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A Pathmaking Journal



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THE CITTASLOW CERTIFICATION AND ITS EFFECTS ON SUSTAINABLE TOURISM GOVERNANCE

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ABSTRACT

The paper examines the relationship between sustainable tourism governance and Cittaslow certification. As an organised network of small cities, Cittaslow is attempting to focus plans around the primary assets of locality-based identity, by choosing to preserve the unique characteristics of each urban area. Through a quantitative analysis, based on International Cittaslow certified cities, the paper aims to examine the effects of Cittaslow certification on local government for the implementation of more sustainable tourism governance. Findings reveal that interest in being certified acts as a stimulus to the definition and the implementation of more sustainable development, allowing a destination to become part of an international network of cities. The results highlight the need to fully exploit the various opportunities in order to be certified, moving primarily from the implementation of policy initiatives coherent not

only with the many requirements laid down by Cittaslow, but which have a positive impact on areas considered more strategic for small town development, while avoiding the waste of effort and scarce resources on other less focused projects.

KEYWORDS

Governance, Local Government, Planning; Policy implementation; Sustainable tourism; Cittaslow

ECONLIT KEYS

G34; H76; O21; R58; D78; L83

1. INTRODUCTION

The role of government in tourism and the influence of public policy on sustainable tourism development (STD) have long been of interest to scholars (Hall & Zapata, 2014). This is due to the fluctuating nature of the tourism industry, with its move away from mass tourism towards greater market segmentation, use of new technologies, product differentiation and adoption of new management styles, demanding constant adaptations of governments' tourism policies (Fayos-Solá, 1996).

Recently, public sector modernization has focused on an extension of the administrative logic behind actions, integrating public value creation into government decision-making processes (Bennington, 2011). The public value paradigm puts forward a post-ideological vision of public action (Benington & Moore, 2011; Moore, 2005; Moore, 2000) in which the public decision maker is pragmatic and flexible, takes into account the context and the acceptability of choices and the capacity to create value for a multiplicity of stakeholders and across various performance dimensions (economic, social and cultural, political and ecological) (Mussari & Ruggiero, 2010).

This paradigm shift is supported by a new *modus operandi* of policy-makers, who have been increasingly turning to strategic planning systems and models (Minguzzi & Presenza, 2012; Hall, 2008; Wilkinson & Monkhouse, 1994). In this process, certifications may become increasingly important as they are adopted by public actors in order to enable them to successfully adapt tourism policies (Lorenzini, Calzati, & Giudici, 2011).

Among the cases identified in practice, this paper focuses on the Cittaslow certification as an example of good practice for more sustainability-oriented tourism policies. Despite the interest in these aspects (theoretical) and the growing number of local authorities in the world that join the Cittaslow Association in order to activate and to implement policies that contribute to improving quality of life for residents and tourists (practical), the issue remains largely unexplored (Nilsson, Svärd, Widarsson, & Wirell, 2011).

The paper aims to examine the effects of Cittaslow certification on local government for the definition and implementation of more sustainable tourism governance and, therefore, seeks to answer this first research question:

RQ1) what are the main reasons that led policy-makers to apply for membership of the Cittaslow Association?

It could be argued that, because of the need to respond to the increasing requirements of sustainable development, a sustainable governance style would be most appropriate for a local authority seeking to improve its public value production.

Nonetheless, it seems that few of the numerous policies adopted actually outline specific aims concerning sustainable tourism development (Dodds, 2007). It thus becomes more and more pivotal for public managers and policy-makers to develop actions capable of creating public value and to promote incisive tourism related decision-making initiatives, as well as providing the resources required to sustain this effort (Bramwell, 2014; Zapata, 2014; Marzuki, Hay, & James, 2012; Briedenhann, 2007).

In this sense, Cittaslow certification is granted to cities that agree to work towards goals and standards aimed at improving the quality of life of their residents and visitors (Miele, 2008). The certification requires local authorities to define and to implement policies focused on six different areas: energy and environment, infrastructure, technologies and facilities for urban quality, safeguarding autochthonous production, hospitality, liveability and awareness (Ekinici, 2014; Cittaslow, 2009).

The other research questions are strictly related to the latter point, in other words to better understand the integration of actions attributable to these six areas into

government decision-making processes. More specifically, two further research questions are developed:

RQ2) Are policy-makers aware of the consequences of membership of the Cittaslow movement?

RQ3) Do they pay attention to developing strategies related to the six areas as recommended by the Cittaslow certification and does this attention influence more sustainable tourism development?

In the following sections, the paper gives an overview of the role of government in the management of sustainable tourism, followed by a description of the Cittaslow certification. Subsequently, there is an explanation of the quantitative analysis carried out on a sample of Cittaslow small towns, analysis of the findings and a final part related to discussion and conclusion.

2. THE ROLE OF GOVERNMENT IN SUSTAINABLE TOURISM MANAGEMENT

Interest in the concept of governance is relatively recent despite the fact that tourism provides an interesting context in which to study governance, given that it lies at the intersection of the public, private and community sectors (Ruhanen, Scott, Ritchie & Tkaczynski, 2010).

Since the 1990s, there has been a gradual shift in approach in tourism policy literature from the notion of government to that of governance. This has gained in importance as researchers have sought to understand how the state can best act to mediate contemporary tourism-related social, economic, political and environmental policy problems at a time when the role of the state has itself changed, given the dominance of neo-liberal policy discourse in many developed countries (Hall, 2011).

Hall (2011) argues that governance is the act of governing. The role of government policy, local or otherwise, is an important factor in generating economic growth and development for any consideration of tourism development (Mair, 2006).

Indeed, governance has emerged as the new buzzword in tourism discourse (Wesley & Pforr, 2010). Bramwell (2011) points out that the term governance is widely used in a variety of academic and practitioner circles. It implies “systems of governing” and the ways in which societies are governed, ruled or “steered”.

For Cooper, Scott, and Baggio (2009) governance can be described as the means by which the purpose, direction, policies, actions and behaviors of an organization are influenced, directed and/or controlled by its governing body. Beritelli, Bieger, and Laesser (2007) propose a broader view of governance applied to tourism destinations as consisting of setting and developing rules and mechanisms for policy strategies, by involving all institutions and individuals.

This interest in tourism governance is also confirmed by examining the implementation of tourism policies at local, national and international levels. The example may be drawn from the UNWTO Forum in 2011 where a declaration of tourism governance was presented. The pillars of this declaration are:

“[...] Governance is a system and process to define strategies and implement them to achieve competitiveness and sustainable development of the tourism destination [...]” and “[...] Governance is the cornerstone for the success of tourism destinations and to achieve sustainable development; and should be created as a resilient and solid system, although able to be flexible and evolve throughout time and reinvent itself if needed [...]”.

From the above definitions, it clearly emerges how important governance is for tourism destinations seeking to promote sustainable tourism. Sustainable development has acquired a central role in tourism governance to the extent that there has been a concerted global agenda to integrate the principles of sustainable development into the production and consumption of tourism (Swarbrooke, 1999).

UNWTO (2005, p. 9) defined sustainable tourism as “tourism that takes full account of its current and future economic, social and environmental impacts, addressing the needs of visitors, the industry, the environment, and host communities”. It follows that good governance is of vital importance for successfully achieving the dual mandate of conservation and exploitation of local resources.

The philosophy of sustainable destination governance is based on the careful compliance of local cultures, history and environment and the enhancement of social responsibility (Heitmann, Robinson, & Povey, 2011). Sustainable destination governance requires a set of useful tools that permit territories to develop towards more efficient, more sustainable and more liveable systems for citizens, as well as more attractive for tourists (Beaumont & Dredge, 2010).

From this outlook, it is possible to assert the importance of local governments foreseeing and understanding the advantages of becoming members of the Cittaslow movement. Indeed, the Cittaslow philosophy aims to promote places that are at peace with their history, nature, and socio-cultural values, and is thus directly related to STD because cities that adopt and practise this philosophy are simultaneously implementing STD (Ekinci, 2014; Nilsson et al., 2011). In the following section, the role of Cittaslow certification is discussed as potential support for offering a significant contribution to systematic implementation of Sustainable Tourism Development on a global scale.

3. CITTASLOW CERTIFICATION AS POTENTIAL SUPPORT FOR SUSTAINABILITY-ORIENTED LOCAL POLICIES

Sustainable destination governance and territorial brands have a complex relationship, starting from the idea that this type of brand represents a way of increasing the attractiveness of a territory as a tourist destination (Neto, 2007). In addition, the concept of territorial brands is closely linked to the history, cultural aspects, social organization and environmental conditions of a territory (Lorenzini et al., 2011) and the community value of which they are an expression. Among the various categories of territorial brands (eco-labels, quality systems, etc.), territorial certifications are progressively becoming voluntary tools adopted by policy-makers to convey a sense of quality and authenticity of products, services and attractions, and of sustainability (environmental, social and cultural, and economic). More specifically, in the case of territorial certifications, the idea of quality is promoted through the intrinsic value of the heritage and assets protected, but also through the sustainable conduct of communities, which recognize the value of their heritage and then decide to preserve it for future generations.

According to Font and Bendell (2002), certification is “the process by which third-party assessment is undertaken, written assurance is given that the product, process, service or management system conforms to the standard” (as cited in Sallows & Font, 2004, p. 92). On the other hand, Honey and Stewart (2002) describe certification as “the procedure that audits and gives written assurance that a facility,

product, process, service or management system meets specific standards. It awards a logo or seal to those that meet or exceed baseline criteria or standards that are prescribed by the program” (pp. 4-5).

From this perspective, there are the distinctive experiences of several territorial certifications which, promoted by appropriate associations such as ‘Borghi più belli d’Italia’ and ‘Cittaslow’, are directing the commitment and efforts of small towns towards distinctiveness, quality of life, cultural heritage, environmental safeguard and efficient hospitality systems.

In general, certifications concerning destinations may adopt two distinct goals: protecting the environment and quality of experiences in the areas of interest; and certifying tourism quality regarding products, services and attractions (Font, 2002).

In order to understand the relationship between sustainable destination governance and territorial brands, the Cittaslow certification has been chosen as a case study. Cittaslow is a novel concept that encourages a different style of town development concentrated on local diversity and economic cultural assets, building on historic resources and traditions and, specifically, encouraging a slow lifestyle (Cittaslow, 2014; Semmens & Freeman, 2012; Radstrom, 2011). The “slow” philosophy states that “there is no doubt that it will be more human, environmentally correct and sensible for present and future generations; the project will respect small realities in a more and more globally connected world” (Cittaslow, 2014).

Developed on the concept of ‘slowness’ (Petrini, 2001), Cittaslow, Slow City or Città Lenta, is mainly considered as a spin-off of the Slow Food movement (Heitmann et al., 2011, p. 116).

It is often assumed that a member of Cittaslow Association is simply a slow growth city or a city in which life is always relaxing and easy going (Radstrom, 2011). Unfortunately, this interpretation of Cittaslow as countering the fast pace of life is not necessarily accurate. The slow in Cittaslow concerns the “idea of taking the time for quality. However, residents of Cittaslow cities do not necessarily have a slower pace of life. Many authors only interpret the word slow based upon the common English use of the word, remaining ignorant of the original intention, which is based upon the Italian cultural interpretation inherent to Slow Food and goes far beyond a simple

notion of speed. It represents a “higher quality of life and taking the time to achieve and appreciate this quality” (Radstrom, 2011, p. 94).

It is becoming a curious example as a suitable model for local governance, highlighting the desire of some governments to identify and sustain pathways to progress and innovation and to stimulate the creation of social and local interest networks around the theme of quality of life, as opposed to economic, environmental and territorial choices no longer recognized as the only sources of wellbeing (Semmens & Freeman, 2012; Hoeschele, 2010; Pink, 2008; Mayer & Knox, 2006; Knox, 2005).

Since its foundation in 1999, the Cittaslow Association has expanded beyond its national boundaries, currently comprising over 180 cities in 28 countries worldwide and becoming an organized global network of small cities (it is a requisite that the town must have no more than 50,000 residents). These members adopt a critical position regarding the homogenization of urban identity strictly linked to globalization and strong consumerism, preferring the culture of pace of life and local conviviality with its unique characteristics, fostering continuous commitment of local community members and encouraging inevitable moves towards economic and environmental sustainability (Nilsson et al., 2011; Pink, 2008).

Moreover, cities belonging to Cittaslow recognize the following principles: definition of an efficacious environmental policy (including a system of evaluation of air and water quality, etc.); implementation of a coherent urban infrastructure policy; incentives for the production and use of foodstuffs; encouraging maintenance of traditional local handicrafts; promotion and improvement of quality related to hospitality systems; promotion of awareness among all citizens; stimulus for the use of new technologies that facilitate sociability and cooperation among local producers (Cittaslow, 2014).

In order to be certificated (initially towns meet around 50% of the criteria) and, then, to maintain Cittaslow certification (towns are excluded from the network if the audit and the review carried out every 3 years do not demonstrate progress towards full adherence to the association’s charter), it is necessary to define and implement policies focused on these six areas: energy and environment, infrastructure,

technologies and facilities for urban quality, safeguarding autochthonous production, hospitality, liveability and awareness (Table 1).

<i>Energy and Environmental Policy</i>
Compliance with existing regulations regarding air and water quality and biodiversity
Plans for the promotion and diffusion of domestic waste recycling and special waste disposal
Diffusion and promotion of industrial and domestic waste composting
Existence of a depurator (special sewage filter) for communal domestic water
Municipal Energy Saving plan, with special attention to use of alternative sources of energy (such as green hydrogen, mini-hydro) and thermo-valorization from RSU and biomass
Plans for control and reduction of noise pollution
Systems and programs for city illumination (prevention of lighting pollution)
<i>Infrastructure Policy</i>
Cycle lanes for facilitating journeys to schools and connecting public buildings areas (moving walkways, escalators, cable cars, dedicated cycle routes to schools, etc.)
Implementation of projects for guaranteeing access to sites of public interest to disabled people and plans for overcoming architectural barriers
Promotion of plans for facilitating family life and for sustainable commodity distribution in urban centers
<i>Policies for urban quality</i>
Interventions for the restoration and enhancement of town centers
Recovery / construction of green areas
Urban liveability (times to and from work, company nurseries, etc.)
Redevelopment and reuse of marginal areas
Use of ICTs in the development of interactive services to citizens and tourists
Bureau for sustainable architecture
Installation of optic fibers and wireless systems
Monitoring and reduction of pollutants (noise, electromagnetic fields, etc.)
Promotion of tele-working
Promotion of sustainable private building
Promotion of social infrastructure (time banks, free-cycling projects, etc.)
Promotion of sustainable urban planning
Recovery / realization of productive green areas
Creation of spaces for the commercialization of local products
Protection / enhancement of traditional shops
<i>Policies for agriculture, tourism, handicrafts</i>
Plans for development and promotion of organic farming
Quality certification of products and artisan goods and artefacts
Enhancement of traditional occupations
Enhancement of rural areas
Use of organic and/or local/typical products in school catering
Programs for taste education and correct nutrition
Enhancement and conservation of local cultural events
<i>Policies for hospitality, awareness and training</i>
Plans for tourist information and personnel training for good hospitality
Sensitization of tourist operators and retailers on price transparency and full information about prices of products and services on shopping sites
Activation of Slow itineraries in the town (leaflets, web information, dedicated web page, etc.)
Adoption of techniques to enable effective participatory bottom-up processes in administrative decisions
Health education
Welcome policy for visitors and plans for facilitating their involvement in the town's activities (parking, flexible/ prolonged public office opening times) with particular attention to special events
<i>Policies for social cohesion</i>

Integration of discriminated minorities
Integration of the disabled
Youth policy
Poverty reduction
Associationism
Partnerships
Support for Slow Food campaigns and activities
Collaboration with Slow Food and other organizations to promote natural and traditional food
Support of twinning and cooperation projects that concern the Cittaslow and Slow Food philosophies

Table 1: Cittaslow requirements.

Sources: Cittaslow, 2014; Ekinci, 2014.

Heitmann et al. (2011) affirm that considering all six areas of Cittaslow policy underlines a holistic idea of sustainable management and development as it includes critical aspects in the planning process, which comprises the environment, the economy, and the community. Indeed, Cittaslow incentivises projects, activities and initiatives that aim specifically at: reducing pollution and increasing pedestrian zones, cycle paths, parks and green-areas; developing alternative energy sources; renovating local historic buildings; promoting innovative technologies for hospitality, sociability and networks among different local actors; sustaining the local market and promoting its products; promoting the preservation of local cultural events in order to revitalize towns; increasing tourist facilities and services (Ekinci, 2014; Semmens & Freeman, 2012; Mayer & Knox, 2006).

4. METHODOLOGY

4.1) DATA COLLECTION AND VARIABLES DESCRIPTION

In order to achieve our research aims, we carried out a quantitative analysis through an ad-hoc survey. We designed a questionnaire based on the detailed requirements for Cittaslow membership (Cittaslow, 2014) and a previous work focused on specific aspects mainly linked to sustainable tourism development themes (Ekinci, 2014).

The questionnaire contained three distinctive sections. The first section asked respondents to answer questions regarding the main reasons for applying for Cittaslow membership and, then, their commitment to the six areas. These questions were structured in a Likert scale mode (1 to 5), with choices ranging from “very weak”

to “very strong”. The second section of the questionnaire included questions about critical variables for the success of Cittaslow initiatives, strategic areas for defining appropriate policies, challenges related to obtaining and maintaining Cittaslow certification and, finally, the benefits obtained. The last section contained demographic information.

The questionnaire was pre-tested using a number of Italian Cittaslow towns in order to ensure that the questions were clear, appropriate and valid. Based on their feedback, certain items were opportunely adjusted, integrated and modified. Italian and English were used as languages for all the questionnaires with the agreement of respondents.

The sample studied consisted of 186 International member cities of Cittaslow. The Cittaslow membership list, obtained from the website of the Association, was used as a basis for collecting the email addresses of mayors and/or tourism departments since they are key informants and appropriate respondents to our questionnaire as they have detailed information about Cittaslow requirements and all of the above specified aspects. Referents in each Cittaslow city received an email explaining issues like general purpose of the analysis, questionnaire salience and length, anonymity, lack of explicit deadline. Two follow-up emails were then sent to non-respondents.

The survey was conducted over the period from January to May 2014. A number of the questionnaires received from sampled towns had to be eliminated due to the fact that they were incomplete. Therefore, we obtained 71 completed questionnaires: 34 from Italy, 37 from other countries. In this last case, we received questionnaires by different countries, such as China, Belgium, Denmark, Finland, Turkey, Holland, etc. Data collected through the survey was coded and analysed using SPSS (11.0).

4.2) STATISTICAL ANALYSIS

A descriptive analysis was made in relation to the main reasons that led policy-makers to applying for membership of the Cittaslow Association. In this way, they accepted the defined principles/criteria of Cittaslow and undertook to meet its requirements by introducing a large range of measures from “the promotion of

organic agriculture to the creation of centers where visitors can sample local traditional food” (Mayer & Knox, 2006, p. 24).

Logistic Regression Models (Kleimbaum & Klein, 2002) were then estimated in order to assess the possible dependence of the dichotomized commitment (Yes=1, No=0) in each strategic area on the requirements in specific projects.

Logistic Regression (Kleimbaum & Klein, 2002) is a statistical method for analysing a dataset in which there are one or more independent variables that determine an outcome. The outcome is measured with a dichotomous variable (in which there are only two possible outcomes). In logistic regression, the dependent variable is binary or dichotomous, i.e. it only contains data coded as 1 (TRUE, success, etc.) or 0 (FALSE, failure, etc.). The goal of logistic regression is to find the best fitting model to describe the relationship between the dichotomous characteristic of interest (the dependent variable, that is the response or outcome variable) and a set of independent (predictor or explanatory) variables. Logistic regression generates the coefficients (and standard errors and significance levels) of a formula to predict a logit transformation of the probability of presence of the characteristic of interest:

$$\text{logit}(p) = \ln\left(\frac{p}{1-p}\right) = \beta_0 + \beta_1 x_1 + \dots + \beta_k x_k$$

where p is the probability of presence of the characteristic of interest. The logit transformation is defined as the logged odds:

$$\text{odds}(x) = \frac{P(Y=1|X=x)}{P(Y=0|X=x)} = \frac{P(Y=1|X=x)}{1-P(Y=1|X=x)} = \frac{p(x)}{1-p(x)}$$

If the parameter β_j is positive, an increase of explanatory variable x_j induces an increase in the odds that the dependent variable takes the value 1.

Rather than choosing parameters that minimize the sum of squared errors (like in ordinary regression), estimation in logistic regression chooses parameters that maximize the likelihood of observing the sample values, using the following likelihood $L(\beta)$ and log-likelihood $l(\beta)$ functions, respectively.

$$L(\beta) = \prod_{i=1}^n p(x_i)^{y_i} [1-p(x_i)]^{1-y_i} \quad \text{and} \quad l(\beta) = \sum_{i=1}^n \{y_i \ln[p(x_i)] + (1-y_i) \ln[1-p(x_i)]\}$$

5 RESULTS

Although respondents have different motivations for joining the movement, the findings of the descriptive analysis (Table 2) show that most of them indicate the following aspects as being “very important”: improvement in visibility and attractiveness (M = 4.21; SD = 0.98); transformation into a visitor friendly destination (M = 4.14; SD = 0.93); stimulus to implement “slow” sustainable development (M = 4.00; SD = 1.09).

Further, results show that respondents have indifferent or neutral answers with regard to the role of Cittaslow certification in order “to address issues of small towns’ decline” (M = 3.48; SD = 1.18). This aspect seems to conflict with the prior pioneer research, which highlighted a certain role of Cittaslow in confronting the decline of small towns (Semmens & Freeman, 2012).

However, respondents consider participation in an international network of cities to be “important” (M = 3.53; SD = 1.21) because it becomes a way of benefiting from an exchange of experiences, culture, best practices and projects. This last outcome deserves a closer look: tourism destinations have a necessity to innovate to remain competitive in an increasingly global environment. A pre-requisite for innovation is to understand how destinations source, share and use knowledge (Baggio & Cooper, 2010). In this respect, a useful recognition of the value of knowledge sharing not just within the destination, but also through outbound networks can produce interesting spaces of improvement for those destinations that fully perceive the importance of collaborations and partnerships with other destinations. This seems to be particularly true for small towns that typically have smaller staffs, less revenue, and less available expertise.

Reasons	1	2	3	4	5	M	SD
Participating in an international network	4 5.6%	12 16.9%	16 22.5%	20 28.2%	19 26.2%	3.53	1.21
Starting and implementing “slow” sustainable development	2 2.8%	6 8.5%	12 16.9%	21 29.6%	30 42.3%	4.00	1.09
Transforming your town into a visitor friendly destination	1 1.4%	2 2.8%	14 19.7%	23 32.4%	31 43.7%	4.14	0.93
Addressing issues of small town decline	5 7.0%	8 11.3%	22 31.0%	18 25.4%	17 23.9%	3.48	1.18
Improving the visibility and attractiveness of your town	2 2.8%	3 4.2%	7 9.9%	25 35.2%	34 47.9%	4.21	0.98
Any other	7 9.9%	2 2.8%	10 14.1%	5 7.0%	4 5.6%	2.89	1.37

Table 2: Main reasons for becoming a Cittaslow certified town.

Source: Own elaboration.

Here below we show the principal results of the Logistic Regression models used in this study.

As it is possible to notice from the results explicitly reported in table 3, success regarding the strategic area of “Environment” is linked with the environmental requirement “banning the use of Genetically Modified Organisms (GMO) in agriculture” (p=0.043). More specifically, the positive sign of coefficient β , associated with this specific requirement (0.847), means that the positive outcomes in the aforementioned strategic area is due to greater commitment by Cittaslow small towns under investigation to programmes and initiatives pertaining principally to new agricultural biotechnologies, their longer-term environmental impact of cultivating genetically modified crops and also food safety.

Predictors	β	S.E	P	Exp(β)	Inf.C.I.	Sup.C.I.
Constant	-0.258	1.945	0.895	0.773	-	-
Env. quality	-0.582	0.562	0.300	0.559	0.186	1.680
Env. use	-0.174	0.550	0.752	0.841	0.286	2.471
Env project	0.673	0.667	0.313	1.960	0.530	7.248
Env recycling	-0.597	0.633	0.346	0.550	0.159	1.904
Env energy	0.179	0.380	0.638	1.195	0.568	2.516
Env GMO	0.847	0.438	0.043	2.332	0.989	5.498
Env pollution	-0.001	0.486	0.999	0.999	0.386	2.588
Env SGA	0.394	0.385	0.305	1.484	0.698	3.154

Table 3: Logistic regression model for Strategic area “Environment”.

Source: Own elaboration.

Considering the strategic area of “Logistics” (Table 4), it can be observed that its positive outcomes are related only to the requirement of “promotion of programmes

to facilitate family life and local activities” characterizing the context of the infrastructure component ($p=0.017$).

Seeing that the positive sign of coefficient β associated with these facilities (0.860) underlines the existence of a positive dependence, it is possible to highlight that greater efforts and commitment, focused mainly on the support of locally owned businesses (conditioned by the changing strategies of global competitors) and their unique characteristics, and the liveability of small towns (e.g. a set of various urban living services to improve quality of life), consequently imply several benefits in the cited strategic area.

Predictors	β	S.E	P	Exp(β)	Inf.C.I.	Sup.C.I.
Constant	-3.377	2.010	0.093	0.034	-	-
Infr. historic	0.339	0.440	0.440	1.404	0.593	3.324
Infr. facilities	0.860	0.361	0.017	2.363	1.164	4.795
Infr. life	-0.516	0.395	0.191	0.597	0.275	1.295
Env plan	0.606	0.470	0.197	1.834	0.730	4.603
Env goods	-0.351	0.325	0.180	0.704	0.373	1.330

Table 4: Logistic regression model for Strategic area “Logistics”.

Source: Own elaboration.

Focusing on the strategic area of “Entrepreneurship” (Table 5), it seems to be significantly dependent on “defining local products and supporting them for their commercial value” ($p=0.038$). The dedicated action plans, events, festivals and other related initiatives, which are aimed at safeguarding and strengthening local products and local businesses, and also at effectively promoting their commercialization through useful and profitable channels (e.g., shops for natural products), have a positive impact on the strategic area of “Entrepreneurship”, as indicated by the positive sign of the regression coefficient (1.106).

Predictors	β	S.E	P	Exp(β)	Inf.C.I.	Sup.C.I.
Constant	1.258	1.760	0.475	3.518	-	-
Safeg. biol	0.326	0.468	0.486	1.385	0.554	3.464
Safeg.loc.prod.	1.106	0.533	0.038	0.331	0.116	0.941
Safeg.culture	0.265	0.482	0.582	1.304	0.507	3.352
Safeg.certific.	0.311	0.336	0.354	1.365	0.707	2.637

Table 5: Logistic regression model for Strategic area “Entrepreneurship”

Source: Own elaboration.

Regarding the strategic area of “Tourism” (Table 6), it is curious to underline that the results of this area are significantly influenced by policies, programmes, initiatives and actions focused on the development and improvement of urban life ($p=0.047$). This means, unequivocally, that the commitment of local actors and their actions, mainly associated with the hospitality category, with the specific aim of “helping both residents and tourists to feel at home in a Cittaslow city” (Radstrom, 2011, p. 99), do not have a direct impact on this strategic area, thus highlighting the difficulties of local actors in recognizing and implementing effective projects that allow achievement of several objectives in the connected strategic area.

Predictors	β	S.E	P	Exp(β)	Inf.C.I.	Sup.C.I.
Constant	6.341	3.269	0.052	567.570	-	-
Infr. historic	0.455	0.796	0.568	1.576	0.331	7.503
Infr. facilities	0.404	0.528	0.445	1.498	0.532	4.218
Infr. life	-0.963	0.702	0.170	0.382	0.097	1.511
Env plan	1.534	0.806	0.047	0.216	0.044	1.046
Env goods	0.856	0.537	0.111	2.354	0.821	6.746

Table 6: Logistic regression model for Strategic area “Tourism”

Source: Own elaboration.

Finally, the strategic area of “Culture” (Table 6) is influenced by the environmental requirements “banning the use of Genetically Modified Organisms (GMO) in agriculture” ($p= 0.007$) and “establishing systems for controlling and reducing electromagnetic, noise, and light pollution” ($p=0.0.34$). These two factors, included within the environmental requirements, seem to be predictors of positive outcomes of the aforementioned strategic area because they have significant influence on it, as denoted by the regression coefficients (1.409 and 1.550, respectively).

Predictors	β	S.E	P	Exp(β)	Inf.C.I.	Sup.C.I.
Constant	2.104	2.248	0.349	8.200	-	-
Env. quality	0.874	0.683	0.201	2.397	0.628	9.145
Env. use	-0.842	0.740	0.256	0.431	0.101	1.840
Env project	1.266	0.854	0.138	3.546	0.666	18.893
Env recycling	-0.991	0.762	0.194	0.371	0.083	1.655
Env energy	0.221	0.495	0.654	1.248	0.473	3.290
Env OGM	1.409	0.522	0.007	4.092	1.470	11.386
Env pollution	1.550	0.733	0.034	0.212	0.050	0.892
Env SGA	-0.425	0.484	0.380	0.654	0.253	1.689

Table 7: Logistic regression model for Strategic area “Culture”.

Source: Own elaboration.

6. DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSION

The study has analyzed the Cittaslow movement as a strategy for local authorities in order to address interdependencies among goals for economic, environmental, and social development. Three main research questions have been developed and are resumed below: “what are the main reasons that led policy-makers to apply for membership of the Cittaslow Association?”; “Are policy-makers aware of the consequences of membership of the Cittaslow movement?”; and “Do they pay attention to developing strategies related to the six components as recommended by the Cittaslow certification and does this attention influence more sustainable tourism development?”.

About the first RQ, it is interesting to highlight that most of the respondents consider Cittaslow certification as a stimulus for the implementation of more sustainable development. Compiling and running efficacy programmes is a contemporary exigency for destinations in order to implement sustainable development principles more effectively (Minguzzi & Presenza, 2012). It requires the formulation of strategies and the implementation of interventions that become increasingly complex.

In this context, certifications, such as Cittaslow, may represent suitable instruments to stimulate and activate strategic pathways aimed at achieving more sustainable development. In this sense, certification represents an appropriate support for small towns because it allows a check-up of the destination to be carried out in terms of strengths and weaknesses in all the strategic areas identified by the Cittaslow movement. The certification assessment also contributes to providing a framework within which to develop strategies for improving visibility and attractiveness.

Respondents consider Cittaslow certification to be important also because it permits them to become part of an international network of cities. This general tendency of opening up to other communities can produce interesting opportunities, so this network can also be viewed as a system of mutual assistance, reputation, support and sharing of experiences. It follows that destinations of this network are expected to collaborate each other as part of developing a common tourism

philosophy. Nonetheless the research shed new light on destinations networks as a chance for linked towns to compete more successfully (Eisenschitz, 2010). It emerges that cooperation is a strategic option to be considered in order to help especially small towns to develop and share more efficient tourism management and marketing tools.

The change in the discourse of the role of policy-makers has automatically required a deeper understanding of public tourism policies (Jenkins, Hall, & Muchazondida, 2014). In this sense, the results of the Logistic Regression statistical methodology produced several answers to the second and to the third research questions.

Results provide insights into the influence that projects, actions and interventions, defined according to the six main categories identified by Cittaslow, exert on certain areas considered as strategic for the sustainable development of small towns (environment, logistics, business).

For example, if the local government focuses on the “environment” category and is therefore heavily involved in the implementation of activities and programs for the protection and preservation of the environment, this means that the policy-maker considers the strategic area of “environment” as more relevant to the sustainable development of small towns compared to other strategic areas (e.g. logistics, business).

In addition, results have highlighted that often the efforts made in all the areas characterizing each single component laid down by Cittaslow do not have a direct influence on the strategic area of reference. For example, if policy-makers assume that the tourism area is strategically the most appropriate for the development of the town, then they will tend to focus on projects in the category of “hospitality”. However, the results show that the strategic area of “tourism” is influenced, on the other hand, “by the implementation of programs for the rehabilitation and improvement of urban living conditions”, a feature of the infrastructure category, rather than by activities undertaken in the “hospitality” category.

This could highlight two aspects of particular relevance: a) limited awareness of policy makers of the effects / results of projects, initiatives and activities; b) need to define and implement appropriate projects consistent with strategic areas, avoiding a

waste of resources in projects that produce effects in other areas not considered to be of particular importance for the improvement and development of the destination.

Looking at the implications, these are both academic and managerial.

In terms of literature, these are related to territorial certifications, which require making and maintaining a commitment to aspects closely linked with sustainable development policies. In terms of management, the paper delved into the main reasons that can push policy-makers to request Cittaslow certification, originating in certain cases from the idea that membership is considered an answer to the important problem of the decline and depopulation of small towns.

However, the most significant managerial implication can be considered the importance that policy-makers recognize in defining and implementing projects and initiatives that not only allow granting and maintenance of certification, but also support the identification of areas considered most strategic for the sustainable development of the destination and at the same time avoid wasting resources in activities not considered strategic. Related to the latter point there is also the ability of policy-makers to link these specific actions to clear goals and related tools that will be used to quantify the achievement of each goal.

Although our findings contribute to the investigation of the relationship between sustainable tourism governance and Cittaslow certification, the main limitation of this study is represented essentially by the size of the sample. Therefore, it would be appropriate to extend the research to other Cittaslow towns (national and international).

Aside from the limitation just mentioned, the present study does highlight several possible future research paths. It would be interesting to carry out an empirical investigation to measure the overall impact (economic, environmental, socio-cultural and marketing) of Cittaslow and to assess how far local residents' and visitors' perceptions of these impacts correspond to reality. Other future lines of research may contribute to deepening the level of knowledge and skills of public servants and ascertaining whether this level is sufficient to properly manage a certification and thus to exploit all related opportunities. Last but not least, new research's lines have to be set out to deepen the knowledge of the real level of cooperation inside this network in terms of the capacity to promote openness and to interact and collaborate.

This research can be also supported by the sophisticated tools of the network analysis.

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