BEST PRACTICES FOR QUALITY TOURISM IN RURAL DESTINATIONS

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Summary

The Transnational Cooperation Project which a network between a certain number of the Local Action Groups (LAG) has organised in 2000 and 2001 , was focused on the "Redistribution of the flow of tourists to favor rural areas".

One of the most relevant actions to be set up and carried out, was the realisation of a "Best Practices Handbook or Manual " , in order to develop a coherent series of indications and methods to which the participants in the project could adapt their actions and choices in their strategies.

The Author believes that a profitable benchmarking can be adopted about such a scope, in accordance with the European Union policy, especially concerning the sustainable development of the rural areas through the european LEADER Programme.

Introduction

q **Scope and objectives**

The Transnational Cooperation Project which a network between a certain number of the Local Action Groups (LAG) has organised in 2000 and 2001 , was focused on the "Redistribution of the flow of tourists to favor rural areas" (1).The partnership of the project has involved, both directly and indirectly, about 10 LAGs all over Europe.

The effective and permanent LAG members of the partnership were the following:
• Sabino Tiburtino Cornicolano Prenestino (I)
• Aderlan (E)
• Alta Tuscia (I)
• Hohenlohe (D)
• Macizo del Caroig (E)

Other LAGs have also joined this group as guests and observers on special occasions of dialogue and benchmarking exchange: Meetjesland (Belgium), Scottish Borders (United Kingdom), Antur Cwm Taf/Tywl (United Kingdom), Noerre Djurs (Denmark).

One of the most relevant actions to be set up and carried out, was the realisation of a "**Best Practices Manual or Handbook**" , in order to develop a coherent series of indications and methods to which the participants in the project could adapt their actions and choices in their strategies.

Several meetings, seminars and exchanges were organised : they represented a real action of benchmarking and the idea of a 'Best Practices Handbook " had its origin in the application of this method.

The LAG partners of this project have explicitly decided to collect and document the identified Best Practices which have been started or already carried out in their respective contexts, to encourage their transferability and speed up the improvement process of their

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own marketing strategies and of the integrated quality management of the areas under their jurisdiction.

According to the agreement signed in the meeting held at Macizo del Caroig (Spain) from 18th to 21st May 2000, it has been unanimously agreed to produce this Handbook and to supply, in the examination of the Best Practices, an integrated strategy containing all the successful elements of a tourist destination and therefore include in this common research the following topics:

• Urban policies
• Environmental policies
• Cultural policies
• Policy of transportation and tourist services
• Management policy
• Marketing policies

In view of the second meeting held in Tivoli (Italy) from 22nd to 25th March 2001, the partners decided to define more precisely the area of the research and production of the 'Best Practices' and to carry out a preliminary investigation to base the discussion on definite parameters and more homogeneous and transparent common interpretation models.

For this purpose, during the meeting/workshop in Tivoli the result of a synthetic and circumscribed investigation was presented concerning both the potential tourist resources of the area and the quality management of the territory for each of the LAG partners in order to reach a critical awareness of the strengths and weaknesses of the destinations and define the most coherent, effective and reliable 'Best Practices' for **an integrated marketing of the territory**.

Why a Handbook of 'Best Practices'?

To create a Manual or Handbook of quality is one of the most used tools in the application of the Quality Systems (with or without certification) (2) It is a sort of "contractual "code stipulated with oneself, the parties involved (stakeholders), the territory and its resources, on the basis of which the LAG partners commit themselves to actions, methods and projects of the best quality available, in accordance with the strategy established by the european Programme Leader II.

It is an instrument, a reference point to assess the **coherence, pertinence, and effectiveness** of the choices and actions that each LAG accomplishes in its own territory and to be assessed by all the parties involved, both private and public, on the actual application and progress.

In brief, it is a sort of moral code concerning the responsibility of one's own political, social, environmental and tourism-related actions.

How the LAGs perceived their involvement and participation in the Handbook project

It is interesting to consider the reason why the different partners of the project have perceived their participation and agreement to the handbook.

First of all, they didn't want to create a " quality manual " : this aim exceeded their purposes. A quality manual includes a long certification process.

They were more interested to value their best practices and to keep a common management responsability or commitment towards their tourist destinations.

The Aderlan (Lanzarote Island – Spain) LAG stated clearly its willingness to take part in the production of a Handbook "*to get acquainted with other experiences carried out in other territories and at the same time to promote our experiences*" so as to consolidate

common ideas and projects of a sustainable development through actions in support of rural tourism . They were aware of the symptoms of a decreasing tourism in the coastal areas (over-crowded and seasonal) : they needed to be able to "*offer alternatives which can contribute to a redistribution of the tourism flows towards the internal (rural) areas of the territory*' and manage this offer successfully. *.*

The Alta Tuscia LAG (Latium – Italy) considered the objective of the redistribution of the tourism flows in support of rural areas its strategic priority : the production of a handbook of Best Practices, together with the other partners and in a transnational context, was '*an opportunity to find more effective methods to reach this goal*' and to declare its commitment therein.

Also the Hohenlohe LAG (Baden-Wuerttemberg – Germany) perceived the project as an opportunity to adopt "successful" experiences and results in the comparison and benchmarking between the LAG partners and to continue this exchange and cooperation in the future, on specific and practical basis.

The target groups of the Handbook and the potential partners in the quality project of rural tourist destinations

The Handbook is offered as a guide and reference point for all the subjects who, being involved in Leader strategies, are partly responsible for their success.

In particular, it addresses local institutions, especially municipalities and districts, as these are mostly responsible for the good management of many of the key elements of tourism in the area (such as territory and landscape planning, the recovery and valorisation of cultural and natural sites, the maintenance of the road system etc.) as well as the definition of an area quality certification which serves as a guarantee for tourists or visitors and as a stimulus and/or a reference point for the actions and choices of the private sector, especially for typical products, catering, handicraft and hotel accommodation.

On reading the Handbook, all these subjects, being the 'protagonist' of the system, will learn to make precise and concrete effort to create a quality policy and to perform an integrated management of rural tourist destinations.

The Hohenlohe LAG mentioned among its local partners, besides the municipalities, for which the LAG itself acts as a linking agency, the representatives of agriculture, among which the Association of Rural Women deserves to be mentioned, the Tourism Organisations, the Chambers of Commerce, Industry and Handicrafts, the Federation of Autonomous and Professional Workers, the naturalistic associations, the technicians and employees of the *Land* Baden-Wuerttemberg and the consulting societies for promotion and marketing.

The Aderlan LAG includes, besides the already mentioned 'actors', also the representatives of the Third Sector or System (ONG), especially those devoted to the environmental preservation and local culture, underlying the importance of a conscious and wide participation in support of sustainable development : some of the 'actors' of the system, such as public institutions and private entrepreneurs, show a tendency to an indiscriminate and unruled development of tourism without '*foreseeing and preventing the negative effects that this tendency can have on the local population*'. This probably explains the importance of ONGs' participation as critical awareness.

On the other hand, the Alta Tuscia LAG put a certain emphasis on a possible positive role of the 'external investors', capable of promoting the tourist product, provided it was not a '*colonisation or subjection to capital coming from elsewhere, but a full promoting of the territory*'. Implicitly, the Alta Tuscia LAG hinted at the fact that the Handbook could prove a well-grounded reading for negotiating with these interlocutors , to be " clear " about the preliminary premises for any investment.

Moreover, the Alta Tuscia LAG reminded the local institutions and the public administrations, in order to stimulate a strong commitment in this sector, of the advantages could come from the " preserved quality " of the attractions of the territory, both for its image and for its budget outcome; furthermore, their commitment is indispensable as they are sources of strategic information on the territory, of influence on the enterprises and of planning and directional power.

q **Sources and guidelines**

The sources and guidelines for the Handbook have been , firstly, internal documents of the LAG partners, written during transnational actions and in the reports that each partner has prepared on their experiences and projects. The Handbook contains suitable synthesis of these reports and of records of meetings and exchanges between the partners

Secondly, we have tried to give this Handbook a profile and a method in full accordance with the declarations, papers, directives and standards of the most important national and international institutions concerning tourism as the driving force of **sustainable development, quality destination management and advanced territorial marketing.**

World Tourism Organisation (WTO)

The following papers of the World Tourism Organisation are particularly suitable to give a scientific and methodological support to the scope and objectives of the manual and its purposes :

- An Integrated Approach to Resort Development (1992)
- Guidelines – Development of Natural Parks and Protected Areas for Tourism (1992)
- Sustainable Tourism Development: Guide for Local Planners (1993)
- Quality – A Challenge for Tourism (1994)
- Agenda 21 For the Travel & Tourism Industry (1997 – in cooperation with the World Travel & Tourism Council, Earth Council)

Among the many Declarations issued at the international conferences of the WTO the following seem to be relevant to the objectives and topics of our Handbook:

- World Charter for Sustainable Tourism, Lanzarote (1995 – in cooperation with Unesco)
- Rural Tourism. A solution for Employment, Local Development and Environment (1997-in cooperation with EUROTER)

All these papers and declarations define a logical framework of principles and rules of management behaviour which are the result of international agreements and conventions , with the contribution of the best experts and/or delegates coming from the different countries which have taken part in the works and certified by the moral and scientific authority of the WTO.

European Union

Among the most important documents there are the following:

- Statements of the European Parliament on sustainable tourism (July 1990)
- The Green Book on Tourism (1995)
- 'ECoNETT', information network on tourism and environment, created in 1995, on the initiative of the World Travel and Tourism Council and of the EU XXIII GD, together

with the XI and XII GD, the WTO, the private industry (ETOA, ECOTRANS, EUROPARTNER, AUIA)
- Moreover, an important guideline is the document " Integrated quality management of Tourist destination" : one of the books of this paper deals with different types of tourist destinations, one of which is Rural Tourism (1999)

Council of Europe
Also he papers, the statements and guidelines issued by the Council of Europe, are very relevant to the subject of our action and deserve to be a basis of the perspective of the Handbook of the Best Practices:
- European Charter of territory management - Charter of Torremolinos (1983)
- Parks, development plans and population. Protected areas and socio-economic development (1987)
- Architectural heritage and rural development (1988)
- Tourism and integrated planning policy (1989)
- The Nature Museums: instruments for the appreciation, promotion and preservation of the European natural heritage (1990)
- Policy of development of a sustainable and environment-friendly tourism (1997)
- European Declaration on Landscape (Florence – 20 October 2000)

United Nations
• Brundtland Report (1987): the Report marked a significant change in the approach of the United Nations and UNO Agencies to sustainable tourism. The central statement of this report appears in all the premises of plans of sustainable development, especially those dealing with tourism. We consider sustainable that kind of development which can 'meets the needs of the present without compromising the ability of the future generations to meet their own needs' (we could paraphrase this statement with a proverb from Kenya which says: 'we do not inherit the land from our parents but borrow it from our children')
• Final declaration of the international conference of Rio de Janeiro (1992)
• Agenda 21 (1992)

National and international prizes and awards
Other interesting sources to strengthen our Handbook of the Best Practices for the quality management of the rural destinations are the requirements and standards foreseen by the prizes and awards which acknowledge the 'Best Practices' and best applications at national or international level, both by public authorities and meaningful and influential private institutions for the positioning of a tourist destination in the competition system:

• The acknowledgement of UNESCO of a natural or cultural resource with the title and the assignment of the 'mankind's universal heritage' mark: The related paper for the criteria and the evaluation methodologies of the sites is the Convention for the Protection of the Cultural and Natural Heritage (Paris 1972), which has given rise to the criteria and parameters to assess the dangers risked by the cultural and natural heritage and to foster, with the Declaration of universal heritage, their preservation, restoration and management/promotion

• The prestigious acknowledgement of Blue Flag (Blue Flag Award for Improving the Coastal Environment): issued jointly by WTO, UNEP and by the Foundation for Environmental Education in Europe has become a more and more impressive element to reward the destinations that adopt ecological and quality policies . The parameters by which an award is given are the following:

- Water quality, which defines fully satisfactory bathing conditions for the tourists (absence of industrial waste, preventive measures for pollution accidents, service of civil dumping, quality of the air, absence of mucilage, etc.)
- Cleaning of the beaches and preservation of sandy shores
- Actions of environmental education of the resident and tourist population
- Suitable and differentiated waste collection
- Restrictions to city and water traffic
- Measures for the admission of disabled and other guests with special needs
- Bathing protection and safety (rescue, etc.)

As it may be easily inferred, the 'Best Practices' this award refers to in terms of parameters and standards are applied everywhere, even in our rural destinations, with the exception of strictly specific aspects such as those concerning bathing.

• The European Award TOURISM AND ENVIRONMENT, dated 1995, encouraged tourist destinations to adopt criteria and requirements to improve their conditions. These requirements are divided into four sections (heritage, streams, organisations and compared conclusions), and they defined a model of the quantitative as well as qualitative aspects in order to assess a destination and its performance with respect to the European competition system. It is an evaluation grid, which we think is still valid as a guideline for our research.

• The acknowledgement of tourist destinations awarded by institutions representative of the sector such as the TUI/THOMPSON, one of the most important tour operators of Europe and the world. In order to establish the criteria of competitiveness and quality of tourist destinations, the TUI conducts tests on several quality parameters that together represent a convincing practical guide for the policy-making and marketing of a territory or tourist district. This happens above all because these parameters are arranged to favour the consumers' choices towards some destinations rather than others. Among these parameters are: the treatment of flowing back waters, recycling of waste, the preservation and conservation of water, conservation and preservation of energy, existence of parks, gardens and greenery, environmental design and landscaping, safeguard measures of vegetation and plants, the typology and coherence of the architecture with the land and the landscape, the use of building materials in accordance with the territory, structural density and intensity of the area, measures of requalification and restructuring of city centres, quality and quantity of ecological information for tourists and visitors, the presence of ecological tourism offers in the promotion by means of information on environment, nature and excursions, specific measures such as rent-a-bike and other means of transport of low environmental impact (horses, coaches, trains, canoeing, etc.), indicators on environment and traffic intensity, etc. In the wake of TUI other organisations and tour operators of the Federal Republic (which, one should remember, is the biggest tourism consumer in the world and the main tourism client of Italy), as well as ADAC and NUR TOURISTIK have worked out guidelines with similar parameters.

Guidelines and Best Practices' Handbook for the awareness of public opinion and tour operators
• The Italian Consumers Movement has published, in collaboration and with the support of the EU – GD XI and other institutions, the book 'How to Promote a Sustainable Tourism' (1995), a handbook of Best Practices very rich in content and directions, useful to our goal.
• The paper 'Der Umweltbewusste Hotel – und Gaststaettenbetrieb' issued in 1993 by the Ministry of Agricultural and Environmental Development of Bavaria was updated recently with further checklists concerning measures and practices about: waste treatment, choice of organic materials and food, preference of wholesalers who use biodegradable packaging, conservation practices of water and energy, meaningful and coherent

measures in marketing and promotion in favour of natural and cultural resources, measures related to transport and industrial plants, interventions of restoration and furnishing in the accommodation facilities and in rural areas. The Government of Bavaria, in accordance with the document, has signed the Declaration of Nuremberg (1994), with the hotel and catering associations, foreseeing an accurate monitoring of the environmental and quality criteria and parameters, and sustainability of tourist development as well as the pursuit of quality management policy. An analogous document was later issued also by DEHOGA- Deutscher Hotel-und Gastaettenverband, which is the German National Federation of Catering and Accommodation Businesses.

• Lega Ambiente Italy and the WWF are particularly active in our research and action field, and following their indications may prove decisive, not only to grasp the trends that are more coherent with sustainability but also to know and closely follow the evolution of the citizens' sensitivity and their inclination for new alternative tourism models compared to the past. A source for our Handbook project that we quote here is the WWF paper "Sustainable Use of Natural Resources: Concepts, Issues and Criteria" (1993).

Goal of the analysis of sources
a. Acquire the widest inventory of the sources in order to allow a selection of the valid, certified, acknowledged 'Best Practices' at an international level and by noteworthy institutions
b. Allow a 'compared' test with the logical proceedings of inclusion, when it deals with tourist destinations that are quoted by the investigated sources with the objective of highlighting and / or awarding their excellence and the continuity of their performance. It follows that it is easier to identify the tourist destinations that are able to present and offer the 'Best Practices'
c. Allow a 'compared' test with the logical proceedings of exclusion, when it deals with the identification of areas where these recommendations are never or almost never valid. In 20 years' time a tourist destination that has never taken part meaningfully in a European tender , or has never received a positive evaluation ex ante, in itinere or ex post, becomes respectively a destination which misses the ability of planning, and has no results in terms of effective changes, and then has higher probabilities of being a destination on the wane, or in 'crisis' or danger. Otherwise, the exclusion proceedings can be adopted also in the analysis of the streams and their not only quantitative but also qualitative composition and nature, and so forth for successive degrees of approximation.

As for all the 'regulating ideas', as well as the one of sustainability, there is and there will always be a variety of interpretations, realisation and proceedings.

However, the method used by the LAG partners in this project, that is, the discussion on the Best Practices, suggests an ideal solution for the experimentation and progress through continuous improvement. In fact, the Best Practices, as we shall see, involve an exchange of successful choices and an objective evaluation of the possible choices made by us which would never come to light without this reciprocal and continuous exchange.

q **Terms and definitions**
In the introduction and in the preceding pages we mentioned the drafting of a Handbook of Best Practices which guides the actions of governments and of the LAGs' local communities on the basis of methods such as **benchmarking** or of principles such as **sustainability, quality, integrated marketing etc.**

Before taking a path which, by its very nature, tends to bind the partner to a methodology, proceedings and directions which are common and shared by everyone, it seems necessary to define as precisely as possible the methods, principles, values, parameters and concepts that we prefer and that characterise them. At the same time we think it is necessary that the partners have a common idea of rural tourism which is

confused very often with concepts that do not conform to its perspective, its integrity and potential such as when, the concept of rural tourism is confused with the more restricted one of holiday farms, thereby risking to become a totally misleading phenomenon with respect to our strategic plan.

In our handbook we shall only define those terms that are strictly necessary and indispensable for the objectives of the handbook itself.

1. Terms and definitions concerning the methods used

BENCHMARKING

The concept of 'Best Practices' comes from the method of benchmarking, which is used by the management sciences and the systems of quality.

Originally, the word benchmarking was used in topography to indicate a distinctive sign on a wall or a tree, a stone or a building which served as a reference point for the position or the height of an observer, with respect to relieves as well as tides, floods, etc.

Today it is used as a synonym of 'comparison based on the Best Practices' of an organisation, firm, and team.

Benchmarking has become a management instrument as it supplies information which help the managers of a public or private organisation to know 'where they are' with respect to leader organisations or organisations which belong to their competitive system and which are better than theirs.

BEST PRACTICE

" A process for rigorously measuring your performance versus the best-in-class companies and for using the analysis to meet and surpass the best-in-class " (3).

An organisation that presents a Best Practice is not necessarily the best in each area; in reality, such an organisation doesn't exist. There follows the necessity and the usefulness of an exchange, someone that can show Best Practices in some given processes or performance and someone else in other processes or performances.

SBA

Strategic Business Area: is the management area which represents the specific subject of benchmarking and of the Best Practices to adopt. In the case of our Handbook, it refers to the most innovative and effective models for a quality management of rural tourism and for a type of marketing whose aim is to favour the growth and the choice of tourist flows to the rural areas.

PDCA or DEMING'S WHEEL

W. Edwards Deming, an American, is considered one of the fathers of the Quality Systems. Among his methodological proposals to offer managers and programme or project leaders a rule to achieve the objective of continuous improvement (which is one of the pillars of Quality Systems), there is the PDCA which is the acronym of 4 words : PLAN, DO, CHECK, ACTION. This rule is usually visualised through a 'loop' as each stage influences the next and so on.

2. Terms and definitions concerning the context

RURAL TOURISM

The Handbook of the Best Practices of the LAG partners involved in the transnational project deals essentially with rural tourism and the most effective ways to elaborate its products and services, to promote its marketing and ensure its quality.

However, rural tourism, although it is not easy to distinguish it from other types of tourism (ecological, cultural, enological-gastronomic, etc.), is characterised by the fact that it gives relevance to the typical features of rural areas, characterised by the importance, if not the prevalence, of **a lifestyle** and an economy linked to agriculture, breeding, fishing, hunting and other primary or complementary activities (such as a certain traditional craft concerning both the preparation of food products and of utensils, ornaments and furnishings). Rural tourism can involve plains, hills, mountains, oasis, or forests and offers itself, in the common objectives connected with the LEADER Programmes, as a **world which deserves to keep its vitality, to be able to compete with the urban world, improving its attractiveness and reputation, in order to preserve and perpetuate values, traditions, settings and lifestyles which are threatened by extinction or degradation.**

SUSTAINABILITY

Regulating principle of development, which involves the pursuit of the economic growth of an area (a nation, a city, a local community) so as to safeguard its resources, above all environmental and cultural, orienting the investments according to the endogenic and most compatible tendencies, including the social and cultural aspects. According to the Brundtland Report (ONU –1987) it is a model of development which " meets the needs of the present without compromising the ability of the future generations to meet their own needs' .

DESTINATION MANAGEMENT

It is an innovative model, which considers resources, tourist products and offers of an area, usually circumscribed and with its own characteristics, as a whole : an integrated management policy should be adopted.

AREA QUALITY MARK

It is a more and more increasing the tendency of today's tourist market which acts on tourist destinations as if they were a holistic or an 'integrated product", to which a characteristic mark should be given and used in promotion and communication policies as a meaningful code of the characteristics, quality, inimitability of an area within the competitive system (in our case the tourist streams market). It is the result of the so called 'territorial marketing', which seems to be a more suitable method for the tourist promotion following the already mentioned aspects of a global and tourism -integrated approach, according to the chain of values that appears and unfolds in this field. It is a kind of USP (Unique Selling Proposition), through which traditional marketing emphasises the uniqueness of a product to mark the difference between this and other products in the consumer's eyes and to motivate him to see the advantages of his purchase.

ECOAUDIT

The term used to define the EU system of ecomanagement and audit (EMAS) contained in the EEC Regulation n. 1836 of 29th June 1993 (first time), revised by the **Regulation n.761 of 19th March 2001**. The five most important reference sectors for its application are:
• Industry
• Energy
• Transport
• Agriculture
• **Tourism**

This system introduces an even more sophisticated and advanced method than EIA (Environmental Impact Evaluation) and gives a territory the opportunity to involve all the

working activities in a voluntary programme of Best Practices in the environmental management. Moreover, EU introduced the Strategic Environmental Evaluation

ECOLABEL

It is recognition, introduced by the EEC Regulation 880/92 of 23rd March 1992, revised by the EEC Regulation n. 1980 of 17th July 2000 ,which establishes a community scheme to assign an environmental quality mark. As the ecomanagement and audit systems, even the ecolabel promotes a policy of environmental responsibility of the producer and the seller as well as of those who buy the product.

It is being widely applied in the tourist sectors all over Europe; a pilot example has been the "gruene Koffer" (green suitcase) worked out by the Oekologischer Tourismus in Europa to identify the types of compatible and socially responsible tourism. Strict evaluation criteria take into consideration the environmental policy of hotels, camping-sites and restaurants, but also of travel agencies and tour operators: the award of the precious seal or mark certifies their commitment in the protection of the natural environment, resources and local culture.

SWOT ANALYSIS

It is the acronym of the four initial letters of the English words:
S = strengths
W= weaknesses
O= opportunities
T = threats

The 'swot' analysis is an easy method used by strategic marketing and applicable to every economic sector to give to one's own planning a balanced character for the values to pursue, the risks to run or avoid and the alternatives to choose.

SEGMENTATION

Being a handbook of Best Practices for the management and promotion of tourist flows, the most delicate and crucial action is the market segmentation, that is the subdivision of the demand (real and potential) into consumer subsets on the basis of given parameters, in order to identify the elements of the demand which can more easily accept the suggested tourist offer and which can be reached through special combinations of mix marketing.

POSITIONING

It is the market analysis on the offer side, that is a classification technique of the products present in the market according to a decisional behaviour, the inclination to purchase, the value and the "plus" perception that a product has compared to another in the consumer's mind (in our case, in the traveller's and in the visitor's mind). As the "plus" of a product derives also from attributions of psychological values, its position has outstanding implications in trade promotion, whose choice is delicate (claim, the reason why, tone and pay off) and deserves a very peculiar competence and creativity, above all for rural tourism and other forms of tourism which have, even now, small market shares.

CUSTOMER SATISFACTION ANALYSIS

It is the manner usually used to test the degree of customer's satisfaction with a given product or service. It can be carried out through questionnaires, interviews, focus groups, surveys in the field.

Requirements and standards

q **The quality system in tourism**

The quality of an integrated destination refers to the whole chain of values of the tourist product offered by the destination under two essential points of view:

• Environment and territory
• Enterprises and services

Environment and territory

The quality of the environment and territory is a priority in the pursuit of an integrated quality management: a total quality or excellence in individual services (hospitality, accommodation, transport, information) would be of little use if the environment, whether it is urban or rural, natural or cultural, was disagreeable or offered negative or inadequate perceptions.

The objectives of global quality are the following:

• to pursue the protection of the environment and the population, involving in this objective both the tourism consumers and the enterprises, the local institutions and the population itself
• to assess and reduce the real and potential impact of the tourist activities on health, the environment, the social system and local culture
• to use practices of energy preservation through the employment of renewable materials and technologies
• to encourage the use of public transport and ecologically compatible means of transport for the mobility
• to improve the quality of the standards with particular attention to the problems of the elderly and disabled, the consumer's safety, security, integration of the tourist activities in the environmental context.

The quality and the methods of integrated quality management of a destination produce an 'endogenic' awareness in the tourism organisation itself, which takes from competitiveness the healthiest and best aspect; quality as correspondence (and outdoing) between output and explicit and implicit expectations of the customer, by virtue of a plus in comparison with the competing destinations.

Now it is necessary to deepen and spread this model of tourism harmonised with ecology: the project proposed in this Handbook intends to offer a chance to reflect, become aware and get to know that kind of tourism management which can concretely put this aim into practice.

For this last objective the Handbook suggests a training programme that involves all these 'creative' methods of communication and 'education' for customers and consumers, to make them aware of this new system, both inside the host enterprise (actions of energy and water preservation, differentiated waste collection, security measures, etc.) and outside (to give preference to the use of collective transport or bicycles, to favour and encourage the enhancement of the surrounding territory, of its environmental, architectural, artistic and cultural heritage, to inform the tourist about the worth of this heritage, employ specialised staff along 'alternative' itineraries in order to ease the 'usually' congested areas of tourist flows, etc.).

Nowadays, examples, experiments and Best Practices are widespread both in Italy and in the European Community: three examples are particularly meaningful in this context, the project Calvià Local Agenda 21 (4), the ECOMOST Project (5) adopted in the Balearic Islands (1996), the project 'Sustainable tourist development in the Valtiberina' (6). Other best practices on integrated quality management of rural destinations have been presented in 1999 (7).

The Best Practices of Calvià: the Town of Calvià is one of the most important tourist destinations in the whole Mediterranean for the number of tourists and for its strategic position. It is the first European seaside town which has faced with courage and determination an analysis of its attitude and its own model of tourist development, finding clear and precise patterns of OBSOLESCENCE AND DECLINE, with losses that would be irreparable and irreversible. The adoption of the AGENDA 21, applied to local development and sustainable tourism, has laid the groundwork for an unprecedented change which we take as a model of excellence in our proposal. After an exam of the actual situation (Calvià absorbs 5% of the whole tourist flow in Spain), it analyses its own real position and ends up with a negative verdict: decline and tendency to pass quickly from 'mature' to 'obsolete " destination. It applies the SWOT analysis to its own product-destination and makes the following synthesis:

• Threats: drop of control on the product, lack of leadership for actions of recovery and renewal, drop of structural maintenance, intensive exploitation of natural resources, drop of attractions.
• Opportunities: presence of consolidated tourist industries and enterprises, diversification of products, good quality image, attention to the quality of services, convenient price.

It decides to 'carry out corrective and preventive improvement measures' through the adoption of the Local Agenda 21 with the following objectives:

• Prevention: through a strategic and long-term view, avoiding destruction of the natural resources of the territory and adapting the products to the emerging values
• Revitalisation: by enhancing the value of and reusing the existing architectural and building heritage, restoring the urban network and road system, as well as the external image of the city and sites, protecting cultural and natural heritage, create value with suitable and compatible investments
• Diversification: the economy cannot be only tourism-oriented, it is necessary to revitalise the hinterland economy (i.e. pastoral, rural, woodland), create activities which can make tourism flows and jobs less seasonal.

The 'political' and social model adopted by the local Government is called 'diamond of sustainability': this is an example of a bottom up approach and of respect for subsidiarity. In the middle of the diamond there is the citizens and consumers' 'Forum' and the 5 terminal points are represented by:
- environment
- cultural heritage
- urban system
- social and cultural development
- economy and tourism.

The planning development is considered from three different points of view: risk (present), tendency (desirable), and future (renewal and intangible values).

All the resources (water, energy, etc.), mobility (internal and external transport), the environment (rural, urban, waste disposal, quality of bathing waters, etc.) are analysed and monitored with precise parameters and pre-established objectives.

The long-term strategic actions are 10 and the operative short-term ones are 40. One interesting objective of the strategic actions is to preserve and even 'accept a reduction in the tourism flows by a small percentage', to keep the balance between the capacity of a destination and the number of tourists and visitors.

ECOMOST: to test and analyse examples and improvement practices in the management of tourist destinations, the most appropriate model of interpretation seems to be the ECOMOST model - European Community Model of Sustainable Tourism - which

summarizes the approach inspired both to the Green Book on Tourism of the European Community (1995) and to the Agenda 21: the sustainable tourism is identified and confirmed according to an approach that foresees the integrated arrangement of all the protagonists of the system represented by the tourist destination.

The fundamental matters the ECOMOST model tries to give a precise answer to are:
• What role tourism should play in the country
• What is the value of its economic, social and cultural potential
• What are the limits and the obstacles
• How should resources be managed and how to settle priorities
• What is the most appropriate set of rules framework
• What is the most appropriate political framework

The fundamental point is the achievement of a sustainable development and the adoption of the most appropriate "instruments" to carry it out through tourism.

The assumptions of ECOMOST (and ours as well) are:
• A strong ability in reading and explaining statistical data and previsions
• A better and more resolute consciousness of the policy, above all regional and local, of the value of tourism as a propeller of sustainable development
• An integrated view of the tourist destination at least on a district scale
• A constant attention to intercept the Best Practices, or the positive applications of models of sustainable tourism development, integrated and satisfactory for the consumers
• The sustainability ECOMOST model makes reference to is at the same time: economic, ecological, cultural and social. This is in line with the trends of Agenda 21 and the directories included there.

The requirements supported by ECOMOST model for the success of the tourist destinations in the long term are:
• that the resident population gains a benefit of welfare and wealth and keeps its own cultural and social identity
• that the environment (the landscape, the site, the rural context) remains an attraction for tourists and visitors
• that nothing is allowed or done to degrade or pollute the territory
• that there exists an efficient and coherent political or governmental framework (of the area, of the district, etc) or clear and respected laws, efficient proceedings of integrated planning and the transparency and the bottom up (involvement) of the protagonists of the system in the implementation of the actions.

As for the checklist of the dangers that haunt the pursuit of sustainable tourism, the ECOMOST model is very explicit, in the sense that the following phenomena appear as indicators of "decline" (or danger):
• Permanent migration of the residents from the destination places outwards
• The occupation index of the accommodation facilities is decreasing without reliable short-term explanations
• The level of the professional quality of the employees is low or decreasing
• The level of microcriminality is increasing
• The level of customers' segmentation is rough and excessively heterogeneous
• Local transport services are inefficient and the private traffic excessive
• Capacity is stressed too much in some moments and the seasonal distribution is concentrated too much
• The average age of the accommodation facilities or the year of the last restoration are too high

And so on. We think we can express an assessment of the potential of a tourist destination through this model and to understand accurately the limits and the ties that keep it separate from a possibility of success within its competitive system.

Only in this framework rural tourism reproduces and regenerates a meaningful exchange among citizens of different origins, able to compare and express their preferences between what they leave (for example the city, crowded beaches, etc) and what they find.

In this framework and only with these requirements, the increase of tourist flows becomes a **powerful means for the local leaders and for the same residents to appreciate and love their territory, to preserve it and suggest it as an accessible and enjoyable reality, as a symbol of the quality of life and hospitality.**

The Best Practices of the Valtiberina project: The application of the orientation methods, the potential analysis, the options (values, alternatives and risks) and the integrated approach to the operative method adopted by the Project of sustainable tourist development in the Valtiberina, is one of the best actions of feasibility and scientific analysis of the rural tourist destination available. The project has been worked out by the Professional Association of social studies and research of Florence on behalf of a group of local institutions (Mountain Communities Council, Province, municipal towns, Chamber of Commerce) of Tuscany and gives us designs, suggestions and proposals, firmly tied to national and international sources, both for an application Model and for supervision and protection of rural tourist destination and their resources.

The starting model suggested by this study of excellence is an INPUT-OUTPUT analysis, conceived at the level of the cycle of tourist activities (SUPPLY SIDE) and at level of PROSUMER cycle (demand) according to the sequence: suppliers, manufacturers, consumers and local communities. To test the output quality, an ex ante assessment and a monitoring or supervision at the output quality level must be organised.

Businesses and services

The quality certification has already been introduced some time ago in the industry and crafts sector, while it has not found yet the same application and spreading in tourism sector and in the related firms.

The services offered by tourist firms (firms and offices of public institutions for tourism are included) have a great "untouchable" component, whose quality is properly "perceived" by the customer on a subjective basis and then it is more difficult to avoid an immediate evaluation of the consumer, without the features of objective "usefulness" that industrial goods possess independently of the instant perceptions of the customer.

These features and many others about the tourist product make tourist firms and in particular, those that work as accommodation facilities, always exposed to a judgement, for which the commitment to adopt managerial methods strongly customer orientated, typical of Quality Systems, appears the appropriate measure by now. This will lead to:
• **an innovative management**: the Copernican revolution of Quality literally consists of "overturning" the traditional setting up of a firm (usually " boss oriented ") : it has to become more and more deeply, "customer oriented", that is to say concentrated on the client
• **an assertive management**: the principles and the methods of quality introduce a client approach philosophy that opposes two equally negative management and direction styles. One is the "aggressive" style: the client is a prey or a traveller to take advantage of, trying to earn a profit at once and elevate as much as possible, without caring about a correct balance between service supplied and price applied. The other one is the "compliant" style: a connection deprived of propositional substance is established, creating confusion of targets in its business mission and showing the characteristic features of an unprepared and old-fashioned way of being an entrepreneur. The "assertive" style, on the contrary, stretches out towards the permanent research of a balance among the client interests, the exact and correct confirmation of his/her expectations, and the vital interest of the firm and the product, of his **brand image**, of the specificity of his/her tourist offer, selecting and

taking care of his/her clients, without confusion and ambiguity, and applying to an exact and legible proposal.

• **a honest and transparent management**: the quality system fixes and circumscribes some key behaviours in unequivocal way, as the case of a promotional communication where the promise (the claim)is outlined in a corresponding and congruent way with the real services, avoiding advertising exaggerations that urge excessive expectations, and proposing, instead, to "surprise" positively the client when he enjoys a service that exceeds his expectation.

• **a management opened to the permanent improvement**: to attain this goal, the quality firm management involves and motivates the whole staff and runs a management of human resources extremely careful to the staff's satisfaction, establishing a feed-back with all the departments, to elaborate in a systematic and strict way any improvement of the services, even the care of the apparently most banal details, through daily and weekly briefing, periodical training periods, and a training on the job that enables the whole firm system to keep the service level expected by the client appropriate and alive.

The process of sensitisation about the quality certification has aroused the interest and is still arousing more and more the interest of national and regional governments. The most advanced Regions, which have taken into account the indications of the EC Framework of Support and the EC Directives about consumers' protection, have already started out a number of initiatives to support the introduction and the development of the certification in the primary and secondary sector. More recently, some regional governments or districts have disposed Laws, rules or Reform plans of the classification (the numer of the " stars ") , in order to introduce in the sector of our competence the quality certification.

Therefore, at this time, the expectations of the market go together with the guidelines of the institutions such as the Regions or the States that want (or need) to accelerate the competitive level of their tourist destinations. This happy combination represent a great topic on which future challenges will be played, and the process of quality mark of the different businesses will be integrated by the process of quality mark of the products of the area as a whole, that's the territorial Product, or PRODUCT/SYSTEM.

Quality and criteria to define the Best Practices

When formulating a possible method common to the project LAG partners, a short synthesis of the criteria, indications, management elements for the integrated quality in the tourist destination was worked out, and it was inferable by the documentation presented in the first chapter of the Handbook.

The twofold approach has been gradual:

a. In the first stage, following the meeting of Macizo del Caroig (May 2000), all the LAG partners received a model of self-analysis, which was related to the two main goals of the Handbook:

• the Best Practices of the territory management and of the integrated tourist product,

• the Best Practices of the promotion management and marketing to boost tourist flows.

The model is here outlined in both the fields of analysis

b. In the second stage, following the intermediate test meeting of Tivoli (March 2001), a first output of the analysis work carried out by the LAGs has been dispensed and discussed and we present here a report in the following paragraph, with the respective graphs and comments. Furthermore, the LAG partners have been given the assignment of identifying a restricted core of "Best Practices" that could be considered fairly well-grounded and demonstrable, and to concentrate an operational and immediate confrontation or benchmarking on them, within sight of the conclusive meeting of the Leader II programme course of Schwäbisch Hall (October 2001).

Best Practices for territory management and for an integrated tourist product

We asked the LAG partners of the project to realise a first analysis on the existence, within the area of the municipalities and their territory, of parameters of Best Practices related to the quality of the environment and landscape management, of the facilities for the tourist/visitor, of the social and community services.

For each of these parameters, we suggested to carry out a first evaluation about the real degree of verifiability of the Best Practices on their territory.

Best Practices of the promotion management and marketing to boost tourist streams

These concern the degree of consciousness and awareness of tourism resources shown by the public and private protagonists of the territorial system of reference, which is an essential requirement for the success of any action.

q **Results of the research**
The tests employed:
TEST TO IDENTIFY THE TOURIST POTENTIAL OF THE AREA AND ITS POSITIONING IN THE COMPETITION SYSTEM

1. A trip to the area is :	
- Easy and comfortable	
- With some difficulties	
- Difficult and uncomfortable	
2. The area offers:	
- Many sites of interest for landscape and nature	
- Some sites of interest for landscape and nature	
- One or two sites of interest for landscape and nature	
3. The area offers:	
- Many cultural attractions	
- Some cultural attractions	
- One or two cultural attractions	
4. The area's peculiarity and uniqueness is:	
- High	
- Medium	
- Low	
5. Locals' traditions in receiving strangers are:	
- Strong	
- Medium	

- Weak	
6. The number of schools and professionals for tourism in the area is:	
- Excellent	
- Satisfactory	
- Non satisfactory	

7. Accommodation for visitors and tourists is:	
- Good	
- Satisfactory	
- Not satisfactory	
8. Private investors are willing to invest in accommodation or in entertainment	
- Highly	
- Moderately	
- Lowly	
9. Food and local cooking traditions can reasonably be regarded as:	
- Rich in variety and originality	
- Fairly enjoyable and with at least one registered typical product	
- Average standard and without registered typical products	
10. Water quality is:	
- Good	
- Medium	
- Pollution hints	
11. The presence of traffic (carrying capacity) and heavy traffic roads is:	
- High	
- Medium	
- Low	
12. The management of urban waste and refuse water is	
- Good	
- Poor	
- Inexistent or almost	
13. Respect for nature and animals is:	
- High	
- Medium	
- Low	

14. Air and climate quality are:	
- Good	
- Medium	
- Pollution traces	
15. Emigration from the rural area :	
- People are coming back	
- Slowing down	
- Continues	

TEST TO IDENTIFY THE BEST PRACTICES OF QUALITY INTEGRATED MANAGEMENT OF RURAL DESTINATIONS :

A- GOOD PRACTICES INDICATORS OF ENVIRONMENT AND LANDSCAPE QUALITY:

	0	1	2	3	4
Preferential measures for financing or financial incentives for the restoration of existing buildings, maintenance of traditional and typical buildings, and new building types conforming to the tradition and the landscape, with possible demolitions of buildings which degrade the environment both in the municipalities centres and in the suburbs, villages etc.					
Incentives to the use of bio-architecture technologies and practices					
Specific actions for quality in urban design or decoration, its protection and usual maintenance, creation and maintenance of public gardens and parks					
Protection of local plants and animals and protected areas for migratory birds					
Actions aiming to a differential collection of urban waste and to its ecological disposal					
Specific actions for the conservation of the monuments and sites					
Use of intelligent, clear and meaningful panelling and road signs emphasising the most interesting aspects, on the symbolic level, of the identity of the sites, villages, castles or towns					
Traffic limits, creation for pedestrian only areas, measures for the care and promotion of "silence"					
Water and air quality protection, with emission controls and monitoring of water streams					
Monitoring of territory in order to avoid landslides, floods, pollution (especially hidden) and illegal waste dumps					

B- GOOD PRACTICES INDICATORS OF TOURISTIC SERVICES QUALITY:

	0	1	2	3	4
Presence , of welcome and information services, even minimal, through the action of local no profit organisations in coordination with the Municipality, local institutions, natural parks etc.					
Availability of guides, even simple, and of maps to be found in evident places of distribution in order for the inhabitants and visitors to achieve awareness of their value, to use and enjoy them and receive an environmental education, by providing accessibility, guides, regular opening hours, knowledge and a certain "fame" (oral, written ,multimedia, web…)					
Quality and accessibility of accommodation such as "diffuse reception" and/or bed & breakfast					
Quality and quantity of catering (restaurants, bars, pubs, wine caves...)					
Quality and quantity of place for purchasing typical products of agriculture, handcraft etc.					
Presence of collections, exhibitions (temporary or not) which introduce the territory, the village, the castle or the borough, its resources, history, people, folklore, work tools, traditions etc.					
Degree of possible fruition of public and private transport					
Degree of awareness for the reception of disabled and of persons with specific needs such as elderly, infants and children, ill persons, pregnant women etc.					

C- GOOD PRACTICES INDICATORS OF SOCIAL AND COMMUNITY SERVICES QUALITY:

	0	1	2	3	4
Quality of local health services (medical service, home assistance, volunteering)					
Existence of efficient social centres and recreational centres for different categories of people					
Active presence of organisations that provide entertainment and rediscovery of traditions, popular culture, folklore, popular feasts, events, ballads, legends etc.					
Type and quality of craft and commerce and their position in the old town centre					
Presence of public libraries and other institutions for reading and researching about the site, the borough, the village, the castle etc					
Training and professionalism of urban police, main actor of reception and information on the road					

How to evaluate:
For each of the items in each section of the question form , the degree in which "good practices"were actually to be found on the territory of interest was established according to the scores from 0 to 4:

0 = no significant sign or objective evidence of this feature was recorded

1 = there are signs recorded verbally or as a wish (interviews in the newspapers to politicians, authorities, or other opinion leaders, assemblies proceedings, proposals etc...) but they have not yet be made into official decisions of precise projects

2 = there are signs in documents, records, proceedings but without accuracy and clearness and congruity and without link to the explicit aims of the programme and of the requirements

3 = there are clear documents and concrete evidences of the attention paid to the requirements

4 = there are concrete and more "immaterial" of the attention paid to the requirements

Items marked 4 are those which represented best practices or excellence cases.

The two graphs :

The results of the research accomplished can be read in the two graphs in Annex A : the first one reports on the potential and the current position, the second on the number and the nature of the best management practices existing in the different LAGs.

The final comment on the results :

The first graph demonstrates that with regard to the potential and the current positioning, the comparison among the LAG partners allows us some meaningful considerations:

• The LAGs present a common performance in some parameters or factors of potential tourist attractiveness better than in others. Most LAGs offer a more convincing performance in the following items (strengths in SWOT analysis):

- N. 1 = accessibility
- N. 2 = endowment of natural and landscape resources
- N. 12 = ecomanagement practices
- N. 13 = safeguard of natural resources and fauna
- N. 14 = quality of the air and climate

• Common negative performances are also related to a certain number of parameters (weaknesses of SWOT analysis):

- N. 5 = insufficient education of local population in hospitality
- N. 6 = insufficient presence of training of professional tourism operators
- N. 8 = low inclination to invest in the tourism of the area

Under the profile of strategic marketing, the Handbook identifies then, more clearly, strengths and weaknesses on which to stress the comparison about the most suitable measures to be used in order to improve the former and be able to remove the latter.

On the whole, the balancing between weaknesses and strengths related to the tourist potential, gives a classification of the LAG partners : close to a high potential position or in a potential intermediate/low position.

The second graph illustrates the performances in the integrated management of the quality tourist destination, that present, if compared with the LAG, generally speaking, lower performances in the parameters of A type (Best Practices for the management of the environment and landscape quality), if compared to the parameters of B type (Best Practices for the management of quality in the services for the tourist/visitor) and C (Best Practices for the management of quality in social and community services).

These results show the LAG what are the factors of attractiveness to manage with more care and the policies to improve significantly.

The LAG which presents the best performances in the Best Practices concerning the whole parameters could be a benchmark for the partners in internal benchmarking exchange to be carried out.

Conclusions

The result has been stimulating in that it has two significant features:

a. It has been thought, discussed, pursued in a 'dialogue' or comparison among different LAGs partners of the project, invested and motivated by the same goal and aspiration to contribute to an important sustainable development in the territories in which they operate;
b. It is the output of a strong engagement and of a steady effort to make our rural destinations accessible, appealing and available to the tourist market, in order to be competitive through the resources, products and typical characteristic offers of our local identity in a globalized world, where the 'economy' of meaningful experiences, emotions, tourism, free time, culture, habits, taste and originality grows daily.

The essential points in order to preserve, protect and reach and promote our tourist destinations and their offers are clearly indicated . However, in conclusion, we can summarise them as follows.

- **First, it is important to follow the principle of an integrated approach to the rural tourist destinations under our responsibility.**
  Therefore we define the concept of '**integrated touristic district'**, increasingly emphasised by the new sustainable development programmes.
  Rural tourist destinations are complex; in order to develop and qualify them, many 'players', elements and factors are involved, among them: local authorities, any kind of tourist firms, farmers and cattle-breeders, producers of typical food and crafts, staff of the protected areas, of the recreational facilities, transport, tour operators, etc.
  The chain of values results from all the sectors that compose it and from the integrated quality of its composition: the beauty of the landscape is important (perhaps the main aspect of attraction), but also the preservation of culture and local traditions, gastronomy, accommodation facilities, reception and information. At the same time, the demand of sport, recreational activities and entertainment increases in rural tourism. The traveller's experience as well as the visitor's and the tourist's is varied and at the same time integrated.

- **Secondly, above all in rural tourism, it is necessary to agree on the marketing plans: in accordance to the 'global' vision of the territory.**
  The players are asked to develop in a more convincing way a very close cooperation among them, centred around common programmes and around quality management models, identifying an area quality certification which sums up the value and the contents of the promise (the claim). The tourist destination has to be seen in the same way in which a single firm should be considered and managed. This approach is sometimes hindered by a long tradition of individualism and parochialism, but it is necessary to overcome these trends which proved unproductive; it is the only way we have to make our territories competitive on the global market.

- **Thirdly, it is important to underline the role of the methodology adopted through the Best Practices Handbook and the rules of the game this Handbook implies : the benchmarking.**
  The benchmarking gives us a model of analysis and permanent monitoring of our positioning in relation to the best competitors, offers the methodology to   test customers' satisfaction, to ensure a permanent improvement, creativity, creation of new products and services, total quality management in the services. This can allow us to avoid mistakes, wrong investments, useless actions and waste.

As an essential consequence of this methodology ,it seems particularly and strongly recommended to adopt the guidelines of Agenda 21 and the ECOMOST model, considering, above all, that the Leader programme is a programme of the European Union

: the vision the Union has, in relation to rural development, is fully inspired to these models and to the principle of sustainability.

Notes

(1) The Leader Program is one of the best and successful European Community Programmes : the word LEADER is a french acronym of the expressione " Liaison entre les Actions pour le Développement de l'Economie Rurale " (Link between Actions for Rural Economy Development).

(2) Quality management systems – Requirements – ISO 9001, ed. ISO 2000. This new edition of the ISO norms includes references to the service sector, like tourism, and environmental requirements more than the past editions. In Annex A, e.g., we find a correspondence between ISO 9001:2000 and ISO 14001:1996.

(3) From the manual on the benchmarking of the consultant firm KAISER ASSOCIATES-USA.

(4) Ajuntament de Calvià – "Calvià Agenda Local 21.La sostenibilidad de un municipio turistico' , Calvià 1997.

(5) ECOMOST (1996)is a model that has been drafted by a research carried out by Mallorca (E) and Rodi (GR) in partnership, to which some research institutes and tourism consultancy offices of other European countries have collaborated such as: DWIF from Munich, Ashdown Environmental Ltd, Earthwatch Europe, NUR Touristic, Dr. Selwyn from Roehampton Institute ,University of Balearic Islands . The coordination was made by IFTO.

(6) SRS – Sviluppo Turistico Sostenibile nella Valtiberina – Florence (1998)

(7)European Commission – Towards quality rural tourism.Integrated quality management of rural destinations , Brussels 1999. The author of the present research was responsible for the final report in the Benchmarking Seminar set up and carried out in January 1999.
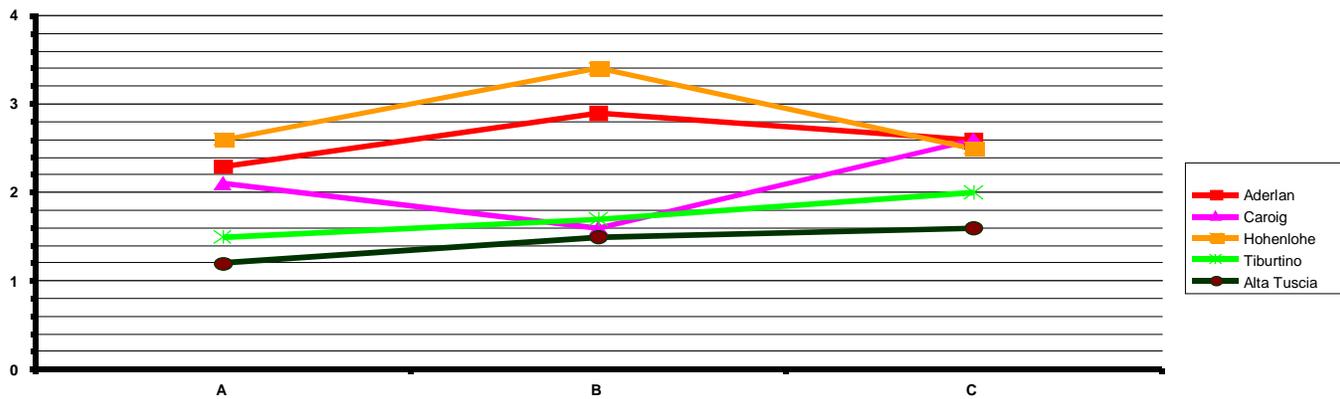
ANNEX A :

Graph n. 1

Potential positioning according to 15 indicators (Test n.1)
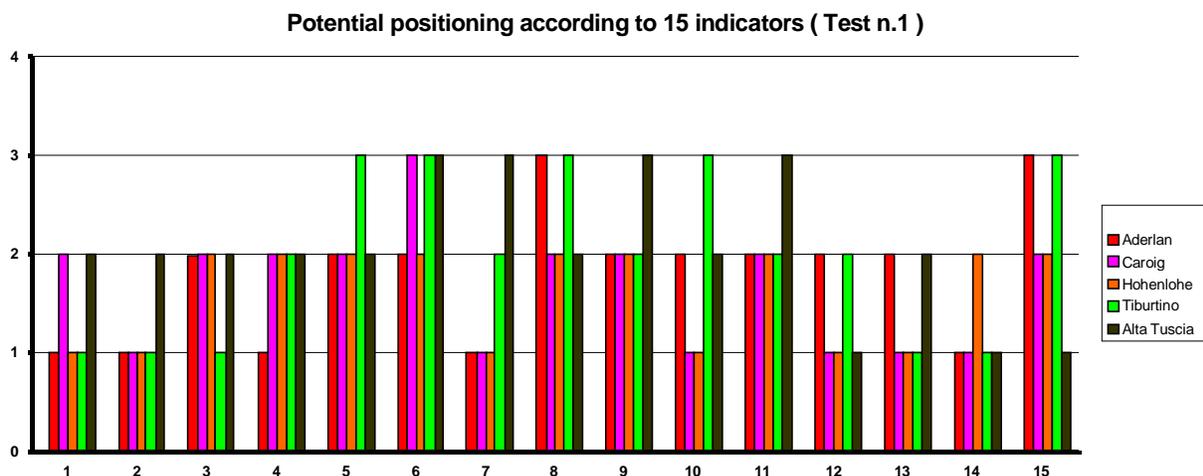
1 - High positioning
2 - Middle positioning
3 - Low positioning

Graph n.2

Quality management of tourist destinations (Test n.2)

0-1 = Not existing evidence of quality indicators
1-2 = Not sufficient evidence of quality indicators
2-3 = Sufficient evidence of quality indicators
3-4 = Satisfactory evidence of quality indicators
4   = Excellence level of evidence of quality indicators (benchmark of excellence)