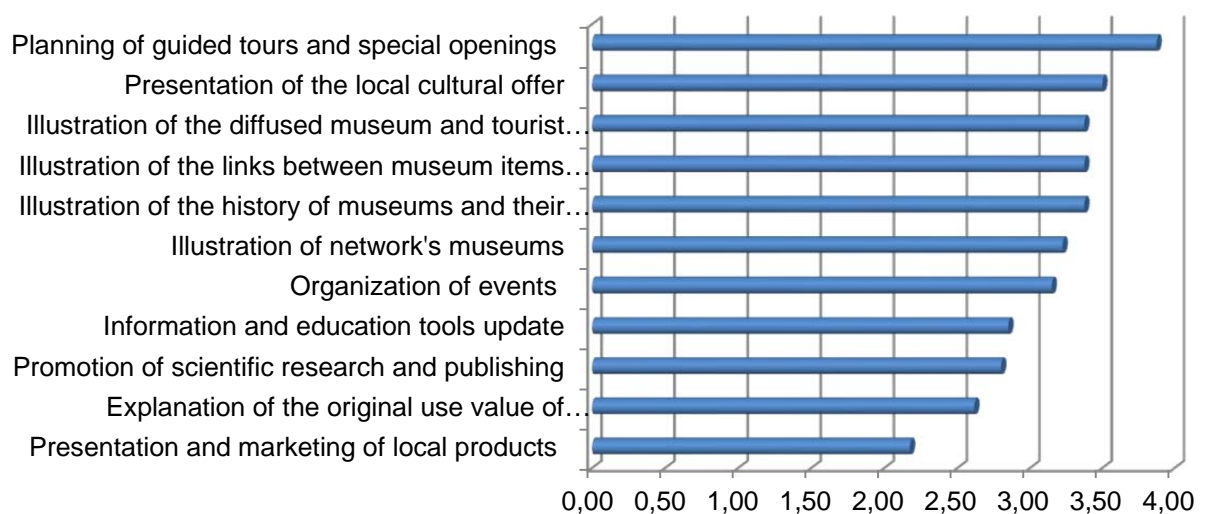


Figure 7. Museum networks' strategies.

Furthermore, the majority of interviewees did not manage to explain the actions that have been used to develop these strategies, nor the evaluation methods and tools employed to measure them and the results actually achieved. They only mentioned the production of brochures and booklets and the organization of cultural tours and exhibitions.

4. DISCUSSION OF RESULTS

Even though Marche Region has promoted laws and initiatives to develop local museums, the analysis of data from the Museum Information System (2007) and the survey carried out during 2011 confirm a profound lack of management skills in Marche Region's local museums. The absence of qualified personnel, poor quality of

service, and restricted opening hours are the most relevant weaknesses. Since the late 1990s, Marche Region's museums have established museum networks, following the example of corporate networks in Italian industrial districts, in order to overcome these issues. Since then, their objective has been that of achieving a competitive position by managing relational capabilities and cooperation.

Research suggests that museum networks have an important role in promoting local cultural heritage and raising awareness concerning local museums. However, up to this time local museum networks have not gone beyond the simple goal of marketing communication through events, guided tours, brochures and guides, and they are still too weak to be able to succeed in innovating the services their museums offer. In particular, they do not respect the same opening hours and reveal a weak network cooperation and visibility. Moreover, they have not generated local employment increase nor the development of new economic activities and entrepreneurship in other sectors. Hence, they still have too little capacity to exploit economies of scale, scope and learning, which could ensure the museums' survival and development as well as their contribution to the sustainable innovation of the local tourism sector. Concerning staff, for example, small museums do not share their personnel and do not make full use of their productive capacity.

Moreover, the survey revealed that museum staff does not trust the management capability of museum networks.

Finally, even though local cultural heritage is an asset that raises awareness of a territory, museum networks have not succeeded in using it as a key resource.

5. CONCLUSION AND IMPLICATIONS

This paper documents the extent that sustainable cultural tourism issues affect the preservation of overloaded big cultural cities, as well as the survival of local cultural heritage. As far as local cultural destinations are concerned, it is argued here that research has neglected the possibility of preserving local cultural heritage *through* – not *against* – enhancement. Rather, relationships between local museums should be promoted in order to achieve economies of scale, scope and learning, to then provide the necessary cultural facilities and improve museum service quality for local tourism development.

Therefore, “variable geometry networks” (Cerquetti, 2008) could be developed to overcome local museum weaknesses. The scale of museum networks should be appropriate to the efficient margin of different service supplies (each museum could participate in one museum network for one type of supplies and in a wider network for other supplies).

In summary, the application of this strategy would allow: (1) an increase in the level of museum facilities and services; (2) local museums to become pivots of a cultural itinerary rather than just unknown destinations; (3) the museums to take advantage of the opportunity of new and increased cultural experience-based tourism demand in search of authenticity; (4) reducing negative externalities and diseconomies due to a flow concentration towards just a few cultural cities; (5) opening new possibilities for local entrepreneurship in tourism and the “made in Italy” industry (Montella, 2009) and promoting the sustainable development of local destinations (Figure 8).

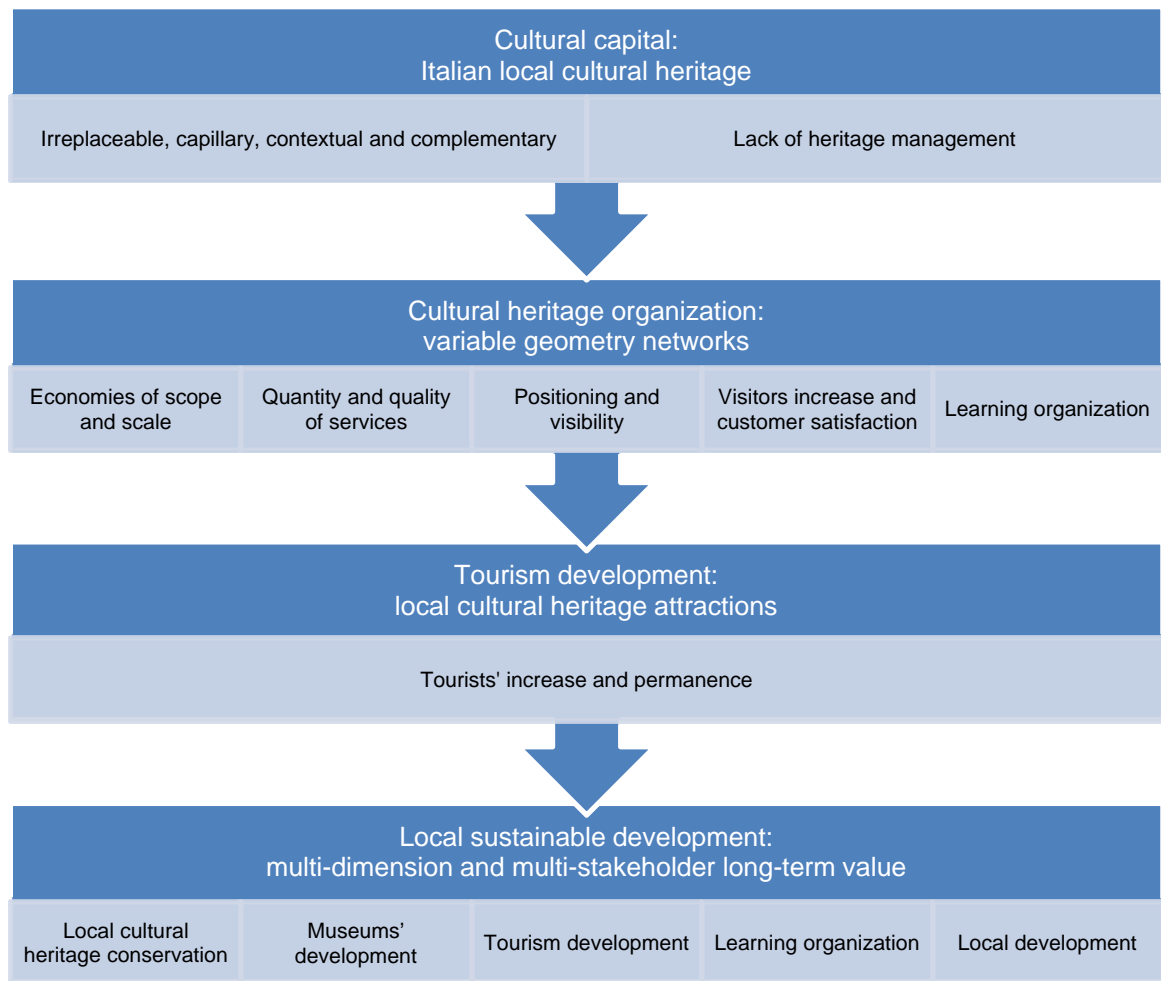


Figure 8. A multi-purpose development of local museum networks.

Finally, the development of cultural tourism through cultural heritage enhancement could promote new economic and environmental planning tools, stimulating people's awareness and participation in the maintenance and management of cultural and historical sites and developing a joint interest of tourism participants and local authorities in inter-sector policies and programming (Primicerio, 1993).

This research, although not validated on a large scale, can identify possible areas of intervention for cultural policies aimed at improving museum networks and their contribution to heritage tourism and local development. Hence, a further development should not exclude the comparison with other regional museum systems.

The paper shows some limitations, which will require further studies in order to suggest future research paths. The first is the need for a more robust statistical analysis of these data. The second is the opportunity to compare these findings with visitor satisfaction about museum services and experience. Another limitation is the

lack of longitudinal analysis, which is useful in order to grasp the changes adopted by museums over time.

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Footnotes

¹ "Marche" (also known as "The Marche") is one of the 20 regions of Italy. The name of the region derives from the plural name of *marca*, originally referring to the medieval March of Ancona and nearby marches of Camerino and Fermo. Marche region is located in the centre of Italy, on the Adriatic Sea. It has 1.560.785 inhabitants and extends over an area of 9.365,86 km². The tourism slogan of the Region is "*Le Marche: l'Italia in una regione*" (The Marche: Italy in one region). The regional cultural heritage is scattered throughout many small walled towns, castles, hill forts, sanctuaries and abbeys.

² Concerning heritage tourism between the 1970s and the 1990s, ATLAS database, for example, indicates that "heritage visits in Europe rose by 100% between 1970 and 1991 (...). The pattern of growth in heritage demand does show considerable variation from one country to another, ranging from over 200% in the UK between 1970 and 1991, through 130% in France, to only 18% in Italy" (Richards 1996: 269).

³ L.R. 6/98 "*Nuove norme in materia di salvaguardia e valorizzazione del patrimonio culturale delle Marche e di organizzazione in sistema del museo diffuso*".

⁴ The "Docup (*Documento Unico di Programmazione*) Marche" is a planning document through which the Marche Region used European Funding for the regional economic development from 2000 to 2006.

⁵ The "Por Fesr (*Programma Operativo Regionale – Fondo Europeo di Sviluppo Regionale*) Marche" is the Marche's 2007-2013 programme for using European Funding.

⁶ L.R. 4/2010 "*Norme in materia di beni e attività culturali*".