

FOOD - TOURISM RELATIONSHIP IN THE ITALIAN DESTINATIONS

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Abstract

Food and tourism are two aspects for which Italy is famous all over the world, but today in a globalized and highly competitive tourist system in which even the stronger destinations need to differentiate themselves from the others, there is need policies of development capable of enhancing their interaction. Tourism promotion, for example, can focus on food products that may stimulate export demand, while food promotion may focus on the regional landscape and lead to a growth in tourism. Local food is a fundamental component of a destination's attributes, adding to the range of attractions and the overall tourist experience (Symons, 1999). In an increasingly competitive world of tourism marketing, every region or destination is in a constant search for a unique product to differentiate itself from other destinations. In this paper, therefore, through the canonical correlation analysis (Hotelling, 1936), we want to examine, at regional level, the relationship between food and tourism in Italy, in the belief that their combination is the starting point not only for differentiating tourism destinations, but also for the use and conservation of food local production.

1. Introduction

Food and tourism are two aspects for which Italy is famous all over the world, but today in a globalized and highly competitive tourist system in which even the stronger destinations need to differentiate themselves from the others, there is need for policies of development that are capable of enhancing their interaction. Tourism promotion, for example, can focus on food products, which may stimulate export demand while food promotion may focus on the regional landscape and lead to a growth in tourism. One of the crucial elements of successful destination marketing is to create tourist satisfaction, which influences the choice of destination and the decision to revisit (Yoon and Uysal, 2005). Many studies suggest that food plays a significant role in creating a quality visiting experience for tourists and, therefore, influences their revisit intentions and recommendations to others (Kivela and Crofts, 2006). It has been generally accepted that intention to revisit a destination has a strong relationship with tourists' overall satisfaction with the food experience during a trip (Ryu and Jang, 2006). Local food or cuisines that are unique to an area are one of the distinctive resources that may be used as marketing tools to get more visitors. (Douglas, Douglas and Derret, 2001). Different types of foods are consumed and connected to a particular location and can be the way to promote and market a destination. In this paper, therefore, through the canonical correlation analysis (Hotelling, 1936), we want to examine, at regional level, the

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relationship between food and tourism in Italy, in the belief that their combination is the starting point not only for differentiating tourism destinations, but also for the use and conservation of food local production. The benefits of this study will enhance marketers' perspective as to how to use food and destination image to encourage tourists to visit Italy again and again.

2. Food – tourism relationship

Tourist destination is a tourist product and service providing a holistic experience and cultural background (Fuchs and Weiermair, 2003). For most of the tourists, experiencing the local knowledge, culture and above all food are the most appealing part of the travel experience, which stimulates their awareness of this particular place and encourages the local community to maintain their features and culture. Tourists often eat out, and while some tourists eat to satisfy their hunger, others eat to sample the local food and cuisine, because for the latter these form an important component of their travel itinerary. This process is similar to spreading the seeds of local features and culture all over the world to maintain the local food identity and to build a sustainable food system for future growth. In recent years, dining has emerged as a major travel activity and many tourist destinations have begun to view their local food and cuisine as an important market niche as well as a pull factor in the promotion of a tourist destination (Bessièrè, 1998; Hall and Sharples, 2003; Long, 2004; Quan and Wang, 2004; Iakovou *et al.*, 2009, Du Rand *et al.*, 2003; Henderson, 2004; Kivela and Crotts, 2005; Sunanta, 2005; Hashimoto and Telfer, 2006; Tussyadiah, 2006; Okumus *et al.*, 2007; McKercher *et al.*, 2008).

In this context, the influence of food on tourists' destination experience has increasingly become the interest. Studies suggest that gastronomy plays a significant role in creating a quality visiting experience for tourists and, therefore, influences their revisit intentions. The role of food in destination tourism was tested since food is one of the most important components related to tourists' experience and plays a significant role in affecting tourists' subsequent behaviors. The culinary experience is inextricably linked to destination and destination image (Kivela and Crotts, 2006; Molz, 2007).

When tourists traveled to different destinations they were not familiar with they generally worried about climate, accommodation, health risks, and especially food and beverage that "There would be nothing to eat there". Moreover, local eating habits and table manners can affect the perception of tourists towards a destination (Cohen and Avleli, 2004). Food is a significant means to penetrate into another culture as "...it allows an individual to experience the 'Other' on a sensory level, and not just an intellectual one" (Long, 1998). It can be concluded that the main factors that we should be concerned with when measuring food image are food itself and place where food is sold which can demonstrate the uniqueness of food and food serving style with value for money (Lertputtarak, 2012). Such developments have spurred an interest in experiencing the unique and indigenous food, food products and cuisines of a destination, so much so that people are often traveling to a destination specifically to experience the local cuisines or to taste the dishes of its 'celebrity chef' (Hall and Mitchell, 2005). Traveling for food has taken an entirely new meaning from what it used

to when voyages were undertaken for spice trade, but voyagers still carried dried food, as the local cuisines were looked upon with suspicion (Tannahill, 1988). Some authors defined “culinary tourism” as follows: while traveling, tourists either (i) purchase or consume local food or (ii) observe and research the process of food production (from agriculture to cooking schools), and view this as an important motivation for traveling or an important travel activity. However, culinary tourism also enhances self-awareness and self-consciousness through experiencing the travel destination via food, which is very different from simply consuming food as in ordinary travels. Culinary tourism implies that local cultures have interesting stories about their cuisines, and it indicates that local or special knowledge and information that represent local culture and identities are being transferred (Long, 2004; Ignatov and Smith, 2006; Smith and Xiao, 2008). Therefore, unique cuisines not only build popular travel destinations but also improve the culinary cultural image of a country, which makes the cuisine culture a major attraction within the travel destination. The growth of culinary tourism is seen as an outcome of a trend where people spend much less time cooking, but choose to pursue their interest in food as a part of a leisure experience such as watching cooking shows, dining out and the like. Recent culinary tourism studies indicate that the relationship between food and tourism is still a major issue in many aspects, such as culture (Delamont, 1994), authenticity (Fox, 2007), policies (Hjalager and Corigliano, 2000; Boyne et al., 2003), and community participation and support (Quan and Wang, 2004) at the travel destination. However, the discussion of the relationship between the food and image of a travel destination must start by examining the existing culinary tourism resources to identify the competitive advantage of this travel destination in developing culinary tourism. The advantages and disadvantages of key stakeholders can then be considered when developing culinary a tourism style and strategic model suitable for that area (Hornig and Tsai, 2012). Leisure researchers have studied special interest tourism like ecotourism (Acott, Trobe and Howard, 1998) and wine tourism (Charters and Ali-Knight, 2002) to show how tourists may be segmented based on their activities along the ‘tourism interest continuum’ (Brotherton and Himmetoglu, 1997). The culinary tourist is thus a special interest tourist whose interest in food is the primary reason influencing his travel behavior and falls on the upper end of the food tourism interest continuum. Thus, the obvious overlap of food as a special interest component as well as a cultural component makes the culinary tourist possibly both a special interest tourist and a cultural tourist. Food and tourism play a major part in the contemporary experience economy. Food is a key part of all cultures, a major element of global intangible heritage and an increasingly important attraction for tourists. The linkages between food and tourism also provide a platform for local economic development, and food experiences help to brand and market destinations, as well as supporting the local culture that is so attractive to tourists (Hjalager and Richards, 2002; OECD, 2012; WTO, 2012). Tourist destinations have also begun to reflect the understanding that food and cuisines represent a core element of these destinations’ invisible heritages - demonstrating their national cultural characteristics and local features - which can even be developed into an international brand. Therefore, culinary tourism, food tourism represent an emerging tourism market for many countries or regions and creates a unique competitive edge for tourist destinations and related enterprises.

3. Food and tourism in Italy

Italian destinations have many interesting activities. Besides the monuments, the sea, the mountains, businesses, etc., can also promote the country as a 'world cuisine'. In Europe, Italy, reported in the survey and for the categories studied and considered fundamental to the definition of a "tourism brand", was in first place in two charts: one of the best country to "Art & Culture" (ahead of France, Egypt, Japan and Greece) and for the "Food", which exceeds, in order, France, Japan, Singapore and Switzerland. Italy is a country that thanks to its climatic conditions is capable of producing agricultural products throughout the year, many of which are known and appreciated worldwide. Italian food is an attractive delicacy, and the exquisiteness of the presentation combined with a high nutritional value with a distinct, delicious, unique taste, which can make a strong impression as Mediterranean art of cooking. The food of a country is governed by environmental factors and is influenced by social, cultural, and religious backgrounds (McIntost, 1995), so every year, many tourists, especially foreign tourists, like to come to Italy to enjoy eating Italian food, which is diverse in appearance, aroma, color, and taste. Travelers have always searched for something that is different and authentic. For example, pizza in Naples is well known for its popularity and has become a regional icon. Adriatic fishes, Sicilian and Calabrian citrus fruits, or even foods such as pasta, risotto, mozzarella, cannoli, etc.

Besides, Italy is the European country (Table 1) that has the highest number of excellent food with a geographic certification recognized (Protected Designation of Origin –PDO-, Protected Geographical Indication –PGI- as defined in the Council Regulation CE 510/2006).

Country	PDO	PGI	total	Country	PDO	PGI	total
Austria	8	6	14	Luxemburg	2	2	4
Belgium	3	7	10	Netherlands	5	3	8
Bulgaria	-	1	1	Poland	9	18	27
Cyprus	-	2	2	Portugal	62	61	123
Denmark	-	5	3	United Kingdom	22	30	52
Finland	5	2	7	Czech republic	6	23	29
France	89	118	207	Romania	-	1	1
Germany	32	64	96	Slovakia	-	7	7
Greece	74	27	101	Slovenia	7	9	16
Ireland	1	4	5	Spain	92	77	169
Italy	158	101	259	Sweden	1	3	4
Lithuania	1	2	3	Hungary	6	6	12
Latvia	-	-	0	European Union	559	579	1.138

Table 1: Number of Protected Denomination of Origin - PDO and Protected Geographical Indication (PGI) by the European Union countries.

Source: Ministry of Agriculture and Forestry, 2013.

Analyzing the specific items of expenditure made by Italian and foreign tourists – in Italy there are 376.785.615 tourists, (Istat, 2013) - during their stay in Italy, either they stay in accommodation that private homes, it is the sector of food consumption in the head at the expense of tourists. Not only for the consumption of meals in restaurants and pizzerias (which covers 67.5% of the tourists for daily rates of around 16 euro per person) and in bars, cafes and confectioneries (68.3% for about 6 euro) but also for the purchase of food and drinks in supermarkets and shops (60.4% to EUR23) and food and wine typical (32% to 10 euro). Besides, according to the National Restaurant Association, more than six out of ten (63%) leisure travelers and 85% of culinary travelers enjoy trying new restaurants most nights during trips (Stewart, Bramble, and Ziraldo, 2008). Therefore, it has become essential to try to measure the possible relationship between food and tourism.

4. Capturing the relationship between food and tourism in Italian regions

4.1 The methodology

To examine the relationship between food and tourism in Italy, has been used the canonical correlation analysis (Hotelling, 1936; Alpert et al. 1972; Lambert et al., 1975; Levine, 1977). It is a method that analyses the number, magnitude, and composition of independent dimensions of this relationship. The underlying logic involves the derivation of a linear combination of variables from each of the two sets of variables, called canonical variates so that the correlation between the two linear combinations is maximized (Thompson, 2000). In canonical analysis, the analyst is not concerned with a single criterion, but, rather, as defined by Kendall, with relationships among sets of criterion variables and predictor variables (Kendall, 1957). His objectives are:

- to determine the maximum correlation between a set (of more than one element) of criterion variables and predictor variables
- to derive weights for each set of criterion and predictor variables, in such a way that the weighted sums are maximally correlated
- to derive additional linear functions which maximize the remaining correlation, subject to being independent of the preceding set/sets of linear compound
- to test statistical significance of correlation measures.

As it can be observed from the above description, canonical analysis is a technique for dealing mainly with composite association between sets of variables.

4.2 The variables

In order to measure the interaction between food and tourism there is the need to collect and organize statistical information. The complexity of the phenomena needs to dispose a wide range of statistical information, especially quantitative indicators. The study revealed that data were not always available. In many cases, the absence of data is

for the proposed regional level, while in other cases there are problems relating to temporal scale and to timeliness. Hence, sometimes it is not possible to insert some relevant aspects or it has to fall back on variables that are partially different from the desired information.

In this paper, however, in order to assess the relationship between food and tourism in Italy at a regional level (NUTS II), we use - about food- typical made in Italy productions, in detail: cheese, wine, oil, fruits, cereals and a residual category that includes mainly bakery products, pasta, seafood, other animal products, other than wine vinegars.

We focused our attention on products with a recognized brand (PDO and PGI) and among them, we have favored those characteristic of the Mediterranean diet. In today's food market, it is important to acknowledge the geographical origin of quality products, which give them a distinctive character. Whereas, the aspects related to tourism that we analyze are supply and demand, with the number of accommodations detailed by hotels and complementary accommodations, the number of restaurants and the number of nights spent. The used set of indicators (table 2) contains information with a range of time from 2013 to 2015 and the sources of data are national institute of statistics (ISTAT), Ministry of Agriculture and Forestry (MIPAAF), and National Institute for Tourism Research (ISNART). Obviously, the list of indicators is neither exhaustive nor mandatory.

Macro categories	Indicators	Source	Year
Food	Total production of cheese	Istat	2013
	Total production of oil	Mipaaf	2015
	Total wine production		
	Cheeses PDO and PGI		
	Oils PDO and PGI		
	Wines PDO and PGI		
	Fruit and cereals PDO and PGI		
	Other products PDO and PGI		
Tourism	Tourist accomodations	Istat	2013
	Foreign nights spent in tourist accommodations	Isnart	2015
	Italian nights spent in tourist accommodations		
	Restaurants		

Table 2: Food and tourism indicators.

4.3 Results

Through the canonical correlation analysis on food and tourism variables, essentially, two sets of weighting coefficients were sought, such that if linear combinations of each set were formed (so arriving at a composite variable representing each set) and correlated in a two-variable linear correlation, a higher correlation for this particular set of composite variables would be obtained than any other set of combinations which

could be formed (Green et al., 1966). The maximum number of canonical variates that can be extracted from the sets of variables equals the number of variables in the smallest set of variables (in this case, they are 7). The highest canonical correlation index is 0.989 (table 3). This index is interpreted as a measure of the overall correlation between the two sets of variables. The second one is 0.974 and so on in descending order.

Number of canonical variates	Canonical correlation
1	0.989524
2	0.974182
3	0.929748
4	0.834254
5	0.745414
6	0.654349
7	0.270392

Table 3: Canonical correlation index

The canonical functions significant are two (table 4).

Number of canonical variates	Wilk's	Chi-SQ	DF	Sig.
1	0	120,563	63	0
2	0	79,92	48	0,003

Table 4: Test of significance of canonical correlation

The proportion of total variance explained, food variables set by the first canonical variable (V_1) is about 22%, which together with the second reach 45%. The proportion of total variance of the set of variables of tourism explained by the first canonical varied (W_1) is about 23%, which together with the second reach 36% (table 5).

Canonical variate		Proportion of total variance
Food	V_1	0.222
	V_2	0.230
Tourism	W_1	0.228
	W_2	0.147

Table 5: Proportion of variance of V_1 , V_2 , W_1 e W_2 explained by its variables set

In order to show how much of the shared variance in a set can be accounted for by a variate from the other set it is useful the redundancy coefficient (table 6). The first two food variates accounted for 44% of variance in the tourism variable set. Similarly, the variance of the tourism variables accounted by the first two variates of the food set was 36%.

Number of canonical variates	FOOD		TOURISM	
	Proportion of variance	Proportion of cumulative variance	Proportion of variance	Proportion of cumulative variance
1	0,218	0,218	0,223	0,223
2	0,219	0,437	0,139	0,362

Table 6: Variance of the original variables accounted for by a variate from the other set

The results suggest that in term of variance, there is a bi-univocal relationship between food and tourism (at least those variables considered in this paper) and more from tourism to food variables than vice-versa.

The interrelationships between food and tourism may be viewed from the side of “food and wine” as characterization of a segment of tourism, where the tourist is directed towards an area of culinary value, in order to know and discover the area from which the food, wine and experience them; and from the side of tourism as an opportunity to promote local food and wine.

To determine which variables were most important in a given pair of canonical variates, the canonical loadings are used (table 7). About food, the first canonical variable is essentially explained by typical foods: oil, wine and other products. The second canonical variate is related to fruit and cereal production and cheese both production either brand.

Food Variable	1	2
Cheese production	0,47	0,615
Oil production	0,16	-0,131
Wine production	0,106	0,197
Fruit & cereal production	0,273	0,808
PDO and PGI wine	0,603	0,476
PDO and PGI cheese	0,28	0,625
PDO and PGI oil	0,639	-0,289
PDO and PGI fruit and cereal	0,544	0,312
Other PDO and PGI	0,723	0,434
Tourism Variable	1	2
Hotels and similar	-0,447	-0,217
Complementary exercises	-0,309	-0,369
Hotels Foreign nights spent	-0,607	-0,058
Hotels Italian nights spent	-0,601	-0,325
Complementary foreign nights spent	-0,403	-0,312
Complementary Italian nights spent	-0,594	-0,274
Restaurant	-0,23	-0,751

Table 7: Canonical loadings for food and tourism variables and their canonical variables.

The first tourism variate is explained in prevalence by tourism demand variables: hotel nights spent (both foreign either Italian) and complementary Italian nights spent.

The second one is essentially related to the presence of restaurants (brand restaurant recognized by “Ospitalità italiana”) in the regions.

To do some considerations a graphical representation of the analysis is useful. In detail, the Italian regions are positioned in a plane where the axes are the food and tourism canonical variates. In the first graph, the horizontal dimension refers to the first food canonical variate and the vertical dimension at the first tourism variate (figure 1).

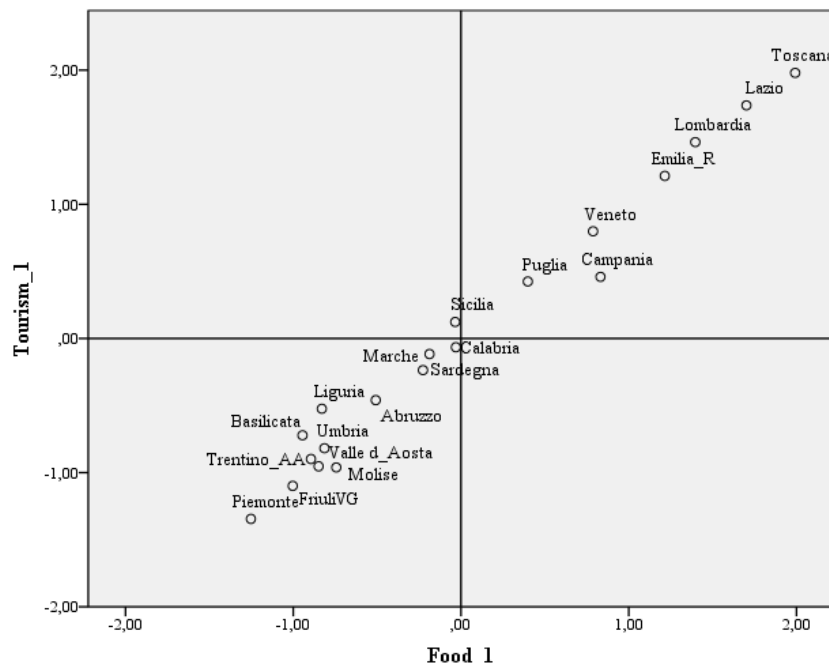


Figure 1: Italian regions' positioning on the first canonical variate.

Recalling that the two first canonical variates are influenced by typical foods, and tourism demand, the graph reveals a strong linkage between food and tourism, substantially with two scenarios for Italian regions. The top-right of the graph is the area with regions characterized by the presence both of typical foods either large number of tourists. These area can certainly be regarded as emblematic for “food-tourism” development because combines the key factors of the Italian food with Italian and international tourism demand.

This is especially true for Toscana, Lazio, Lombardia and Emilia Romagna and in second order for Veneto, Campania and Puglia.

Instead, the part on the bottom left of the graph represents the area where there is a fundamental role neither typical foods nor the tourism demand.

This area involves a large part of the Italian territory- both of the north and south of the country- so, it is possible to argue that there is necessary an in- depth reflection on current and future tourism and food strategies. Because the analysis showed the interaction of food and tourism, for these regions it is very important to invest to increase the flow of tourists and improve strategies on typical foods.

Some more observations are possible looking at the graph built on the second food and tourism canonical variate (figure 2).

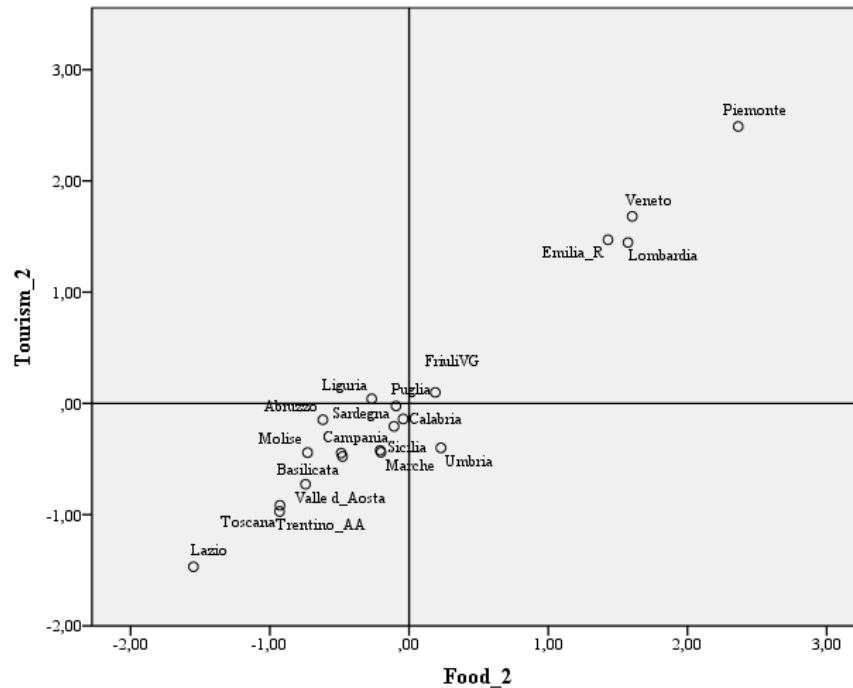


Figure 2: Italian regions' positioning on the second canonical variate.

The figure shows that a group of regions moves away from the others. In detail, Piemonte goes on the top right of the chart. Toscana, Lazio, Campania go in the opposite side. Reminding that the second canonical variate is essentially explained by cheese (production and brand) and cereal and fruit production - about food- and restaurant - about tourism -, it is possible to think that the relationship between food and tourism (bottom up of the graph) is mainly explained by local consumption, tourism so-called “hit and run” rather than a longer-term tourism. The results suggest that pushing for a quality restaurant with a recognized brand name can be a lever for winning the final statement of the segment “culinary tourism”.

Ultimately, you can think of a virtuous circle with the promotion of tourism, which in turn has a positive effect on the typical production and that can further benefit from dining to enhance them and that is recognized and identified by the tourist market.

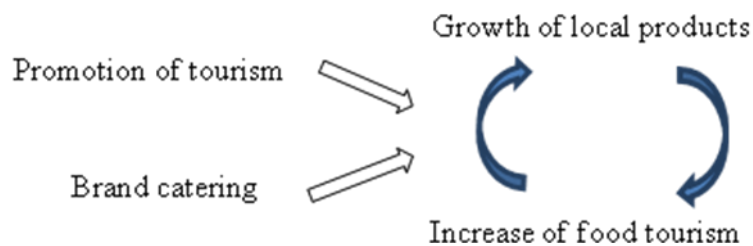


Figure 3: Food – Virtuous circle of food and tourism.

5. Conclusion

The attention of the world of tourism for the high quality food products is certainly not a recent phenomenon. Simply think of the thematic itineraries developed in all Italian regions in recent years, but also to the numerous tourist destinations seeking to be characterized by the exploitation of their food products. The development and promotion of typical products becomes a tourist and territorial development strategy, especially in those areas that are most vulnerable, as the rural ones. In these places, the main attraction is the presence of an intangible asset that needs to be enhanced through sustainable and qualitative development patterns. It can generate new opportunities for local development, avoiding repeating the numerous attempts to define new tourist practices solely based on the supply characteristics. If it adds that the trip is now understood as an experience, and the emotions and the feelings that it can move the element of differentiation that the modern tourist research and that the tour operator has to offer. It is intriguing to explore the potential relationship between food and tourism with a view to developing synergy. So in this paper is explored through the canonical correlation, the relationship between food and tourism in Italy.

The study reveals that in Italy there is a relationship between food and tourism, especially from tourism to food. So, the empirical results show that in Italy tourism can be used as a driver for food such as food can be used as a lever for tourism. This suggests that policies to develop tourism can also have a positive influence on food. Data show that Italian regions are positioned along the bisector, where large number of tourists and the quality restaurants are accompanied by the significant presence of local products and where low tourist numbers denote a shortage of local products.

Tourism and food is a winning combination for Italy, from which we can and must start to rebuild development. The food chain - from production to distribution to consumption - is now a formidable multiplier of opportunities for the regions.

Tourism and the food industry can be interpreted like the winning combination to create jobs and rebuild the development of the territories, especially for areas positioned in the lower part of the bisector. This is reinforced by the consideration that in the first half of 2015, employment in services and accommodation catering and 'grew up in Italy by 5.4% over the first half of 2013. In addition, in the last three years there 'was a real boom of farms (+ 48.5%, are almost 113,000). They win the territories that are recognizable and embody the good reputation of Made in Italy to the world, intercepting global demand for traceability and authenticity.

Nevertheless, to succeed in this goal it is important that local communities and their administrations valorize in a targeted way the specific vocations of their territory. It offers many ideas that allow its development: environmental resources, historical, artistic and cultural heritage that can be exploited to increase the number of visitors, tourists or consumers. It should be then create synergies that result from the activation of the virtuous circle among tourism, food and territory; and to do this it is necessary that both private and public entities have the will to achieve such synergies. It would be appropriate that all food companies, trade associations, municipalities, businesses tourist intermediation companies and those of accommodation should be coordinate perfectly

with each other to arrange tourist routes of taste, to the rediscovery of the countryside and traditions.

Local resources can be used for tourism, especially the typical products that represent a universe vast and complex that includes not only those covered by the denominations laid down in Community legislation, but also perceived as such.

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