

TRAVEL PROFILES OF FAMILY HOLIDAYS IN ITALY

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1. Introduction

The family is the most universal, enduring and adaptable social institution through which most people derive their principal source of identification, support and meaning in life (Schänzel, Yeoman & Backer, 2012), and the organization of the holidays is often motivated by family needs. Despite extensive research on both tourist motivation and destination competitiveness, the literature still suffers from lack of empirical research that investigates tourist motivation and competitiveness simultaneously using gap analysis (Pansiri, 2014). Schänzel *et al.* (2005) analyse leisure travel away from home for more than one day taken within the context of a family group; Schänzel and Yeoman (2014) underline that family tourism represents one of the most important and profitable markets for travel industry. In fact, it is doubtless that holiday is one of the most important mean by which families invest time and energy in forging strong connections and generating well-being for their members. Many scholars predict that family travels will continue to growth at a faster rate than all other forms of leisure travel, partly because they represent a way to reunite the family and for family members to spend time with each other, away from the demands of work (Schänzel, 2013). However, past studies on tourism market segmentation were been focused on grouping single tourists, neglecting the core unit of the society, the family. As a matter of fact, in the literature the tourist is considered as a lone traveller, but in reality tourism is intensively group based, and families form the consumer base of travel industry (Celardo & Iezzi, 2015). Many authors in last years have drawn attention to the "invisibility" and the marginalization of the family in tourism theory, also with the absence of childhood (Obrador, 2012; Small, 2008).

Currently the concept of family is more than ever in question (Schänzel & Yeoman, 2015); the effects of liberalism, demographic shifts and the growing economic engagement of women have changed a significant proportion of families to more fluid, flexible and cross-generational groupings (Schänzel, Yeoman & Backer, 2012). These shifts in demographic and lifestyle, and the broadened definition of families, have important consequences for travel behaviour (Schänzel,

Smith & Weaver, 2005) because travel decisions are strongly determined by the structure and the composition of the family, particularly by the presence or not of the children. Traditional families decrease in favour of new types of families (Iezzi & Grisoli, 2010). According to the Italian National Statistics Institute (ISTAT), in Italy there has been a dramatic decrease in the number of average members per family. Multiple factors have contributed to the reduction in births: a decrement in the number of marriages; a rise in the number of single-parent families; an increase in the number of couples without children; family where one member is a commuter or lives for some period in other parts of the country because of work (ISTAT, 2016). Latter over 20 years, like than in other western countries, in Italy the family is changing rapidly into the composition with important consequences in holiday choices. According the last Census, the Italian resident population amounts to 59,132,045 of individuals, families are 24,611,766 and the number by family members is 2.4 units (ISTAT, 2013). In 2013, Italian residents made around 60 million of travels; the 91% were holidays (ISTAT, 2014). Over the 63% of Italian's holidays were spent with other family's components, and then belong to the sphere of family holidays.

In this paper, we analyse the profiles of the Italian family in holidays. We use a statistical sample of around 14,000 Italian families, carry out by the ISTAT for the survey "Trips and Holidays". The goal is to classify family holidays, and detect their profiles.

The paper is composed of 5 sections, as follows: in section 2, we describe the data from ISTAT survey "Trips and Holidays" used in this article; in section 3, we introduce the methods; in section 4, we illustrate the main results; in section 5, we discuss the conclusions.

2. Data

"Trips and Holidays" is a CATI (Computer Assisted Telephone Interview) quarterly multipurpose survey carry out by ISTAT since 1997 on a sample of around 3,500 households and 8,000 individuals per quarter; the main objective of this survey is to allow the Institute to investigate tourism activities of Italian residents, both tourists and non-tourists. According to the purpose of the survey, its target population consist of Italian families, defined as sets of people who live together, connected through marriage, family relationship, affinity, adoption, or protection (ISTAT, 2014).

From this survey, we analyzed a sample of 14,024 Italian families; our analysis focused on the four quarters of 2013: January-March, April-June, July-September and October-December. In each quarter, information about family members and

travels done in the referring period is collected. Selecting holidays done by at least two components of the same family in the referring period, we obtained a sample of 2,223 vacations. To describe Italian family holidays, we chose seventeen variables (table 1); to illustrate the socio-demographic characteristics of households, we selected five indicators (table 2).

Table 1 – Travel features variables

Variable	Levels
Quarter	January-March/April-June/July-September/October-December
Length of stay	Short (1-3 days)/Long (more than 4 days)
Motivation of the holiday	Leisure/Visit to relatives/ Religion/ Wellness
Mean of transport	Plane/Train/Ship/Road
Accommodation*	Collective/Free/Private
Destination**	Italy/Europe (not Italy)/Extra-European countries
Holiday environment ***	Seaside/Mountain location/Countryside/Cruise trip/Urban area
Reserved transport	No/Yes
Internet reserved transport	No/Yes
Reserved accommodation	No/Yes
Internet reserved accommodation	No/Yes
Number of family's participants	From 2
Other participant to the holiday	No/Yes

(*) Categories has been constructed as follow: "free" includes relatives' homes and second houses; "private" includes rental housing; "collective" includes hotel facilities and similar

(**) European countries are selected by UNWTO classification

(***) Five variables

Table 2 – Socio-demographic variables

Variable	Levels
Area of residence	North-East/North-West/ Middle/South/Islands
Number of family's components	From 1
Families' age profile	From 15
Highest qualification in family	PhD/4-years degree/ Master's degree/ Bachelor's degree/ Associate degree/ Academy/5-years High School/3-years High School/Middle School/ Elementary/ No title
Percentage of workers in family	From 0 to 100

In 2013 over than 60% of holidays were spent with their own family; 47.50% of those were made in the summer season. The prevalent mean of transport was with road vehicles (74.94%), while the common holiday motivation was leisure (63.92%), followed by visit to relatives (31.62%). Around 80% of the trips were in Italy, 17.27% in Europe and the 2.74% in other countries. 43.14% of vacations were spent in second homes or relatives' houses, and the preferred typology of vacation was in seaside and urban area.

We compared family holidays and other vacations to bring into focus if there are differences between them; to do that, we used association measure – χ^2 test. We individuated significant differences in four categories:

- *Time of the year*: family holidays were more concentrated than others in third quarter and less in first and second ($\chi^2=15.77$, p-value<0.001);
- *Mean of transport*: in family holidays car or similar were more utilized than in other, while plane and train were less chosen ($\chi^2=254.40$, p-value<0.000);
- *Accommodation*: family holidays were made mostly in second homes and relatives' houses than other vacations, that were spent more in hotels or similar ($\chi^2=11.44$, p-value<0.003);
- *Destination*: family holidays were spent most in Italy than others, and significantly less outside ($\chi^2=45.52$, p-value<0.000). Moreover, family holidays chose largely seaside ($\chi^2=20.74$, p-value<0.000) and mountain location ($\chi^2=21.54$, p-value<0.000), and less urban area ($\chi^2=61.29$, p-value<0.000).

3. Methods

To simultaneously reducing dimension and classifying categorical data, we used the Multiple Correspondence *K*-Means (MCKM- Fordellone & Vichi, 2016) that identifies, at the same time, the best partition of *N* objects described by the best orthogonal linear combination of variables according to a single objective function. The solution of the model is the minimization of the objective function, which is solved by an alternative least square algorithm.

This method represents the alternative of tandem analysis, in which Multiple Correspondence Analysis (MCA) and Cluster Analysis are implemented sequentially; the choice in using a simultaneous approach lies in the fact that the variables reduction step could remove some significant information about the clustering structure of the data and introduce noise from the variables that do not contain clusters information (Rocci, Gattone & Vichi, 2011). We apply this algorithm because the results are better than a sequential approach, as it manages to capture noises and more clearly classifies groups.

The MCKM was applied on holiday features variables (table 1), with the aim of detecting homogeneous travel profiles; to implement the analyses, we used Matlab software. The best solution in terms of number of clusters is identified by the estimation of the Calinski-Harabasz index, using the R package “clusterCrit” (Desgraupes, 2014).

Figure 2 – *Projection of the cluster on the first two axes*

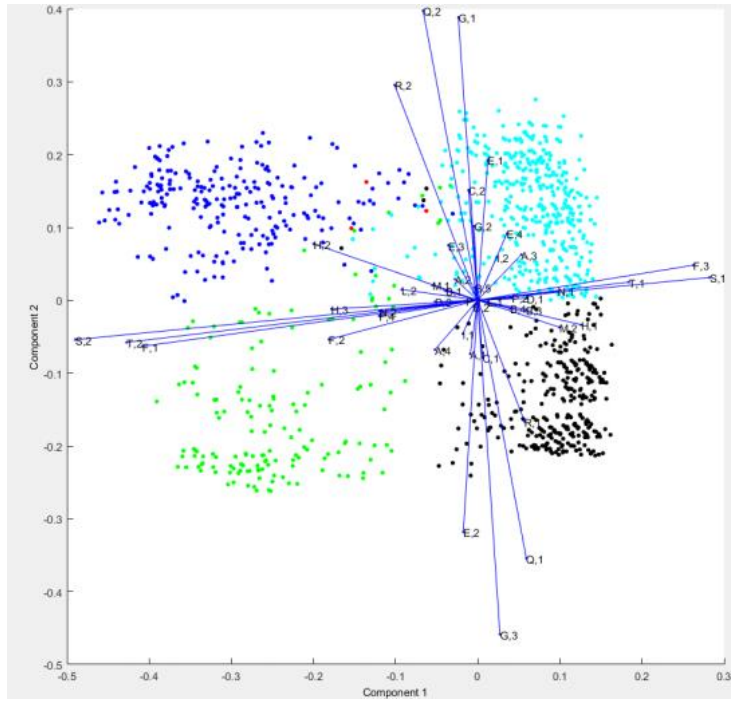


Figure 3 – *Clusters size*

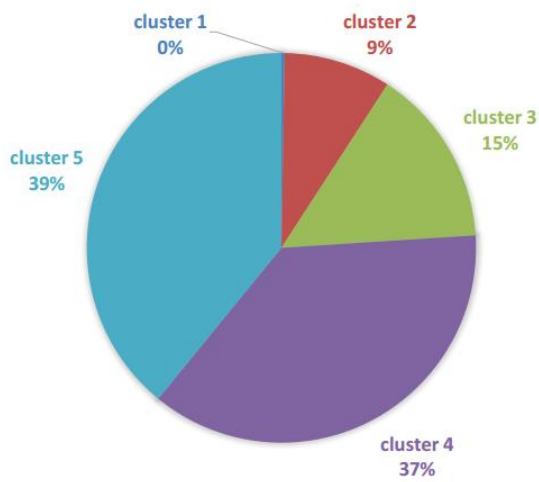


Table 3 – Travel and family profiles

Cluster	Size	Travel profile	Family profile
1	6	Holidays made for leisure purpose, in which families use train and stay in hotel facilities or similar, going in Italy and choosing seaside or urban area	Families with few components (mostly two), with the highest age profile and a lowest level of worker
2	198	Trips made to visit relatives for long periods, in which families travel with plane, train or ships in Italy and Europe (seaside and urban area), staying in relatives' houses	Families with not too much components (mostly two or three), with an higher age profile and a low level of workers
3	329	Vacations made for leisure or religious motivation for long period in which families travel with plane, train or ships for extra-European destinations, staying in hotel facilities or similar and choosing cruise trip, seaside or urban area	Families with more components (mostly four), with a lower age profile and a higher level of workers
4	821	Travel made for leisure or health reasons, in which families move by car or similar to Italy and Europe, staying in hotel facilities and in private structures, choosing seaside, mountain location and countryside	Numerous families (mostly four), with the lowest age profile and the highest level of workers
5	869	Holidays made to visit relatives, in which families travel with car or similar to Italian destinations, staying in relatives' homes, choosing seaside, mountain location or countryside	Families with a medium number of components (mostly three), a medium age profile and a medium level of workers

The first cluster identifies leisure holidays in Italy, in which families are composed of two elderly members, who travel by train and stay in hotel facilities. The second and the last group represent holidays in which families travel to visit relatives; the families in cluster no.2 are composed of elderly couples or couples with adult children, travel to Italy and Europe without car; while the cluster no.5 is composed of couples and parents with children (from one to three), who trip in Italy by road vehicle. The third and the fourth clusters identify journeys in which families travel for pleasure reasons; in the third group, we find long-haul trips with long staying in hotel facilities, travelling without road vehicles. On the other hand, in the group no.4 we recover travels to Italy and Europe, in which families stay in hotel facilities or private structures, moving by car. In both cases, families that make this kind of vacations are younger and numerous than other groups, but in cluster no.4, the families have a higher percentage of workers in family, then they could spend more.

5. Conclusions

In this study, we show that family holidays present several distinctive characteristics that are strictly connected to the structure of the families. In fact, in 2013 Italians' family holidays profiles are well defined: the travel clusters are strongly linked to family composition, ages of the members and financial resources.

Travel profiles are characterized by trip motivation, mean of transport, kind of accommodation, destination and type locality; on the other hand, different travels have different "buyers". In this study, we link holiday decisions to the characteristics of the families; it emerges that family composition determines different choices in going on holiday.

In conclusion, the analysis of this research defines a clear framework: in Italy, family holidays have two main motivations: leisure and visitation of relatives. The mean of transport is almost always the car; travels are made principally in Italy and families that do this kind of trips are numerous and more well off.

Afterwards, tourism research needs to implement more in depth investigations toward the relationship between family and travels. In the future, we will extend those analyses to investigate more the link between holiday decisions and families' frameworks; in particular, we will introduce other variables related to the presence or not of the children, to understand if that condition actually induces more differences in Italians holiday customs.

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SUMMARY

Characteristics and travel profiles of family holidays in Italy

Family represents the most important and emotive connection among humans. In tourism sector, it is the consumer base of the industry; however, the importance of family in travel market is not reflected in tourism research, even if family holiday market has been identified as constituting a major portion of leisure travels around the world. Furthermore, travel choices are clearly influenced by the composition and the characteristics of the families. In this paper, we analyse family holidays in the Italian context; for the purpose of this study, from ISTAT multipurpose survey we use a sample of around 2,000 holidays made in 2013 by almost two components of the same family. The goal is to classify family holidays, and detect their profiles.

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