

Advances in Applied Economics: Coordination in Tourism Destinations

The call

The Centre for Advanced Studies in Tourism at the University of Bologna (Italy), Rimini Campus, is looking for candidates for a one-year post-Doc position.

Applicants should hold a recent PhD in Management, Economics or Statistics (or related fields) or be close to its completion. The ideal candidate should be interested or have some research experience in applied economics, specifically related to the economics of the tourism sector. Good knowledge of Academic English (written and spoken) is necessary.

The candidate will be working on a research project aimed at engineering an integrated business intelligence system for tourism destinations. This will bring together and analyze several types of data stemming from different online platforms (e.g., booking search engines; rating platforms; social media) and offline (e.g., mobile data traffic; hotel management software). Such an architecture at the destination level will allow the research team to investigate cutting-edge research questions related to intra-destination coordination among tourism stakeholders, with implications for regional economics, tourism economics, industrial organization, revenue management, and behavioral economics.

The successful candidate will be working with the team of researchers at the Centre for Advanced Studies in Tourism (CAST) and will participate in the everyday activities of the Centre and the other departments involved in the project (Department of Statistics, Department of Economics). The position will start approximately on March 1, 2025. The gross salary will be € 25,000 per year (including pension contributions, but tax free: the net salary will approximately be € 19,500 per year).

Interested candidates should apply through the University of Bologna website (<https://concorsi.unibo.it/>) before the deadline of December 15, 2024. Interested candidates are invited to contact the project supervisor (Prof. Paolo Figini –paolo.figini@unibo.it) and co-supervisor (Prof. Laura Vici –laura.vici@unibo.it) if they have further inquiries.

The research project

Tourism is a complex activity, requiring coordination between several economic industries (transport, accommodation, travel agencies, cultural and leisure services, etc.) and a strong interaction between the public and the private sectors. Modern destination management must rely on multi-dimensional, multi-source, and real-time information, pillars of a system of business intelligence based on Big Data.

Big Data are firmly tied with tourism business. This sector has been a pioneer of e-commerce (in the 2000s) and of user-generated contents (in the 2010s). In the last years, the availability of massive chunks of data from several sources (e.g., booking systems and online rating platforms) has been opening new avenues that will change again the industry business. At the same time, the public sector has been investing in the identification of strategies to integrate Big Data with official statistics. Big Data are also key to applied economics, statistics and management. Among the most flourishing research topics in applied economics and tourism studies we recall the investigation of dynamic pricing strategies, the evaluation of quality service and the identification of fake reviews stemming from online platforms, the perception of the destination image through the content analysis of pictures posted on Instagram. The massive amount of available data, the likely evolution of tourism, (more integrated than ever with the digital economy) and the advancement of statistical and data mining techniques, will make Big Data play an even more central role in future research.

This research project will contribute to taking a further step in this direction, by specifically exploring how data published and shared by private stakeholders and public local institutions drive the type and extent of local coordination. The candidates can browse the recent publications of Paolo Figini and Laura Vici to learn more about the topics, approaches, and methodologies that are likely to be used in the research project.

The research plan

The project will unfold in several phases, each with a specific goal:

Phase 1 (months 1-3): Literature review and mapping of the state of the art on the issue of coordination among destination stakeholders and on the use of Big Data in this context.

Phase 2 (months 4-6): Development of the theoretical framework that will guide the empirical analysis.

Phase 3 (months 7-9): Collection and organization of the data.

Phase 4 (months 10-12): Empirical analysis and completion of the research.

Although the different phases have been sorted in chronologic order, a partial overlapping is possible. Ideally, the researcher will work on two publications, jointly co-authored by the other members of the research team.