

International Journal of Science and Research Archive

eISSN: 2582-8185 Cross Ref DOI: 10.30574/ijsra Journal homepage: https://ijsra.net/



(RESEARCH ARTICLE)



Impact of the television series 'police inspector Montalbano' on tourism and cultural entrepreneurship in Sicily

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International Journal of Science and Research Archive, 2025, 15(02), 178-186

Publication history: Received on 14 March 2025; revised on 03 May 2025; accepted on 05 May 2025

Article DOI: https://doi.org/10.30574/ijsra.2025.15.2.1257

Abstract

This paper examines the impact of the television series "Police Inspector Montalbano" on the tourism development of the imaginary city of Vigata, which is based on real locations in southeastern Sicily. Through the series, it highlighted the authenticity, culture and natural beauty of Sicily, attracting a large number of visitors and contributing to the development of the local economy and cultural entrepreneurship paper analyses the link between cultural production and tourism development, focusing on how the television portrayal of Vigata led to an increase in tourist flows. The contribution to local development and the challenges arising from this projection, such as the need for sustainable tourism and the protection of the authenticity of the place, will be examined. The "Montalbano phenomenon" is highlighted as an example of how film projection can act as a catalyst in tourism and economic development. The paper seeks to answer the research questions What is the role of the series in promoting Sicily as a tourist destination? How has it affected Sicily's cultural entrepreneurship?

Keywords: TV Series; Inspector Montalbano; Tourism; Cultural Entrepreneurship; Sicily

1. Introduction

Literary and, by extension, film tourism, as soft forms of tourism development, offer a model for sustainable exploitation of cultural heritage, linking literary works and film productions to geographical locations (Fawcett & Cormack, 2001; Femenia-Serra et al., 2019). Tourists seek to experience the "imaginary" through visiting places associated with authors or fictional heroes, thus enhancing local identity and economic activity (Manola et al, 2022; Manola et all.,2022) The case of Sicily and the "Strada degli Scrittori" initiative, which links the life and work routes of writers such as Camilleri, Pirandello and Sciascia, eloquently highlights the role of literature in tourism development. Andrea Camilleri(2002), in particular, through the character of Inspector Montalbano, contributed decisively to the promotion of Sicily internationally, while the television adaptation of his works attracted thousands of visitors (Barilaro, 2004; Manola,& Kostaki, 2024)

Film tourism, in a similar way, can act as a driver of sustainable development, provided there is strategic planning. Illustrative examples are the Italian Matera with the film "Christ stopped in Empoli" Spinalonga with the series "The Island" and Dubrovnik with the popular series "Game of Thrones", which have generated strong tourism flows (Manola, 2019; Croy, 2010). However, the absence of adequate infrastructure and environmental planning may lead to severe impacts, as illustrated by the case of Maya Bay in Thailand after the movie The Beach (Pillai et al., 2018; Manola, & Tsatambassoglou, 2021; Manola et all., 2020; Manola & Gioka, 2021

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2. Literary tourism and cultural entrepreneurship

When literary tourism is transferred to the small or big screen, it is transformed into film tourism - a phenomenon that links film and television productions to tourism development and has emerged in recent years as a field of intense academic and practical importance. In this context, cultural productions, such as films and series, play a key role in the promotion and promotion of tourist destinations, either by depicting iconic locations or by highlighting the cultural characteristics of the regions in which the plot takes place. These productions not only showcase natural sites, but also actively contribute to the creation of an authentic tourist identity.

A prime example of film tourism is the television series Inspector Montalbano, which has attracted thousands of visitors to south-eastern Sicily. The series, inspired by Andrea Camilleri's novels, highlights the fictional town of Vigata, which is based on real locations such as Ragusa, Sicily and Montica. Through narrative and visual images, Sicily is presented as a place with a strong cultural identity, natural beauty and authentic traditions.

In addition to showcasing the natural sites, the series incorporates elements of local everyday life - such as Sicilian gastronomy, social relations and distinctive architecture - offering a holistic view of the region. This multidimensional representation has boosted the flow of tourists to Sicily, as many viewers wish to experience the atmosphere of the series in person, while contributing to the strengthening of the local economy and the creation of cultural entrepreneurship.

Although Vigata is an invented town, it has served as a nucleus for the development of an authentic tourist destination. Visitors are not only interested in the filming, but seek to experience the place as a whole: the local cuisine, the historical monuments, the cultural activities. According to Ponton and Asero (2021), the Inspector Montalbano series has been a catalyst not only for tourism development, but also for the integration of cultural heritage into Sicily's contemporary tourism offer.

This dynamic extends to the field of cultural entrepreneurship. Film tourism creates new opportunities: from themed tours and souvenir products inspired by the series, to support for local businesses related to the hospitality and gastronomy sector. However, the success of these initiatives requires strategic planning to avoid problems of overtourism and ensure that the authenticity and cultural heritage of the destination is protected. (Manola, & Balermpas, 2020; Manola, 2020)

Film tourism can contribute substantially to tourism development and the enhancement of cultural entrepreneurship, provided that it is approached with respect for local culture and with concern for the sustainability of the natural and cultural environment. (Manola, & Papagrigoriou, 2020)

3. The imaginary city of Vigata as a model of cultural tourism

The fictional town of Vigata, although imaginary, highlights the authenticity of Sicily through its natural beauty, local architecture, and gastronomy—elements that enhance the destination's appeal to tourists. According to MacCannell (1976), authenticity is a key element of the tourist experience. The series Il Commissario Montalbano has emerged as a central factor in the cultural promotion of Sicily, boosting the region's international reputation and generating economic benefits. Studies show that in the areas where the series was filmed, such as Ragusa and Montica, tourist flows increased by up to 60% (Ponton & Asero, 2021; Manola et al., 2022a), confirming the power of film tourism.

Sicily's portrayal in the series goes beyond the filming locations and inspires visitors to seek an authentic experience involving local culture, history, cuisine, and everyday life (Connell, 2012). The audiovisual representation of the region has strengthened its cultural identity while also creating opportunities for cultural entrepreneurship, including themed tours and tourism products inspired by the series (Manola & Balermpas, 2020; Manola, 2020). However, as Beeton (2016a) points out, managing this growth requires strategic planning to preserve authenticity and address the challenges of overtourism.

4. Cultural entrepreneurship and sustainable tourism management in Vigata

Vigata, although a fictional place, has become a real film destination thanks to the popularity of the television series "Inspector Montalbano", which is filmed in south-eastern Sicily. Cultural entrepreneurship can capitalise on this potential, boosting the local economy and promoting the region's unique cultural identity through themed experiences combining literature, television, history and local lifestyle. Such activities include themed tours of filming locations, local

festivals based on the narrative universe of the series, experiential workshops on local gastronomy, and highlighting authentic culture through small, local businesses. (Maniou 2024; Maniou et al., 2024; Maniou et al., 2024a).

However, boosting film tourism poses risks such as over-tourism, infrastructure degradation, increased cost of living for residents and loss of authentic local identity. To address these challenges, a holistic strategic planning based on principles of sustainability, social participation and cultural management is necessary. Upgrading tourism infrastructure, strengthening public transport, developing digital information media and introducing reservation or flow control systems in sensitive areas are crucial steps to reduce tourism pressure. (Maniou,2024b; Maniou et al.,2024c; Mītoula, and Kaldis, 2018)

Furthermore, creating cultural routes in less visible areas can act as a decentralization tool, emphasizing new local narratives linked to the cultural heritage and episodes of the series. International partnerships with film and tourism networks enhance the extroversion of the destination, transforming Vigata from a mere backdrop to a cultural core with growth potential. The integration of gastronomy, local history and film locations into integrated experiences strengthens the visitor's bond with the place and adds value to its tourist character. (Maniou et al., 2024d; Maniou et al., 2025). Sustainable management of tourism development in Vigata is not just an option, but an imperative to maintain cultural authenticity and social cohesion. Through smart planning, social participation and a balance between the business and cultural dimensions, Vigata can become a model of sustainable film tourism, where cultural entrepreneurship does not threaten but enhances local identity and prosperity. (Maniou & Mitoula, 2025; Tsatalmpasoglou and Manola, E., 2024; Maniou et al., 2025a; Tsatalmpasoglou and Manola, 2024).

Finally, we underline the importance of all digital technologies in education domain and for cultural entrepreneurship training and education. ICTs support education for everyone, give new methods for efficient teachers training, improve knowledge retention, encourage collaboration, improve transparency, create learner-centered approaches, invent new teaching methods, and accelerate knowledge acquisition. Moreover, provide new tools for knowledge representation and endorse the education activities and methods via virtualization, mobilization, artificial intelligence, and through new learning environments- worlds. More specifically in entrepreneurship training ICTs are very productive and successful, facilitate and improve the assessment, the intervention and the educational procedures via Mobiles which brings educational activities everywhere [38-39] and through various ICTs applications which are the core supporters of education [40]. The exploitation of AI, STEM & ROBOTICS raise educational procedures into new levels of adaptability, innovation and performance [41-42], while games transform education in a multisensory, very friendly and enjoyable interaction [43]. Additionally, the adoption, enhancement and combination of ICTs with theories and models of metacognition, mindfulness, meditation and emotional intelligence cultivation [44-50] brings the mental abilities to the core of the education procedures and policies, and accelerate and improve even more the educational practices and results, especially in business and new entrepreneurs training [51-57].

5. Research methodology

The research methodology of this paper was designed to analyze the impact of the television series "Inspector Montalbano" on the tourism development in Sicily. To achieve this objective, the quantitative method was used, i.e. data collection through questionnaires This approach allowed for a comprehensive investigation of the phenomenon, also combining information from different sources to obtain reliable and global conclusions. The main method of data collection for the research was a structured questionnaire addressed to visitors to Sicily and people who were familiar with the "Inspector Montalbano" series. The results obtained from the responses of 130 participants revealed important demographic data.

1.1. Question 1: What is your age?

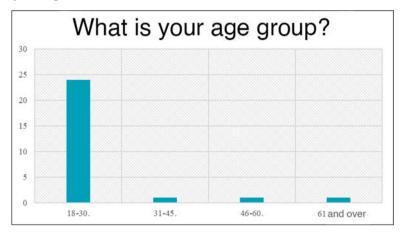


Figure 1 The majority of participants (89%) were aged 18-30, which underlines the greater appeal of the Inspector Montalbano series to younger audiences and the importance of audiovisual media in reaching them

1.2. Question 2: Have you visited Sicily?

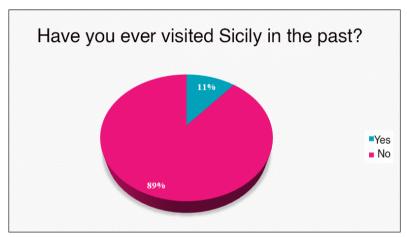


Figure 2 11% have visited Sicily. Only 11% had visited Sicily, with 33.3% of them having visited more than three times, indicating a high level of satisfaction. 89% had never visited Sicily, revealing significant untapped potential for future tourism development, especially through cultural promotion

1.3. Question 3 The television series "Inspector Montalbano" has influenced the image of Sicily as a tourist destination.

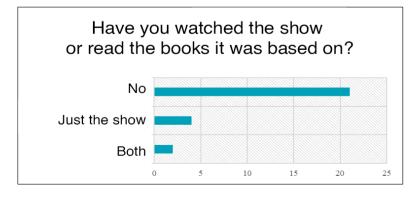


Figure 3 Have you watched the show or rea the books?

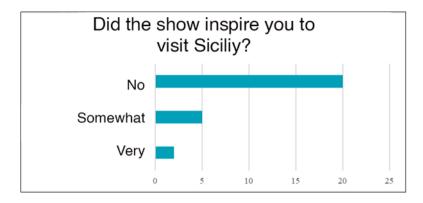


Figure 4 Did the show inspire you to visit Sicily?

The television series "Inspector Montalbano" had a limited but significant impact on the image of Sicily as a tourist destination. 22% of participants were aware of the series, with 33% of them stating that it had a positive impact on their perception of Sicily and 18% citing it as a key reason for visiting. Overall, 25% of the sample acknowledged some influence of the series on their choice of tourism, confirming the role of television promotion in the tourism dynamics of the island.

1.4. Question 5. Which of the following factors influenced the choice of Sicily as a destination

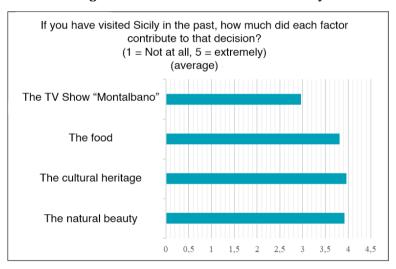


Figure 5 Participants evaluated various factors that influenced their choice of Sicily as a destination. Cultural heritage (mean 3.96) and natural beauty (mean 3.92) emerged as the most important reasons for visiting, while gastronomy (mean 3.81) also scored highly. Although the television series 'Inspector Montalbano' received a lower score (m.o. 2,96), its contribution to increasing tourist interest in the area was recognized

1.5. Analysis and comments on the results of the survey

The quantitative survey allowed to draw meaningful conclusions from the participants' answers to the questionnaire. Through statistical processing, it was possible to identify key patterns in viewers' behaviour and to highlight significant correlations between knowledge of the series and the intention to visit Sicily. The link between television viewing and tourist intention reveals the decisive role that cultural production can play in shaping new forms of tourist demand. The results of the quantitative analysis showed that: 65% of the study participants stated that they knew or had watched episodes of the Inspector Montalbano series, which confirms its significant resonance with the general public. Of these, 45% considered that the series was an important source of information about Sicily, as it enabled them to discover the natural beauty, cultural heritage and gastronomy of the region. In addition, 40% of the total sample said that the series inspired them to visit Sicily, making it one of the main factors that boosted their tourist interest in the destination.

The statistical treatment of the questionnaires focused on understanding the relationship between the series and the tourist mobility induced by it. One of the most significant correlations identified concerned knowledge of the series and

intention to visit: participants who had followed the series were 1.8 times more likely to state their intention to visit Sicily, compared to those who had not been exposed to the series.

In terms of destination choice factors, the natural beauty of the region was rated the highest (4.6/5), confirming its role as a key motivation for visiting. This was followed by cultural heritage (4.4/5), highlighting Sicily's deep connection with its history and architecture. Gastronomy also received a high score (4.3/5), while its connection with the series was rated at 3.7/5, demonstrating the enhancing role of TV narrative in the tourist experience.

Of particular interest is the desire to visit locations featured in the series. Over 30% of participants said they would like to visit Castello Donnafugata, while 25% chose the Montalbano movie house as a tourist attraction. These data confirm the strength of the link between the imaginary locations of TV fiction and real geographical destinations, reinforcing the role of audiovisual content as a tourism promotion tool.

6. Conclusions

This study has highlighted the decisive contribution of the television series Inspector Montalbano to the tourist promotion of Sicily, enhancing the international visibility of areas presented in the television series. The case of Vigata highlights the potential of film destinations as drivers of cultural entrepreneurship and tourism development. The exploitation of cultural identity through the Inspector Montalbano series offers opportunities to create thematic experiences that strengthen the local economy and highlight the cultural richness of the region. However, uncontrolled tourism development can lead to over-tourism, deterioration of local resources and loss of authenticity. It is therefore necessary to implement sustainable management strategies that combine the protection of cultural heritage with innovative entrepreneurship. Through partnerships, decentralisation of tourism pressure and experiential forms of tourism, Vigata can be a model of balanced and sustainable tourism development, where culture functions not only as a resource but also as a tool for local empowerment and long-term prosperity.

Compliance with ethical standards

Acknowledgments

The Authors would like to thank the SPECIALIZATION IN ICTs AND SPECIAL EDUCATION: PSYCHOPEDAGOGY OF INCLUSION Postgraduate studies Team, for their support.

Disclosure of conflict of interest

The Authors proclaim no conflict of interest.

Statement of informed consent

Informed consent was obtained from all individual participants included in the study.

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