New professions
for planning and managing a tourist destination

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1. Competitiveness, human resource and integrated training

The strategy of an economic system, from which the ability of creating value depends on, is developed within a competitive framework – customers, suppliers, competitors – through what are called competition incentives – the choice of the activity to be carried out and of the resources, in particular human resources, on which to focus. (M. Porter).

From this perspective, human resources represent a restraint and, at the same time, an opportunity for the competitiveness of an economic system, both in the case of a single company and of the whole territory in its complexity:

- A restraint as the development of an economic system and its sustainability depend on the characteristics of the people operating professionally within it;
- An opportunity as they represent the foundations on which a programmed and pursuable development can be projected.

According to the point of view adopted in the following pages the close relation that is always created between the competitive strategy of any kind of
economic activity and the human resources that are available to implement it, results in its greater centrality in the case of the tourism sector.

The role of training is therefore crucial for:
➢ The creation of new professional profiles facing the market fast evolution;
➢ The renewal of traditional professions;
➢ The fostering of the exchange, and therefore of growth, of knowledge within a territory;
➢ The motivation of the human capital toward quality and customer orientation.

The role of training in the competitiveness of tourism

It should also be added that as far as tourism is concerned, the foundations of competitiveness are bound to be the following concepts of:
• **Destination**, the passage from the single product to the destination product, which results from the valuation of the territory and the relation among different operators (not only economic);
• **Integration**, where co-operation among different players results in a network among companies (which is formalised and not dependent on “the good will” of the single individuals).

*It is therefore clear that in tourism, the emerging professions are not only those connected to the company management and to the new technologies, but they are also the professions of the territory, those connected to the network and company management, besides those related to the relational aspect both among different players and, above all, between company and customer (customer satisfaction)*

Integration, however, is to be searched at training level. Only if the training programs are able to guarantee a strong integration, is it possible to attain a
level of flexibility and response time to the continuous change that can ensure not only the production and the introduction on the labour market of new professions but also the preservation and the development of new competencies and professions that have already been operating.

The need for a model for an integrated training for tourism results in particular:

- from the fact, on the one hand, that competitiveness of single companies is strongly affected by the competitiveness of the destination (the whole tourism territory);

- from the observation, on the other one, of the fact— which is often forgotten— that the beneficiary of the single offer components, which compose the holiday experience in a territory, is unique. If we accept the presupposition that “professionalism represents the capacity of reacting to specific needs” (those of tourists) then it needs to be stated that a tourist expresses different needs in different moments of the day and that the needs for the same service vary according to each tourist. This calls for the need of realising integrated services, rather than single ones, taking into consideration that the tourist always carries out a process of generalisation of his/her evaluation (global perception). The lack of quality of a single aspect thus determines a negative evaluation of the offer on the whole and therefore of the experience.

It is therefore clear how the dictate “co-operate within to compete outside” becomes increasingly unavoidable.

We have already mentioned the fact that co-operation should be developed into an actual integration which gives rise to the need of creating professions that are able to operate according to a “companies network” logic and to manage the relational aspects both within it (among the different components of the network) and outside (between the network and the customers). It seems therefore reasonable to conclude that training should adopt an integrated form fostering relations and competencies exchange among different sectors of the tourism activities.

Unlike the sequential training process, the concept of integrated training lays its foundations on the recognition as well as on the management of existing interdependencies among the different phases of the training process of the professions necessary to the reality of the tourism sector.

2. A new approach: professions and professional systems
As a consequence of the complex challenges of the market, today we are witnessing a process of professionalisation of work and a parallel de-sectorialisation of many work profiles.

The use of traditional categories of the labour market (“crafts”) – and consequently the use of the most traditional training criteria – results in fact, problematic if the objective is that of pinpointing the human resources that are strategic for the competitiveness of a company as well as of a whole territory.

Today, the sector logic is therefore declining in every field, with the exception of training.

The traditional professional profiles suffer from a sort of cultural rigidity which does not make them suitable to meet the emerging needs or to react promptly to the rapid changes of the market.

“Emerging” professions (as they are the most requested ones) have common traits:

- Continuous training;
- Orientation toward competencies, flexibility, intersectoriality and interdisciplinarity.

The approach here referred to does not, however, make reference to the single profession but it adopts a perspective centred on the concept of professional systems.

The reason is given by the fact that in a territorial perspective (destination instead of single tourism product), professional systems provide with a concept that is able to clarify the contributions that single human resources and professional profiles bring to the development and to the competitiveness of a territorial area on its whole.

A professional system is composed of different profiles which share:

- Technical skills;
- Organisational abilities;
- Professional culture.

Technical skills relate to the sphere of knowledge (to know) and of the abilities (to know-how).

Organisational abilities refer to the modalities of interaction, thus encompassing the sphere of relational and behavioural skills (to know how to be)

Professional culture is the ensemble of shared values, which have an impact on both the significance of the working experience and on the related behaviours.

From that we can infer that the concept of professional system does not make reference to a restricted group of equals. Instead, it refers to a relational network of different elements which share some of the aspects of their
profession, with the objective of making the professional abilities (knowledge and experience) of each one available and usable by everyone, for a balanced tourism development of the whole territory. Should there not be this mutual “exchange” we could not talk of system.

3. Professional systems for the competitiveness of tourism destinations

The strategic importance of a professional system depends on the territorial vocation pursued. In other words, every vocation has its own corresponding specific professional systems.

According to the point of view here adopted, the territory is here considered a player characterised by a function of value generation, in a strictly economic sense (income and occupation) and also in terms of the growth of its image. Both aspects, however, go hand in hand.

The link between these reflections and the application phase is given by the connection between the competitive choices and the professional systems.

It is clear that the chances of success of a tourism activity (company or territory) strictly depend on these four conditions:

- differentiation;
- entrepreneurship;
- system making;
- quality making.

It is already known that the pursuance of any objective requires the preliminary availability of human resources with a suitable level of professionalism.

Realisation of these conditions, as a corollary, depends mainly on:

- level of sharing of the professional abilities, of knowledge and experience within a system of professional training, on the one hand;
- enhancing of the managerial and relational skills, on the other one.

Each one of the four conditions of tourism competitiveness above described, refers to – quite automatically – a specific system of tourism professions. Such system includes also a fifth one resulting from the change of scenario induced by the network technology (e-information, e-business, e-commerce).

**Differentiation** ⊳ system of tourism professions of the territory;

**Entrepreneurship** ⊳ system of the company tourism professions;

**System making** ⊳ system of the network tourism professions;

**Quality offering** ⊳ system of the relational tourism professions;
and finally, transversal to the four systems, the system **of technological tourism professions.**
Connection between competitive choices and professional systems

TOURISM COMPETITIVENESS

DIFFERENTIATION
  Territorial valuation

ENTREPRENEURSHIP
  Company ability valuation

SYSTEM MAKING
  Relations among single players valuation

QUALITY MAKING
  Customer relation valuation

DESTINATION PRODUCT

SINGLE COMPANIES

NETWORK AMONG COMPANIES

GLOBAL ORIENTATION TOWARD CUSTOMER

TERRITORY PROFESSIONS

COMPANY PROFESSIONS

NETWORK PROFESSIONS

RELATIONAL PROFESSIONS

TECHNOLOGICAL PROFESSIONS

VALUE GENERATION OF THE TERRITORY
4. The analysis of the professional systems in the competitive strategy perspective

The issue of the professional figures can be analysed from different angles:

- from the perspective of the labour market where the main issue is given by the possibility of meeting the demand with the supply (and consequent gap);
- from the perspective of training supply which refers to the institutions that, with different roles and in different phases of the program, operate in the field of training of the professional profiles of tourism;
- from the perspective of competitive strategy where the aspect of the professions constitutes one of the competitiveness levels for the growth of the whole territory value.

It is clear the reference to the last one of the approaches (the perspective of the competitive strategy) even though the three perspectives, despite being quite differentiated, do not constitute isolated systems and have not therefore elements of mutual interaction.

In this context, without concentrating too much on the concept of “profession” and by adopting a typical logic of functional approach, we refer to the profession as the “response capacity (satisfying) to the requirements and the needs” (of the tourist).

A “response” is characterised by three elements:

- the content (the object of the response);
- the relational aspect (the person to whom it is provided with);
- the context (where, when and the environment of reference).

Any reflection concerning the profession (and tourism profession as well) should therefore take into consideration each of those elements and should be characterised by the reference to:

- the specific content of the profession (to know);
- the characteristic connotations of the tourist it is related to (to know how);
- the company, sector and territorial context of exercise of the profession (to know how to be)

The following model of approach to the issue of the profession and professional systems for tourism constitute formalisation of the reflections we have made so far.
It is therefore clear that reference to the profession should be made according to two parameters:

- a specific parameter related to the single profession (*technical component*);
- and another one that takes into consideration interrelations among different professions (*transversality component*).

The profile of every single profession is therefore characterised by three components:

- its own technical specificity (*to know*);
- the typical connotations of the profession system of belonging (*to know how*);
- common connotations among all professional systems of tourism (*to know how to be tourism operators*).
PROFESSIONAL SYSTEMS AND PROFILES IN TOURISM *

The tourism professions system of the territory

- Manager of tourism destination
- Marketing manager of tourism destination
- Experts in tourism organisation and planning of the territory
- Cultural events organisers
- Tourist guide

The company tourism profession system

Hotel sector
- Hotel manager
- Host manager

Catering
- Catering manager

Extra-hotel sector
- Extra-hotel receptivity manager

Intermediation
- Agency manager
- Computing and booking system operator
- Tourist planner

Congress sector
- Congress events organiser

The network tourism profession system

- Companies network manager
- Manager of tourism associations/consortia
- Manager of local tourist information offices, local borough...

The relational tourism professions system

- Quality experts
- Information offices operators
- Tourism communication experts
- Tourism market analysts

The technological tourism professions system

- Information manager
- Web manager
- Database manager
- Network technologies experts
- E-commerce experts

* this is not an exhaustive list of the professional profiles of tourism but includes those professions that distinguish themselves as competitive incentives in the sector.