

# Opportunities and costs of tourism for a new Humanism

## Abstract

The first part of this paper describes the flow of tourism on a national and international scale, emphasizing the role that entertainment tourism and theme parks play globally. Following these preliminary remarks, the second part of the paper presents the positive and negative economic effects of leisure tourism opportunities at the European and regional level. The third part of the paper analyses the environmental aspects of tourism and entertainment tourism. It shows that sustainable tourism development can be an essential condition for the protection of natural and cultural resources. Finally, the fourth part summarizes some of the most important social issues arising from tourism activities, among them the conflict between residents and tourists on the exploitation of resources and the demonstration effect deriving from the consumption of resources. To avoid this spoliation and destruction of the destination (land and local community), the paper suggests a new Humanism based on Catholicism as a way to realize a sustainability utopia.

## Keywords

Entertainment tourism • geographic dynamics of tourism • sustainability of cultural tourism • environmental and economic impacts of tourism • new moral value in tourism,

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## Introduction

In the current international climate, managing mobility represents a daily challenge. Mobility is, in fact, a factor that, while offering an opportunity to render companies more dynamic, on the other hand constrains the formation of an identity rooted in the community, because cultural integration combines the different backgrounds of citizens. Both of these aspects are present in all forms of human mobility, but above all in tourism, which in recent decades has been reaching ever-increasing levels worldwide. Tourism has increased, as have the social, economic and environmental impacts described in the academic literature (Wanhill et al. 2013). This paper, after highlighting the current stage of tourist flow and the tourist impacts on destinations, investigates a new way to avoid the typical circle of tourist products, leading to a new moral context. The new Humanism is a revolutionary way of reducing the negative impacts of tourism and takes into account the relationship between hosts and guests as based on the tourist experience.

## The evolution of tourist flow globally

In 2013, international tourist arrivals – the number of customers that arrive at facilities, representing, therefore, the frequency of accommodation requests in those facilities – totalled 1.087 billion (UNWTO 2014) and this is expected to increase at an average of 3.3% annually until 2030. Moreover, the development of tourism cannot be considered evenly distributed around the planet. There are geographical regions where tourism growth is higher than in other areas; meanwhile, in other places where the flow of tourists predominated in the past, there are fewer growth opportunities, although they still have a major share in the

tourism market. In fact, since World War II, the latter group has been dominated by Europe. Holding more than 50% of tourist flows and international arrivals, the continent is now considered a mature destination where the high concentration of both supply and demand for tourist services has made it a traditional destination, meaning that a greater growth in flow is not to be expected. Instead, an increase is expected in emerging countries – that is, those countries that are currently characterized by high economic growth, such as China and Brazil, and those with a high potential for enhancement and quality of natural resources, such as Africa (both North and South) and the whole basin of South Asia.

Globally, high tourist flows are caused mainly by large-scale urbanization which tempts people, in their free time, to leave their habitual dwelling and go to another locality for not less than a night and not longer than a year. In fact, over the last fifty years the considerable growth of airport infrastructures around the world has contributed to the very frequent use of this means of transport for short and medium haul trips, which were previously taken by other means of transport.

The predominant reason for trips on an international level is that of entertainment, rest, and vacation, accounting for 52% of the total arrivals in 2013 (equal to 568 million arrivals – UNWTO 2014). The sector of leisure tourism is vast and variegated, and actually concerns many types of tourism, meaning that the volume of flows in this sector is certainly one of the most profitable. Among these different types, tourism to visit theme parks is a particular kind of tourism that today attracts a large number of people. The overall increase in the number of visitors

to these sites between 2011 and 2012 is estimated to be around 6.7%, a very significant increase considering the global economic crisis and other international issues. In 2012, there were about 205 million visitors to the 25 most visited theme parks in the world, which are concentrated in North America and the Asia Pacific region. The turnover of these parks is very high and certainly provokes deep reflection, especially considering that the 20 most visited museums in the world attract a total of only about 98 million visitors per year.

If on the global scale theme parks attract more tourist traffic than museums, in Europe the phenomenon is decidedly reverse. Cultural tourism, in fact, is the type of tourism preferred by travellers who go to Europe: of the 534 million international arrivals in Europe in 2012 (UNWTO 2014), 58 million people (about 10% of total arrivals) visited the 20 most attractive European theme parks, while 71.5 million people (about 14%) visited the 20 most important museums.

The ratio between the total number of arrivals and visitors to museums in Italy in 2012 is, however, much higher than the European one. About 30% of the total arrivals (104 million arrivals in 2012, of which 46 million international arrivals – UNWTO 2014) visited a museum (36 million visits – MIBACT 2014); among these, the museums with the highest number of visits are concentrated in Rome and Florence. On the other hand, theme parks were visited by about 26% (TEA / AECOM 2014) of the total arrivals in Italy.

Moreover, if we consider both domestic and international arrivals, we note that in 2011 the Northeast attracted about 50% of arrivals, the central area about 30%, and finally the South almost 20% (ISTAT 2013).

Similarly, hoteliers in Italy are a great strength and attraction, especially when compared to the complementary facilities that were chosen by only 20% of the total international tourist arrivals in 2011 (ISTAT), and all domestic arrivals.

Moreover, the flow of foreign tourists to Italy has seen times of rapid expansion but also periods of sharp decline: while in the 1950s, foreign arrivals to Italy accounted for 19% of all international arrivals, in 2012 they made up only 4.5% (Monte dei Paschi di Siena 2014). While there has clearly been a reduction from a percentage point of view, from the numerical perspective there has been close to a ten-fold increase in flow, from 4.8 million foreign tourists per year in the 1950s to 47 million in 2011.

As for domestic arrivals – that is, trips made by Italians within the country – in 2011 there were around 56 million, constituting about half of the total arrivals. In terms of geographical distribution, Italians also travel mainly to the North and go to hotels rather than complementary facilities.

In 2011, the Italian region with the highest number of foreign arrivals (ISTAT 2013) was Veneto, while the region with the largest number of domestic arrivals or residents was Tuscany (ISTAT 2013).

The average stay – the ratio between the number of nights spent by guests in accommodation and the absolute number of arrivals – of tourists in Italy in 2011 was 3.6 days. However, taking a step back, it is also possible to note a reduction in the length of stay, since in the mid-1990s this was closer to 4.2 or even 5 days. In referring to the intensity of tourism, however, another tourist indicator should be taken into consideration: attendance, measured by the total length of stays in facilities. In particular, in Italy in recent years, in spite of the increase in arrivals, the average stay has decreased along with the drop in attendance.

### **The economic impact of tourism: a lever to guide crisis opportunities**

Tourism, in Italy as in other parts of the world, is currently seeing growth margins in terms of flows that other sectors are

not experiencing. Certainly, this increase is not distributed across the globe, but nor is it distributed even at the regional level. The data provided is a clear geographical representation of tourism flow distribution. Even at the economic level, said distribution is clearly present, although tourism is a cross-sector and affects many production areas. In the early years of the great streams of people dedicated to tourism, the phenomenon was expected to grow because the economic, social and environmental effects on society of this kind of service activity were little known. Defined as smokeless, i.e. smoke-free business, tourism seemed to be something that would bring many economic benefits in return for low costs, especially environmental and social.

As for the economic effects, from the early years to the present, they have been greatly amplified to the extent that the local economy has been radically transformed into a tourism monoculture. This effect has occurred in many parts of the world, especially on islands or at beach destinations. If we consider that in 2011 the global gross domestic product of tourism was 9% of the total, and that at least 1 in 11 people was employed in tourism (UNWTO 2014), what emerges is a very positive picture of the role of tourism in the global economy. Tourism also contributed more to the overall increase in exports and therefore the balancing of payments amounted to 29% of global exports (WTTC 2013).

It is also estimated that the hotel business, the so-called hospitality industry, makes an annual total of between 400 and 500 million USD in revenue, and a third of this revenue can be attributed to the US market. Moreover, from an economic standpoint, it is the tourist expenses that generate multiplicative flows, above all locally. It is estimated that, in 2013, tourists spent about 3.412 billion USD (Statista, The Statistic Portal 2013) on entertainment and leisure holidays, which is the highest spending flow for all types of tourism. This figure is perfectly in tune with the proceeds, also on a global scale, of large theme park companies: 1.11 billion USD in 2013 alone (Statista 2013).

It is clear, therefore, that the economic impact of this sector is really very high, considering the recent evolution of tourism, such as it is practiced today. In fact, in many of these theme parks the tourist experience starts and ends within the park, where tourists essentially practise their activities and spend all their time, even sleeping in hotels specially built in the parks. This form of tourism is a real enclave and is much more common internationally than at the European level, where the tourist experience of entertainment is only part of the trip, which instead often ends with a visit to a city of cultural interest.

However, on the European scale it is interesting to consider that entertainment (theme parks, water parks, natural parks, children's parks and science parks) is far from negligible; the revenue generated by this sector in 2013 was estimated at a value of € 9,322,000 and contributed to the formation of 238,483 jobs in total (IAAPA, European Economic Impact Study, 2014), constituting more than 20% of total jobs in the European tourism sector (around 32,795,500 jobs – IAAPA 2014).

In short, the data shows that this sector is of economic significance for the tourism industry, both from an international and a European point of view. As for Italy, this sector is also very important in economic terms, since its revenue is approximately € 218 million, about 2% of the European total. The turnout at amusement and theme parks is very high – in 2012 there were about 8.8 million visitors, equivalent to about 7.8% of total tourist arrivals in Italy (IAAPA 2014). The relatively low number of visitors to the Italian parks is due primarily to the modest number of parks located in the country, compared to the rest of the world. In Italy, Gardland, Wonderland and Rainbow Magic Land are, in fact, among the largest, but they are really small in scale, and hence offer fewer attractions than the other international parks.

Nevertheless, in 2012 this area employed about 2% of the entire workforce that contributes directly to employment in the tourism sector.

It is very interesting to compare the numbers of theme parks with those of museums and cultural institutions. Unfortunately, there is no detailed estimate of the economic impact, but a comparison can certainly be made: as mentioned, in 2012, in Italy, there were 8 million visitors to theme parks and amusement parks, while in the same year visitors to museums totalled 36,489,632. While this data may be reassuring to 'a country of art and culture', it is also true that, with the theme parks being very limited, it is comparable to 8 million people visiting the top four most visited museums in Italy in 2012. Art, therefore, is not as competitive and attractive as one might think: economically, in fact, according to the Ministry of Cultural Heritage and Activities and Tourism (MIBACT 2013), the total turnover in Italian art was about € 727 million in 2012, while the total turnover in the sector of theme parks and entertainment was about € 409 million (IAAPA 2014).

The above analysis certainly positions the entertainment industry as an important sector of attraction for a region. Tourists today are more and more attracted by leisure and culture in the traditional sense. This new lifestyle also creates a different way to benefit from the cultural heritage, which is preferred only after an intense promotional activity linked to the possibility of seeing that heritage as entertainment.

#### **Benefits and costs of tourism in environmental protection**

If, as discussed above, tourism flows generate an income that can positively influence the economy of a nation, it is also true that this activity is not always free of charge. However, in the early twentieth century tourism was smokeless, or smoke-free, indicating that at one time visitors caused no additional emission of smoke, just as it is for any other industry.

Over time, in effect, the phenomenon of tourism developed greatly both in terms of flows and of infrastructures with ecological and social benefits and costs that cannot be omitted.

From a cash flow point of view, as has already been noted, the gradual increase was definitely caused by three factors: the expansion of transport in terms of speed and convenience, the increased purchasing power and available income, allowing the purchase of luxury goods such as travel, and finally the intensified need for cultural expansion arising from globalization. These elements started the process of growth of investment in the tourism sector in those places most requested by tourists. The exponential economic involvement of destinations has resulted in a significant increase in infrastructures that has sometimes changed the original "vocation" of the area (Bizzari 2008). An example of this is Nice, which, along with many other destinations, has expanded the space dedicated to tourism due to the increase in tourist flows, so as to become a coastal urban polyvalent open tourist space (Lozato-Giotart 2003, p. 57). "More and more tourists are looking for new activities within the area that receives them" (Lozato-Giotart 2003, p. 37), meaning that it is easier to distinguish tourists who practise exclusively cultural tourism from those who prefer recreational tourism.

This is the case with many Italian and European cities where cultural tourism has been added to entertainment tourism, causing a spread of multiple effects, both from the economic and environmental perspective. As for the economic point of view, in the short term, the multiplier effects of tourism costs are clearly positive, even though there will be negative impacts on the rise of commodity prices, above all in the suburbs. As regards the environmental concerns, it is impossible to ignore the congestion problems, increased traffic, and noise and air pollution deriving from the growing tourist infrastructures, which contribute to

the deterioration of the landscape (Wray 2009). The latter is the primary reason for the environmental problems associated with tourist destinations, since tourist facilities, being generally large in size, are highly invasive both in terms of landscape and structure. In particular, the construction of structures determines a major cause of pollution of natural resources, often deriving from excessive use, as well as generally exceeding the carrying capacity of tourism in the area (Bizzari & Querini, 2006). Water is one of those resources widely used by both tourist facilities and tourists. Tourists require a very substantial use of water resources, to the extent that it has been found that the water consumption of a tourist is about three or four times more than that of a resident (Arlem 2012, 3).

As regards tourist facilities, in Italy, "80% of sewage from 120 main cities on the coast is released into the Mediterranean without being at all treated..." (Arlem 2012, 3).

Moreover, besides water, other resources are used without any restriction, or at least unsustainably: air is overloaded with congestion due to increased mobility resulting from the use of modes of transport; furthermore, the excessive use of fragile resources, both natural and cultural, must be considered (Bizzari 2008). The continuous inflow of tourists to places particularly prized for their uniqueness becomes a reason for the degradation of resources inherent to those territories due to excessive use and the waste produced after the visit (museums and archaeological sites, natural areas, etc.).

This is certainly not the case for theme parks; on the contrary, they are built to accommodate thousands of visitors a day. Nevertheless, the use of natural resources of these entertainment facilities is much higher than any other activity, thus generating a deterioration at both the global and the local level (Pollice 2005). Congestion in parking lots and access roads causes air pollution, the use of water and electricity to heat and refrigerate generates degradation as well; the concreting of wooded and fertile areas for car parks and attractions alters the structure of the area, reducing biodiversity. Landscape pollution is caused by infrastructures and their expansion, changing the original landscape of the surrounding area. Finally, noise pollution is produced by vehicles, and above all by the extremely loud music played in the parks.

To these devastating effects, we must add those caused by the fact that huge areas of fertile land, which were originally used for agriculture, have been abandoned. The problem arises especially when – as is now the case with Gardland, the largest amusement park in Italy – the entire surrounding region is oriented towards developing tourism to the point that locals begin to leave farming and lake fishing to go into tourism, creating a real monoculture (Provincia di Verona 2013). What is more, in economics it has already been proved that 'monoculture tourism' is very risky because, as the life cycle of the tourist product shows, these tourist activities, if not well organized, managed, planned and vivified, can reduce and ruin all the benefits obtained at the local level (Faccioli 2009).

#### **The social aspect of tourism**

In social terms, tourism has very important consequences deriving from the encounter-clash between tourists and residents. The more there is a dialogue present between tourists and residents, the fewer conflict situations arise between the two communities (Dredge 2006).

Economists and geographers have analysed the relationship between citizens and tourists through the "game theory", according to which the conflict between two or more players is determined by the interests and preferences of each group/community (Bimonte, Niglia & Punzo 2006), exposing them to both intra- and inter-community conflict.

While the flow of tourists has different effects on the communities hosting them (subjective element), it is also true that certain objective factors may influence the relationship between residents and tourists – for example, exceeding the carrying capacity of the physical environment and negative externalities (such as crowding and congestion) are caused by tourists' behaviour, comparable to players who play just once and then leave the game, unwilling to repeat the experience under the same conditions (Bimonte, Niglia & Punzo 2006). Moreover, tourist-players do not feel the need to respect the rules of the game, being generally disinterested in repeating the game; they do not consider it their duty to enhance the reputation of the destination or the social and environmental conditions.

The contrasts between the two communities emerge, therefore, during the development phase of the "life cycle" of the tourism product. At this stage, tourism activities permeate the economic system of the area, causing a "displacement effect" among other economic activities, due to the high level of resources needed to meet the needs of the wave of tourists pouring into the city (Ruggiero 2013).

Furthermore, the conflict increases when residents realize that, in order to achieve potential earning power, expenses for public investment in the tourism sector, such as the financing of urban regeneration and the renovation of older buildings, are higher than investments in public services used by the local community, such as hospitals or transportation.

Instead, to activate a virtuous cycle and a positive effect in terms of capital, it is certainly very useful both for tourists to obtain information on the destination prior to the trip, as well as for the local community to introduce its cultural heritage to tourists with authenticity, in an accessible way, with appropriate information and guides and with ample opportunity for active participation in the local lifestyle (Pollice 2002; Minle & Ateljevic 2001).

If such policies are adopted, peace, development and solidarity can be ensured for both locals and tourists. If not, tourism may become the cause of serious social conflicts, especially when the tourist is placed in a position of not knowing the reality of the chosen tourism. Such is the case with resorts, theme parks, amusement parks and everywhere that constitutes an "enclave" (Lozato-Giotart 2003, 103), where tourists are closed off in a restricted area, hence not knowing the local reality; they place high demands on natural resources, not knowing the difficulties that the local community may face in order to access and use the same resources.

Moreover, in these places there may be a further critical element which could threaten a peaceful social dialogue (Pope John Paul II 2000). These are recreational activities that are often too invasive and aggressive and deny people spaces where they can find peace and quiet. This situation could lead to a predominance of the culture of selfishness and pleasure, contrasting with the idea of "vacuum", or "otium", which in Latin means having time to read, write, think and spend your life on other activities without daily stress. In fact, having free time from work does not mean to surrender to extreme fun; on the contrary, it means to halt the daily stress in order to focus on one's own life (Pope Francis 2014). A trip and a stay (of whatever length) in a place other than one's habitual residence, therefore, induces people to take a break from work and other obligations pertaining to social responsibility, without denying the possibility of being open to other experiences and new lifestyles, without ever succumbing to cultural relativism and approval of behaviour (Pope Benedict XVI 2009).

### A new Humanism in tourism

For a new form of tourism and new moral encounter in tourism between guest and host, it is very important to spread the tourist flow in little towns or cities where it is possible for the two

groups to meet each other. This form is characterized by human relations and feasibility. In fact, the growth of this type of tourism derives from knowing that the competitive benefit depends on the different resources available in the area, the irreproducible and particular resources on which the tourism product of a destination can be based.

The realization of this kind of tourism offer should involve the local community which, because of their proximity, trust, and mutual interest, can easily create networks within the internal components of the territorial system, using not only natural, environmental, and cultural resources, but also human resources and the most appropriate local technologies. Therefore, it can be stated that the *community-based* theory for this type of tourism is more explicative than previous theories (Minle & Ateljevic 2001). In this form of tourism the new moral encounter is represented by a new Humanism and the new relationship between residents and tourists is based on humility, "disinterest" and "beatitude". Humility helps the tourists and the residents to discover each other's heritage and cultural path; "disinterest" contributes to opening the mind to discover resources and avoiding the temptation to "shut themselves up in the structures that give us a false security, standards that become implacable judges, customs where we feel peaceful" (Pope Francis 2015a); "beatitude" leads to having time to contemplate the beauties of nature and cultural heritage for both tourists and residents (Pope Francis 2015b).

So the relationship between tourists and residents is based on simplicity, allowing tourists to enjoy their travel in the lesser-known destinations and avoid "the use and exchange value becoming intangibly complicated..." (Mostafanezhad 2014).

Integration between tourists and the local community creates a close tie in such a way that it is possible to compare, come together, and even "clash" with the open territorial system. To be successful, this type of tourism must develop strong interlinks between environment and cultural resources with the food and wine, sport, natural and social resources present in the area.

The new Humanism in tourism offers the opportunity not to fall into the vicious circle of the tourism product marked by "everything and right away" and by "all for all", since the local community should play an active role thanks to "bottom up" initiatives at every phase of planning, creating and carrying out the "tourism package".

In order to succeed, human relations between the local community and tourists are the competitive benefit most helpful to local growth, since they are based on the irreproducibility of the context and social relations. Therefore, the scoring of a "good experience" is determined by the satisfaction from the tourist who is once again a traveller, exploring human relations with the hosting community and building customer loyalty with that type of experience.

This form of tourism, based on human relations, allows a re-territorialisation of the economy – that is, a new valorisation of "social capital" and of the many relations through which subjects taking part in it can pursue interests that would have been otherwise precluded or reachable only at higher costs had they not been part of the network or the trip. In a similar way, entertainment, museums and other such attractions are based on the heritage and the possibility for tourists to enter into dialogue with the hosts that manage them. An important and useful role is played by the social responsibility of local businesses, which cooperate with the network "trustees" in order to both increase the local production and heritage appreciated by these type of tourists, and to involve more local participants is the main reason for the success of the trip. As a result, if this type of experience has good results, it is automatically repeated.

Involving all local participants, both public and private, is certainly positive since it determines a strengthening and

reorganization of a cultural identity, which in time disintegrates due to the continuous external impulses from the territorial system. If this upstanding cycle takes place, relational tourism becomes a tourism “guided” by the local population, which welcomes the tourist into an environment particularly attentive to the individual and for whom it is not possible to apply mass tourism – that is, an intrusive and aggressive tourism. Therefore, integrated relational tourism requires special attention from tourism services so as to integrate a tourist into the local culture (Naselli 2012).

Satisfying the needs of this particular tourism demand can be achieved via dialogue prior to the trip, with social networks contributing to indicating what the tourists’ needs are. This awareness is very useful, allowing the tourist destination to arrange for the use of resources specific to that kind of tourism.

This relationship (tourists – tourist offer – local community) (Vargo & Lusch 2004; Pine & Gilmore 1999) essentially constitutes a form of participation of the tourists in the local community’s decision on the natural, environmental, cultural and social resources to use in the course of the trip. The constant contact during the trip, not only among tourists, but also with the local community, allows the development of a positive relationship between tourists and residents, creating a mutual respect for the different cultures.

If these two communities (residents and tourists) converge in a synergic approach, it is clear that external economic sources can facilitate not only tourists, but also the local community, as well as relations with the surrounding area. These benefits can be reached when the destination and the surrounding tourist area are prepared and organized to welcome tourists. Therefore, the destination is transformed into a local tourist system (Pollice 2002). In fact, this is possible when at least three conditions are present: the eco-system balance, the harmonic development of suburban and central areas, and the lifestyle continuity of the local community are not compromised.

## Conclusions

Nowadays, tourism plays a very important role in the international arena, both in terms of economic growth and environmental and social quality. In other words, research shows that tourism has a strong influence on the behaviour and lifestyles of both the local and tourist populations, comparing people of different traditions and origins.

This aim can fail when there is a risk of abuse and socio-cultural aggression from tourists towards the local community which, moreover, is not particularly cohesive. This danger is especially present in places where “entertainment tourism” is practised, since, in assuming that foreign investment prevails, the local community could be alienated from the tourism management.

Therefore, the research underlines the fact that investments in tourism should be made after a careful appraisal of the local situation, not only keeping in tune with the knowledge of local traditions, but, above all, enabling the active participation of citizens in political choices and in planning destination strategies. Sharing and participation are the constituent elements of “unity in diversity” and the dialogue to safeguard the dignity of the community and the tourists themselves.

The new Humanism in tourism, promoting the restoration of the human person, should be realized via solidarity, responsibility and social unity, contributing to dialogue and mutual knowledge. This new tourism fosters man’s familiar acquaintance with nature. It promotes his appreciation of nature’s resources and renews the ties between man and nature that are easily shattered by technology. It reveals the wondrous beauties of creation as the common heritage of all mankind.

The social, environmental and economic implications of this new form of tourism, the new Humanism tourism, are not yet known and future research should be conducted to investigate the complexity of this dialogue between guest and host – above all, the strengthening or the diminishing of heritage.

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