

A PRELIMINARY EVALUATION OF THE IMPACT OF GRANT POLICIES IN APULIA IN FAVOUR OF OPERATORS IN THE TOURISM SECTOR

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DOI: <https://doi.org/10.31410/tmt.2019.183>

Abstract: *Tourism represents a continuously growing sector of the economy and is often considered as a partial solution to the economic problems existing in a territory, and as a tool to increase the employment levels of a given area. These are some of the reasons why the tourism sector has been the subject of government grants.*

The aim of this chapter is to realize a preliminary evaluation of the impact, in economic-social terms, of grant policies in Apulia in favour of operators in the tourism sector.

In particular, the analysis focuses on the effects deriving from the implementation, in the 2014-2020 period, of the financial instrument called Title II Tourism Sector, by the Apulian regional system through the regional in-house agency Puglia Sviluppo.

Keywords: *Tourism Financing, Regional Policy, Government Grants.*

1. INTRODUCTION

In the new millennium tourism has undergone a profound change: globalisation processes, coupled with various anthropological and cultural changes, have led travellers to be increasingly demanding in satisfying their need for a vacation. In a society affected by a frantic pace, the management of free time, leisure and rest is of great importance in order to recover physical as well as mental energy (CISSET & Banca d'Italia, 2019). A vacation turns into a life experience and represents a moment of personal enrichment under a social, cultural and environmental point of view. Tourists are looking for a direct relationship with the places they visit, along with the local identities and the typical traditions of the territory. Tourist destinations take advantage of tourist flows to increase their turnover and number of jobs.

Worldwide, tourism has been characterized by a remarkable growth since the mid-1980s, due to the reduction in travel costs and to the growth in global demand. In the 2018 worldwide scenario, Italy ranks fifth for the international arrivals of tourists travelling on holiday (with just over 62 million arrivals) and it ranks sixth for tourism revenues, with 49 billion dollars according to the estimates of the UNWTO (2019), mainly due to its unique historical, artistic and cultural riches, but also due to other assets like the quality of food and the excellence of “made in Italy” products.

Tourism represents an important driving force in the economy of Apulia and the levels of growth, both qualitative and quantitative achieved in the last decade, appear to be prodromal

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to further development of the sector in the coming years. The Apulian territory has elements of great attraction from a cultural, artistic and food and wine point of view and this makes it a place with a high tourist vocation. The Apulia region has sought to exploit this potential through the provision of public grants, which allow it to support operators in the tourism sector and increase the employment levels of certain areas. The research, starting from an analysis of the tourist phenomenon, has the objective of assessing the preliminary impact, in economic and social terms, of grant policies in Apulia in favour of tourism actors. In particular, the analysis focuses on the effects deriving from the implementation, in the period 2014-2020, of the financial instrument called Tourism sector title II, by the Apulian regional system through the regional in-house agency Puglia Sviluppo.

Among the Italian regions, Apulia has experienced a growth in the number of arrivals and stays of travellers in the last few years, acquiring an increasingly broad competitive advantage in the context of national tourist destinations (ISTAT, 2019; A.A.V.V., 2019). Its geographical position as a bridge between the West and the East and its coasts that stretch for many kilometres lead tourists to choose this region as a destination for their holidays, in order to experience forms of tourism which range from the seaside and cultural to the religious, food and wine and rural vacation (Loiodice, 2015; Del Vecchio & Passiante, 2017).

Tourism represents a continuously growing sector of the economy and is often considered as a partial solution to the economic problems existing in a territory and as a tool to increase the employment levels of a given area. These are some of the reasons why the tourism sector has been the subject of government grants.

The intervention of public administrations in favour of enterprises is commonly based on the presence of disequilibria in the market where those very enterprises operate. The economic analysis shows that contributions to enterprises are justified only when markets cannot achieve socially desirable goals (Giavazzi et al., 2012), or in the presence of the so-called market failures (Stiglitz, 2000).

The evaluation of the effects and of the economic and social effects of incentive policies for enterprises by public administrations has been widely discussed over the two last decades on both a national and an international level (Dessalvi et al., 2017).

Lacking negative consequences for enterprises, the effectiveness of public interventions can be achieved when the contribution either brings about additional activities or does not finance activities that a firm would perform regardless.

With reference to the study of the role of public administrations and of the reasons underlying the grant of public contributions to the tourist sector operators, many scientific contributions are available (Hardin, 1968; Hughes, 1986; Smeral, 1998; van Beers & de Moor, 2001; Aquino et al., 2003, Durbarry, 2004; Shubert & Brida, 2009). The scientific production about the relation between public contributions to the tourist sector and the performance of the territorial context of reference, on the other hand, is less abundant and its results are not equally univocal (Fleischer & Felsenstein, 2000; Aiello & Pupo, 2005; Cassar & Creaco, 2012).

The gap pertaining the analysis of the effects resulting from the grant of contributions to individual tourist enterprises, on the other hand, appears to be decidedly significant. As a matter

of fact, such a gap is beginning to be filled, thanks to the recent and excellent work carried out by Dessalvi et al. (2017), who, investigate on the effects of public contribution policies on beneficiary enterprises, in terms of both economic and social impact, and carry out an assessment in terms of effectiveness and efficiency in the use of public resources in the tourist-receptive sector.

The chapter is organized as follows. In Paragraphs 2 and 3, the general aspects of the tourist phenomenon and of the dynamics of tourism (in the World, in Italy and in Apulia) are revised. The Paragraph 4 presents a systematic review of literature of the reasons underlying the intervention of public administrations, through public contributions (par. 4.1) and of the mechanisms for evaluating the degree of effectiveness of business-supporting measures in economic and social terms (par. 4.2), with particular reference to enterprises operating in the sector of tourism (par. 4.3). Section 5 presents a description of policy instrument analysed and a highlighting the first results achieved following its implementation, while Paragraph 6 draws some conclusions, discusses the limitations of the analysis and point out some directions for future research.

2. THE TOURIST PHENOMENON: GENERAL ASPECTS

The tourist phenomenon has been the subject of an important social evolution. The first examples of travel that can be assimilated to the way of understanding them today date back to the seventeenth century and appear to be connected with the Industrial Revolution. With it, the physical separation between place of production and place of residence also led to the distinction between working time and that of rest; and it is precisely with the birth of free time that tourism in the modern sense is conceived.

In the seventeenth century long-distance travels spread, such as the Grand Tour that touched the major European cities (Scotto Di Luzio, 2005). An educational requirement for all wealthy young European people was an obligation, with a total duration of at least two years and had the objective of allowing them to see and learn as much as possible from the places they visited.

As a consequence, it was an activity for a few elected, typical of the upper classes and aristocracy. It wasn't before the second half of the twentieth century that the phrase "mass tourism" was known as a growing number of people not following individual choices, but standardized paths: all in the same places, in the same period, to do the same things.

The tourist experience, which well-to-do subjects considered "well-voluptuous", has gradually become "a primary expense element in consumer baskets, at least in the capitalist markets of the West" (Madonna, 2001, p.3).

The Manila Declaration on world tourism in 1980 underlines the fundamental importance of social factors in tourism development. As a matter of fact, tourism is an essential activity for the life of nations, since it produces direct effects in the social, educational and economic sectors of national societies and on international relations all over the world. Man's opportunity to experience leisure time and the granting for workers to get paid leaves have contributed to the transition from a limited level of elitist leisure to the general level of social and economic life.

Peroni himself (1994) emphasizes on how the tourist experience has attracted the attention of the community over time due to its social value. Tourist activity involves the transfer of people

into space and this generates dynamic relationships both with other people and with the environment. For this reason, the tourism sector is characterized by heterogeneity, as a set of economic activities, interconnected and interrelated, and at the same time different.

It is quite common to think of tourism as a complex phenomenon characterized by varieties due to different variables such as space, time and motivation, and all the activities related, having as a common element the movement of people from their homes.

It would seem now more appropriate to speak about “tourisms” to highlight the differences between the ways of working that are no longer comparable. The World Tourism Organization (UNWTO, 1994) has defined tourism as the set of all the activities of people who travel and stay temporarily in a different place from their own residence, for no more than a year, for leisure, business or other reasons, different from any work or paid activity.

It is difficult to distinguish travellers according to the reasons that determine their movements, though there are also analyses that try to identify them. Cross-border workers who live in a country but work daily in a neighbouring country, nomads, migrants and refugees who travel for over a year are excluded from tourism statistics; passengers in transit, who have no reasons other than the transit itself; the armed forces and diplomats.

Cooper (2008), based on the Leiper model (1995), defines tourism as a combination of individuals, enterprises, organizations and places that produces a travel experience. In this sense, it should be interpreted as a multi-dimensional and multi-faceted activity that embraces different aspects of social life and many economic activities.

“Tourist activity is not a uniquely identifiable production activity with a representative enterprise: tourism is a complex of activities ranging from the operation of a hotel, to the management of a restaurant, to the maintenance of a museum, to the network of collective transports. [...] The tourist activity is not attributable to the receptive structures and enterprises that produce the receptive service. The tourism sector is a collection of heterogeneous multi-sectoral activities” (D’Antonio, 1990, pp. 22-23).

Rispoli & Tamma (1996) ignore the unitary character of the tourist phenomenon. In recent years tourism scholars have been more inclined to consider the sector as a set of multiple sub-systems, homogeneous within them and closely related, operating in a very permeable environment, characterized and influenced by economic, social, cultural and political and technological variables. This approach shows tourism as an open system that adapts to various changes in a dynamic perspective and that, therefore, fits perfectly into the combination of territory and environment (Romei, 2016).

The increasing number of moving people links cultures, habits and heterogeneous identities in both international and domestic tourism. At the same time these relationships favour or should favour traveller and host’s intellectual growth. Furthermore, in a society conditioned by frenetic rhythms, the idea that spare time and leisure time should offer a chance to recover physical and mental energies, takes on great importance.

Tourism involves not only accommodation and catering but also activities aimed to satisfy the psychological need to live an experience in a location other than one’s usual residence (Ejarque, 2003;

Peroni, 2008; Cooper, 2008; Della Corte, 2009; Franch, 2010). The traveller, tourist or hiker, brings with him a “human burden” of needs and needs linked to his state of health and his system of relationships that directly affect many aspects of the destination, from mobility, to health, to social relations, to consumption (Della Corte, 2009, p.24; Franch 2010). The trend in tourism demand is influenced by several factors: the price of the requested good / service, the per capita income, seasonality, climate, the political and economic stability of the region where the destination is located, advertising and fashion. Tourist demand is usually considered elastic because it changes according to these factors but considering that the need for tourism grows and becomes primary for millions of people, tourist demand tends to a semi-rigidity. It is also cyclical, because it tends to repeat itself periodically and with the same cadences and concentrated in time and space since the large tourist flows occur in specific periods and often concern the same geographical areas.

In recent years, the demand has become particularly differentiated and this has led to a diversification of the offer and a classification of types of tourism. The most important distinction is between “leisure tourism” and “business tourism”. The first groups together forms of leisure holidays both in an organized way, when using specialized firms, and personal research, when travel companies are not used or are asked for individual services.

The second is very dynamic and interesting from an economic point of view, to the point that specialized travel companies known as MICE (Meeting, Incentive, Conference and Exhibition) have emerged. Within the segment there are the corporate travel, the organized trips for the firm employees; the corporate meeting, trips to participate in events and conferences promoted by firms and institutions; incentives, travel for those employees who have achieved positive results for the firm, rewarded with premium holidays; individual customers, such as managers, consultants and freelancers.

The tourist offer is the combination of goods and services offered by a specific tourist destination to meet the needs of tourists. Among its features there are: natural resources, historical-artistic, cultural, structures and infrastructures. The offer is also affected by seasonality. It is also rigid since its products cannot be immediately adapted to the variations in demand, and it is non-transferable, since the tourist facilities are fixed.

Tourism also plays an important role in the process of redistribution of wealth, since tourists’ movement proceeds from economically strong areas to highly attractive regions, which in certain cases are more disadvantaged. This allows the development of new forms of tourism, such as the rural one with the spread of the hospitality model of the widespread hotel, theorized by Dall’Ara (2015). Unknown destinations are attractive for this type of tourism. The common feature is a high-quality landscape with a strong synergy between local actors and history and local traditions that shape these areas as cultural districts (Gazzola et al., 2018).

On the other hand, the World Tourism Organization shows how the tourist phenomenon at present is becoming “overtourism”, as the number of tourists is growing so much as to put many host areas in crisis, failing to reduce the impact on natural resources, on socio-cultural factors, infrastructures and mobility. In this case, it is possible to speak about “passive tourism”, which, while bringing positive effects with an increase in wealth and employment in the area, has negative consequences on the natural and social environment, damaging local identities. Tourism must, therefore, be framed in the perspective of local development, for its effects on the territory, on populations and on economic activity in a broad sense (Dallari, 2007; Martini, 2015; Palumbo,

2015). It is essential to consider the approach to sustainability, which introduces the fundamental dimensions of the limit and the trade-offs between the various components that come into play in defining the long-term outcomes (Fusco & Nijkamp, 2016; Coroş et al., 2017; Martini, 2017).

In the latest years of the twentieth century there was a shift from “mass tourism” to “global tourism”. The economic stagnation of Western countries, the flexibility of work, the need for travel as an escape, the advent of the Internet modifies the way of holidaying. Even if the threat of wars and terrorism affect the choices regarding travel arrangements and destinations, do not reduce the demand. According to Boccagna (2010) the destination is a concept that has changed over time and is now interpreted subjectively by tourists, based on their cultural background, the purpose of the visit, the level of education and experience.

What has enormously affected the tourist phenomenon is instead technology, both because it has favoured the growth of the sector in quantitative terms, and because it has changed the tourist's attitudes before, during and after the holiday. In the latest thirty years, tourism firms with the advent of the Internet “have been able to redefine not only their organizational structure, but also the structure of relations with partner organizations, thus succeeding in the dual objective of optimizing management costs, from one side, and to increase the ability to generate value for the customer, on the other” (Martini, 2000, p.1).

Technological changes play a strategic role both in guiding consumer choices and in enhancing the industry's ability to respond to customer needs. In tourism, the role of the technology revolution is disruptive and affects costs, profits, and productivity of tourism and accommodation. From a supply point of view, a progressive increase in the number of operators using the network was conceived as a means of making their offer of accommodation linked to travel known. Nowadays, tourists use smart phones, PCs and tablets to plan their vacation and gather as much information as possible about tourist destinations of their interest, comparing the different proposals in quantitative and qualitative terms, browsing on search engines and tourist portals.

A survey by the Google Travel Study (2014) showed that 45% of tourists' searches take place via smartphones and not just computers, and that the Internet is the main source of inspiration for travel planning. The market logic has forced companies dedicated to travel and tourism to significantly modify their way of operating and being present on the market. The phenomenon of digital tourism growth has affected the leisure sector as well as the business sector (Olietti & Musso, 2018). The key factor in changing the tourist market is linked to customers' comments who have already used the facilities. Word of mouth remains the most widely used form of tourist product consumers and also the one that most easily influences customer decisions. Social travel, such as TripAdvisor, Trivago, Zoover, along with social networks, such as Facebook, Twitter, Instagram, LinkedIn collect comments from tourists that influence the choices, reward or reject those firms that do not keep their promises, whose quality compared to the price does not fully meet expectations.

The tourist chain evolves according to a network model of subjects and companies. The consumer / tourist has an active role in the supply chain, he can create his own sales and distribution channel and, therefore, he becomes an organizer of himself. With new technologies, tour operators can sell directly to end consumers bypassing middlemen and classic distributors. The same travel agencies have transformed themselves from retailers to organizers, basing their offer on an ever-increasing personalization and specialization.

The most recent definition of tourism is the “experiential” one, linked to the experience that the tourist performs by visiting a destination, actively participating in the activities that take place there. The latest evolution of tourism sector is the Airbnb phenomenon, an online platform born in 2008 that allows those who have an available room at home or have a free apartment, to rent it to people looking for a short-term accommodation. It is a sharing economy portal for experiential tourism. Guests have the opportunity to share experiences of daily life with local people, detaching themselves from products offered by mass tourism. An important service is the rating both of the host and of the hosted, through a written review or with images, punctually verified by Airbnb. The considerable number of digital tracks that every user leaves daily on the network (big data), are becoming valuable sources for understanding phenomena in all fields, including travel, essential for defining demand and forecasting future trends.

3. THE DYNAMICS OF TOURISM IN THE WORLD, IN ITALY, IN APULIA

3.1. World

Tourism has been characterized by strong growth with a positive outlook worldwide since the mid-1980s. The reason for this expansion can be identified both in the reduction of travel costs, after the liberalization of the transport sector and the entry of new digital technologies, and in the growth of world demand, which is also affecting the emerging countries, where an increasing number of people register a net increase in disposable income (OECD 2018). Based on the data released annually by the OMT (UNWTO, 2019) the first six months of 2019 confirm the growth trend of international tourist arrivals, with an increase of 4% compared to the same period of the previous year. The results are in line with historical trends.

Growth was driven by the Middle East (+8%) and Asia and the Pacific (+6%), followed by Europe (+4%). Africa (+3%) and the Americas (+2%) recorded more moderate growth in the first half of 2019. The expectation on global tourist performance, according to the latest UNWTO confidence index, remains positive but cautious considering the weaker economic indicators, the prolonged uncertainty on Brexit, the commercial and technological tensions and the growing geopolitical challenges.

On UNWTO final data at the end of 2018, international tourist arrivals worldwide increased by 6% and reached the threshold of 1.4 billion (Figure 1), based on data reported by destinations worldwide, with two years ahead of UNWTO's long-term forecasts released in 2010.

The Russian Federation (+16%), France (+10%) and Australia (+9%) recorded the highest increase in spending in the first nine or eleven months of 2018. Similarly, the United States (+7%) and the Republic of Korea (+6%) showed increasing spending figures, also fuelling inbound growth in their respective regions. According to the World Travel & Tourism Council's 2011 World Travel & Tourism Impact report, the travel and tourism sector constitutes 10.4% of world GDP (+0.2% compared to 2017), for a total of around 8,811 billions of dollars, with an expectation of growth of 3.6% in 2019 and 3.7% in 2029 (+11.5% of world GDP with 13.085 billion dollars). On a global level, in the tourism sector about 319 million people were employed in 2018, accounting for 10% of the total number of workers, with estimates of growth of 2.9% for 2019 (more than 328 million people) and of 2,5% in 2029 (almost 421 million which would represent 11.7% of total employment).

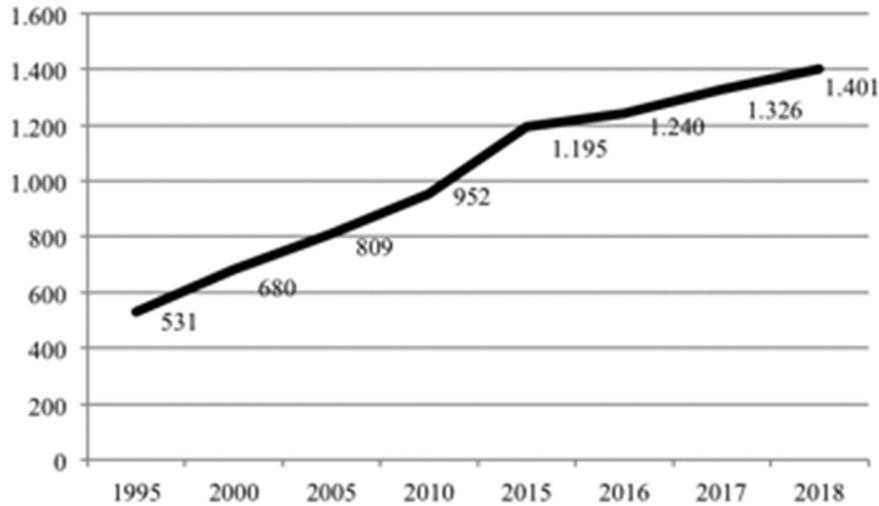


Figure 1. Trend of international tourist arrivals (millions)

Source: Own creation inspired by UNWTO, 2019

3.2. Italy

In 2018, according to UNWTO data, Italy ranked fifth in the world for international tourist arrivals on holiday (with just over 62 million arrivals) and, compared to 2017, lost a position with the inclusion of China in fourth place (almost 63 million). France (89 million), Spain (83 million) and the United States (80 million) are confirmed in the first three positions (Figure 2). It seems remarkable the increase in 2017 when Italy, with a +7% was the country with the highest growth rate among the first five mentioned, since the increase fluctuates between 1% and 4%.

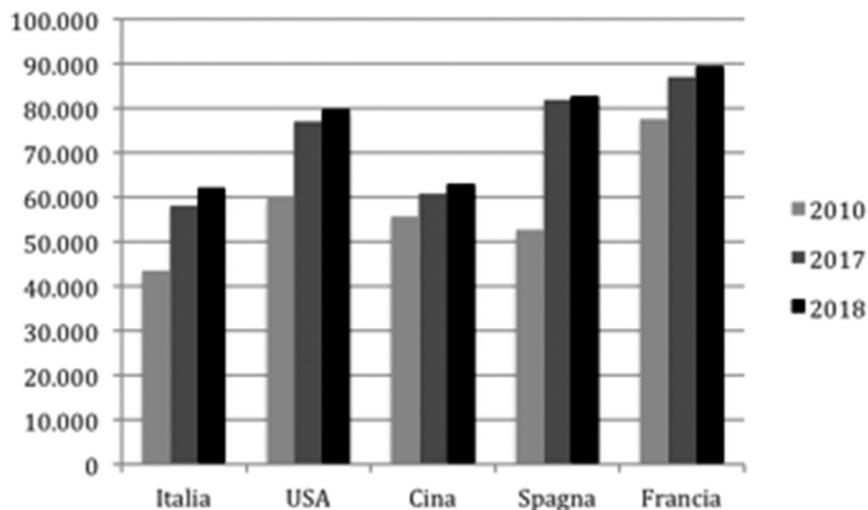


Figure 2. International tourist arrivals by country of destination (millions)

Source: Own creation inspired by UNWTO, 2019

In 2018 Italy ranked sixth in the world in terms of turnover from tourism with 49 billion dollars according to UNWTO estimates, with an increase of 7% compared to the previous year (Figure 3). Also, in this case this rate is the highest compared to the first five (USA, Spain, France, Thailand, United Kingdom), which fluctuate between 2% and 6%.

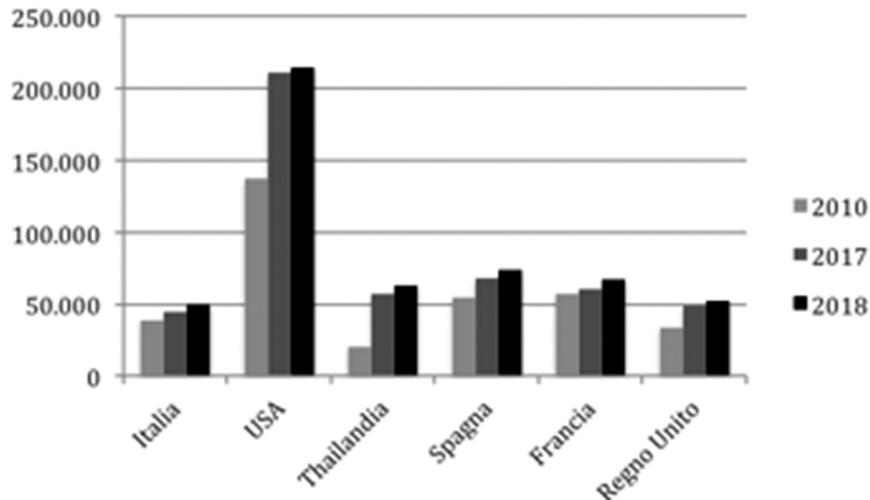


Figure 3. International tourism receipts by country of destination

Source: Own creation inspired by UNWTO, 2019

ISTAT data state that in 2018 Italian hospitality establishments recorded about 428.8 million presences and 128.1 million arrivals, numbers that represent a new historical peak, surpassing the peak already reached in 2017. Italy is the third Country in Europe for the number of presences in hospitality establishments 13.6% of the total of the EU28, after Spain and France. Domestic demand for tourism shows an increase in both arrivals (+3.6%) and presences (+1.1%) of customers living in Italy. The increase in resident customers has mainly affected presences in non-hotel structures (+1.7% compared to 2017). The survey reveals that 36.2% of tourists prefer historical-artistic towns, 21.2% seaside resorts, 10% mountain resorts.

Germans remain the first to choose Italy as a holiday destination; in 2018 they reached almost 59 million nights spent in the hospitality complex (27.1% of the total number of non-resident tourists). Followed by tourists from the United States, France and the United Kingdom and around 5%, those coming from the Netherlands, Switzerland, Liechtenstein and Austria. The most visited Italian cities are Rome with about 29 million presences (6.8% of the national total; 4.1% of the national clientele and 9.4% of the foreign one), Venice which joins Milan in second place (both with about 12,1 million presences, equal to 2.8% of shares of the national total).

ENIT survey carried out in 2018 involved 137 Tour Operators (88 in Europe and 49 in the rest of the world) and showed that, besides tourism in seaside and mountain resorts, the most requested tourist products for the Italian destination are art cities, food and wine tourism, cycling tourism, shopping tourism and outdoor tourism. The Italian cultural heritage is unique in its kind, also thanks to other contents such as the quality of the cuisine and the excellence of Made in Italy (A.A.VV., 2019). It is particularly appreciated by travellers coming from the most distant countries, those who come back after previous holidays, people who visit Italy for the first time and from young tourists (Filippone et al., 2019).

In 2017, the “2017-2022 strategic tourism development plan” was defined by the Ministry of Cultural Heritage and Activities and Tourism (MIBACT, 2017) and contains the objectives of innovating, specializing and integrating the national offer; increase the competitiveness of the tourism system; develop effective and innovative marketing; implement efficient and participatory governance in the process of drawing up and defining the Plan and tourism policies.

3.3. Apulia

Apulia boasts a prestigious historical, artistic and cultural heritage and this gives it an important competitive advantage in the panorama of national tourist destinations. Its strength lies in regional and religious tourism, food and wine and the rural landscapes. The geographical position as a crossroads between the West and the East and the many kilometres of coastline are other elements that tempt tourists to choose the region as a holiday destination. The ISTAT/SPOT data (Apulia System for the Tourist Observatory) confirm a growth of the sector in the first half of 2019: +2% arrivals and presences from January to June compared to the same period of the previous year (1.6 million of arrivals and 4.4 million admissions/overnight stays). From 2013 to 2018, arrivals and presences in the region increased by +27.5% and +14%; growth from abroad was +71% and +45% and involved travellers from Germany, France, USA, Australia, Russia, Spain, Southeast Asia, Romania, Turkey, Ireland, Canada and Brazil.

An outstanding feature is that in Apulia, as well as in other countries, there has been a strong growth in the Airbnb phenomenon. According to the analysis of New Mercury Consulting on ISTAT data and Inside Airbnb (2018) by Pugliapromozione, Apulia is in fifth place (after Lombardy, Lazio, Sicily and Tuscany) with more than 36 thousand active ads on online portals. The number of beds surveyed by ISTAT is 278,170 while those not officially recorded are 110,361 (almost a third of the total accommodation offer). Airbnb beds are respectively distributed in the provinces: 60.1% Lecce, 14.3% Brindisi, 10.7% Bari, 7.7% Taranto, 5.8% Foggia, 1.4% BAT.

Based on data published by the Bank of Italy on international tourism, in relation to the second quarter of 2019, it emerges that the total expense of foreigners in Apulia was 195 million euros (-5.8% compared to the same period in 2018); the number of travellers was 771,000 (+13%); the number of overnight stays was 4,039,000 (-11.4%).

The three giants of global publishing National Geographic, Lonely Planet and New York Time have awarded Apulia with the recognition of the most beautiful region in the world in 2016 (for the second time since 2014) thanks to the Baroque architecture, to the extraordinary historical monuments, to the evocative Greek and Neolithic archaeological sites, to the most beautiful beaches in Italy, to the cliffs overlooking the sea, to the caves of Castellana, to amazing Polignano a Mare, to the pleasant towns such as Ostuni and Locorotondo. Another award was given by Lonely Planet to the city of Bari, as the fifth best European destination for summer 2019 and the only Italian destination, appreciating its historic centre, good food and culture.

In 2018 Travel Appeal analysed the offer, the reputation of the territory and the satisfaction of travellers in Apulia; the result was that online reviews have increased by 46% and traveller satisfaction is over 86% of positive sentiment, (+1.3% compared to 2017). The French are the main reviewers in Apulia (16% of the total reviews) and the Americans are the most satisfied (87.5%). In the analysis, the very positive comment (94.5%) on the reception, on the appreciation of the structures position (94.2%) and on the quality of the internal catering (85.9%) is of great importance. There are aspects to improve about the quality of the Internet connection, the accommodation facilities, the quality/price ratio and the quality of the rooms. Travellers' general satisfaction about Apulian museums and attractions is high, equal to 88.4% of the reviews.

4. PUBLIC CONTRIBUTIONS TO ENTERPRISES OPERATING IN THE SECTOR OF TOURISM, WITH PARTICULAR REFERENCE TO THE APULIAN REGIONAL CONTEXT

In the first place, this paragraph presents a systematic review of the reasons underlying the intervention of public administrations, through public contributions, in the economy. In the second place, the mechanisms for evaluating the degree of effectiveness of business-supporting measures in economic and social terms are described, with particular reference to enterprises operating in the sector of tourism.

4.1. The intervention of public operators in economy through public contributions and the economic and social effects of incentive policies for enterprises

The intervention of public administrations in favour of enterprises is commonly based on the presence of disequilibria in the market where those very enterprises operate. The economic analysis shows that contributions to enterprises are justified only when markets cannot achieve socially desirable goals (David et al., 2000; Doraszelski, 2008; Giavazzi et al., 2012; Malavasi & Vallascas, 2006), or in the presence of the so-called market failures (Stiglitz, 2000). In other words, in those situations where economy produces a sub-optimal quantity of a given good, a public contribution might help to restore a socially optimal production level (Giavazzi et al., 2012).

Theoretically, six causes have been detected, due to which the market mechanism cannot give rise to an efficient allocation of resources, namely: competition inadequacy; public goods; externalities; incomplete markets; lack of information; unemployment.

In practice, however, although the various contributions to enterprises show different elements of heterogeneity, there are three main hypotheses of market failures, such as negative externalities, information asymmetries that bring about financial constraints and the support to economic activities in underdeveloped areas (Giavazzi et al., 2012), which justify the intervention of public administrations. However, the presence of one or more causes of market failure is a necessary – albeit not sufficient – condition to justify public intervention and to guarantee its effectiveness.

Moreover, in the face of the potential benefits it may entail, public intervention can be a harbinger of negative effects for enterprises, namely: regulatory uncertainty, distortions induced by the political market, sustaining access and administration costs of contributions.

4.2. The evaluation of the economic and social effects of incentive policies for enterprises by public administrations, with particular reference to the Italian context

The evaluation of the effects and of the economic and social effects of incentive policies for enterprises by public administrations has been widely discussed over the two last decades on both a national and an international level (Dessalvi et al., 2017).

Lacking negative consequences for enterprises, the effectiveness of public interventions can be achieved when the contribution either brings about additional activities or does not finance activities that a firm would perform regardless.

Many studies can be found at an international level on the degree of effectiveness of the various support measures to enterprises (Girma et al., 2007; Harris, 1991; Tzelepis & Skura, 2006). However, considering that incentive policies show many differences in terms of time, sector and country system, it is almost impossible to define an overall assessment of those very policies. Such a characterization surfaces in particular with reference to the incentives granted within regional or local policies, whose evaluation derives from the structure of the programme under analysis and from the features of the individual country or regional context.

With reference to the Italian context, despite the long tradition of public incentive policies to enterprises promoted with the aim of favouring the economic development of some underutilized areas of the Country, the analysis of literature shows that only during the last twenty years the topic of impact assessment of the above-mentioned policies has become the focus of the academic and political debate (Pierleoni, 2012).

In particular, in the present economic and social context, understanding the level of success of a given incentive measure for enterprises in terms of effectiveness and efficiency becomes more and more necessary (Sisti, 2007), given the dual need of public administrations to operate with ever-decreasing public resources and to avoid mistakes (Martini & Trivellato, 2011).

The evaluation of the economic and social performance of public contributions to enterprises, with regards to the territorial context of reference, concerns the capability of those very enterprises to distribute the benefits deriving from their activity on the territory, in terms of increase in the level of investments, employment and in the additionality rate of investments.

With regards to the three above-mentioned variables, the study by Guelfi & Ercoli (2008), integrated by our own review of the analyses published from 2008 onwards, contributes to carrying out a systemization of the evidence emerging from the most important research carried out over the two last decades, with reference to the Italian context.

First of all, as far as the investment variable is concerned and with reference to many measures analyzed (law 488/92; tax credit for investments and regional laws), no univocal results are found (Bagella et al., 2004; Bronzini & de Blasio, 2006; Bronzini et al., 2007; Capuano et al., 2002; Gabriele et al., 2007).

Second, as far as the employment variable is concerned, different positions are found. Results are generally positive with regards to the evaluation of law 488/92 (Adorno et al., 2007; Bernini et al., 2006; Bia & Mattei, 2007; Carlucci et al., 2001; De Castris & Pellegrini, 2006; De Castris & Pellegrini, 2005; Pellegrini & Carlucci, 2004; Pellegrini & Carlucci, 2003) and to programme contracts (D'Amico & Biscotti, 2011), whereas they are not significant for all the other incentive measures under analysis, such as tax credit for new employees, European Structural Funds and training courses (Bondonio & Greenbaum, 2006; Cipollone & Guelfi, 2006; Montanino, 1999).

Finally, as far as the incentives' additional effects are concerned, particularly in the field of activities of research and development, contribution policies to enterprises do not seem to have caused any such effect (Danielis, 2006; Merito et al., 2007).

4.3. The evaluation of the economic and social effects of incentive policies for enterprises by public administrations, with particular reference to the sector of tourism

With reference to the study of the role of public administrations and of the reasons underlying the grant of public contributions to the tourist sector operators, many scientific contributions are available (Hardin, 1968; Hughes, 1986; Smeral, 1998; van Beers & de Moor, 2001; Aquino et al., 2003; Durbarry, 2004; Shubert & Brida, 2008). The scientific production about the relation between public contributions to the tourist sector and the performance of the territorial context of reference, on the other hand, is less abundant and its results are not equally univocal (Fleischer & Felsenstein, 2000; Aiello & Pupo, 2005; Cassar & Creaco, 2012).

The gap pertaining the analysis of the effects resulting from the grant of contributions to individual tourist enterprises, on the other hand, appears to be decidedly significant. As a matter of fact, such a gap is beginning to be filled, thanks to the recent and excellent work carried out by Dessalvi et al. (2017), who, through the research method of the multiple case study conducted on five Sardinian hotel enterprises benefiting from regional subsidies, focus their analysis on two questions, that is to say, whether: 1) obtaining such contributions brings about an increase in the economic and social performance of the enterprises operating in the tourist-receptive sector; 2) public contributions appear as effective and adequate for the tourist-receptive sector. These scholars investigate on the effects of public contribution policies on beneficiary enterprises, in terms of both economic and social impact, and carry out an assessment in terms of effectiveness and efficiency in the use of public resources in the tourist-receptive sector.

5. THE FINANCING OF THE SECTOR OF TOURISM BY THE REGIONAL GOVERNMENT OF APULIA THROUGH THE SO-CALLED “TITLE II TOURISM SECTOR 2014-2020”

As previously stated, the aim of this work is to assess the economic and social performance of the public contributions allocated to the enterprises operating in the sector of tourism in Apulia through the financing tool called “Title II Tourism Sector” within the 2014-2020 Regional Operational Plan.

In other words, this work tries to highlight the ability of the Apulian enterprises operating in the tourism sector and beneficiaries of a public contribution granted by the Title II Tourism Sector to spread the benefits deriving from their own activity in the regional context of reference, in terms of impact on economic and social well-being (Dessalvi et al., 2017).

This paragraph, therefore, will deal with the systemisation of the main analyses aimed at evaluating the incentive policies for enterprises (paragraph 4), at defining the financing tool under analysis called “Title II Tourism Sector” 2014-2020 (para 5.1) and at highlighting the first results achieved following its implementation (para 5.2).

This work has to be considered as an exploratory study, given both the articulation and composition of the data utilised and their “natural” provisional nature, as the instrument in question is part of the ongoing 2014-2020 programming, whose final effects shall be assessed only in the years to come.

5.1. Description of the policy instrument

The *Title II Tourism Sector* financing tool is part of a range of flexible incentive schemes devoted to enterprises, designed to facilitate new enterprise investments, made available by the Apulia Regional Government, through the regional in-house agency Puglia Sviluppo.

Title II Tourism Sector represents a financing scheme which supports investments in the tourism sector, aimed at contributing to the consolidation or renovation of existing tourism and hotel facilities and/or to the creation of new tourism enterprises in the region.

In the 2007-2013 period, the policy instrument under consideration was launched in April 2009 and remained operational until June 2014 with a one-stop-shop approach.

This instrument has been revived with some changes also in the current 2014-2020 programme. It is targeted to micro, small and medium enterprises located in Apulia. The *Title II Tourism Sector* instrument supports investment projects for existing enterprises already located in Apulia or for new ones to be located within the region, aimed at the following types of business initiative (*eligibility criteria*):

- expansion, modernisation and renovation of existing tourism or hotel properties, including property facilities (such as bars, gyms, swimming pools, spas, etc.) as well as projects aimed at removing architectural barriers, renewing, upgrading and improving the environmental impact of existing facilities;
- construction or modernization of beach resorts, including areas for restaurants, bars, car parks and yacht mooring facilities;
- construction and/or management of yachting marinas;
- construction of tourism and hotel facilities through the consolidation, renovation and conservative restoration of buildings that are considered part of the region artistic, architectural and historical heritage;
- consolidation, preservation and restoration of rural buildings, farmhouses, trulli (a trullo, plural - trulli, is a traditional Apulian dry stone hut with a conical roof), towers, fortifications, with the aim of transforming them into hotels, without altering their original dimensions and volumes and maintaining their original architectural and artistic features;
- creation of newly planted “green areas” of at least 100 hectares (including the construction of cycling routes, sports trails, eating places, etc.), including publicly owned areas, the access to which is shared with facility management firms.

The call indicated some minimum and maximum investment limits. Firstly, funding is available for investment projects with overall eligible expenditure and costs, totalling a minimum of 30,000 euros. As to the maximum threshold, the reference was not to the investment cost, but to the bank’s credit. The maximum amount of funding available is 2 million euros for investment projects submitted by medium-sized enterprises and 4 million euros for investment projects submitted by micro and small-sized enterprises.

Enterprises active in the following business sectors (ATECO – Classification of economic activity code) are eligible for funding (Eligible business sectors):

- a) Section H, limited to category 52.22.09 “Other service activities for maritime transport and water transport” with reference exclusively to the enterprises carrying out investment for the management of marinas and boat storage;

- b) Section I, limited to division 55 “Accommodation” with some exceptions;
- c) Section N, limited to categories: 77.21.01 “Bike rental”, 77.21.02 “Rent of boats without crew (including pedal boats)”, 77.21.09 “Rent of other sport and recreational facilities”, 77.29.1 “Rent of table, bed, bath linen”, 77.39.94 “Rent of facilities and equipment for demonstrations and shows”, and groups: 79.1 “activities of travel agencies and tour operators”; 79.9 “Other reservation services and related activities” as long aimed to offer tourist services and 82.30 class “Organisation of conventions and trade shows”;
- d) R, limited to the following divisions: 90 “Creative, artistic and entertainment activities”, 91 “Activities of libraries, archives, museums and other cultural activities”, and some activities included in division 93.

This instrument could finance seven types of expenditure (eligible expenditure) namely: i) Purchase of land: up to 10% of investment in tangible assets; ii) construction works and similar; iii) specific infrastructure works; iv) engineering studies and works management, up to 5% of expenditure for construction works and similar; v) machinery and plant facilities; vi) computer programmes; vii) technological transfers through the acquisition of patents and licenses connected with the enterprises’ needs.

The funding is available as set out below: a) up to 35% for medium-sized enterprises; b) up to 45% for micro and small enterprises. Funding levels are calculated on the overall interest payments of agreed bank loans, irrespective of the overall investment budget, on maximum loan values of: a) 4,000,000 euros for medium-sized enterprises; b) 2,000,000 euros for small and micro-enterprises. Additional funding is available on investments in new machinery and equipment for a maximum of 20% of the eligible costs, for a total of up to 800,000 for medium-sized enterprises and 400,000 euros for small and micro-enterprises.

In the 2014-2020 period, as well as in the 2007-2013 period, regional agency Puglia Sviluppo was given the responsibility for its implementation. In particular, Puglia Sviluppo was in charge of screening the applications received mainly on the basis of the consistency of their financial plan and expenses. Applicant enterprises had to include indicators on the employment expected to be generated by the investment, distinguishing between male and female employees at the time of applying to Title II and expected by the end of the investment project. However, these indicators were not binding and were not used to rank projects. Investment projects were selected or refused individually one at a time, with no competition among different projects.

5.2. First results emerging from the implementation of the “Title II Tourism Sector” financing tool during the 2014-2020 period

Based on the data supplied by Apulia Region and Puglia Sviluppo and on our own processing by 7th November 2019, the total number of applications for the grant amounted to 962. As illustrated by the data on the number of applications received per year (table 1), the financing tool started to gain popularity in 2016, when 219 applications were submitted when the macroeconomic scenario started to improve. The number of applications increased to 255 applications in 2016, due to an improved knowledge of the tool by both enterprises and consultants.

When referring to the province where applications were submitted (table 2), there is prevalence of applications submitted by enterprises located in the province of Lecce, amounting to about 41% (392 applications) and in the province of Bari, amounting to about 26% (246 applications),

followed by the provinces of Foggia, Taranto, Brindisi and BAT, respectively with 97, 96, 89 and 41 applications.

Table 1. Number of applications submitted per year

Year	Number of applications	Investment carried	Potential Public contribution
2015	99	36.506.934,18	13.613.847,01
2016	219	94.078.318,47	34.117.585,93
2017	255	130.478.497,91	47.775.527,41
2018	217	102.144.276,31	38.273.847,19
2019	172	92.539.350,88	34.334.031,01
Total	962	455.747.377,75	168.114.838,55

Source: Own processing based on Apulia Region and Puglia Sviluppo data

Table 2. Number of applications submitted by province

Province	Number of applications	Investments carried	Potential Public contribution
Bari	246	98.022.198,45	36.964.886,03
BAT	41	15.778.004,65	5.499.300,52
Brindisi	89	41.414.790,77	13.956.718,19
Foggia	97	59.861.411,91	23.057.935,80
Lecce	393	211.053.895,64	78.007.606,34
Taranto	96	29.617.076,33	10.628.391,67
Total	962	455.747.377,75	168.114.838,55

Source: Own processing based on Apulia Region and Puglia Sviluppo data

When referring to the size of the enterprises which submitted an application to financing (table 3), a clear-cut majority is observed in micro-enterprises (with about 800 applications, amounting to 83.16%), compared to 132 applications from small enterprises (13.72%) and to 30 applications (3.12%) from medium-sized enterprises.

Table 3. Number of applications submitted by size of enterprises

Size	Number of applications	Investment carried	Potential Public contribution
Medium	30	37.192.435,37	12.981.275,24
Micro	800	337.756.191,03	127.040.973,43
Small	132	80.798.751,35	28.092.589,88
Total	962	455.747.377,75	168.114.838,55

Source: Own processing based on Apulia Region and Puglia Sviluppo data

When referring to the types of business initiative the utilisation of the financing tool is observed mainly for the expansion, modernisation and renovation of existing tourism or hotel properties, including property facilities (572 applications), for the construction of tourism and hotel facilities through the consolidation, renovation and conservative restoration of buildings that are considered part of the region artistic, architectural and historical heritage (206 applications) and for the consolidation, preservation and restoration of rural buildings, farmhouses, trulli, towers, fortifications (100 applications).

5.3. Results of implementation of the Title II Tourism Sector financing tool during the 2014-2020 period

When referring to the applications submitted by 7th November 2019 and to the activities carried out by Puglia Sviluppo, also considering what reported in the very applications, the financing tool under examination is leading to important results in terms of investment volume and jobs created.

First of all, by 7th November 2019, out of 962 submitted applications – 172 of which in 2019 alone – 633 have been admitted to financing. The total volume of the investment carried out by enterprises and leveraged by the grant amounted to around 300 million euros, against a public contribution of about 108 million euro. In particular, tables 24 and 25 show results in terms of the overall volume of investments that can be activated and of contributions that can be granted, both on a geographical and a size basis.

The geographical distribution of beneficiary enterprises (table 4) is as follows: around 40% of projects were carried out in the province of Lecce and 27% in the regional capital city of Bari. These result can be explained by the fact that, while Lecce is the Apulian province with the greatest tourist vocation, the province of the regional capital city of Bari has the highest number of enterprises in the region, but also by the fact that information about public support tools from business associations and consultants is more fluid in this area.

Table 4. Distribution of beneficiaries by province

Province	Number of applications allowed	Investment approved	Public Contribution approved
Bari	170	70.668.138,58	25.370.055,32
BAT	26	11.641.794,54	4.133.287,54
Brindisi	54	23.281.837,99	8.225.287,54
Foggia	69	47.455.905,91	18.081.515,61
Lecce	250	128.098.537,57	46.096.293,47
Taranto	64	19.190.137,38	6.804.512,15
Total	633	300.336.351,97	108.710.951,63

Source: Own processing based on Apulia Region and Puglia Sviluppo data

In relation to the size of beneficiary enterprises (table 5), micro enterprises account for the widest group of beneficiaries for the policy instrument: more than eight projects out of ten (82%) were carried out by this type of firm. The average volume of the investment carried out by micro enterprises and leveraged by the grant amounted to around € 413.000, against an average of almost € 630.000 for small enterprises and of almost € 1.271.000 for medium-sized enterprises.

Table 5. Distribution of beneficiaries by size

Province	Number of applications allowed	Investment approved	Public Contribution approved
Medium	22	27.968.824,12	8.714.080,54
Micro	520	214.956.782,97	79.895.955,31
Small	91	57.410.744,88	20.100.915,77
Total	633	300.336.351,97	108.710.951,63

Source: Own processing based on Apulia Region and Puglia Sviluppo data

The aid intensity (share of total public contribution over the investment volume) is almost equal across different beneficiary sizes, being about 37%, 35% and 31% for projects implemented by micro, small and medium-size enterprises respectively.

The average aid intensity per project slightly increased over the years, from 35.81% in 2015 to 37.84% in 2019.

Last, and always with reference to the analysis of the applications admitted to financing, the potential employment impact of the instrument in question can be noticed (table 6). As a matter of fact, compared with 4,177 jobs at the time of the application submission, an increase to 5,787 jobs could be attained, which would account for an occupational increase by 1,609 jobs.

Table 6. Potential employment impact

Province	Number of applications allowed	Jobs at the time of the application submission	Potential jobs at the end of the investment	Potential increase in employment
Bari	170	776,1	1153,93	377,83
BAT	26	168,38	266,40	98,02
Brindisi	54	287,74	430,41	142,67
Foggia	69	427,94	620,96	193,02
Lecce	250	1918,96	2512,41	593,45
Taranto	64	598,37	802,89	204,52
Total	633	4177,49	5787,00	1609,51

Source: Own processing based on Apulia Region and Puglia Sviluppo data

6. CONCLUSION

Tourism in Apulia is a driving force for the development of the territory, an instrument for promoting the landscape and cultural heritage. The Region has adopted a strategic Plan for tourism, for the period 2014-2020, the result of open participation to citizens, municipalities, parties, associations, businesses and trade unions, which transversely involves the culture, tourism, agriculture and internationalization sectors. The goal is to increase the competitiveness of Apulia in Italy and abroad, increase the flow of international tourists and give a positive boost to the seasonal adjustment, promoting organizational and technological innovation (Martini, 2015). The data presented show the attractive force that the region has compared to other tourist destinations and this represents a challenge for the Regional Administration to take advantage of in order to make the most of the elements of the territory and give impetus to an expanded economic development that goes beyond the tourism sector. Aid policies for tourism operators must be understood as an input to support growth for the entire regional economy.

The results achieved in the implementation of the financing tool under examination, which must be considered with caution given the type of data available, indicate that the aid policy (the financing instrument in question) suggests that these public subsidies are achieving positive effects on the territory of reference. In other words, granting public subsidies to the enterprises operating in the tourist sector in Apulia improves both the volume of implemented investments and the level of employment.

The present analysis, anyway, has some limitations. First of all, results are provisional and partial, as the 2014-2020 programming period is still under way. Second, only the economic and social effects deriving from the implementation of the “*Title II Tourism Sector*” financing tool on the territorial context are taken into consideration.

Moreover, despite the above-mentioned limitations, the results achieved underline some important operational implications for regional policy makers such as Apulia Region and its in-house company Puglia Sviluppo. The same implications were pinpointed with reference to the aids granted to investment projects submitted by micro and small enterprises in Apulia by the so-called “Title II” tool in the 2007-2013 period (Report EC, November 2015, p. 45); in a regional context where the majority of enterprises are individual entrepreneurs or micro size businesses, operating in traditional and low-tech sectors, suffering from the shrinkage of both consumption levels and bank credit, *Title II Tourism Sector* was seen by tourism enterprises as an important support opportunity.

Designed as an instrument of investment promotion, business growth and employment generation, the Managing Authority made it the main tool to mitigate the effects of the crisis on the most vulnerable categories of enterprise and to increase the tourist firms’ propensity to access public funds and, thus, to undertake new investment projects in the tourism sector.

Ultimately, it is possible to define some paths for the future development of research. First of all, it is necessary to consider the economic, financial and property dynamics of the tourist enterprises that benefit from the contribution under examination. Secondly, the analysis of the afore-mentioned dynamics could be compared - in the light of a counterfactual logic - with the dynamics observed in a sample of enterprises that do not benefit from such public contributions.

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