Undertourism and Destination Management in the Inner Areas. The Case of Locride, Reggio Calabria

Francesco Calabrò(✉), Immacolata Lorè, Giovanna Emanuela Minniti, and Rosa Maria Staropoli

Mediterranea University, Via dell'Università, 25, 89124 Reggio Calabria, Italy
francesco.calabro@unirc.it

Abstract. This work illustrates the first results of an experimental activity conducted in a territory characterized by a strong peripherality, located in the southern part of Calabria.

The study starts from an examination of the role of Cultural Heritage and Tourism for the development of Inner Areas. Among the tools identified to promote the triggering of processes of touristic enhancement of Cultural Heritage, Destination Management Organizations are identified, whose characteristics are outlined, highlighting their function in terms of Strategic Planning.

After recalling the process in which this type of process is usually articulated and the fundamental role of Evaluation, the territory object of the case study is framed, especially in relation to the relevance of its Cultural Heritage.

The work concludes by illustrating the results of the first cognitive investigations conducted in the field through questionnaires administered to a group of tourist-cultural operators.

Keywords: Inner Areas · Cultural Tourism · Destination Management Organization · Strategic Planning · Economic Evaluation

1 Inner Areas, Cultural Heritage and Tourism

> *"Inner Areas are those that, failing to enhance the existing resources, are poorly responsive both to the impulses deriving from their integration into the national economy and to the solicitations expressed on them by interventions, especially those of an extraordinary nature"* [1].

It was 1996, when Edoardo Mollica gave this definition in the study "*Typology of the Framework Plan for Inner Areas in Calabria*", commissioned by the Calabria Region to the then PAU Department of the Mediterranea University of Reggio Calabria, a good 18 years before the Italian State equipped itself with the National Strategy for Inner Areas (SNAI), included in the National Reform Program (PNR) of 2014 and in the Partnership Agreements 2014–2020 and 2021–2027 [2, 3].

© The Author(s), under exclusive license to Springer Nature Switzerland AG 2026
O. Gervasi et al. (Eds.): ICCSA 2025 Workshops, LNCS 15889, pp. 283–300, 2026.
https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-031-97603-2_18

The poor reactivity of these areas to external stimuli recorded up to now has also been highlighted by other authors in more recent times, such as Bernard and Keim-Klärner, Kuhn and many others [4–6].

The definition given by the Department for Cohesion Policies and for the South – DPS, instead, defines Inner Areas as "*those areas characterized by a significant distance from the main service provision centers, in particular those relating to education, mobility and social and health services*".

A further interpretative key to these territories is offered by the Public Investment Evaluation Unit - UVAL, which considers the considerable unused or underused "territorial capital", consisting of environmental resources (water resources, agro-forestry-pastoral systems, etc.), cultural resources (archaeological assets, historical settlements, defensive and religious architecture, small museums, etc.), disused building capital, underused accommodation facilities, traditional knowledge, etc. [7]; UVAL itself underlines their national importance in terms of "economic development potential", that is, "*how consistent is the development potential that they express today as a whole and how important is their contribution to stabilizing the trajectory of national economic development.*" [7].

Whatever definition one wishes to consider, the Inner Areas still constitute a significant portion of Italy, they represent more than 60% of the national surface area, over half of the municipalities (53%) and approximately a quarter of the resident population (23%) [8].

In terms of underutilized territorial capital, cultural heritage stands out: in 2022, of the 4,416 structures open to the public, including museums, galleries, archaeological areas, monuments and public and private monumental complexes found in Italy, 1,740, equal to almost four out of 10 (39.4%), were located in the Municipalities of the Inner Areas. The heritage sites of the Inner Areas are mainly ethno-anthropological museums (19.2%), archaeological (17.6%), natural sciences or technological (17.0%) and thematic museums (14.9%); among the monumental complexes, castles and fortified buildings prevail (35.7%), as do churches and other religious buildings (33.2%) [9].

Such a substantial Cultural Heritage, however, struggles to express its full potential contribution to local development processes, especially from a tourism perspective: it is "*A widespread reality, where tourism still plays a modest role compared to the country's poles of attraction (sea and cities of art), and below the potential linked to the richness and variety of the cultural and environmental assets present and the availability of almost half of the Italian accommodation offer.*" [10].

As perfectly highlighted by the above-mentioned definition of Inner Areas given by Mollica, one of the elements that characterizes them is precisely their poor reactivity: for this reason, the mere provision of resources is not sufficient to trigger development processes: "*The project areas of the National Strategy for Inner Areas are characterized by extreme diversity and variety within them* […]. *In order for these distinctive features to transform into a desire to travel, stay and/or enjoy, an effort is needed to identify the real vocations of the territory, to define the best differentiation strategies on the market and to develop specific interventions and product ideas, with respect to which to also evaluate the possibility of forming local (and/or supra-local) alliances and implementing any system actions.*" [10].

2 Organization of the Tourist-Cultural Offer: Destination Management Organizations

The ICOMOS International Charter for Cultural Heritage Tourism "Reinforcing cultural heritage protection and community resilience through responsible and sustainable tourism management", adopted by the ICOMOS Annual General Assembly (Bangkok, Thailand) in November 2022, provides useful principles to guide Cultural Tourism policies towards sustainability [11].

In particular, Principle 5 "*Raise awareness and reinforce cultural heritage conservation*", pushes towards organizational forms of the tourist offer that involve all stakeholders.

In literature and in Italian legislation, numerous references can be found to different forms of organization of the tourist offer; in literature, in particular, two different approaches to the topic of the organization of the tourist offer can be found [12, 13]:

- One that looks first of all at the territory and its components: forms such as Local Tourist Systems, introduced by Law 29 March 2001 n. 135 "Reform of the national tourism legislation", and the Tourist Districts, introduced by law 12 July 2011 n. 106 [14, 15];
- One that could be defined, instead, as demand-based, to which the DMO - Destination Management Organization tool can be traced back. This organizational form in Italy is not regulated at a national level, also in light of the attribution of Tourism to the Regions, as a "residual competence", while numerous Regions (among which, for example, Sicily, Tuscany, Veneto, Emilia Romagna and Campania) have legislated on the matter. Calabria has not yet issued any regulations on DMOs.

According to the UNWTO, the purpose of DMOs is: "*the coordinated management of all the elements that make up a destination (attractions, amenities, accessibility, human resources, image and price).* […] *Its role is to lead and coordinate activities under a coherent strategy or plan, serving the interests of all stakeholders*". [16].

2.1 DMO: Definition and Functions

According to the Department of Economic and Social Affairs Statistics Division of the United Nations: "*Destination (main destination of a trip): The main destination of a tourism trip is defined as the place visited that is central to the decision to take the trip. See also purpose of a tourism trip*" [17].

The answer becomes more complicated if the question becomes which territorial entity corresponds to a Destination. There is no univocal answer to this question, as there may be destinations corresponding to profoundly different territorial entities: cities, rural areas, regions or even entire nation states [18].

The legal forms that a DMO assumes can be equally differentiated: "*In some countries, destinations may be managed for tourism directly by the central or regional tourism authority, but the trend is towards decentralization and encouraging greater local involvement.* […] *Often there is a need to create a new organization, or to strengthen an existing one, to undertake some functions that the partner organizations are not able to handle effectively.*" [19].

About the functions performed by a DMO, instead, Carter and Nevill first propose a distinction between "core functions" (at two levels) and "enabling functions" [19]. The first ones include:

Level I:

- Strategic and operational planning
- Research & intelligence

Level II:

- Product and experience development
- Destination marketing and sales
- Visitor and destination services
- Events development
- Skills development

While the "enabling functions" include:

- Partner and stakeholder engagement
- Advocacy and corporate/ industry communication
- Fundraising and financial management
- Performance management
- Application of digital systems

In reality, even Research & intelligence can be considered enabling functions, therefore the true core function of Level I of DMOs is Strategic and Operational Planning.

3 Organization of the Tourist-Cultural Offer: The Strategic Planning

Strategic Planning, as is known, is a tool that was born in the military field and then adopted in the corporate field [20] to arrive, starting from the 80s, to the planning of cities and territories: in the latter case it is more correct to speak of Strategic Territorial Planning or Strategic Spatial Planning [21].

In the case of DMOs, given their nature and their purposes, we find ourselves in a hybrid situation, in which elements of Corporate Strategic Planning and Territorial Planning coexist, but the territorial dimension clearly prevails, since the ultimate goal is not the promotion of the development of the company-DMO but of the territory in which it operates. It is therefore to Strategic Territorial Planning that we will refer for the rest of the article, keeping in mind, however, the conditions of budgetary balance necessary to guarantee the sustainability of DMOs over time [22, 23].

Among the many definitions of Strategic Planning, the following is given by Albrechts: "[…] *strategic planning can be defined as a public sector-led process through which a vision, actions and means of implementation are formulated, shaping and framing what a place is and can become*". In other words, strategic planning [22]:

- Focuses attention on a limited number of key issues;
- Critically addresses the environment, assessing its strengths and weaknesses, as well as threats and opportunities;

- Evaluates external trends, forces and available resources;
- Identifies and groups the main interests (stakeholders), both public and private;
- Allows for broad (at various administrative levels) and diversified (public sector, private sector, civil society) involvement during the planning process;
- Develops a vision/perspective – realistic and long-term – and strategies, at different administrative levels, considering the power structure, uncertainties and different competing values;
- Designs structures for the preparation of plans and develops contents, images and decision-making frameworks to direct and manage territorial transformations;
- Builds new ideas and the processes that can bring them forward, generating ways to understand, to build consensus, to organize and mobilize opinion and to exert influence in different arenas;
- Focuses attention, both in the short and long term, on decisions, actions, results and implementation, incorporating monitoring, feedback and review procedures.

This last point, by emphasizing the characteristic of the Strategic Plan of being a goal-oriented process, also implicitly highlights the need for the entire process to be permeated by evaluation activities.

3.1 Strategic Planning and Demand for Evaluations

In light of the last consideration, the most generic Strategic Planning scheme, shown in Fig. 1, sees the process divided into 3 phases, connected to each other by the different types of evaluation required by the corresponding phase [24]:

- Phase 1: Cognitive
- Phase 2: Proposal
- Phase 3: Implementation

In the transition from the Cognitive Phase to the Proposal Phase, the Evaluation is necessary to understand the strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and threats (typical action of the SWOT Analysis), but also what are the points of view of the stakeholders and, more generally, of the Community: the result of this first evaluation activity is the vector of the objectives of the Plan, based on the Priority criterion.

The next step is the selection of the actions, based on the criteria of Effectiveness, Feasibility and Sustainability: through both monetary and non-monetary evaluations.

Once the Proposal Phase is concluded, it is possible to move on to the implementation of the Strategic Plan; during this phase, a constant monitoring action is carried out, which provides the information necessary for the ongoing evaluation; the outcome of this evaluation activity allows any corrections to be made to the Plan.

At the end of the planning cycle, it is necessary to draw up a balance of the path, through the ex post evaluation: the results thus obtained will allow the start of a new programming cycle, which will be able to capitalize on the experience conducted previously.

The entire process is accompanied by two types of transversal activities: research and development activities and community involvement, starting with stakeholders.

In the specific case of Strategic Planning applied to DMOs, the Knowledge Phase includes:

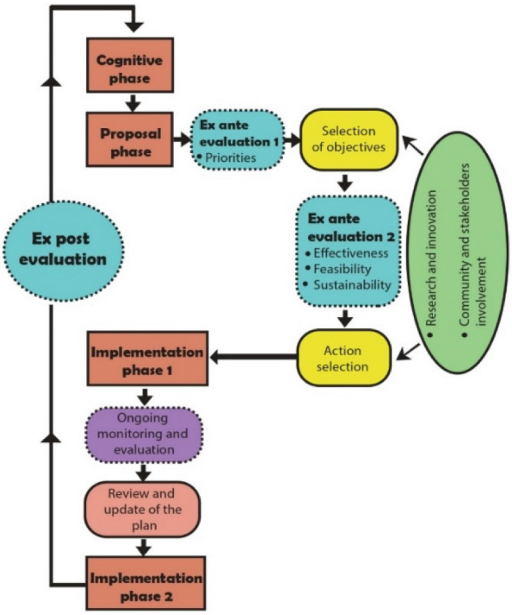

Fig. 1. Strategic plan scheme

- Stakeholder Analysis
- Reconnaissance of Attractors
- Reconnaissance of existing services
- Reconnaissance of the already expressed planning
- Market research
- Benchmark

3.2 Strategic Planning and Demand for Evaluations

In this phase, apart from the estimate of the costs necessary for the implementation of the actions, it may be useful in some cases to also verify the economic feasibility/sustainability in the management phase of the planned interventions, through the use of the Discounted Cash Flow Analysis - DCFA or the Cash Flow Analysis – CFA [25–27].

Similarly, the set of Key Performance Indicators (KPI) will be built to measure the effectiveness of the planned interventions: in the ex-ante, planning phase, in terms of expected results; in the ex post phase, in terms of results achieved [28–30].

> *"Enterprises and institutions need to evaluate their activity in order to determine the extent to which their goals have been achieved. One possible way to carry out this evaluation is to measure performance, for which organizations rely on metrics known as Key Performance Indicators (KPI)."* [31].

> *"Indicators are considered as useful tools that allow tourism managers to diagnose the situation of the destination, and to identify and evaluate issues that require addressing to improve the level of sustainability of the tourist activities."* [32].

The United Nations World Tourism Organization - UNWTO identifies 42 key indicators, grouped into 13 thematic areas, to measure tourism performance from a sustainability perspective: Wellbeing of Host Communities (5 indicators); Sustaining Cultural Assets (1 indicator); Community Participation in Tourism (1 indicator); Tourist Satisfaction (2 indicators); Health and Safety (4 indicators); Capturing Economic Benefits from Tourism (7 indicators); Protection of Valuable Natural Assets (2 indicators); Managing Scarce Natural Resources (4 indicators); Limiting Impacts of Tourism Activity (5 indicators); Controlling Tourist Activities and Levels (2 indicators); Destination Planning and Control (4 indicators); Designing Products and Services (4 indicators); Sustainability of Tourism Operations and Services (1 indicator) [33].

4 Cultural Tourism in Italy and Calabria

With the profound transformation of production systems underway, which has affected almost all industrial sectors, tourism has become increasingly important in the Italian economic system. According to the study conducted in 2023 by OpenEconomics and Fondazione Tor Vergata for the Ministry of Tourism, given the direct impact produced by an annual expenditure on tourism consumption of 100 billion euros (in 2022), the overall impact on national GDP, also considering the indirect impacts (i.e. the increase in supply and demand in the activated supply chains) and induced impacts (re-injection of income from work received by families in the form of consumption and re-investment of tax revenues in the form of public spending) is equal to 255 billion euros, equal to 13% of total GDP [34]. According to other studies [35], however, the added value activated by tourism spending is approximately 7% of GDP.

It should be noted that these data are affected by the so-called "COVID effect": in 2020, in fact, due to the pandemic, Italy recorded a 48.6% drop in tourism spending [35]. After the 2020 crisis, there was a progressive recovery in the sector, which, in 2023, recorded a full recovery, even exceeding the 2019 data, at least as far as tourist presences are concerned: with 133.6 million arrivals and 447.2 million presences recorded in accommodation facilities, the absolute peak recorded previously in 2019 was exceeded, when arrivals were 131.4 million and presences 436.7 [36].

As is known, Cultural Tourism is the prevalent type of tourism in Italy. According to ISTAT, 61.8% of national tourist flows are linked to the use of cultural attractions [37].

In order to identify the specific vocations of each territory, ISTAT has proceeded to classify Italian municipalities based on the geographical and/or anthropic characteristics [38]:

- **Municipalities with cultural, historical, artistic and landscape resources**
- **Municipalities with maritime facilities**
- **Municipalities with lake facilities**
- **Municipalities with mountain facilities**
- **Municipalities with thermal facilities**
- **Municipalities with two or more facilities**

of which: Maritime and cultural-landscape; Mountain and cultural-landscape; More than two facilities of which one cultural-landscape; Two or more facilities other than cultural-landscape.

– **No specific facilities**

From this classification it emerges that, of the 7926 Italian Municipalities, 1026 (12.95%) have vocations connected, in various ways, with cultural tourism, 1182 (14.91%) refer to other categories, 4014 (50.64%) do not belong to a specific category and 1704 (21.50%) cannot be classified as "Tourist Municipalities".

In Calabria, of the 404 Municipalities into which the regional territory is divided, 39 (9.65%) are characterized by cultural tourism flows, 68 (16.83%) by other types of tourism, 114 (28.22%) do not belong to a specific category and 183 (45.30%) are not considered tourist.

It is important to compare the regional data with the national one, as the percentage of non-tourist Municipalities in Calabria is more than double the national one, including almost half of the total number of Municipalities.

If the analysis of the tourist characterization of the Municipalities is limited only to the "tourist" ones, the proportions vary significantly, as can be seen from Table 1:

Table 1. Classification of Calabrian municipalities by type of tourism (Source: ISTAT)

	Municipalities with Cultural Tourism categories		Municipalities with other categories		Municipalities not belonging to specific categories		Total Tourist Municipalities
Italy	1026	16,49%	1182	19,00%	4014	64,51%	6222
Calabria	39	17,65%	68	30,77%	114	51,59%	221

As can be seen, in Calabria the data on cultural vocation is slightly higher than the national average, while the substantial difference concerns the other types of tourism which, based on empirical evidence, should be mainly traced back to seaside tourism.

5 The Case Study Territory: Inner Areas, Calabria, Locride

The Inner Areas are the element that most characterizes the territory of Calabria, as confirmed by the classification carried out by the DPS: out of 404 Municipalities present in Calabria, 326 (80.69%) are classified as Inner Areas, with varying degrees of peripherality [39].

Of the 97 Municipalities falling within the territory of the Metropolitan City of Reggio Calabria, 75 (77.32%) are classified as Inner Areas; in Locride, the area that is the subject of the case study illustrated in this contribution (highlighted with a black border in Figs. 2 and 3), the Municipalities included among the Inner Areas are 31 out of 42 (73.81%) [39, 40].

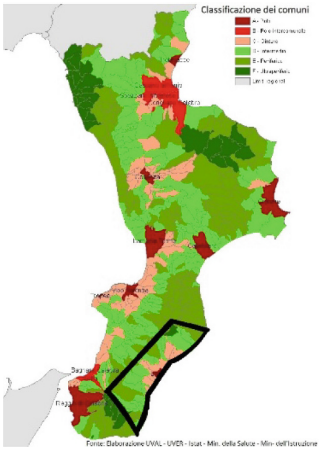

Fig. 2. Calabria Region – Territory classification 2014–2020 (Source: Elaboration of UVAL – UVER – ISTAT – Ministry of Health – Ministry of Education)

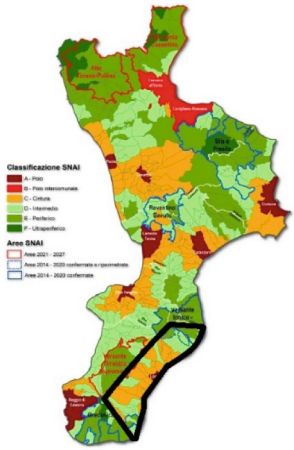

Fig. 3. Calabria Region – Territory classification 2021–2027

As regards cultural endowment, if we refer for example to the density of museums and similar structures in relation to the resident population, Calabria is slightly above the national average, with 2.8 institutions per 10,000 inhabitants compared to the Italian average of 2.7, as can be seen from Table 3 [9] (Fig. 4):

The case study that is the subject of this article concerns the eastern area of the Metropolitan City of Reggio Calabria: the area, called Locride, includes 42 municipalities and is bordered to the east by the Ionian Sea and to the west by the Aspromonte National Park (Fig. 5).

Regioni	Numero di istituzioni per 10.000 abitanti
Valle d'Aosta/Vallée d'Aoste	13,0
Piemonte	6,5
Friuli-Venezia Giulia	6,3
Liguria	5,5
Marche	5,2
Sardegna	5,1
Trento	4,8
Molise	4,4
Bolzano	3,5
Umbria	3,3
Lombardia	3,3
Toscana	3,2
Calabria	2,8
Veneto	2,7
Italia	**2,7**
Emilia-Romagna	2,3
Campania	2,1
Abruzzo	2,0
Basilicata	2,0
Lazio	1,9
Sicilia	1,2
Puglia	0,7

Fig. 4. Density of museums and similar institutions in the Municipalities of the Inner Areas in relation to the population. Year 2022, values per 10 thousand inhabitants. (Source: ISTAT)

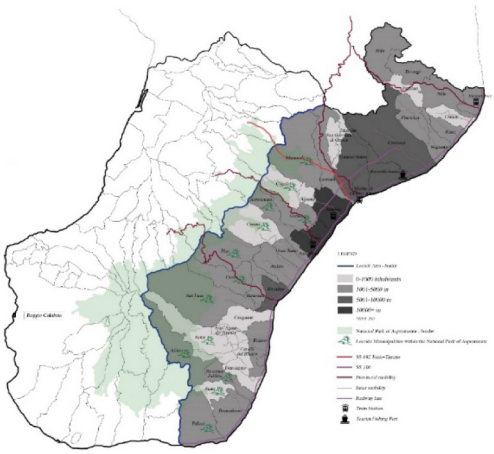

Fig. 5. The territory under study (Source: authors' elaboration)

6 The Initial Process for the Construction of a DMO for Locride

The Municipalities of Locride have been working for a long time to promote the tourism development of the territory. Numerous experiences have been conducted in the past, both individually and in aggregate form, starting from the Integrated Local Development Projects, promoted in 2013 by the Calabria Region and also dedicated to Tourism, and from the Local Action Plans developed over time by the GAL of Locride, just to name a few.

The results, however, are currently unsatisfactory, Locride is struggling to trigger tourism development processes: it is from this condition that the hypothesis of a new

initiative is born that allows to overcome the difficulties encountered by the previous ones and manages to achieve the desired results.

With this spirit, four entities operating in the field of Tourism Services (Tourlallà), Digital Solutions for Companies (Evermind s.r.l. Benefit Company), Training (Farimpresa srl) and Research (Mediterranea University of Reggio Calabria - ECHE Lab Laboratory), have decided to start an experimental path aimed at the creation of a DMO of Locride.

6.1 The Cognitive Activities of the DMO

In February 2025, the four promoting entities started a preliminary cognitive phase, aimed at identifying:

- the enhancing resources, cultural and natural;
- the stakeholders;
- the existing activities and services (accommodation, transport and infrastructure, use of attractions, catering, typical products, complementary services, etc.);
- the planning already expressed by the territory;
- the existing tourist flows and potential demand;
- any benchmarks.

6.2 The Enhancing Resources, Cultural and Natural

This is an area with a cultural and natural heritage of great importance; in addition to the aforementioned National Park, among the cultural sites open to the public there are 14 Defensive Architectures, 10 Historic Palaces, 8 Historic Centers, 7 Archaeological Areas, 5 Places of Pilgrimage and 5 Rock Sites [41] (Fig. 6).

The Locride area also has a very rich intangible heritage, made up of rites, traditions, peasant and artisan knowledge, as well as highly appreciated food and wine products, among which it is worth mentioning the wines (IGT Mantonico Bianco, and DOC Rosso di Bivongi), the cheeses (caciocavallo di Ciminà) and much more, currently the subject of detailed cataloguing by the working group [42].

6.3 Stakeholder Analysis

Given the limited availability of information referring to levels of territorial aggregation lower than the Region, the start of the knowledge activities consisted of audits with sixteen private operators, which allowed us to have an initial picture, certainly not exhaustive, on the origin of the current tourists of Locride and on the main existing critical issues.

These interviews are part of the broader stakeholder analysis that will be conducted during the knowledge phase. Stakeholder analysis identify and analyze the more relevant actors of a strategic planning process. It involves understanding their interests, influence, and potential impact on the plan [43, 44].

The sixteen tour operators carry out very heterogeneous work activities. The most represented category is that of the managers of accommodation facilities (ten); of these,

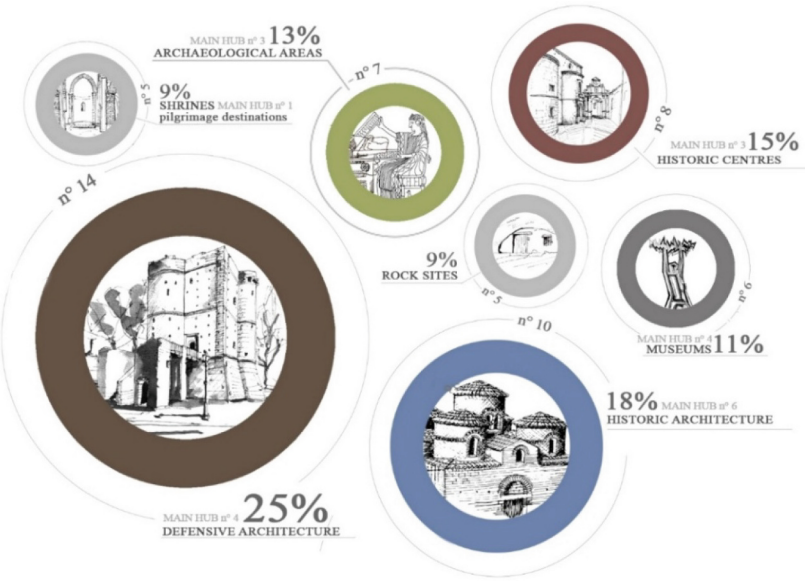

Fig. 6. The Cultural Heritage of the area under study (Source: authors' elaboration)

three are also hiking guides, two of whom are also organizers of events and shows. Two operators carry out activities related to the sea: one organizes boat trips, the other manages a buoy field and water sports. Other categories represented by an operator are: travel agent; manager of a civic museum; hiking guide; organizer of outdoor sports activities (climbing, paragliding, etc.).

From a methodological point of view, the interview was divided into two parts, the first aimed at identifying the origin of current tourists, the second aimed at knowing the main critical issues encountered by professionals. Both parts were structured with open answers, but as regards the origin, there were three questions:

– among your customers, what is the percentage ratio between Italian and foreign tourists?
– among Italian tourists, what is the region of origin?
– among foreign tourists, what is the country of origin?

The results of the interviews are shown in Tables 2, 3, 4 and 5.

Table 2. Origin of tourists of Locride (Source: field survey and processing by the authors)

Origin	%
Italians	40%
Foreigners	60%

Table 3. Regions of origin of tourists (Source: field survey and authors' processing)

Origin	%
Piedmont	15%
Lombardy	10%
Sicily	10%
Lazio	10%
Veneto	5%
Emilia-Romagna	5%
Tuscany	5%
Other Regions	40%

Table 4. Countries of origin of tourists (Source: field survey and authors' processing)

Origin	%
France	15%
U.K	15%
Germany	10%
U.S.A	10%
Switzerland	5%
Poland	5%
Other countries (Canada, Australia, Argentina, Scandinavia, Belgium, Netherlands, Luxembourg, Eastern countries, Austria, Greece, Spain, Portugal)	40%

From the interview with the operators it was also possible to obtain a first picture of the critical issues that hinder the tourist development of the territory. The questionnaire was open-ended but, despite their heterogeneity, the answers can be traced back to eight thematic areas:

The percentages reported for each area indicate the percentages of operators who have identified that area as a priority.

It is clear that the priority issue concerns transport, in terms of accessibility to the area but, above all, in terms of internal mobility, especially towards areas far from the coast.

The data that is in some ways the most surprising is the self-criticism that entrepreneurs make: the most frequent answers concern above all the difficulties in creating synergy, in dialoguing with operators from other sectors, such as food and wine producers, in operating by giving themselves medium-long term visions and horizons without privileging immediate results.

As regards the Communication Area, the observations concern above all the quality of some communication campaigns, their effectiveness in changing the stereotyped image

Table 5. Thematic areas that hinder the tourist development of Locride (Source: field survey and authors' elaboration)

A	Community	37,50%
B	Politics and Local Institutions	37,50%
C	Communication	62,50%
D	Transport	75,00%
E	Entrepreneurship	68,70%
F	Skills and Education	50,00%
G	Tourist Offer	31,20%
H	Complementary Services	18,70%

of Calabria, but also aspects such as the availability of information on institutional websites or the poor dissemination at local level of information on events and initiatives organized in the area.

Skills are also one of the most felt vulnerabilities: in particular with regard to linguistic skills, but in general there is a lack of professionalism on the part of many operators (both business owners and employees) and a certain propensity to improvise. The education system also does not help, by not providing students with almost any information regarding the huge cultural heritage, both tangible and intangible, that Locride is endowed with, thus not allowing the Community to acquire full awareness of the importance of the existing heritage.

The Communities themselves, for their part, are called into question especially with regard to the widespread mentality, oriented towards pessimism, welfare, lack of initiative and, above all, finding in emigration the answer to the problems of personal fulfillment.

In this context, Politics and Local Institutions could certainly not be missing, even if they are not in first place: the lack of effective planning, capable of truly responding to the needs of citizens, the incorrect use of the huge resources spent in recent decades, the lack of institutional support for businesses in terms of advanced services and, above all, administrative simplifications, represent obstacles that sometimes appear insurmountable [45].

The operators' responses also concerned the Tourist Offer Area: in this field, it is reported that the quality of services is often inadequate, which sometimes, in proportion, corresponds to excessive prices, the lack of innovation and originality of products and, above all, the lack of effective organizational forms, capable of conveying the territory's offer in a unitary manner.

Finally, a non-negligible share of responses also concerned complementary services: the lack of essential services in some places such as pharmacies, ATMs, etc.; the poor accessibility and usability of many cultural sites; the lack of attention to accessibility and usability by people with disabilities; the scarcity of complementary services such as, for example, equipment rental and, more generally, experiential activities; the lack of

attention to the quality of the environment, both in terms of cleanliness of public spaces and urban decorum [46].

6.4 Provisional Strategic Objectives

This Survey has therefore allowed us to define a provisional vector of strategic objectives, which will serve as a basis for comparison with other stakeholders and will guide subsequent knowledge-gathering activities:

Objective 1: build the "products" of the Locride Destination, thematic itineraries that consider the resources to be enhanced, existing accessibility and other available services;
Objective 2: enrich the offer of "complementary" services, such as events (musical, cultural, sporting, etc.) and experiences, with the involvement of companies operating in the area;
Objective 3: promote knowledge of the Locride Destination: develop innovative and effective communication and marketing tools, also through the use of digital technologies and social media;
Objective 4: improve the quality of services offered to tourists;
Objective 5: increase the skills of operators;
Objective 6: improve internal mobility in the area through innovative forms of transport;
Objective 7: increase community empowerment;
Objective 8: promote synergies between operators.

7 Conclusions

The cognitive activities for the establishment of the DMO of Locride have just begun. The results obtained from the responses of the interviewed operators constitute a starting point for the subsequent cognitive activities and will allow to start the comparison with the stakeholders and the involvement of the Community.

The outcome of this participatory process will allow to identify the real priority objectives of the Strategic Plan of the Locride Destination and, subsequently, to hypothesize the actions to be undertaken, to be subjected to evaluation of effectiveness, feasibility and sustainability.

In particular, the actions will concern:

- Product and experience development
- Destination marketing and sales
- Visitor and destination services
- Events development
- Skills development

The research activities will concern, in particular, the evaluation tools, starting from the identification of the set of Key Performances Indicators to be used for the purposes of the ex-ante and ex post evaluation of the actions of the Plan.

This aspect is particularly relevant in the strategic planning process of a tourist destination: it is the tool that, in addition to allowing us to understand the effectiveness

of the plan, allows us to prevent overtourism phenomena, aiming at the sustainable growth of the destination, without ever exceeding its carrying capacity.

Disclosure of Interests. The authors have no competing interests to declare that are relevant to the content of this article.

References

1. Mollica, E.: Le Aree Interne della Calabria. Rubbettino Editore, Soveria Mannelli (CZ), Italy (1996)
2. Agenzia per la coesione territoriale. Accordo di Partenariato 2014–2020. Strategia nazionale per le Aree interne: definizione, obiettivi, strumenti e *governance*. Documento tecnico collegato alla bozza di Accordo di Partenariato trasmessa alla CE il 9 dicembre 2013 (2014)
3. Dipartimento per le politiche di coesione e per il sud. Accordo di Partenariato Italia 2021–2027, pp. 84–85 (2022)
4. Bernard, J., Keim-Klärner, S.: Disadvantaged and disadvantaging regions: opportunity structures and social disadvantage in rural peripheries. Tijdschr. Econ. Soc. Geogr. **114**(5), 463–478 (2023)
5. Kühn, M.: Peripheralization: theoretical concepts explaining socio-spatial inequalities. Eur. Plan. Stud. **23**(2), 367–378 (2015)
6. Torriani, C., Barreca, A., Rebaudengo, M., Rolando, D.: Projects and funding in Italian inner areas: learning from the 2014–2020 programming of the SNAI national strategy. In: Gervasi, O., et al. (eds.) Computational Science and Its Applications – ICCSA 2023 Workshops. ICCSA 2023. LNCS, vol. 14106. Springer, Cham (2023). https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-031-37111-0_17
7. UVAL - Unità di valutazione degli investimenti pubblici. Strategia Nazionale per le Aree Interne: definizione, obiettivi, strumenti e governance. Materiali Uval, Numero 31 - Anno 2014, Roma, Italy (2014)
8. ISTAT. The geography of Inner Areas in 2020. Territories between potential and weaknesses. Statistiche Focus. Roma, Italy (2022)
9. ISTAT. Il Patrimonio Culturale nelle Aree Interne. Anno 2022. Statistiche Focus. Roma, Italy (2025)
10. MiBACT - Ministero dei beni e delle attività culturali e del turismo. Linee Guida per la Strategia Nazionale per le Aree Interne (2016). https://www.agenziacoesione.gov.it/wp-content/uploads/2020/07/Linee_guida_Mibact_v05122016.pdf
11. ICOMOS. International Charter for Cultural Heritage Tourism "Reinforcing cultural heritage protection and community resilience through responsible and sustainable tourism management" (2022). https://openarchive.icomos.org/id/eprint/2805/
12. Capone, F.: I sistemi locali turistici in Italia. Identificazione, misurazione ed analisi delle fonti di competitività. Firenze University Press (2005)
13. Franch, M.: Destination management: governare il turismo tra locale e globale. Giappichelli, Torino (2002)
14. Legge 29 marzo 2001, n. 135, Riforma della legislazione nazionale del turismo. (GU Serie Generale n.92 del 20-04-2001)
15. Legge 12 luglio 2011, n. 106, Conversione in legge, con modificazioni, del decreto-legge 13 maggio 2011, n. 70, concernente Semestre Europeo - Prime disposizioni urgenti per l'economia. (GU n.160 del 12-07-2011)
16. World Tourism Organization. A Practical Guide to Tourism Destination Management, UNWTO, Madrid (2007). https://doi.org/10.18111/9789284412433, https://www.e-unwto.org/doi/book/10.18111/9789284412433

17. United Nations, Department of Economic and Social Affairs Statistics Division. International Recommendations for Tourism Statistics 2008. Studies in Methods Series M No. 83/Rev.1. New York, USA (2010). https://unstats.un.org/unsd/publication/Seriesm/SeriesM_83rev1e.pdf#page=24
18. Viglianisi, A., Calabrò, F.: The management models of a tourist destination in Italy. In: Calabrò, F., Della Spina, L., Piñeira Mantiñán, M.J. (eds.) New Metropolitan Perspectives. NMP 2022. LNNS, vol. 482, pp. 2325–2334, 2022. Springer, Cham (2023). https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-031-06825-6_223
19. Carter, R., Nevill, H.: Destination management handbook. a guide to the planning and implementation of destination management. World Bank Group, Washington DC, USA (2022)
20. Martinelli, F.: La pianificazione strategica in Italia e in Europa. FrancoAngeli, Milano, Italy (2005)
21. Albrechts, L.: Strategic (Spatial) planning reexamined. Environ. Plann. B. Plann. Des. **31**(5), 743–758 (2004). https://doi.org/10.1068/b3065
22. Albrechts, L.: Alcune riflessioni sul "cosa" e sul "come" della pianificazione strategica. In: Martinelli, F. (ed.) La pianificazione strategica in Italia e in Europa. FrancoAngeli, Milano, Italy (2005)
23. Spatari, G., Lorè, I., Viglianisi, A., Calabrò, F.: Economic feasibility of an integrated program for the enhancement of the byzantine heritage in the aspromonte national park. the case of staiti. In: Calabrò, F., Della Spina, L., Piñeira Mantiñán, M.J. (eds.) New Metropolitan Perspectives. NMP 2022. LNNS, vol. 482, pp. 313–323. Springer, Cham (2022). https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-031-06825-6_30
24. Calabrò, F., Mafrici, F., Meduri, T.: The valuation of unused public buildings in support of policies for the inner areas. The application of SostEc model in a case study in Condofuri (Reggio Calabria, Italy). In: Bevilacqua C., Calabrò F., Della Spina L. (eds.) New Metropolitan Perspectives. Smart Innovation, Systems and Technologies, vol. 178, pp. 566–579; Springer (2021). https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-030-48279-4_54; Scopus ID: 2-s2.0–85091316344
25. Nesticò, A., Maselli, G., Ghisellini, P., Ulgiati, S.: A dual probabilistic discounting approach to assess economic and environmental impacts. Environ. Resource Econ. **85**(1), 239–265 (2023). https://doi.org/10.1007/s10640-023-00766-6
26. Nesticò, A., Galante, M.: An estimate model for the equalisation of real estate tax: a case study. Int. J. Bus. Intell. Data Min. **10**(1), 19–32 (2015). https://doi.org/10.1504/IJBIDM.2015.069038
27. Sica, F., Tajani, F., Cerullo, G.: An evaluation model for an optimal decarbonisation process in the built environment. Built Environ. Project Asset Manage. **15**(1), 51–66 (2025). https://doi.org/10.1108/BEPAM-05-2024-0126
28. Rasoolimanesh, S.M., Ramakrishna, S., Hall, C.M., Esfandiar, K., Seyfi, S.: A systematic scoping review of sustainable tourism indicators in relation to the sustainable development goals. J. Sustain. Tour. **31**(7), 1497–1517 (2020). https://doi.org/10.1080/09669582.2020.1775621
29. Stankulova, A., Barreca, A., Rebaudengo, M., Rolando, D.: The quantitative indicator-based evaluation for rural development. Int. Regio. Sci. Rev. 01600176241268028 (2024)
30. Aulisio, A., Barbero, S., Barreca, A., Malavasi, G., Rolando, D.: From data collection to a cross-cutting analysis visualisation: territorial complexity overview to foster responsible tourism in rural areas. In: Gervasi, O., Murgante, B., Garau, C., Taniar, D., C. Rocha, A.M.A., Faginas Lago, M.N. (eds.) Computational Science and Its Applications – ICCSA 2024 Workshops. ICCSA 2024. LNCS, vol. 14819. Springer, Cham (2024). https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-031-65282-0_3
31. Domínguez, E., Pérez, B., Rubio, A.L., Zapata, M.A.: A taxonomy for key performance indicators management. Comput. Stand. Interfaces **64**(2019), 24–40 (2019). https://doi.org/10.1016/j.csi.2018.12.001

32. Lozano-Oyola, M., Blancas, F.J., González, M., Caballero, R.: Sustainable tourism indicators as planning tools in cultural destinations. Ecol. Ind. **18**(2012), 659–675 (2012). https://doi.org/10.1016/j.ecolind.2012.01.014
33. World Tourism Organization. Indicators of Sustainable Development for Tourism Destinations A Guidebook (English version), UNWTO, Madrid (2004). https://doi.org/10.18111/9789284407262
34. OpenEconomics, Fondazione Tor Vergata. Il turismo in Italia. Impatto della spesa turistica sull'economia (2023). https://www.openeconomics.eu/2023/12/04/turismo-in-italia-analisi-di-impatto-economico/
35. Marasco, A., Maggiore, G., Morvillo, A., Becheri, E.: Rapporto sul Turismo italiano - XXV edizione, 2020–2022. CNR Edizioni, Roma, Italy (2022)
36. ISTAT. I flussi turistici nel 2023. Statistiche today (2024). https://www.istat.it/wp-content/uploads/2024/11/Statistica-Today_Turismo-2023_rev.pdf
37. ISTAT. Il Turismo Culturale in Italia. Analisi territoriale integrata dei dati. Letture Statistiche - Territori. Roma, Italy (2023)
38. ISTAT. Classificazione dei Comuni in base alla densità turistica come indicato dalla Legge 17 luglio 2020, n. 77, art. 182 (2022). https://www.istat.it/it/files/2020/09/classificazione-turistica-comuni.Istat_.pdf
39. Agenzia per la Coesione Territoriale. Dossier_DPS_Calabria (2015). https://www.agenziacoesione.gov.it/wp-content/uploads/2020/07/Dossier_DPS_Calabria.pdf
40. Formez PA & Dipartimento per le politiche di coesione e per il sud – DPS. SNAI Dossier Regione Calabria (2022). https://politichecoesione.governo.it/media/3166/snai-dossier-regionale-calabria.pdf
41. Calabrò, F., Cassalia, G., Lorè, I.: A project of enhancement and integrated management: the cultural heritage agency of locride. In: Calabrò, F., Della Spina, L., Piñeira Mantiñán, M.J. (eds.) New Metropolitan Perspectives. NMP 2022. LNNS, vol. 482, pp. 278–288. Springer, Cham (2022). https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-031-06825-6_27
42. Calabrò, F., Campolo, D., Cassalia, G.: a cultural route on the trail of greek monasticism in calabria. In: Calabrò F., Della Spina L., Bevilacqua C. (eds.), New Metropolitan Perspectives. Smart Innovation, Systems and Technologies, vol. 101, pp. 475–483, Springer, ISBN: 978-3-319-92098-6, ISSN: 2190-3018 (2019). https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-319-92102-0_50
43. Malavasi, G., Barreca, A., Rebaudengo, M., Rolando, D.: A stakeholder analysis to support resilient strategies in the Alta Valsesia inner area. n: Gervasi, O., et al. (eds.) Computational Science and Its Applications – ICCSA 2023 Workshops. ICCSA 2023. LNCS, vol. 14106. Springer, Cham (2023). https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-031-37111-0_19
44. Tajani, F., Manganelli, B., Cerullo, G., Morano, P., Morente, M.A.: The student housing as a catalyst for virtuous processes of "win-win" revitalization of property assets in disuse. Lecture Notes in Computer Science (including subseries Lecture Notes in Artificial Intelligence and Lecture Notes in Bioinformatics), 14109 LNCS, pp. 387–400 (2023). https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-031-37120-2_25
45. Forte, F., Antoniucci, V., De Paola, P.: Immigration and the housing market: the case of castel volturno, in campania region Italy. Sustainability **10**, 343 (2018). https://doi.org/10.3390/su10020343
46. Del Giudice, V., Massimo, D.E., De Paola, P., Del Giudice, F.P., Musolino, M.: Green buildings for post carbon city: determining market premium using spline smoothing semiparametric method. In: Bevilacqua, C., Calabrò, F., Della Spina, L. (eds.) New Metropolitan Perspectives. NMP 2020. Smart Innovation, Systems and Technologies, vol. 178. Springer, Cham (2021). https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-030-48279-4_114