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A case of place branding: from opportunity to problem for tourism

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Abstract

The subject of the report is the development of the Cinque Terre (meaning “Five Lands”) area, from rural and marginal area to fragile environmental heritage, tourist destination and, lastly, territorial brand recognized worldwide. This development, which is closely linked to tourism, has strongly accelerated over the last few decades, to such an extent that an opportunity could turn into a problem if the phenomenon of overtourism isn’t tackled through new management models. The first part of the speech will focus on the geographical and anthropic factors to better capture the Cinque Terre area, as well as to understand the geographical location and the distinctive elements of this territorial heritage, which in 1997 was recognized by UNESCO as a World Heritage Site and in 1999 as Italian National Park. Afterwards, the highlight will be on the tourist development within the area, from the first settlements and the planning of the network of tourism operators (the Consorzio, meaning the “Association”), to the recent exponential growth, which has shaped this area and the entire region from a social point of view. Data related to the flow of tourists and visitors, and the markets affected by this flow will be discussed. Furthermore, attention will be drawn to the great impact on the economy and on the employment situation within the area and the surrounding region, thanks to which the Cinque Terre area stands out as a tourist destination and as an international brand. Lastly, the focus will be on the current situation in the Cinque Terre area, particularly on the overcrowding and on the critical issues that arose because of the place marketing and place branding strategies pursued, and the aim will be to understand which remedial measure can be adopted in order to restore the sustainable use of the territorial assets and to protect the brand.