Rural tourism as a form of cultural tourism in Apulia

Abstract

The rural area provides new cultural, tourist and landscaping functions, besides the traditional «four F’s» (Food, Feed, Fiber and Fuel) (Sotte, 2008, p. 5-26). The offer is enriched by food and wine experiences, hiking and educational and cultural activities (didactic farms, craft workshops, peasant life museum, etc.). The goal becomes to know the rural culture through its rhythms, activities, places in order to enrich the visitor’s experience.

Keywords: Rural tourism, Cultural tourism, Rural development, Apulia.

Rural tourism, agritourism and cultural activities

The INEA institution (National Institute of Agricultural Economics) institution defines rural tourism as «all the tourism activities that are practised with specific themes (trekking, birdwatching, overnight in rural buildings, hiking etc.) and distinguish it from agritourism, which is defined as a form of tourism that has particular organization features, being connected to the farm». Therefore, rural tourism is a form of tourism connected to rural resources and activities in a broad sense (landscape and natural, agricultural and social and cultural ones) that «are not necessarily created by a farmer using his company» (Schifani, 1995; De Luca, Messina, 2012, p. 491). However the borderline is quiet labile and these two terms are often wrongly used as synonyms. Hence rural tourism includes agritourism, ecotourism, farm tourism etc. The agricultural evolution in a multifunctional sense (Legislative Decree 228/2001) contributed to increase the number of activities that could guarantee additional earnings to the operators. Therefore, the activities connected to the agriculture can promote and enhance the value of the reference territorial context, increase the attractiveness of the tourist offer and the possibility of an economic development. For this reason the agritourism includes several activities: farm products sale, didactic activities organization, reception and hospitality services etc. The Law no. 96 of February 20, 2006, controls agritourism in order to support agriculture by «promoting new countryside forms of tourism that can: a) protect, qualify and enhance the value of the specific resources of each territory; b) promote the maintenance of human activities in rural areas; c) to promote the multifunctionality of the agriculture and the differentiation of agricultural incomes; d) to promote initiatives of the farmers in defense of the ground, the territory and the environment by increasing farm incomes and improving the quality of life; e) to recover the rural building heritage protecting the landscape peculiarities; f) to support and increase typical productions, quality productions and the connected food and wine traditions; g) to promote rural culture and food education; h) to promote agricultural and forest development» (Law 96/2006). By the described objectives, it can be seen how agriculture, environment and tourism are fundamental elements for the development of rural areas. According to an ISTAT research (2011), in Italy the current situation of the farm holiday sector is improving a lot. The report published in November 2012 indicates a farms increase of the 56,8% (from 13.000 to over 20.000) in the reference period 2003-2011. Farms authorized to practice farm holidays are 20.413 (2,2% more than the previous year). The greater concentration of agritourisms are noticed in the northern regions (45,6%), followed by the Center (34%) and the South (20,4%). «Agritourism represents a little part» (De Luca, Messina et Al., 2012) of the numerous initiatives by which rural tourism offer is composed: sport, food and wine, and culture above all (natural, social and architectural heritage). These activities can be carried out by farms, in accordance with the observance of some particular obligations. «In the rural sphere, tourists enjoy the use of the territorial resources (parks, rivers, flora and fauna, etc.), but also of the anthropic environments (festivals,
Traditions, craft, religious festivals, other popular events, etc.) (Bencardino, Prezioso, 2007). Sporting activities that can be carried out in the rural area concern, for example, horse-riding, trekking, hiking by mountain bike, canoe, birdwatching, etc. «Wine and food tourism represents one of the various potential shapes that can be assumed by rural tourism when wine and food can induce tourists to see rural places, rather than being promoted by tourism» (Rocca, 2013, p. 441). In order to enhance the value of typical local productions, numerous initiatives, together with the promotion of the territory, have the aim to generate tourist flows in rural areas, have been activated by the operators. One of the activities with the aim to attract tourist (and then, economic) flows in areas considered marginal, such as olive and wine ones, is represented by wine, olive oil and taste routes. The Law of July 27, 1999 no. 268 has officially instituted the wine routes. The same regulations apply to the olive oil, typical products routes and every quality production to enhance their value (Art. 5, Law 268/99). The aim of the law is to promote territories with a wine and food bent, particularly the ones dedicated to typical or quality productions (Law of February 10, 1992, no. 164). All the activities by which the tourist offer is made aim to spread the territorial culture. It is interesting to know all the aspects that characterize the visited place (history, traditions, architectural and artistic heritage, etc.) also for people who is searching for typical local productions. But generally this also applies to every type of tourist visiting places strongly bounded to the traditions, such as the rural one. The agricultural activity is full of an ethnological heritage with a great cultural value: farm machinery, implements, forges, craft workshops, cellars, olive-presses, quarries and architectural elements can be used by the tourist as real social and cultural heritage. There are numerous museums dedicated to peasant life and local traditions, agriculture and craft. Production places become culture places. Therefore rural areas have got elements able to generate knowledge. The environment and all the activities that can be carried out in it (hiking and various sports) can contribute to enrich the native flora and fauna culture, often through dedicated shows and museums, and the knowledge of the landscape typicalnesses. Agricultural activity and wine and food can contribute to make local productions and typical products (tasting), as well as cultivation, harvesting and production techniques (visits to farms) known. Cultural, artistic and architectural heritage, enriching rural areas with rocky churches, monuments, castles, period buildings, etc., enhances the value of the tourist’s experience. Another basic component of rural tourism is represented by traditions and local cultures. One of the development factors of rural tourism is the authenticity of the experience entered in the place, without being perceived as calculated (Marzano, 2009). The tourist must feel like a part of the rural reality he’s living. He must be involved in the country life activities and manage to deepen the aspects regarding culture and local traditions. As a result, all the events, shows, festivals and religious feasts often carried out in rural areas and involving the visitor in habits and traditions of the visited places are very important.

Tourism and rural development in Apulia

Apulia features a territory with different morphological features that can make it a very attractive tourist destination. The sea has a strong tourist importance. It stands on the region for over 800 kilometers. Another favorable factor is the Mediterranean climate. This could make Apulia a tourist destination all year round. In fact, one of the principal aim is to free the region by a form of tourism decidedly bounded to summer and sea. From this point of view, rural areas of the Apulian inland can offer a richness of environmental, landscape, cultural, wine and food, folk, sporting etc. elements that if developed and above all correctly promoted can contribute to a seasonal adjustment of tourist flows, as well as a development of the rural area itself. Looking at the most recent data of the tourist flows and the presences in Apulia, according to the «Osservatorio Regionale del Turismo» (http://www.agenziapugliapromozione.it) over 3,2 millions of arrivals and roughly 13,3 millions of tourist presences are reported. These data, if compared with the ones of 2011, show a slight drop in arrivals (–0,1%) and presences (–1,6%) that anyway represent a good result if compared to the national data. Tourism in Apulia has borne the crisis thanks to a significant increase of foreign tourist flows (that is +7% of arrivals and +5% of presences). According to the Osservatorio’s Report again, Apulia consolidates its position in some important international markets, such as Germany (+15,7% of arrivals), France (+24,6% of arrivals), Switzerland (+22,8 of arrivals), United Kingdom (+19,5% of arrivals), Belgium (+23% of arrivals) and U.S.A. (+10,4% of arrivals). Due to the crisis, a drop in arrivals and permanences has been noticed in the internal tourist demand, mainly from
Programma di Sviluppo Rurale (PSR) 2007-2013. The DSR makes provision for three general aims: «1. to enforce the attraction factor of the territory, improving the accessibility; 2. to promote innovation, enterprise and development; 3. to carry out better conditions of settlement. Inside these macroareas, numerous interventions regarding activities of architectural and cultural heritage salvage and reclamation on natural criticalities are reported. These interventions are fundamental for the farms multifunctions increasing and the carrying out of a regional tourist strategy based on the improvement of the offer quality» (DSR, p. 14.944). The PSR is a planning tool of Apulia Region authority, directed to the agricultural and industrial system in order to increase their development potential and make them more competitive. The basic aim is to protect natural spaces, the agricultural ecosystem and the rural landscape. In this direction, interventions are divided into four sections, each of them with a specific aim to be pursued: 1) section I, improving the agricultural and forest sector competitiveness; 2) section II, improving the environment and the rural space; 3) section III, quality of life in rural areas and rural economy diversification; 4) section IV, leader. Section III makes provision for two objectives of utmost importance: the maintenance and the foundation of brand new employment opportunities in rural areas and the improvement of rural territories attraction both for businesses and population. As regards the section III, through the intervention measures no. 311 and 313, the tourist activity is foreseen as a development tool. Tourism must be used for diversifying the local entrepreneurs activity. They can create interrelated services, such as didactic, recreational and receptive (agritourisms) activities.

Piemonte, Liguria, Lombardia, Emilia Romagna and Friuli Venezia Giulia. Arrivals and presences flows reported in Trentino Alto Adige and Molise are positive. Domestic tourism grows by 6,4% of arrivals and 4,5% of presences. Proximity tourism is increasing from Calabria, Campania, Abruzzo and Basilicata.

As regards the destination of the tourism flows inside the region, a heavy concentration towards seaside towns is reported. In detail: the Province of Foggia and Lecce gather the 60% of regional arrivals (Osservatorio Regionale sul Turismo, 2012). The data regarding flows towards internal rural areas are promising. In fact, in 2012 a significant increase of arrivals has been registered towns of Valle d’Itria, of Magna Grecia, Murgia and Gavine and of Salento (Osservatorio Regionale sul Turismo, 2012). For Apulia, the tourist activity may represent an important factor of development. In fact, according to an IPRES (Apulian Institute of Economic and Social Research) research, tourism provides an important contribution to the regional GDP, reporting a trend of increase. As regards rural areas, tourism plays a fundamental role in this direction. Therefore for Apulia, rural tourism can represent a strategic means for the tourist offer diversification, through an action centered on protection and increase in value of the rural heritage, in particular of typical agricultural and local craft products, as reports the Regional Law no. 20 of July 22, 1998 that disciplines rural tourism in Apulia. In the EU intervention policies, rural tourism is placed in the rural development model, founded on sustainable management of natural resources and local economy diversification principles. In the regional autonomies outline, the tourist activity is present both in the Documento Strategico Regionale (DSR) and in the Programma di Sviluppo Rurale (PSR) 2007-2013. The DSR makes provision for three general aims: «1. to enforce the attraction factor of the territory, improving the accessibility; 2. to promote innovation, enterprise and development; 3. to carry out better conditions of settlement. Inside these macroareas, numerous interventions regarding activities of architectural and cultural heritage salvage and reclamation on natural criticalities are reported. These interventions are fundamental for the farms multifunctions increasing and the carrying out of a regional tourist strategy based on the improvement of the offer quality» (DSR, p. 14.944). The PSR is a planning tool of Apulia Region authority, directed to the agricultural and industrial system in order to increase their development potential and make them more competitive. The basic aim is to protect natural spaces, the agricultural ecosystem and the rural landscape. In this direction, interventions are divided into four sections, each of them with a specific aim to be pursued: 1) section I, improving the agricultural and forest sector competitiveness; 2) section II, improving the environment and the rural space; 3) section III, quality of life in rural areas and rural economy diversification; 4) section IV, leader. Section III makes provision for two objectives of utmost importance: the maintenance and the foundation of brand new employment opportunities in rural areas and the improvement of rural territories attraction both for businesses and population. As regards the section III, through the intervention measures no. 311 and 313, the tourist activity is foreseen as a development tool. Tourism must be used for diversifying the local entrepreneurs activity. They can create interrelated services, such as didactic, recreational and receptive (agritourisms) activities.
Rural Tourism and Cultural Activities in Apulia

The Apulian territory is an area with a strong agricultural bent. It has a specific landscape, architectural, manufactured goods and wine and food identity. These elements can set up the premises for the promotion of a tourism directed to know the relationships between agricultural, environmental, craft, social and cultural activities of production. Capabilities to enhance the value of the history and the territorial culture are attributed to rurality, well as capabilities to create employment and income flows. There are many components able to attract tourist flows in rural areas of Apulia: nature and environment, agricultural and wine and food activity, rural and cultural heritage and local traditions and folklore. As regards environment and nature, Apulia features two National Parks, that is to say the Gargano and the Alta Murgia ones. There are also numerous natural parks, nature reserves, protected areas and WWF oasis. Tourists can visit natural areas, naturalistic museums, and carry out numerous activities in touch with nature, discovering the local flora and fauna elements. As regards wine and food, that is strongly connected with the local agricultural activity, tourists can enter wine and food routes appreciating typical local products through the wine, tastes and olive oil routes. According to Agriturist (http://www.agriturist.it/), the olive oil routes in Apulia are: «Strada dell’Olio d’Oliva Antica Terra d’Otranto», «Strada dell’Olio d’Oliva Castel del Monte», «Strada dell’Olio Collina di Brindisi», «Strada dell’Olio Extra Vergine di Oliva DOP Dauno», «Strada dell’Olio Terra d’Ulivi». Wine and food routes try to involve the tourist into direct experiences through visits to olive-presses, oil mills, olive oil museums, ethnographic museums, agricultural and peasant civilization museums, besides promoting typical local products. Therefore numerous farms, agritourisms and large farms, tourist facilities, craft businesses and cultural associations for the popularization of traditions are connected with such routes, in order to enrich the tourist experience and guarantee the services he needs. Didactic farms are included among cultural activities that can be carried out in rural areas and that are about agricultural activities. Law no. 2/2008 makes provision for didactic farms at a regional level. The aim is to spread the knowledge about the activities carried out inside large farms, involve visitors (children and adults) in the creation stage of the typical product or other agricultural activities. Also the rural heritage is included among the components that can enrich the rural tourist offer of Apulia. There are numerous examples of rural architecture on the territory; large farms, farmhouses, ‘caselle’, towers, ‘izazi’, underground oil mills, etc. Types vary depending on geographical areas inside the region and identify its landscape and traditions. Numerous buildings have been recovered and re skinned and now have become tourist facilities or museums. Undoubtedly, the ‘trullo’ is an architectural element considered the symbol of Apulia, declared humanity heritage by UNESCO in 1996. The «Murgia dei Trulli», subregion among the province of Bari, Brindisi and Taranto, is characterized by the goodly and widespread presence of the trulli as rural residences. The area with the highest density of trulli is the one including the towns of Locorotondo, Cisternino, Martina Franca and Alberobello (Grillotti Di Giacomo, 2000, p. 387). In the old centre of Alberobello there is the «Trullo Sovrano» a structure built upon two surface areas by a well-off family round about 1780. The «Trullo Sovrano» represents one of the examples of increase in value and reskilling of a rural architectural element. In fact the inside of the trullo has been used as a museum where the tourist can visit the original inhabited rooms, the private chapel, the yard, the stables, the indoor hayloft, the market garden and the garden that give the idea of how a well-off family could live at the time. Examples of this kind of increase in value are present on the whole apulian territory in numerous variations. Past and history are tangible on the territory thanks to the presence of cultural heritage, such as castles and towers, noble palaces, historical buildings, archeological areas and sacred places. The traditional production activities and the folklore are communicated to the tourist also through the various kind of museums large net. They have the fundamental aim to preserve and pass on the aspects of the daily life, production activities, beliefs, and all that represents the tangible and intangible heritage that helped give birth to the territorial and cultural identity of Apulia. One of the numerous examples of this «museum reality» is represented by the ethnological and anthropological town museum of «Trappeto Maratea». The museum is located in the town of Vico del Gargano (province of Foggia), rising at a height of 445 meters, on the northern edges of the «Foresta Umbra», which also belongs to the National Park of the Gargano. Inside the old town, in ancient houses, there are underground spaces going to be oil mills.
Conclusions

The rural development has always been indis-solubly connected to agriculture. But recently, through the beginning of modernization processes and a multifunctional approach of the agricultural activity, it can be seen that it is approaching to economic sectors next to it, such as the tourist one. Tourism in rural areas can represent one of the key factors for the economic growth of the territory. Therefore, all tourist operators need a systemic territorial approach involving all the actors and the people interested at a local level, first of all public administrations, in order to carry out their duties in the best way. Efficient transport and infrastructure networks, leisure and entertainment, cultural services, etc. are needed in order to enrich the tourist offer and make the reference rural area attractive. But all these interventions must be carried out with respect for the territory and its identity, minimizing the negative impacts on the environment and local communities. In order to enhance the value of rural areas, culture plays a basic role and represents a resource to invest on. Cultural and rural architectural heritage together with all the initiatives directed to know local traditions, wine and food and culture can become attractive factors for potential visitors and consequently they can represent a resource. But all these elements must be integrated and increased in value within a development process inclusive of the needed investments that must be unique and directed towards the territorial resources. The legislation, from the regional level to the european one, is trying to direct this development process in these terms. The key points about the PAC (Common Agricultural Policy), at Community level, and the PSR, at regional level, concerning common goals to support the competitiveness of agriculture through the promotion of innovation that can improve the management of natural resources and support a balanced territorial development involving the local population. Tourist activity in rural areas is one of the numerous actions that can improve the quality of life and the rural economic diversification through the creation of new figures at the professional level and the implementation of new economic activities respecting the territorial integrity. Very important, then, is the involving of young operators both in agricultural and touristic sector, in order to generate vitality, innovation and new ideas for development.
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