A Non-Standard Methodology
to Measure Tourist Satisfaction (*)

Una metodologia non standard
per la misurazione della tourist satisfaction

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1. Introduction

The modern discipline of customer care is paying more and more attention on the centrality of customers in the modern business organization. It is even more true if we consider the tourist industry where the market globalization and the competition of the emerging Countries is getting more and more hard.

Nowadays it is unimaginable to plan a new kind of touristic service/product not considering the needs of the customers, their homeland and the satisfaction level of their travel.

Acquiring just one more tourist is similar to throw a stone into a pond, which only makes positive shockwaves. That means added value and occupation for business. This effect becomes stronger and stronger if we consider a happy tourist, satisfied of his destination and who wants to come back to the same place for a longer period. It spars off a winning marketing mechanism, that is the so called 'word of mouth'.

Several researches, based on some classical models well known in literature, have studied the matter of the customer satisfaction application. They measure the customer satisfaction computing the differential among the expectations and the perceptions (Zeithaml et al, 1990, Parasuraman et al., 1994) or quantifying directly the perceptions (Lee et al. 2000), in order to obtain a customer satisfaction index linked to the tourist destination.

In this work we propose a methodology to measure the tourist satisfaction (TS) based on the employment of a strategy of non-parametric models, whose aim is to individualize a set of optimal weights for the construction of a synthetic indicator of customer satisfaction. The knowledge of the role played by the latent dimensions of the satisfaction allows to support the management in the allocation of resources.

2. The methodology

The Stump Two-Stage via Discriminant Analysis methodology, described in this work, is based on an extension of the TS-DIS method proposed by Mola and Siciliano in 2002. The aim of this method is to identify the relationships between the typical dimensions of a tourist service, throughout the quantification of a set of optimal weights used to build up a global satisfaction index.

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In other words, starting from the data obtained through a direct survey of customer satisfaction, the methodology makes use of a strategy of analysis which combines a non-parametric technique (two-stage segmentation trees) and a factorial method (linear discriminant function) to measure the importance of each dimension and each attribute, in order to better explain the difference between clusters of satisfied and unsatisfied tourists. In a previous work, this methodology has been applied to measure the customer satisfaction of local public transport users, showing very interesting results, in terms of description and interpretation of the different characteristics which influence the global satisfaction levels (Aria et al. 2008).

3. The application: tourist satisfaction survey in the area of Naples

This methodology is shown by a TS survey carried out in the context of the Province of Naples. In the period May-June 2007, 3123 tourists, visiting the area of interest, have been interviewed. The survey had a double task. The former represents the description of the ‘tourist’ who visits Naples and its province, the motivations which led him to choose this destination, the ways he organizes his travel, the attractions he decides to visit, etc. The latter intends to measure the satisfaction level perceived by the tourist towards the offered services, describing the motivations, the determining characteristics and above all the criteria of intervention. These three last aspects explained in terms of actions to improve the efficiency and efficacy of the tourist product ‘Naples’.

The obtained results have allowed us to identify the discriminant levers of satisfaction, which, in other words are the critical points of the tourist offer, where it is necessary to invest in order to increase the level of the satisfaction perceived by the tourists.

References