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Destination image and tourism intermediation.

A possible interdisciplinary approach¹.

Summary

This study focuses on the analysis of a tourism destination image. Specifically, we analyzed Sicily and its image, in relation to the point of view of two tourism intermediaries: tour operators and guidebooks. To obtain the perceived image of tour operators we used textual analysis of data gathered with a sample survey, while semiotic analysis was applied to the analysis of the destination image, by using the main guidebooks referring to Sicily. The use of an interdisciplinary approach makes it possible to reach the objective in a broader way.

Key words: destination image, tourism intermediaries, tour operator, guidebooks, textual and semiotic analysis.

1. Introduction

From the start of the 1980s tourism marketing literature considered more the role played by travellers than that of intermediaries. Only recently can we find some contributions that highlight how complex it is to construct the image of a specific destination whose promotion and diffusion are entrusted to different kinds of communication forms: messages which are more or less intentionally announced, more or less carefully monitored. Indeed, a destination becomes a touristic destination not only because of the effects of classical promotional instruments used by public subjects, but also because of a series of texts, speeches and representations made by other subjects that are, themselves, links in the tourism chain. Tour operators and tour guides play a major role in this direction: the former, giving information to the potential travellers, can affect the purchasing process (McLellan e Foushee, 1983; Reimer, 1990; Baloglu e Mangalolu, 2001); while the latter construct a representation of the destination giving advice to the reading tourist and suggesting some possible routes during his journey (Giannitrapani, 2008).

So our purpose in this study is to analyze a tourism destination image. Specifically, we refer to Sicily and its image according to what emerges from the point of view of the two

¹ Although the authors share the expressed opinion, Dioguardi wrote section 3, Giannitrapani section 4, Parroco 1, 2 and Conclusion.

tourism intermediaries we have already indicated: tour operators and guidebooks. To achieve our purpose we apply textual analysis, of a statistical and semiotic kind, to different data sources. Lastly, we make some observations concerning the interdisciplinary approach adopted.

2. Tourism Destination: some introductory considerations

Before presenting our research on the image of Sicily, it is necessary to make some considerations on certain aspects of the concept of tourism destination. In the last few years general agreement regarding the appropriateness of considering a destination as a combination of products and services, able to offer to consumers an integrated experience, seems to have been established (Davidson e Maitland, 1997; Hall, 2000).

Bieger (2000, p. 86) defines a destination as “a geographical context (a place, a district, a small village or a nation) chosen by a tourist or a particular tourist target as the destination of his holiday including all the facilities necessary during the journey, relating to accommodation, meals and recreation”. Further, Keller (2000, p. 31) says that “ In a traditional sense destinations are geographical places (a country, region or location) attracting a great number of tourists [...] tourists perceive a destination or supply services in that destination as a whole. It is often impossible to set supply services apart from the destination. So destination and goods are identical”.

So what we would like to underline is that a destination is an entity that, although it is complex and heterogeneous, is a global construct; it is presented as an aggregate of resources, structures, activities joined with each other. This is the meaning of “global product,² which is a specific and spatially-defined set, containing all the attractive factors (goods, services, information, natural and social resources) to which the tourist can address – according to his motivations, his culture, his value system, information and experience, his personality and his socio-economical conditions – his own specific demand (Rispoli and Tamma, 1991, 1995 quoted in Franch, 2002).

In the same direction we find the theorists of the systemic approach that, considering the destination as a local system of tourism supply, recognizes the value of supply composed of an aggregate of heterogeneous elements, provided that these elements are integrated with each other. In terms of management this could be seen as the need to define a unitary strategy of territorial promotion, precisely because the territory is a competitive unity.

² To study in depth the concept of global product, see also Smith (1994).

On the other hand, the boundary of a destination is not of a natural kind, nor defined in an aprioristic way. That is to say, a touristic destination is constructed keeping in mind the practical use and enjoyment of a territory, in the view of the visitor, the operator and the scholar); according to this view a destination could be, depending on the level adopted, Palermo, Sicily or Italy.

In our case we realized that the products offered by intermediation (tourist packages and guides) make reference to the whole of Sicily and not to smaller spatial units comprised within it or broader territorial contexts. The decision to analyze the overall image of Sicily, rather than single tourist areas on the island, thus derives from considering the destination as the discursive outcome of a plurality of these that consider it as such.

3. Tour operator: their image of Sicily as a tourism destination.

3.1 Why is it relevant to study the image of a destination perceived by tour operators?

Tour operators, like gatekeepers (Bitner e Booms, 1982; McLellan e Noe, 1983) and sources of information (Gartner, 1993; Baloglu e Mangaloglu, 2001), can act on potential travelers developing their opinions (Reimer, 1990), thus having a significant effects on the buying process. Knowing the way this kind of intermediary perceives a destination could be useful, in terms of destination management, for influencing, by means of specific promotion and distribution strategies, destination image and final consumer behavior.

If it is true that recently, thanks to the Internet, the use of “self-made journeys” is developing more and more, it is also true that in our postmodern society, characterized by insecurity, instability and transitoriness, (Bauman, 1999; Fabris, 2003; Minestrone, 2006) the action of those subjects that minimize traveler risks, giving competence and protection, is of a great importance above all for all travelers asking for economy and safety.

3.2 Methodological note

To get an image of Sicily we undertook empirical research. The analysis units were English and French tour operators. We took into consideration English and French markets in relation to their position on a list of incoming tourism flows³. The research involved the following steps:

³ Analyzing incoming foreign tourism flows towards Sicily, we noticed that France is in the first position, that is incoming foreign tourists come from France more than from other country. And the flow is constant or decreases little. The variation in French arrivals obtained comparing the 2006 data with those for 2000 is of -6,8%. The United Kingdom is another major market regarding incoming tourism towards Sicily; in 2006 it was

- 1) A pilot research on a group of English and French tour operators specializing in outgoing tourism. This was to know the destinations which are in competition with Sicily, according to the interviewed subjects. We noticed that, in the French tour operators' opinion, Sicily's competitors are: Croatia, Creta and Costiera Amalfitana; and in the English tour operators' opinion Sardinia, Andalusia and Cyprus;
- 2) A sample research (N = 514; n = 146) on English and French tour operators who specialize in outgoing tourism to know the perceived image of Sicily. To do so we used a semi-structured questionnaire. Among other things, the interviewees were to list three adjectives that, in their opinion, can describe, better than others, the Sicilian atmosphere and that of its competitors. Hence these are free answers and they can give rise to a wide information system, useful for knowing the representation of the tourism destinations we spoke about according to the tour operators' point of view. These data were used as the empirical source for the textual analysis we will show later.

3.3 What do tour operators say about Sicily? The latent dimensions of the destination image.

To analyze the image of Sicily as perceived by the tour operators interviewed we made use of a methodology often used in social science: computer-assisted quality-quantitative textual analysis. As is well known, it is a technique making it possible to analyze textual corpora of different lengths, so as to explore its textual structure systematically (occurrences, co-occurrences, association and so on) and to identify its fundamental sense dimensions. We used the T-Lab software, which makes it possible to explore, analyze, compare and represent graphically the contents of different kinds of texts.

It is correct to observe that the thematic sense of texts had already been analyzed (Dioguardi, 2008)⁴. In that study, a nucleus of words suited to summarizing the contents of the different adjectives used to describe Sicily and its competitor destinations was found. It was pointed out that when tour operator speak about Sicily, they use above all lemmas (*historical, cultural, interesting; culturelle, historique*) referring to the historical and cultural

the fifth country on the list, with a value increasing, from 2000 to 2006, 89,6%. So we took into consideration a mature market and an emergent one.

⁴ The corpus was formed by the same adjectives as we use in this paper.

dimension of the region. There are also some typical lemmas⁵ used to describe Sicily: *historical, boring e sunny* (by English tour operators); *sale e chaude* (by French tour operators). Besides the historical dimension the texts spoke about a dimension we called the “character one”; this includes several negative aspects like *mafia, dangerous, dirty, unclean* for English tour operators and *mafieuse, cordiale e diverse* for French tour operators. These all refer only to Sicily, not to competitor destinations, but, due to their negative sense, they are not considered as useful instruments for taking advantage of the tourism market and thus giving rise to a buying process.

In addition to the thematic aspect, another relevant one is the semantic one, analysis of which could allow us to know which are the fundamental sense dimensions. These give us information for better understanding how the speech object, for us Sicily, is perceived by interviewees, and hence its relative market position. Positioning has been defined in several different ways by various authors; but there is overall agreement in considering that positioning a product or a firm or a place means putting it in the mind of the objective market, in a perceived map. In other words, positioning a product or a brand consists in the perception of the product or brand in the mind of the target group units, in relation to the rank they give competitor products or brands. Thus it is clear that we would use the information about how tour operators perceived the destination as a way to know its positioning.

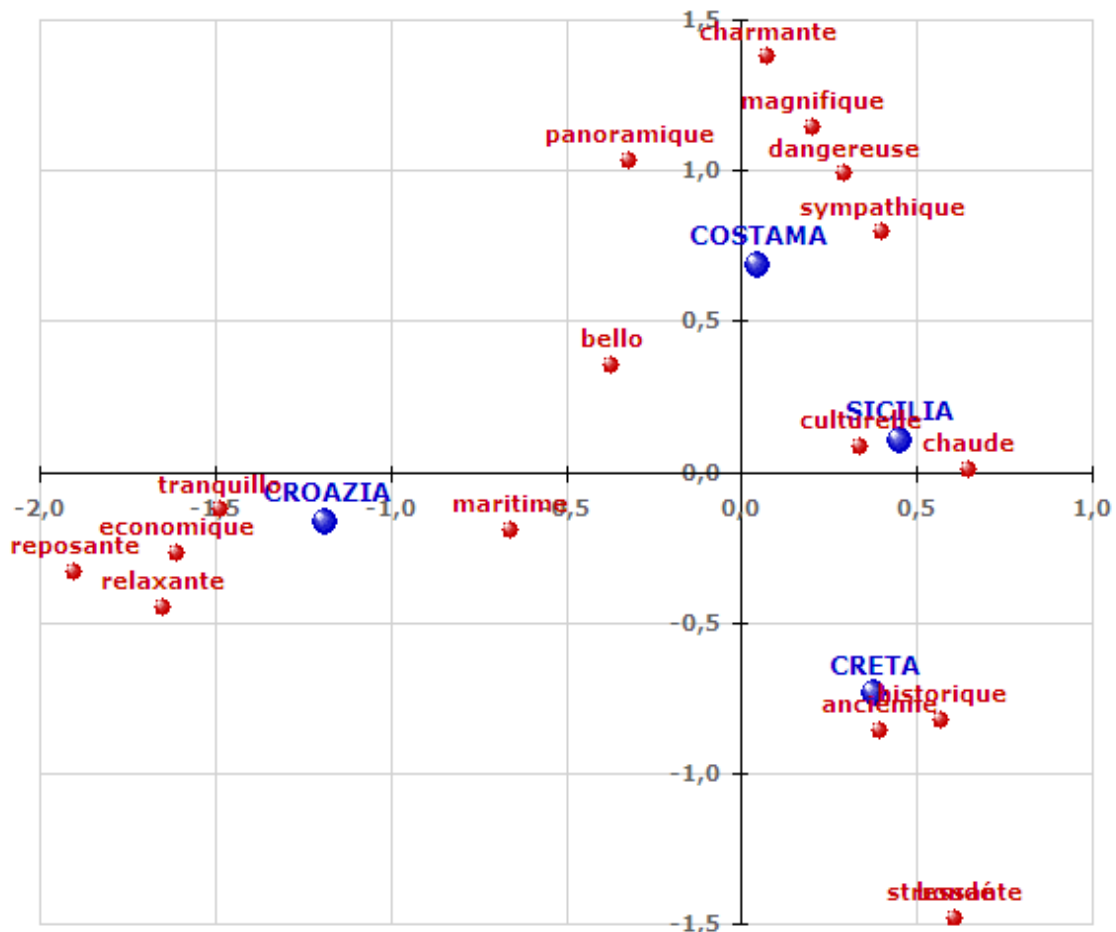
For this reason we will try to identify a representation of the interviewees’ perceptions, mapping the differences between competitors and Sicily; so it will be possible to identify which are the differences that produce other differences (Bateson, 1976), and that, in their turn, can make the difference for Sicily as a tourism destination. As in Lo Verde and Trobia (2007, p.16), every difference, every distance, can lie in a one or multidimensional space, and the dimensions can be less or more visible.

In our study, the analysis of lexical correspondence is used both to map in a factorial plain the objects of speech, and to give an interpretation of those factors. Hence the adopted technique gives rise to a factorial space in which every factor is a latent semantic dimension, “a support to measure the sense gradients that permit us to see the words significance shading off into the two polarities of the axes” (Bolasco, 1997 quoted in Lo Verde e Trobia, 2007, p. 17).

⁵ T-Lab gives a measure, called “Specificity”, that permits us to identify “typical” lemmas, that is lemmas usually adopted in a specified cluster (for example, adjectives typically used to describe Sicily rather than Croatia) and “exclusive” lemmas, used only for a specified cluster (for example adjectives used to describe only Sicily and no other destinations).

Figure 1 shows the factorial space we obtained applying the textual analysis to the adjectives used by French tour operators to describe Sicily and its competitors (Croatia, Costiera Amalfitana and Crete)⁶.

Figure1: LCA of adjectives used by French tour operators



It is immediately evident, looking at the graph, that Croatia on one side and Sicily and Crete on the other outline the polarity of the first factor; the sense of this thematic opposition is well expressed in table 1 where we can find the most significant adjectives of the first semantic dimension, which are listed according to the test value⁷.

⁶ The active variable used is destination. It has four modalities: Sicily, Croatia, Crete and Costiera Amalfitana. The words under analysis are 169; they sum up to 649 occurrences (with a limit of occurrences major than 4). 79% is the total variability shown by the first two significant axes.

⁷ Statistical measurement was used to make interpretation of factorial polarity, identified by correspondence analysis, easier. Listing values are measured in a decreasing or increasing way, and taking into account the value limit of 1.96 as the significant value corresponding to a p-value of 5%, it is possible to understand immediately the loading of each object in the factorial axis and hence its significance (see, T-LAB help on line on www.tlab.it).

As it is possible to observe, the keywords that make up the positive axis refer to cultural and historical destination aspects, while the other semi-axis, the negative one, is characterized by adjectives that refer to the relaxing, peaceful and maritime character of the destination. At a first sight it seems that French tour operators are basing the differences between destinations on the opposition cultural-artistic versus bathing character. On one side we found Sicily and Crete, with a supply based on human resources, made up of cultural activities and goods, probably a destination for a curious tourist. On the other side we found Croatia, “*maritime*”, and hence perceived as relaxing and peaceful, far from the idea of an environment rich in cultural stimuli.

Table 1: First factorial axis: Lemma and characteristic modalities

POLARITY (-)	TEST VALUE	POLARITY (+)	TEST⁸ VALUE
VAR CROATIA	-12.6916	VAR SICILIA	6.5941
LEM relaxante	-5.2596	VAR CRETE	4.3407
LEM tranquillo	-4.9612	LEM culturelle	3.2869
LEM economique	-4.8592	LEM historique	3.2391
LEM reposante	-4.2614	LEM chaude	2.1801
LEM maritime	-3.5008		
LEM bello	-2.1591		

Regarding the Y axis, the most evident opposition is between Costiera Amalfitana, in the positive semi-axis, and Crete, in the negative semi-axis. In this case the keywords of the “northern” polarity refer to country, landscape (*charmante, magnifique, panoramique*) and natural elements of Costiera Amalfitana; while on the opposite side (-) to place identity and to other aspects that are the historical and cultural characteristics of Crete (*historique, ancienne*). The sense dimension in this case could involve the opposition *nature vs culture*. Sicily does not seem to contribute to the construction of this axis.

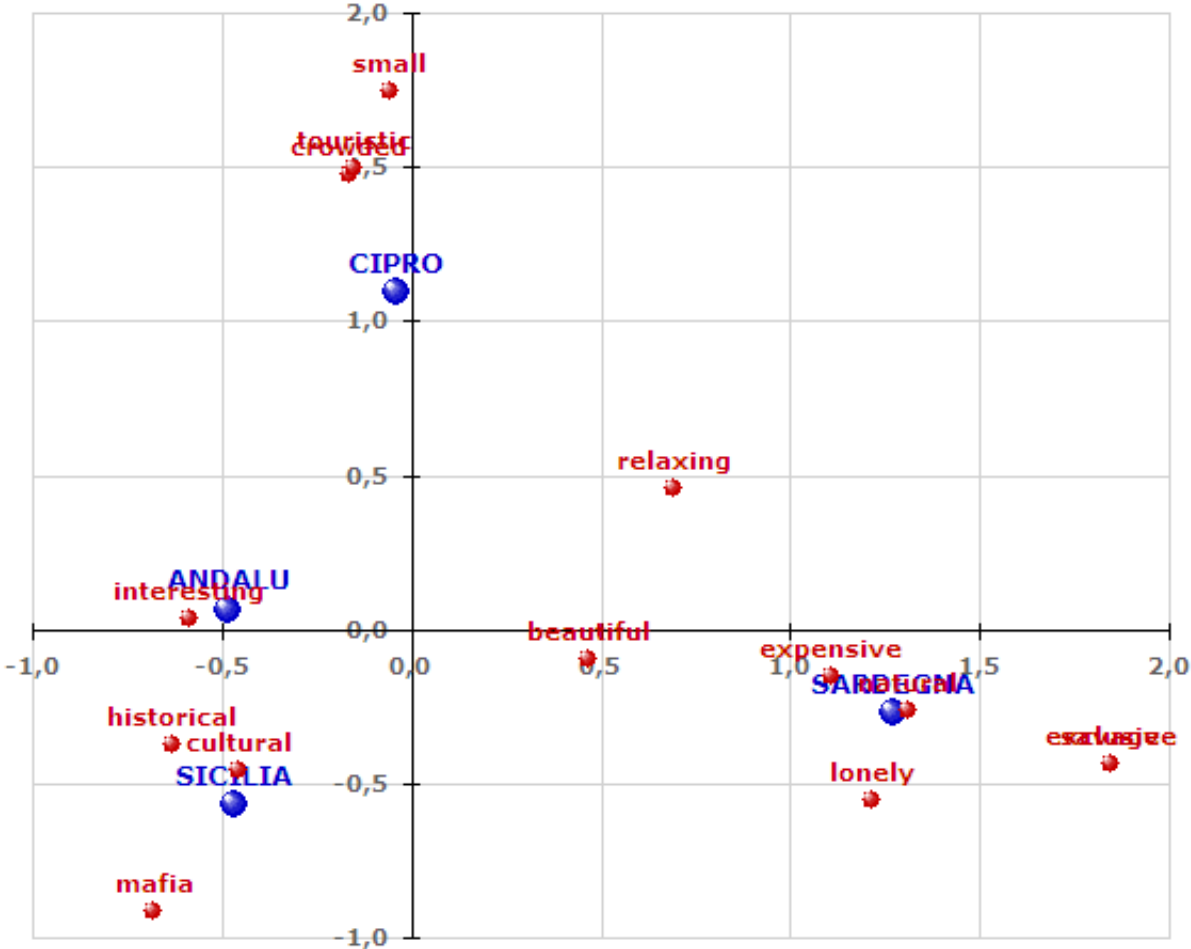
Table 2: Second factorial axis: lemma and characteristic modalities

POLARITY (-)	TEST VALUE	POLARITY(+)	TEST VALUE
VAR CRETE	-8.4466	VAR COST.AMALF.	8.2650
LEM historique	-4.6734	LEM dangereuse	3.4527
LEM stressante	-3.3318	LEM charmante	2.7544
LEM bondée	-2.9767	LEM magnifique	2.5598
LEM ancienne	-2.7513	LEM panoramique	2.3155
		LEM sympathique	2.2528
		LEM bello	2.0679

8 See note 5

Figure 2 shows the factorial space we obtained applying the textual analysis to the adjectives used by English tour operators to describe Sicily and its competitors (Cipro, Andalusia, Sardinia)⁹. It is possible to observe that Andalusia and Sicily are on opposite sides of the X axis with respect to Sardinia.

Figure 2: LCA of adjectives used by English tour operators



Looking at the loading of each word (Tab.4), we can see that the negative semi-axis clusters lemmas like *historical, cultural, interesting* which are related to the cultural and historical dimension of the destinations, instead, the positive semi-axis lemmas like *natural, savage, relaxing* refer to the natural elements and landscape of destinations.

⁹ In this case too the active variable used is destination with four modalities: Sicily, Croatia, Crete and Costiera Amalfitana. The words under analysis are 165, and they sum up to 417 occurrences (with a limit of occurrences greater than 4). Almost 81% is the total variability shown by the first two significant axes.

Hence in this case the significance of the first axis, could concern the opposition between the two adjectives: the cultural and natural ones. Instead, in the Y axis, the position of Cyprus, positioned in the semi-positive axis, opposite to that of Sicily, positioned in the semi-positive axis, is the most evident. Nevertheless, it is not easy to understand the semantic dimension of this axis. More in general, we could say that adjectives used to describe Sicily reflect its peculiar identity, which is almost atavistic and involves aspects reflecting some unique characteristics, its cultural heritage and the presence of the mafia. Instead, lemmas associated with Cyprus are not a peculiarity of that destination, but concern general aspects suited to describing all small tourism destinations. Hence we could say that in the first case tour operators made a characterization of Sicily linked to its identity, while in the second case the characterization is of a generic kind.

Table 3: First factorial axis: Lemmas and characteristic modalities

POLARITY (-)	TEST VALUE	POLARITY(+)	TEST VALUE
VAR SICILIA	-5.0831	VAR SARDEGNA	10.1378
VAR ANDALUSIA	-3.9325	LEM natural	4.8534
LEM historical	-3.1671	LEM exclusive	3.7171
LEM cultural	-2.2409	LEM savage	3.7171
LEM interesting	-2.0695	LEM expensive	2.7482
		LEM lonely	2.4479
		LEM relaxing	2.3512
		LEM beautiful	2.2948

Table 4 : Second factorial axe: lemmas and characteristic modalities

POLARITY (-)	TEST VALUE	POLARITY(+)	TEST VALUE
VAR SICILIA	-6.2501	VAR CIPRO	8.8037
LEM mafia	-2.6307	LEM touristic	5.5296
LEM cultural	-2.2459	LEM crowded	3.6458
LEM historical	-2.1869	LEM small	3.5157

At this point let us introduce some considerations. The first one regards the fact that Sicily is for English and French tourism intermediaries, a top destination both for its historical and cultural heritage. So if on one side Sicily is not perceived only as a “natural and seaside place”, resources that competitors also have, on the other side it has only a small differential power in terms of cultural tourism, as is shown in the map, with Crete (Fig.1) and with Andalusia (Fig.2).

If it is true that cultural motivation represent a very important component both of French and English journeys (Enit, 2007), and that it is necessary to valorize the cultural

aspect in order to increase the tourism flow coming from those markets, it is also true that Sicily could differentiate its supply by a strategy aiming to promote other resources, like, for example, local gastronomy, arts and crafts, which competitors cannot easily reproduce. It is possible to argue that cultural tourism could give an impulse to other supply components, giving rise to synergies between various kinds of tourism that have high differential power. The increasing request for “authentic” journeys, for people looking for traditions, can lead to the development of a new demand that is associated with a cultural factor.... in a wider sense (Svimez, 2005).

Sicily needs to enrich and develop its tourism supply, starting an innovative process to boost the diffusion of some niche products. The latter represent, nowadays, a big potentiality that could make the difference.

To summarize, it is possible to say the image and positioning of Sicily seems to be associated with factors like history, arts and culture that, even though they clearly define its identity, cannot be considered sufficient elements to gain a competitive advantage in the two markets we considered. Without any action of repositioning of the destination it is possible to lose the position reached in a context which is becoming more and more competitive and more and more globalized.

4. Tourist Guidebooks: the image of Sicily as tourism destination.

4.1 Why is it relevant to study the image of a destination spread by guidebooks?

One function of tourist guidebooks (Cohen 1985) is that of making a *communicative mediation*, i.e. giving the reader, a potential tourist, a destination image. Indeed, guidebooks are texts with a descriptive vocation, aiming to give a portrait of a destination, not only a general one, but also of its most representative buildings, and also of its restaurants and accommodations. So guidebooks also spread opinions and considerations regarding the destination. If the opinions are basically euphoric, sometimes negative ones are present too. The expressed sanction is associated with axiologies, with value systems which are implicit in every text and hence with the kind of valorization of a destination and of its tourism supply.

4.2 Methodological Notes

In this study we undertake the analysis of Sicily's image using the most important tourism guidebooks according to Demoscopea's data source. According to Demoscopea (there are some evaluations of the guidebooks sold in 2005) the bestselling guidebooks on

Sicily (guidebooks for domestic tourism) are Lonely Planet, Guida Verde Touring, Mondadori, Rough Guide and Routard.

Semiotic methods were applied to the analysis of the destination image emerging from those guidebooks. Our reference theoretical model is the one proposed by Greimas (1976) known as the *generative trajectory*. Greimas' semiotics maintains that each text can be analyzed along stratified levels, from the deeper and more abstract ones to the superficial and evident ones, with a growing sense of enrichment (for details see Greimas Courtes 1979; Greimas 1976; Marrone 2001).

In the following part of this study, the principal results obtained will be presented.

4.3 Guidebooks: images and sanctions

Lonely Planet

Lonely Planet aims, in a very strong way, to sanction tourist services of a specific place and this is introductory to the competence of the writer. Quite often the sanction is delegated to some other entity, not clearly identified. Delegation may concern official collective entities, which are competent, by definition, for example:

“ [...] the best beach on the coast that gained the blue flag” (p. 213)

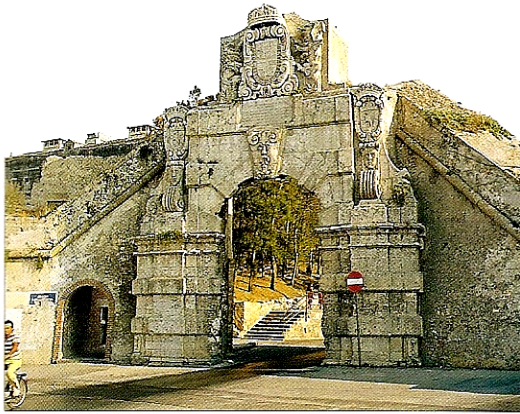
“UNESCO is seriously worried about the situation, considering the survival of the mosaics at risk” (p. 241)

Otherwise it concerns a collective entity, not well identified (“it is said to have great success”, p.216) or on the community of readers (“[...] these all are aspects very much appreciated by our readers, who send us a lot of laudatory letters”, p. 241). In each case the sanction has an intensifying value (both the positive and negative one) compared to a simple judgment expressed only by the enunciator. Instead, other times, the sanction has the role of reducing the distance of enunciator and addressee and establishing confidence between them; for example, regarding the controversial Sanctuary of the “Madonna delle Lacrime” (which, to tell the truth, does not receive euphoric judgments from other guides either) we read:

“[...] it has become one of the most emblematic – and sincerely ugliest – of Syracuse's monuments”, p.211.

Mondadori Guide

The *Mondadori* guide rarely uses sanctions in its writing and when it does, it is always in a positive direction, through valuation adjectives, while the dysphoric judgment are implicit. The euphoric atmosphere of the journeys is always maintained (it is not by chance that *Mondadori* is the guide in which opponents of the inscribed tourist experience are less indicated) and the destination image is generally positive.



La Porta Spagnola di Augusta (1681), accesso alla città antica

Illustration 3: Disphoric elements in Mondadori Guide

An interesting example relating to a dysphoric situation is that of Augusta. In this case with an assertive tone we read: “the development of the petrochemical industry has changed the look of the place” (p.153), without any value judgment being made. Then the writer says that access to the city is by an ancient door which is photographed on the same page with a NO ENTRY sign placed in the foreground (Fig.3). In this case the suggestion about what the tourist is

not to do is left implicit: it is made by a visual convention that could lead to a prescription without anything directly being said. The negative judgment can only be intuited and reconstructed *a posteriori*.

Guida Routard

This kind of sanction is always absent in *Routard*, where the enunciator rarely makes any delegations to give sanctions (and, where he does so, as in *Lonely Planet*, sanctions have an intensifying value), while, more often, he is the person mainly responsible for the judgment expressed.¹⁰ With *Lonely Planet* it is in the text that judgment tensions become more evident, where the judgment role as the essence of the guide is more explicit. Here judgments are highlighted, used in a direct manner. That often irony is used to muffle the tones of a negative sanction is more a stylistic element than an expressed will not to dramatize the text (about an hotel called *Mediterraneo Palace*: “[...] one could expect more considering it as a “palace””, p.160; “[...] steps forward to save natural and historical heritage, about time too...” p.290). Both *Routard* and *Lonely Planet* express judgments on hotels and restaurants,

¹⁰ “This is, in our opinion, the most interesting route [...]”, p. 207; “ Perfect address. We recommend it.”, p. 277

taking upon themselves an interpretation that they transmit to the tourist. Sometimes in these cases sanction is delegated to the *host* whose judgment, which is an internal one, has an intensifying value: it is true by definition, it is authentic (“A *must* for residents”, p.147). In this way the tourist is led to emulate and to be on the same wavelength as the host community. The tourist want to be a native and to mingle with Sicilians.

In *Routard* sanctions relating to hotel and restaurants are a kind of evidence of competence of the enunciator, who demonstrates that he knows what to do and can choose (speaking about tourism accommodation often they say which rooms must be asked for, to avoid, for example, too much noise or hot rooms):

“Glass windows under sun make the temperature insupportable, so protect yourselves by closing the shutters that are behind the curtains” (p.289).

Touring Guide

Touring Guide does not have this kind of judgment. Judgments are left, concerning accommodation establishments, to the star classification system. We can find some sanctions in the enunciated story, particularly, for example, regarding the museum setting. The setting is evaluated in all guidebooks, because it is a way to highlight and this to valorize or de-valorize the object of observation (Hammad 2006); it acts as an amplification of some objective properties, so it is characterized as a help or a hindrance to the tourist and his attention.

In *Touring Guide* evaluation criteria become rational, cognitive; they are explicated in order to explain to the addressee which parameters are used to evaluate an object. Instead, other guidebooks speak about a “creative” or a “splendid” setting, according to esthetic evaluation criteria or, in general, to empathic ones; impressions and sensations that the setting could cause. In *Touring Guide* the writer gives a judgment and then a motivation, thus requiring, as always, agreement from the addressee that is logical and rational. Regarding the Aeolian archeological museum, the Guide says:

“[...] a setting that is among the best in Sicily, for the care over the display and the clarity of the account proposed by means of some documents relating to the different evolutionary phases of Aeolian culture” (p.230).

Touring Guide, like *Mondadori*, gives a holiday image with euphoric tones; rarely are there negative sanctions relating to any place; these are, just as in *Mondadori*, left to the reader’s intuition, which is why they are delegated to other entities or put in a marginal

position in the text. Again referring to the Sanctuary of “Madonna delle Lacrime”, notice the difference from *Lonely Planet*:

“[...] lively controversies were caused by the shape and the height of the building [...] the Sanctuary represents a clearly distinguishable (and still much discussed) reference point of the city” (p.167).

In other respects, euphoric adjectives constitute the judgment system of this guide; they are used in a skilful way by the writer because the enunciator’s words do not directly emerge, and the text is more neutral. In any case rare negative sanctions on the enunciated text are sure, absolute and indisputable (“[...] the twin copy, which is located on the opposite side, today is used as an entry to the modern baptistery, which does not permit the right compositive reading”, p.215) based on making decision on a universal procedure that naturalizes and gives written explanations in the text, as the only possible ones.

Rough Guide

The sanction system in *Rough Guide* is based on a series of procedures aiming not to dramatize the story and bring out the search for solutions and the saving role of the guide. Above all some negative sanctions are delegated to other entities, placing on the latter the weight of an expressed negative judgment (thus it is that *Rough Guide* speaks about the Sanctuary of “Madonna delle Lacrime”: “[...] the monument is the last one added to the Syracuse profile, and for some, also the least harmonious”, p. 283). Another procedure serving not to dramatize the story consists in giving a negative judgment on an aspect and, at the same time, a positive one on another aspect (“[...] a little like a labyrinth but well done [...]”, p. 281). Or else hesitant phrases are introduced to tone down judgments (“North of Mazzini square there is maybe, the most interesting side of the city”, p. 241). Finally, a place can be de-valorized in an indirect manner; to suggest an intention not to do something; in this case a dysphoric situation is presented to the tourist, even causing some figurative elements that usually have an euphoric sense to be re-semanticized:

“It is difficult to arrive there without one’s own means (and it is also not a frequently visited place) [...] after a hard and long walk of over 5 kilometers, you will arrive[.]” (p. 347).

So, in this last case, negative aspects are not clearly expressed, but there is an evident leaning towards a negative sanction: the walk can become hard, the place is not frequently

visited and this is more a symptom of something uninteresting than a source of pleasure etc. In the end, more than the others, this guide gives sanctions to the tourist: the procedure typically used is that of delegating the choice to the tourists and then giving them sanctions. Revealing judgments, especially the negative ones, some possible reader errors are virtualized, so that they cannot occur. In this way the guide charms the reader, making him like a subject who is choosing what to do (he has ideas and takes initiatives) when really he is essentially a passive subject.

4.4 A comprehensive view: valorizations

All guidebooks, more or less evidently, above all regarding practical information, present a text that becomes a judge, guaranteeing by means of different linguistic forms the reliability and good quality of the selection made (so, we can read, sometimes, about a “good address” or that the best hotels are listed, etc.).

Specific ways to evaluate and highlight practical information (hotels and restaurants) emerge (fig. 5). In each case, both for cognitive and pragmatic valorizations, in abstract terms it is defined an axiological preposition from the text that, once made good by enunciatee, will become an ideology. The relation between axiology and ideology is well defined by Floch (1990) according to whom:

“From a semiotic point of view ideology is the search for values, as their “actualization” from a subject – which can be individual or collective – that assumes and tries to realize them. So axiology has a paradigmatic nature, where the paradigmatic axis belongs to the level of the system. Ideology has a syntagmatic nature; values, when they are assumed and researched, become potentialities of the process” (p. 232).

Touring Guide, for example, tries to simulate the absence of valorizations; behind the judgment due to the star classification system, each hotel is considered in a systematic way; address and telephone number; number of rooms available; list of supply services and a short descriptive text used to set the context or to indicate some (euphoric) peculiarities of the hotel. In this direction we can say that the guide makes a valorization of accommodation establishments of a practical kind: according to *Touring Guide* hotels and restaurants simply perform their primary function, that is guaranteeing a sleeping place and meals for the inscribed tourist for whom minimum qualitative standards are necessary and nothing else.

This is the confirmation of the different way *Touring Guide* uses to give practical and cultural information: if in the first case practical valorization is prevalent, for the latter utopian

valorization prevails in which the subject is combined with the object in the esthetic grip of the place (Greimas 1987). Or, more exactly, sites are more valorized when natural elements are combined with cultural ones, as in a search for synthesis and for a complex term that contains all the contradictions of a mythic structure. So, in *Touring Guide* practical information presents practical valorization, cultural information utopian valorization; on the whole *Touring Guide* is positioned on a complex term where the two types are not fused but remain in a bipolar structure.

Categorie di prezzo per una stanza doppia, per notte, con colazione, tasse e servizi inclusi:		PISCINA		CARTI DI CREDITO		PISCINA		SPAGLIA		PARCHEGGIO PRIVATO		RISTORANTE	
① sotto i 52 euro	② 52-105 euro	③ 105-155 euro	④ 155-205 euro	⑤ sopra i 205 euro	①	②	③	④	⑤	①	②	③	④
TERMINI IMPERIESE: Grand Hotel Terme ghterne@hotmail.it Piazza delle Terme 2. Carta stradale C2. ☎ 091 811 3557. Edificio neoclassico con giardino privato, sala conferenze, palestra, sauna, discoteca, cure termali (fanghi, idromassaggi, ginnastica). 🚗 📶 📺 📺 Camere: 68		PISCINA attrezzata a utilizzo degli ospiti dell'albergo. SPAGLIA attrezzata a utilizzo degli ospiti dell'albergo. La spiaggia può essere adiacente all'albergo o raggiungibile mediante un bus-avvetta.		Carte di credito: V, AE, DC, CS, MC		PISCINA		SPAGLIA		PARCHEGGIO PRIVATO		RISTORANTE	
TRAPANI: Crystal www.framon-hotels.com Piazza Umberto I. Carta stradale A2. ☎ 0923 20000. 📠 0923 25555. Centralissimo e avveniristico albergo dalle grandi vetrate fumé. Camere spaziose, arredate con gusto e dotate di ogni comfort. 🚗 📶 📺 📺 Camere: 70		PISCINA		Carte di credito: V, AE, DC, CS		PISCINA		SPAGLIA		PARCHEGGIO PRIVATO		RISTORANTE	
USTICA: Grotta Azzurra Contrada San Ferlicchio. Carta stradale B1. ☎ 091 844 90 48. 📠 091 844 93 96. Edificio su una grotta a picco sul mare, è arredato, elegante e confortevole. Terrazza con splendida vista. 🚗 ott-mag. 📶 📺 📺 Camere: 51		PISCINA		Carte di credito: V, AE, DC, CS		PISCINA		SPAGLIA		PARCHEGGIO PRIVATO		RISTORANTE	
SICILIA SUDOCIDENTALE													
AGRIGENTO: Dioscuri Bay Palace www.framon-hotels.com Lungomare Falcone e Borsellino 1. Carta stradale C4. ☎ 092 406 111. 📠 092 411 297. Situato in una posizione da cui si possono raggiungere sia i termali di Agrigento che il limpido mare nella sottostante baia. 🚗 📶 📺 📺 Camere: 102		PISCINA		Carte di credito: V, AE, DC, CS		PISCINA		SPAGLIA		PARCHEGGIO PRIVATO		RISTORANTE	
AGRIGENTO: Villa Athena www.villaathena.com Via Panegiata Archeologica 33. Carta stradale C4. ☎ 0922 596 288. 📠 0922 402 180. Villa del '700 situata vicino alla zona archeologica. Rampicanti e vegetazione lussureggiante e vista sui templi fanno da contorno. 🚗 📶 📺 📺 Camere: 40		PISCINA		Carte di credito: V, AE, DC, CS		PISCINA		SPAGLIA		PARCHEGGIO PRIVATO		RISTORANTE	

Illustration 4: Table of practical information in *Touring Guide*

On the other hand, *Mondadori Guide* shows prevalence of the practical valorization of accommodation structures: these all are put in a table that minimize word use and an attempt is made, as always, to communicate in a direct, speedy and essential way by using symbols (Fig.4).

Hotels are briefly described: two lines just to indicate the address and, sometimes, some hotel characteristics. The remainder is expressed by symbolic language: everything that in *Touring Guide* was a list of services, here becomes a series of symbols. Other information in the table is easy to consult: in a column some characteristics (like credit card facilities, swimming pool, beach, private parking, restaurant), in the line a symbol describing the presence/ absence of the characteristic itself.

Everything, from the verbal part to the symbols, to synoptic tables, shows practical qualities that a hotel can or must present. The same kind of articulation is found for restaurants; however, in this case, the verbal part lists the “best” dishes of the restaurant. There is clearly a new to help the tourist and make his task shorter (summing up the menu and making an a priori choice of dishes).

In *Rough Guide* instead there prevails valorization of a critical kind, and this is both as concerns the choice of touristic places to visit (in this sense there is the necessity to make “the best” timing table) and as concerns means of travel (according to the relationship between length and value of a journey) and the description of accommodation structures. In the latter case the description remains a reference one, above all if it is compared with those offered by

Routard and *Lonely Planet*, but even so the communicative modality presents direct and confidential tones to the reader.

Structures are presented highlighting for and against features, the quality-price ratio is evaluated; hotel site is valorized (it makes it possible to optimize visit timing) or the fact that from the hotel sightseeing is possible (this valorizes continuity and hyper-representation that the tourist has in this guidebook¹¹); relating to restaurants the kind of reception is also described¹².

In *Lonely Planet*, there is a minute description of the environment and of sites' physical characteristics which give a referential illusion and the idea that effectively somebody was there to get experience before the tourist. This strategy has the effect of making the tourist confident, and making the guide and the story authentic, once again causing the guide to emerge as a competent subject. On the other hand, also beginning from this minute description a fundamental importance given to location is inscribed; and this is just the opposite of that negation of experience of *Touring Guide*: hotel and restaurant are not only means to satisfy one's own needs, but are rather the endpoint where the holiday finds some of its non-secondary aspects, which are effective components of the travel experience. So it is a valorization of a utopian kind, which is combined with a pre-determination of the tourist experience, similar to that of *Mondadori Guide*, but with more seductive and less deontological tones¹³.

In the end, in *Routard Guide* valorization becomes of a playful type. Hotels and restaurants are places of experience, of pleasure, where one can go to meet other kinds of culture and other manifestations of local culture. Specifically, the search for quiet and secluded sites, where the travel subject is constructed, is described, and with it there also emerges all the relaxing dimension of the holiday, above all regarding restaurants, which are a way to come more into contact with a culture and to imitate host habits¹⁴.

¹¹ Relating to the rule of look in guidebooks, see Giannitrapani, 2007.

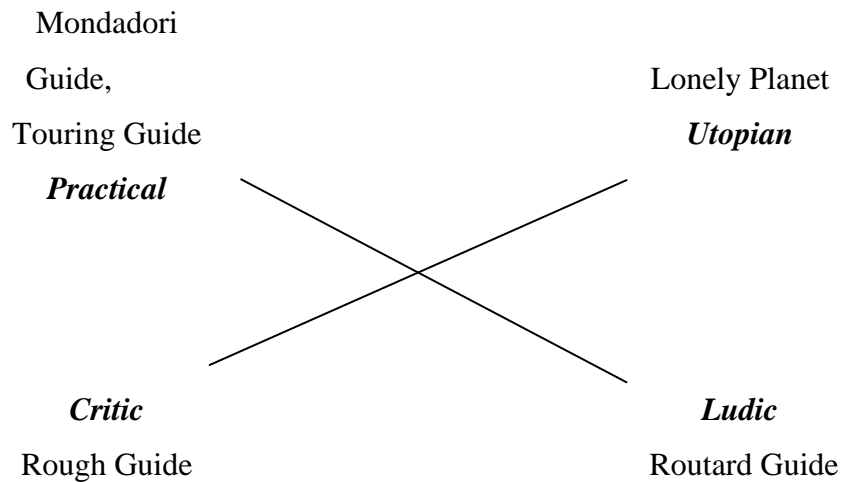
¹²“[...] from its oven excellent pizze go out, they are rapidly served and must be taken with bear. Sometimes you shall expect for a table”, P.289; “Advantages of this hotel [...] are: kind staff; well – furnished rooms (even if without wash-basin), some of them with a sightseeing upon Ballarò Market and safe parking. Nevertheless, area is not exactly healthy: narrow and not illuminated streets towards hotel during night time could be somewhat worrying” p.57.

¹³“Look for a table in the lovely courtyard under the embowered and asks for the excellent spaghetti with mussels”, p.215; it is furnished with Sicilian antiquities and linen of the best quality. The best restaurant “Firriato”, the pleasant library with its big fireside and the well equipped fitness room, makes it an unquestionable protagonist of luxury accommodation”, p.90.

¹⁴“It is easiest, but looking at the cheerful face sit is clear that it is a table of first quality. [...] Make as usual guests: come in into the kitchen and give directly your order “, p.62.

Moreover, convocation of actors stimulate tourists to interaction, interaction with a different community, going to the latter and searching for everything that is typical, cultural change, anecdotes, curiosity, interactional relations and changes. With all these a valorization of a critical type is combined; economic accommodation and a good quality/price ratio are preferred, because they seem to give pleasure to the inscribed tourist¹⁵.

Figure 5: Practical information: kinds of valorization



If, more or less, judgments of different guides tend to converge, the way they construct the discourse, the way they valorize some aspects of the destination or highlight some topics makes a specific image of Sicily for each guide¹⁶.

4.5 Destination image and editorial peculiarity

To conclude, we can say that *Touring Guide* gives an official image of Sicily: its attention is turned to everything regarding history, arts, architecture (also relating to the Aeolian Islands rather than to seaside tourism, it speaks about a cultural visit to places); the uniqueness of each place emerges (see, for example, Milazzo, a site described in the other guide only as one from which tourists can sail; here it is considered as another place speaking about “the reading of town-planning history”, p.226). *Touring Guide* speaks of everything as a certainty, and it is not by chance that a typical lexicalization of the guide is “As is evident” thus revealing the competence of the speaking voice.

¹⁵“Who has not a lot of money will have to renounce to sleep in Messina, this is because economic accommodations (near the station) are not entrusted. ”, p. 242.

¹⁶ About the differences between edition here analyzed and about sites imagine see Giannitrapani (2005, 2007, 2008).

On the opposite side we find *Routard Guide*, where there is an evident will to construct an alternative image of the destination. The important thing is not visiting museums, buildings or churches (the descriptions of which are very brief) but finding places that are “different” and lost sites to be associated with an archaic and exotic atmosphere that is absent in normal life. This is the reason why the tourist is always invited not to follow the typical circuits but to go to the hinterland or to sites rarely visited by other tourists.

A synthesis of these two positions is represented by the image of Sicily emerging from *Rough Guide* where the text moves in two different directions: at first the tourist is incited to take the classic cultural journey to visit sites, but later, (“if you have time” it often says in the text) the reader is incited to take less frequented routes. The alternative image of Sicily is also always placed on a secondary level with respect to the official one. On one side typical lexicalization is the classic “you mustn’t miss” and on another side “you will discover”.

Mondadori Guide, instead, gives a classical touristic image of the destination considered as a collection of exemplary places that must be seen in a relatively short time. The presupposed visit is, in fact, quite hurried and fast and the reader, thanks also to his guide that speaks using pictures, will make it possible that what he sees in the guide could be similar to what he sees at the sites. Thus a collection is made of these sites and an image of Sicily is given that it is not very different from what the reader had before leaving.

It is not by chance that *Mondadori Guide* always uses the relative superlative that relates the place visited with another term varying each time (a part of Sicily, Italy or the whole world). Relative superlative and hurried look are the expression and content of a kind of place valorization, so that what is typical or typified is seen according to different adjectival dimensions.

In the end, *Lonely Planet* gives a transversal image of the destination, which is not focused and generalized. Above all the pragmatic aspects of holidays are valorized (for example, the question of how to get oriented, services supplied, etc), and here the speaking voice shows its competence. Attractions are also described, but using less technical language than that used in *Touring Guide*, but, for other aspects, readers are referred to many sources of information (administrators of tourism information) that can let them know the place more directly.

Conclusion

The interdisciplinary approach, even if is often suggested in marketing research, is still scarcely used in a single study concerning peculiar phenomena. In this study, by means of it,

we were able to obtain different pieces of information that, if synergically used, can contribute to the achievement of the same focus.

Regarding the empirical research on tour operators it is possible to say that the image and positioning of Sicily are due to factors (history, arts and culture) that, even if they define the identity of Sicily in clear and recognized terms, are not elements of differentiation sufficient to gain a durable competitive advantage in the two markets considered – the French and English ones.

Analyzing guidebooks different image of Sicily emerged: from an official one that is connected with representative classical monuments, to an alternative one that leads to a search for ancient and exotic places. While the image revealed in tour operators is well defined and homogeneous, the one presented by guidebooks is more diversified and heterogeneous.

Concluding, the relevance of considering the image of a touristic destination according the two typologies of intermediaries depends on the fact that both of them are relevant subjects that widely influence expectations and perceptions and hence tourist satisfaction. These intermediaries address two market segments: on one side there is the tourist that entrusts his holiday organization to a tour operator, on the other side an independent tourist that uses the guidebook to support his travelling experience.

The information obtained could be used, from a destination management point of view, to program actions which address different targets, so to increase the tourism flow and to develop a competitive advantage.

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