

Submitted Abstract

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Abstract

Sustainable tourism is a widely studied topic, which has been assessed at different geographical contexts and under different perspectives. Referring to the mountain environment, sustainability has been considered in assessing mountain destinations, activities and the hospitality sector as well.

Among the mountain accommodation facilities panorama, the most representative and critical-to-be-managed structures, i.e. mountain huts, have been analyzed with specific reference to their service quality (Duglio & Beltramo, 2014), their relationship with the surrounding environment (Beltramo & Duglio, 2016) as well as contemplating the figure of the changing guest.

In the last few years, research has also started taking into consideration the issue of accessibility in the tourism and hospitality sector. In fact, due to geographical and physical constraints, mountain huts can be a significant case study for understanding strengths and difficulties in hosting people with special needs in extreme management conditions.

This contribution refers to an exploratory analysis carried out in the Northwestern Italian Alps, Piedmont and Aosta Valley Regions based on semi-structured interviews to four mountain huts' managers. The huts were selected depending on their reachability - by car or on foot -, a variable that may contribute to define the typology of visitors' needs and expectations. Preliminary results* show how mountain huts that work in a severe environment (i.e. medium-high altitude and reachable only on foot) may face difficulties in hosting visitors with physical constraints, who, on the other side, do not attend this kind of accommodation. In any case, mountain managers have shown in the past their ability to host and welcome people with special requests. Considering accessibility on its broad meaning, no difficulties at all have been registered for coping with special dietary requirements as vegetarian or vegan gluten free guests, who nowadays represent an important component of the mountain hut tourism demand as pointed out by the interviewees

* the methodology and results are actually under review by the international Journal Sustainability

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