

Introduction

Tourism as we understand it today, with vast numbers of people on the move, began towards the middle of the twentieth century. Only a few countries were involved, ones that were fortunate in terms of geographical position and natural and artistic beauty; virtually all of them, including Italy of course, were bathed by the Mediterranean.

Tourism in those days was called “*going on holiday*” and tourists were “*holiday-makers*”. For those who could afford them, holidays were often taken in the same place year after year, and perhaps for three or four weeks consecutively, i.e. for the whole time that it was possible to get away from home and the workplace. These were *the* holidays.

Where tourism existed it flourished and thrived on monopolistic factors, with numbers in continuous growth and easy to plan for. Holiday-makers had simple requirements that were easy to satisfy and investments guaranteed secure yields in a context that was still unburdened by excessive regulation.

The sea held sway with a season that lasted less than four months per year, but which was still often enough to guarantee a good income for the entire year. Tourists flooded in, particular into the Mediterranean, especially from Great Britain, Germany and then the other European countries and the United States. There were few others nationalities, almost exceptions. Travelling, especially far away, was not easy and was quite expensive.

And so the most common means of transport was the car, followed closely by the train. In many countries, and in some more than others, tourism was still not seen as a real economic sector; few people bothered with it and it essentially centred on the hotel industry.

Sixty years have passed since then and the situation has changed radically. Thanks to the progress made in the transport sector it has become possible for almost every country in the world to engage in tourism after realising that it is an economic sector that can provide extraordinary opportunities for growth, with the creation of revenue and jobs.

Today tourism is recognised as one of the most promising *capital saving and labour intensive* sectors of the world economy; one that is growing and that will continue to grow more for many years at steady rates. Several factors contribute towards the formulation of these rosy forecasts and these unquestionably include higher world population, the constant growth of the average per capita income and, obviously, the benefits offered by a vigorous global competitive framework that is growing exponentially.

In addition to this is another extremely important component: travellers' behaviour has changed radically in recent decades, especially since 2000.

Today the trip, the holiday, the break from everyday routine, and the desire to discover and get to know new places and other worlds, have become much more important than they were just a few years ago and have been climbing step by step up the ladder of our priorities.

The tourism of the past when operators' success was guaranteed and linked to the shrewd foresight of an eager entrepreneurial class is a distant memory. Today, in a much more dynamic, articulated, changeable and highly competitive environment, nothing can be left to chance and to spontaneity. What dominates in travelling and holidaying nowadays are the search for knowledge, satisfying one's curiosity and desires and living different experiences, for weekend breaks or for longer periods, and but ones that are scattered over the entire year.

The sea, the mountains and cultural centres the cities of art have gradually been joined by hundreds of new destinations all over the world, located outside the traditional tourist circuits. Thanks to traditions, fiestas, events, and local tangible and intangible products and distinctions, any place can become an interesting tourist destination. As a result, designing new tourist products and planning for them is taking on innovative contours that respond adequately to the new demand generated by increasingly informed and demanding tourists who make decisions quickly and are attentive to the environment and its sustainability.

Tourism has therefore become a highly complex and multifaceted sector that calls for new skills and roles and, above all, for the involvement of lots

of new actors: no longer the old vertical supply chain with a hotel at the centre and a few services around it. Today, partnering and collaboration and the networks associated with them have become horizontal and transverse; they expand and interweave even with areas that are seemingly distinct and distant from tourism, but which, taken as a whole, are capable of creating high-content synergies, generating interest and becoming identities. They are therefore capable of transforming themselves into a tourist product.

We have been accustomed, for many years, to pigeonholing tourism into categories such as seaside, mountain, spa, cities of art, religious, business, sport and so on, i.e. on the basis of the traveller primary interests.

Today, however, these subdivisions can seem insufficient for an adequate representation of the real situation. The interaction between tourist attractors, on the one hand and, on the other, sectors such as farming or culture in the broadest sense – those that are open to the contemporary, to music, design, fashion and big events – has become an essential and indispensable component of the tourist experience. The result is a complex picture and, in reality, an enrichment that has also contributed to radically modifying tourist consumption in the present day.

Today's tourists, with their new categories and clusters of millennials or of grey-haired globetrotters, have quite different rhythms, curiosities and interests than they did in the past, and these have a crucial effect on the variables in the dynamics of the tourist business such as seasonality: length of stay, booking times, where to eat, what to see and what to buy. All of this is obviously the result of developments in ICT and in the computerisation of tourism which have opened up paths that will take us a long way towards destinations that we can only imagine at present.

Everything has become easier, more immediate, available and cheaper for tourists. Tourist guides and maps have become obsolete, or niche products at best. We can get all the information we need from the Internet, social media and apps available today, whether it is a question of finding the nearest petrol station, museum opening times, restaurant menus, the price of a bottle of wine or the opinion of someone who has bought and drunk it. Everything is easy and within arm's reach. Technology and its tools have invaded our lives, in a certain sense imposing on us their languages, rhythms and rules to which we have become accustomed and adapted.

In a context like this one, of new tourists, new destinations, new prod-

ucts and new business models, tourism proposals that are promoted and marketed along traditional lines no longer have any sense and cannot find any space.

So what will happen in the coming years? Technological progress and the economic development of new areas of the world will unquestionably feed the expansion and sweeping transformation of tourism for as long as this is not thwarted by international political instability. New markets will open up and the current ones will be consolidated, we will dialogue in real time with our hotel or with our Airbnb guests using increasingly sophisticated smart devices, we will cruise on bigger and bigger ships and travel on faster and faster trains and many of us even by bike. But who will we be, where will we go, and what will we want to do? And how will tourism enterprises have to respond to these changes? How will we guarantee the sustainability of this enormous development of tourism? This is what this book wishes to unfold.