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27 February 2013

Online at <https://mpra.ub.uni-muenchen.de/49671/>

MPRA Paper No. 49671, posted 09 Sep 2013 16:43 UTC

## SOCIAL DIVERSITY: A LOOK AT TOURISM

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### 1. Introduction.

With the term about social diversity we refer to a variety of phenomena that pass through the fabric of the population of an area (at city, regional, national, or continental level) and are registered with different indicators, and that are often studied with a multidisciplinary approach, showing what occurs in the different cultural contexts. Therefore, the theme of diversity or, in general, of social inequality (Sen, 1980), is dealt with by various observers, who examine it from different points of view, considering both the communities and the phenomena present in them.

The first perspective regards the system of relations that can be established at different levels of interdependence: single individual and family, local and national communities; the object of study is, in this direction, the one relative to the social and cultural dynamics that influence the context.

The second perspective that can also disregard the type of community, underlines the single paradigms that characterise social diversity: gender, race, culture, disability, age, nationality, work activity, religion, sexual orientation, etc.

Social inequality influences numerous socio-economic phenomena (income distribution, consumption patterns, access to education, job placement, etc.). Among these, tourism is one of the most important ones even if, up to now, it has been scarcely examined under this perspective.

In fact, tourism not only is an important economic activity sector, but it also has significant effects at social level. In this field, a first distinction can be made assessing the effects on travellers on one side, and the ones on the inhabitants of the regions visited on the other.

Italy, known as one of the most important touristic nations in the world, is significantly affected by the phenomena we are studying and, therefore, is an ideal context to analyse and identify the characteristics of tourism that can interact with the various aspects of social diversity.

This article faces the theme of social diversity with specific reference to the phenomenon of tourism in Italy. The main objective is to find the way to give some quantitative references to these themes through statistic and administrative sources. However, since these aspects are not easily measurable, we will try to highlight some empirical evidences, valorising the limited existing data sources. In our opinion this is very important because, in a world in which there is a "data deluge", we must increasingly consider the information content of the data that relate to these topics.

The second paragraph takes into consideration tourism as "primary social need"; since this is the way, it is now being assessed, examining some relative public and private initiatives.

In the following paragraph, some aspects of the complex relation between tourism and social diversity are analysed; a case study that regards the activity, in Tuscany, of an association that promotes tourism for a specific unprivileged part of the population is presented following. Some final and perspective considerations end the work.

### 2. Tourism: a primary social need.

It is known that tourism is more and more considered an important economic factor. In Italy the assessment of the national accounts of 2010 indicate that the Value Added (V. A.) produced by tourism and the activities related to it amount to almost 83 billion euro, which represent 6.0% of the V. A. of the entire economy. However, at territorial level a part of V. A. produced by tourism, which is considerably higher than the national one, can be observed in some regions: Tuscany 7.6%, Sardinia 8.1%, Veneto 8.8%, Aosta Valley 14.2%, and Trentino - South Tyrol 28.8%.

Moreover, the tourism activities represent an efficient instrument for increasing one's own knowledge and favouring the development of their personality. "For all these reasons today it is necessary to ensure access to the tourism experience to all citizens, regardless of personal, social, economic, and any other condition that can limit the use of this asset. To achieve these goals it is fundamental to refer to the principles of "Universal Design", design and organisation model of the services that considers the needs of the different typologies of users whose proposals of global solutions that take into consideration human diversities represent an essential quality standard." (Italian Ministry of Tourism, 2009).

In other words, tourism is considered more and more as a primary social need. For this reason, in 2009, in Italy, within the Ministry of Tourism, the "Commissione per la promozione e il sostegno del turismo accessibile" (Committee for the promotion and encouragement of accessible tourism) was established to focus the tourism system on each person and his needs. Among the multiple classifications applicable to tourism, so is defined the concept of accessible tourism. The concept of "accessible tourism" refers to the characteristics of the demand and specificity of the supply structure. Recently ENAT (the European Network for Accessible Tourism) has promoted a conference internazionale on "Accessibility in tourism: an ethical value, a business opportunity" (BIT/2013).

Specifically, the demand for accessible tourism refers mainly to tourists with special needs, tourists that must have access to all the same services used by all the other travellers. This means that accessible tourism refers to various categories of people: elderly, disabled, sick, poor, persons with food and environmental intolerances, pregnant women, families with children, and so on.

Concerning the offer, the accessibility is expressed with a combination of structures and services: transport, gastronomy, accommodation, beach, ...

From an economic point of view, accessible tourism represents, annually, a target of about 38 million tourists in Europe and 3.5 million tourists in Italy. It must be noticed that for every tourist with special needs, we must consider a multiplier equal to 2.8 for the size of the family (etc.), this means that more than 100 million travellers in Europe could be part of this type of market.

A "Carta dei diritti del turismo" (Charter of Rights of Tourism) was also established in Italy and the "Manifesto per la promozione del turismo accessibile" (Manifesto for the promotion of accessible tourism) was published.

In the Manifesto, it is affirmed that the accessibility implies the involvement of the entire touristic sector, at national and local level, starting from:

- a. the transport system;
- b. accommodation;
- c. catering;
- d. culture, free time activities, and sports.

Another important concept to be considered in the framework of the "diversity / travel" relation is "social tourism". This type of tourism is largely preferred to accessible tourism, both because of economic problems and reasons linked to the travellers with special needs (ISTO, 2010).

An important aspect of social tourism is represented by the fact that many of its categories cannot be assessed quantitatively and in an easier way compared to the more general "accessible tourism".

Social tourism, which had initiatives in Italy before the World War II, developed mainly during the 1950s, and includes tourism activities promoted by non-profit organisations in favour of the "unprivileged classes".

Over the years, this type of tourism has been always aimed at satisfying the need for better social relations, and therefore, it is not only aimed at persons with special needs. The elements that motivate the demand of social tourism are not very different from those that refer to "accessible tourism". The main difference is that social tourism strives to eliminate, with specific organisational models (generally developed by non-profit associations or foundations), the economic and social ties that prevent many categories of people from satisfying this primary social need.

In this regard, we can identify two categories of actors:

- a. public institutions (regions and local authorities) that contribute to social tourism through support policies for the travelling of the unprivileged categories;
- b. private subjects that act to support the unprivileged persons. Among these there are, above all, non-profit operators whose objective is (in accordance with public institutions) to increase the accessibility level of the tourism offer, in physical, demographic, and economic terms. In this sector, there is a large variety of operators: from the churches to company clubs, from sports associations to cultural ones. In Italy there is even a federation, Federazione Italiana per il Turismo Sociale (FITuS) (Italian Federation for Social Tourism), which develops projects and initiatives in this direction.

### 3. Tourism and social diversity: some empirical evidences.

It is not easy to assess quantitatively, through the main official statistical sources, the concepts that we have expressed in relation to accessible tourism.

In Italy, there are different sources of official data, which directly or indirectly, supply information regarding tourism:

- a. Arrivals and nights spent in the Italian tourist establishments (ISTATa);
- b. Trips and holidays in Italy and abroad (ISTATb);
- c. Household Consumption (ISTATc);
- d. Capacity of the accommodation facilities (ISTATd).

In these four sources of data, disseminated by the Istituto Nazionale di Statistica (ISTAT - the Italian National Statistics Institute), there is no specific information concerning accessible tourism.

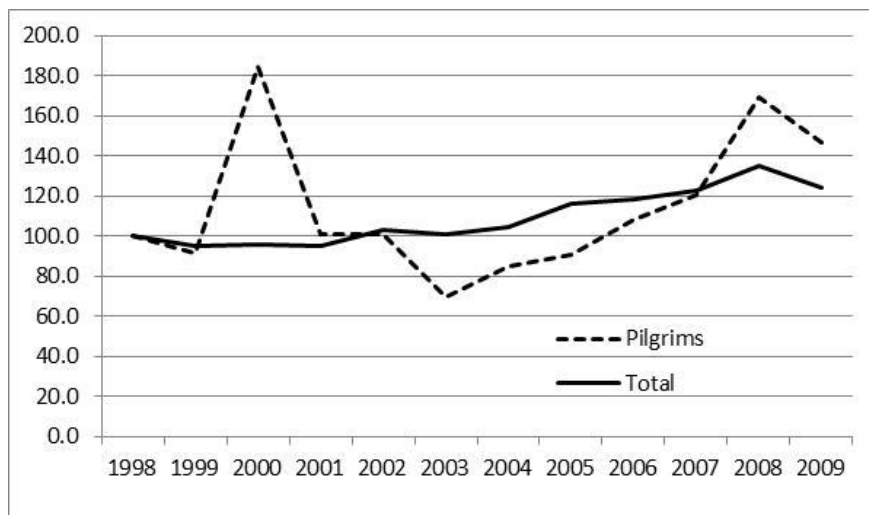
For this reason, we have searched for some proxy information. First, always considering all the data disseminated by ISTAT, we find some interesting information among those regarding social tourism.

For example, in the ISTAT source "Trips and holidays in Italy and abroad", we found some information regarding the relation between tourism and diversity. Among the different types of tourism in this category, we examined the one regarding pilgrims; the tourist demand included in this typology can reasonably be considered both in the context of accessible tourism and in the social tourism one. In figure 1, we refer to the information regarding the trips made by residents in Italy for "religious reasons, pilgrimage". We used this data relative to trips made for "religious reasons, pilgrimage" (about 2% of the total trips), also for the availability of a specific very detailed Tuscan source, on which we will develop a specific analysis (see paragraph 4).

Figure 1 highlights three specific characteristics relative to the phenomenon examined, about what happens for the tourism demand as a whole:

- a. a peak during the Holy Year of 2000;
- b. a peak in 2008, for the 150<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the apparitions in Lourdes;
- c. a greater elasticity of this series, which however shows a higher increase (46.9% instead of 24.7%).

Figure 1 - Trips made by Italian residents for "religious reasons, pilgrimage" and total no work tourism (index number 1998=100) – source ISTAT.



After having shown this simple result, the only one possible related to the ISTAT data, we considered the field of administrative sources and other non-systematic data sources.

The first opportunity is represented by Istituto nazionale ricerche turistiche (Is.Na.R.T. - National Institute for Tourism Researches) that since 2008 has been publishing an annual report about "social tourism in Italy", with the aim of analysing the demand and the supply of services dedicated to social tourism.

In Is.Na.R.T. report 2012 on "Social tourism in Italy" (Is.Na.R.T., 2012), we discovered that:

- a. in 2011 social tourism represented about 2.3 million holidays (2.4% of the total in Italy) with an

- increase of 9.6% compared to 2010, while the total holidays registered a decrease of 2.6%;
- b. social tourism has a different time distribution: this way it produces an important “smoothing” of the seasonal pattern (that, in this field usually represents a very important problem);
  - c. social tourism represents a linking factor between some selected operators (3068 structures, representing 4% of the total offer in Italy) and a mixed group of organisations: cultural, companies, and sports associations, churches and other religious groups, schools, etc.

Therefore, social tourism is an important factor since it balances the market increasing demand and distributing tourists' presence during the year. The information on social diversity obtained through the study of social tourism, allow also evaluating the instruments that can reduce, at least partially, the existing social and economical gaps.

At international level, there are other researches and approaches for the assessment of the relation between social diversity and tourism.

Among the international programmes, very important is the Calypso initiative. Calypso considers social tourism as a remarkable tool to help those people, who normally cannot go on holiday (Calypso). Calypso identifies four groups of subjects:

- a. young unprivileged adults, between 18 and 30 years of age;
- b. families with financial or other problems;
- c. disabled people;
- d. over 65 and retired people who cannot afford travelling.

The aim of this programme is also to increase low season tourism, whose costs are usually lower than those of the other periods, being this already an advantage for travellers and, as we have already said, it has a positive effect on the accommodation system.

In brief, “Calypso model” is aimed at:

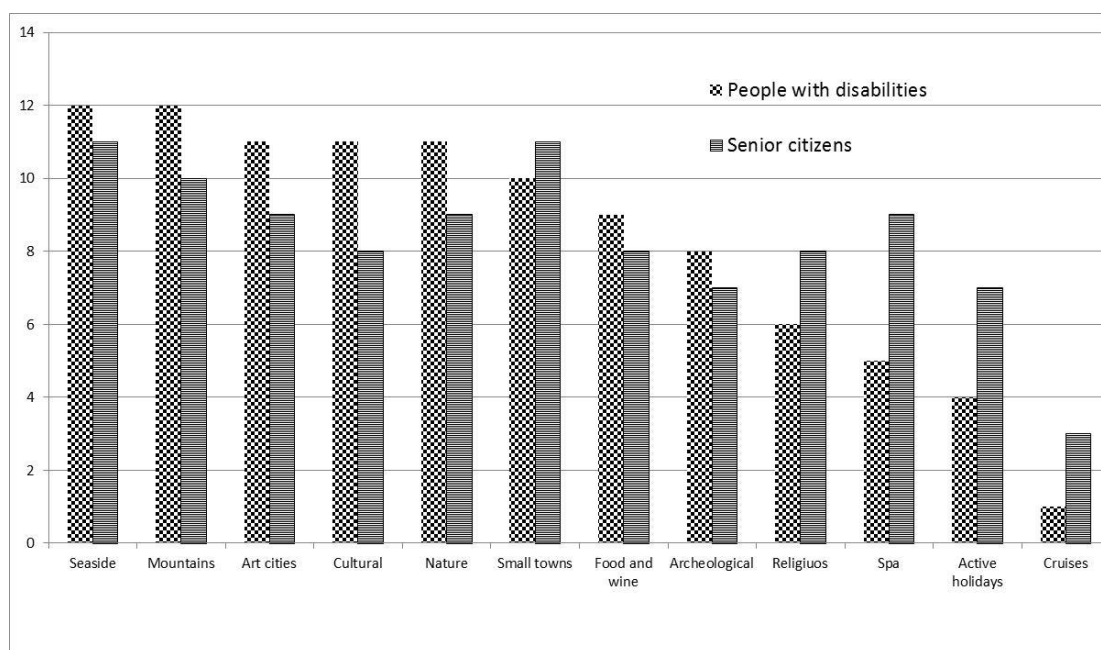
- a. promoting off-season tourism, in particular in those regions where tourism is already well developed, but with a high seasonality.
- b. allows less well known, small, or emerging destinations, to have the opportunity to come into contact with a wider range of European tourists
- c. encourages a longer lasting employment in the tourism sector, offering the possibility of extending work relationships beyond the high season period.

Other information on social tourism was disseminated within Calypso programme. Specifically, Calypso year 3 (2011) includes information about Italy (and other seven European countries), while the 2012 programme involves another six countries (the programme includes a total of fourteen countries: Italy, France, Spain, Portugal, Poland, Finland, Czech Republic, Malta, Belgium, Germany, Sweden, Hungary, Romania, Croatia).

Two groups of subjects involved in the accessible tourism were identified in the Italian report "Calypso-study on social tourism":

- a. tourists with special needs (not necessarily disabled, but for example, with special diet needs, allergies, etc.);
- b. disabled tourists.

Figure 2 - Main holiday offers in Internet (%) for people with disabilities and senior citizens



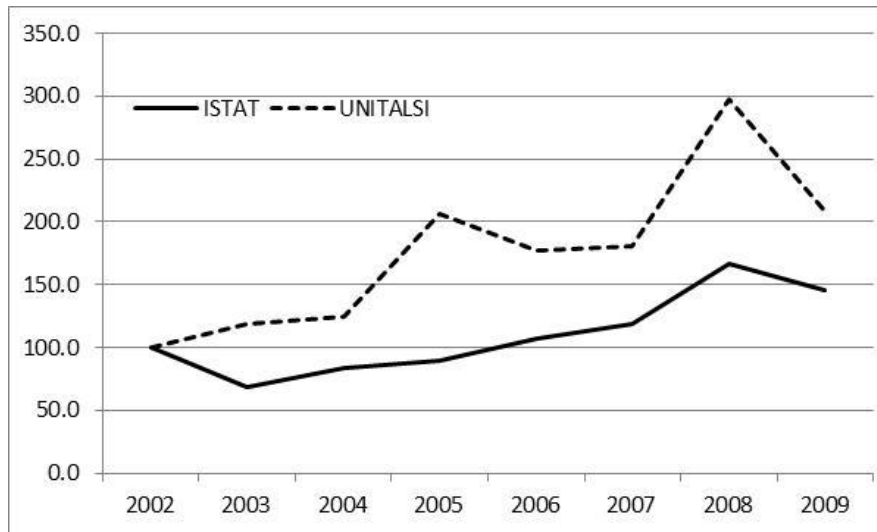
The tourists with special needs prefer a cheaper kind of accommodation, such as non-hotel. They are especially women (54%). A significant percentage of tourists with special needs, are represented by elderly people (22.6% is over 64) and about half of them live in northern Italy (49%). The disabled tourists have a medium-low income (about € 800-900). An important aspect is the absence of specific seasonal peaks for this last category of travellers.

In figure 2, there are the results of a survey carried out on Web Sites in order to identify the holiday offers for disabled and elderly people. In this figure, it is possible to observe inhomogeneity between the offers (destinations) for the disabled and the ones for the elderly. For example, holidays linked to nature, culture, and cities of art are considered more appealing, thus they are offered more to the disabled, while cruises, active holidays, and spa, are considered more suitable for the elderly.

#### 4. A specific example in Tuscany.

For a more detailed overview of the relation between tourism and diversity, we have used some information of Tuscany region regarding the activities of the "Unione Nazionale Italiana Trasporto Ammalati a Lourdes e Santuari Internazionali" (Italian National Union for the Transport of the Sick to Lourdes and International Sanctuaries) (UNITALSI) from 2002 to 2012. In fact, UNITALSI is a non-profit organisation, whose main activity is to organise pilgrimages (mainly by train) to the most important sanctuaries for the sick who are accompanied by physicians, priests, and friends. Non-disabled people also participate in these pilgrimages, thus these activities can be considered also as social tourism (not only as accessible tourism).

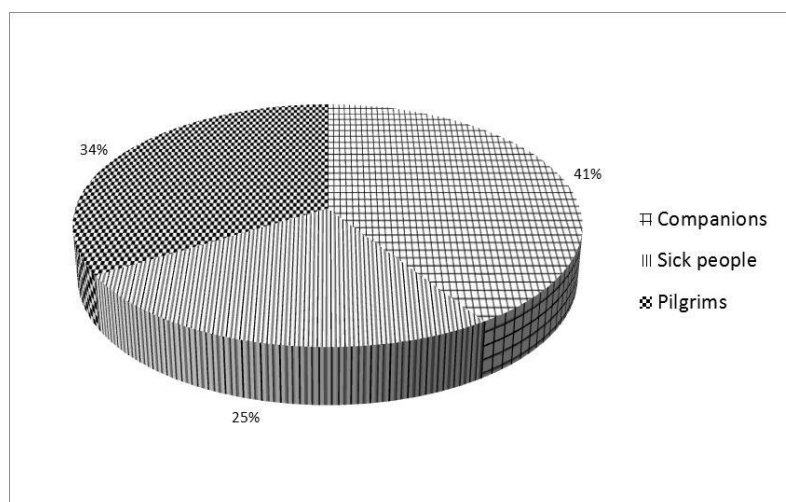
Figure 3 - Trips made by Italian residents for “religious reasons, pilgrimage” (source ISTAT) and UNITALSI travellers (index number 2002=100).



In figure 3, we have compared the trend of the UNITALSI groups of Tuscan travellers with the trips of the other residents in Italy (ISTAT source) for religious or pilgrimage reasons (only from 2002 to 2009, since the second series was limited). The first and most general consideration, regards the overall trend of the two series. In fact, we notice that their dynamics is essentially the same. However, while the UNITALSI series shows a greater variability, even with a very positive trend (with a more than doubled end value: +109.2%) the ISTAT one, shows a decrease between 2002 and 2003 and, successively, a positive trend that recovered, only in 2006, the initial level. The total growth of this series reaches 45.1%. Therefore, we notice that travelling for religious or pilgrimage reasons did not suffer from the ongoing global economical crisis (at least not in this time period). Apart from the higher growth, the Tuscan series shows two peaks: in 2005 and 2008. The 2008 peak, which was due, as already said, to the 150<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the apparitions in Lourdes, is present also in the ISTAT series; while the one in 2005 is a specificity of the UNITALSI trips.

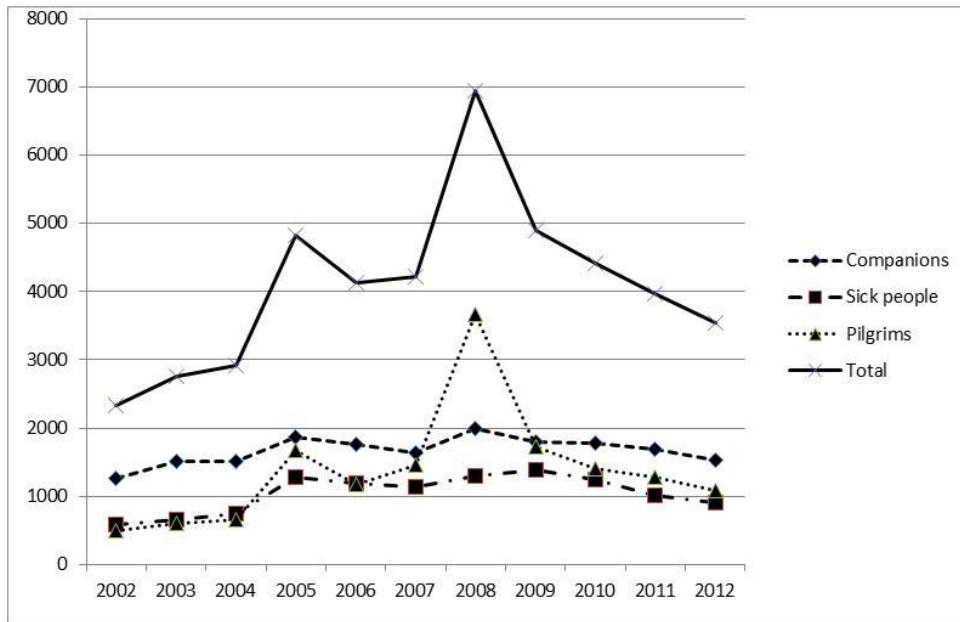
The composition of the UNITALSI travellers from 2002 to 2012 is shown in figure 4.

Figure 4 – UNITALSI traveller composition.



The participants in the pilgrimages are divided into three groups: one fourth includes the sick accompanied by a remarkable number of physicians, priests, and friends, which represent over 40% of the travellers. The remaining part, equal to one third of the total includes the pilgrims that is, non-sick people that are neither responsible for the transport nor for assistance. This component determines the accentuation of the global data dynamics.

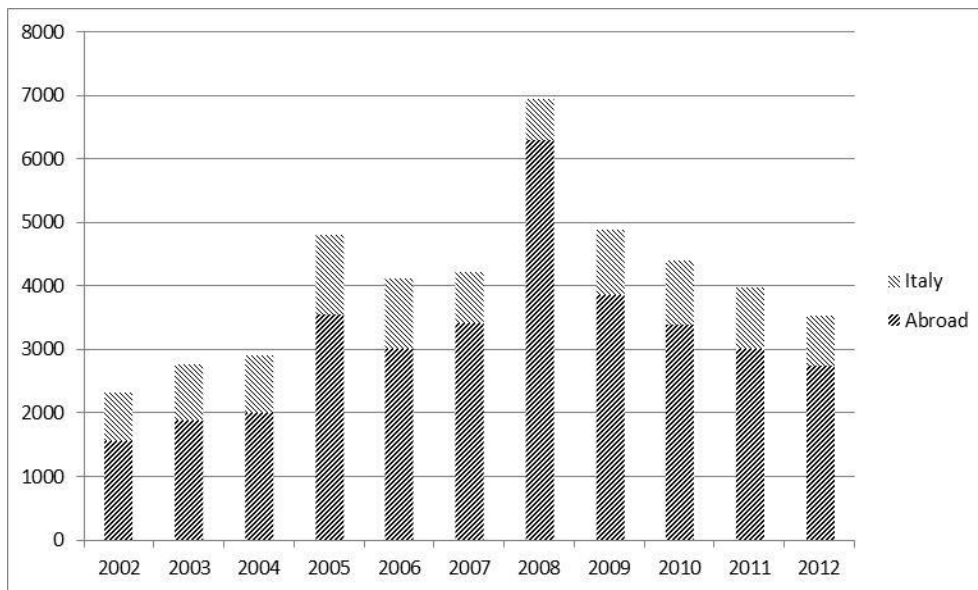
Figure 5 - UNITALSI traveller dynamic and composition.



In figure 5, it is possible to observe the evolution of the UNITALSI travellers over the years (always referred to the period 2002-2012). In fact, we notice a greater stability of the series relative to the sick and those who accompany them (physicians, priests, and friends); while the one regarding the pilgrims is remarkably influenced by special events (as it has already been noticed before).

In figure 6, we notice that the UNITALSI trips are represented mainly by non-Italian destinations; travellers going abroad are averagely over 77% of the total. In this representation, it is possible to observe how the extraordinary events can influence even the composition in accordance with the destination.

Figure 6 – UNITALSI traveller destination.



These events have remarkably strengthened the outbound component, for example, the increasing of the pilgrimages to Lourdes in 2008.



## 5. Final remarks.

Equal opportunities to have the same tourism services are a theme that is being perceived more and more at various government levels. As all the actions that need interventions, even innovative, the knowledge and dimension awareness of the phenomena connected to it, represent essential elements for the identification of priorities, even on the basis of the empirical evidences.

Here, we have tried to identify and use quantitative references regarding the relation between tourism and social diversity. This allowed us to evaluate the dimension of accessible tourism indirectly. However, there are no statistical sources regarding accessible tourism directly. Therefore, we took into consideration some proxies as for example, the information regarding social tourism and its components such as trips of elderly people, families with problems, pilgrims, disabled people, the sick, and so on.

In this context, we have examined some elements:

- a. the interventions of the Ministry of Tourism
- b. the assessments produced by an Italian study centre;
- c. some results obtained by a European programme;
- d. the data supplied by a non-profit organisation.

This study is only a first approach in order to find a strategy to help assessing the quantitative and qualitative characteristics of accessible tourism. The development of this type of tourism shall imply more and more, actions, techniques, and policies aimed at reducing the problems about social diversity in the sector, in order to make tourism become a factor of social inclusion. All these activities allow establishing relations with other people in order to ease their discomfort.

In our opinion, it is necessary that the national and local authorities, responsible for the tourism sector, aim to its organisational and structural improvement. This implies the carrying out of two direct actions in the sector:

- a. monitoring the accessibility of all the services connected to tourism with a constant data updating;
- b. supply economical and technical support to tourism industry, to promote the accessibility of its structures.

The availability of structures suitable for accessible tourism, does not regard only the accommodation ones, but also every type of service connected to tourism. These initiatives are not important only for tourists and operators of the sector (who can increase their turnover), but also for all the tourism destinations local communities, and all this in an international competitiveness scenario.

Apart from these direct interventions for the sector operators, it is necessary to promote the accessibility culture (for example, with incentives and awards) with appropriate communication campaigns, starting from schools.

We believe that in this framework it would be important to change the perspective from which we approach these themes: change from "development of the tourism to tourism for the development" (Carli, 2010), a situation in which the quality of people, organization, and community must be the hallmark of a sustainable development. For this reason, high quality information, with suitable quantitative references, represents an efficient vehicle of promotion for accessible tourism, with positive outcomes for everyone.

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