

The role of branded “Made in Italy” Museums in revitalizing tourism: a quali-quantitative research

Marco Francesco Mazzù¹ Irene Della Sala² Matteo De Angelis³

Keywords: Made in Italy, Tourism, Fashion, Museum, Willingness to visit, Emotional Well-Being.

1. Introduction

Throughout the years of the pandemic, the Italian tourism experienced a significant drop (-56.1%) in the number of foreign tourists (ISTAT, 2022). The typical rebound observed in the sector after periods of external crisis has been limited by the recent Russia-Ukraine conflict, with the direct consequence of a loss of >300,000 Ukrainian and Russian tourists (ISTAT, 2022), and the indirect effect on the decrease in individuals' willingness to travel (-52,3%) at EU level in (Banca d'Italia, 2021). Among the typical recovery strategies in such contexts, researcher observed investments in infrastructures (Mandić *et al.*, 2018), in repositioning the destination (Scott *et al.*, 2018) and in valorizing specific micro- sites within each destination (Botiş *et al.*, 2017). In a situation where different countries are competing on a shrank EU tourism market (-26%) over 2019 (UNWTO, 2022), patterns of distinctiveness should be explored by Italian destinations to increase tourists' engagement and attractiveness. While Italy is recognized for its unique cultural offering and for *Made in Italy*, little attention has been dedicated to investigating features at the intersection between “cultural” and “shopping” tourism, two of the most relevant sources of tourism attraction in Italy. The aim of this research is then to investigate whether *high-end fashion Made in Italy museums* (HEFM) might improve the attitude toward different Italian destinations and, consequently, the potential absolute flow of tourists. The structured abstract highlights the direction of the research and propose the first preliminary findings, as basis for the development of the following part of the research.

2. Approach, Methods, and Data

In order to provide actionable insights on such relevant topic for the Italian tourism and fashion industry, we structured our research design in two phases: (a) an exploratory qualitative analysis to identify main categories and dominant frames, and (b) a quantitative analysis that will support the development of a specific model for HEFM, to understand how the presence of a Made in Italy Museum in a specific city might affect relevant dependent variables as time-to-stay, willingness-to-pay, as well as emotional well-being, as detailed below. We selected Prada as reference case, as one of the most known brands owning a museum.

2.1. Qualitative analysis

We first conducted a stimuli validation test on attitudes toward Fashion and Luxury products and the perceived authenticity of the presence of a Made in Italy museum in different specific cities (Florence, Lecce, Agrigento, Matera, Venice, Bologna, Genoa), other than the one where the museum is present (Milan). The aim is to figure out which Italian cities have the highest fit with the heritage and tradition of the Prada brand, where to set a branded Museum which can have a positive impact both on local tourism, on brand appreciation and on consumer attitudes.

Stimuli validation (completed)

We conducted an online survey (86 participants; Mage = 28.58, SD = 9.60), recruited through the Prolific platform in exchange for a nominal payment. We first provided the participants with some pictures and information about the museum. Next, we asked through a 7-point Likert scale to rate their attitudes and how they perceive the fit of the Italian city in relation to heritage of the Made in Italy brand. Results showed the presence of 2 main groups: consumers with low (vs. high) interest and involvement in fashion, luxury, and art activities. Both groups correctly recognized Milan as the city that best is associated with the Prada brand (thus validating our stimuli) and identified different alternative cities depending on which group they belong to.

Main Study 1 – Qualitative Research (Data collected)

We conducted interpretive qualitative research to understand how high-end fashion branded museums affect the choice to visit a city, also in terms of length of stay, willingness to travel and visit. Specifically, we intend to unveil the thoughts, emotions, motivations and trends that influence travel decisions, linked to the presence of the Prada Museum. Accordingly, our main goals are:

- Exploring individuals' expectations on their experience with high-end fashion museums
- Observing reasons for customers' willingness to travel in relation to the visit of a museum.

¹ Professor of Practice di Marketing, Luiss Business School, SECS-P/08. e-mail: mmazzu@luiss.it

² Teaching and Research Assistant, Luiss University, SECS-P/08. e-mail: idellasala@luiss.it

³ Full Professor di Marketing, Luiss University, SECS-P/08. e-mail: mdeangelis@luiss.it

- Finding a potential relation between attitudes, personality traits and willingness to visit
- Understanding how much a brand's heritage matters in tourists' choice of museum.
- Observing how travel decisions can be influenced by culture, WOM, and personality.

We administered a survey, delivered via Prolific, with 10 open-ended structured questions to 88 European customers (Mage = 31.58, SD = 7.14). Data analyses (*in progress*) are conducted through coding analysis (Strauss and Corbin model paradigm, 1990). Accordingly, we read through each interview transcript, coded it for units of meaning and assigned each unit an open code (using the exact words of the participants). In the next step, we bring together the units of meaning or codes relating to the same content into categories and dominant frames. Hence, the process will be structured in a) Subcategories b) Categories c) Dominant Frame. Ultimately, our results aim to demonstrate a positive and direct relationship between the presence of a high-end fashion museum and the willingness to visit the place where it is located. We suggest that this relationship is stronger when it comes to high attitudes towards fashion and luxury products and specific personality traits. Moreover, outcomes from this qualitative study will be used as input for our further quantitative research.

2.2. Quantitative analysis

Based on our qualitative results, we will conduct a series of experiments. After conducting a manipulation check to observe the potential effects of the two levels of our manipulation (HEFM/no HEFM), the first study will investigate the impact of the presence of the HEFM on perceived destinations' attractiveness and observes the serial mediation effects of location/brand fit and attitudes toward the brand and toward museums on the variable. Study 2 will explore specific personality traits as moderators for our serial mediation model.

Formally, we will explore whether:

H1: the presence of High-end Fashion Made in Italy museums has a direct effect on the perceived destinations' attractiveness (measured in terms of Willingness-To-Visit the location, Expected Length of Stay, Positive Word-of-Mouth)

H2: the perceived fit between brand and museums' location image, the attitude toward the brand and the attitude toward museums mediate the relationship between the presence of high-end fashion made in Italy museums and their destination attractiveness.

H3: specific personality traits (as need for uniqueness, self-expression, narcissism) moderate the overall effect.

We project that the presence of a High-End Fashion museum (HEFM) directly affects the Willingness-To-Visit the location, Expected Length of Stay, and WOM (Study 1), and that the effect is stronger when the museum is a) located in a place with high fit with the origin of the Brand and b) the attitude toward high-end Fashion products and toward the location is higher (Study 2). Finally, we predict that the effect is also stronger for customers with higher need for uniqueness (Study 3). This research then contributes to the extant literature by exploring the intersection of on cultural and shopping tourism through high-end Fashion *Made in Italy* museums. The outcomes of our research could have a relevant managerial implication in determining how cities emphasize high-end Fashion museums and how they co-invest with private companies.

Key References

- Banca d'Italia, (2021, September 28). Il settore turistico e la Pandemia Di Covid-19. Banca d'Italia.
- Botiř, S. (2017). Valorizing heritage and cultural identity from Land Of Barsa through cultural tourism. *Journal of Environmental Management and Tourism (JEMT)*, 8(06 (22)), 1216-1221.
- Chen, H., & Rahman, I. (2018). Cultural tourism: An analysis of engagement, cultural contact, memorable tourism experience and destination loyalty. *Tourism management perspectives*, 26, 153-163.
- García-Almeida, D. J. (2019). Knowledge transfer processes in the authenticity of the intangible cultural heritage in tourism destination competitiveness. *Journal of Heritage Tourism*, 14(5-6), 409-421.
- Istat. (2022). Il turismo nei primi nove mesi del 2022, 23 Dicembre 2022
- Joseph Sirgy, M. (2019). Promoting quality-of-life and well-being research in hospitality and tourism. *Journal of Travel & Tourism Marketing*, 36(1), 1-13.
- Knobloch, U., Robertson, K., & Aitken, R. (2017). Experience, emotion, and eudaimonia: A consideration of tourist experiences and well-being. *Journal of Travel Research*, 56(5), 651-662.
- Mandić, A., Mrnjavac, Ž., & Kordić, L. (2018). Tourism infrastructure, recreational facilities and tourism development. *Tourism and hospitality management*, 24(1), 41-62.
- Scott, N., Laws, E., & Prideaux, B. (2008). Tourism crises and marketing recovery strategies. *Journal of Travel & Tourism Marketing*, 23(2-4), 1-13.
- Shen, Y. S., Jo, W., & Joppe, M. (2022). Role of country image, subjective knowledge, and destination trust on travel attitude and intention during a pandemic. *Journal of Hospitality and Tourism Management*, 52, 275-284.
- World Tourism Organization (2022), World Tourism Barometer and Statistical Annex, November 2022