

Benchmarking for Sustainable Touristic Development: the Case of Pavia (Lombardy, Italy)

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ABSTRACT

The paper analyzes in detail the implementation and the process of benchmarking for improving territorial and touristic development. This research uses primary and secondary data. The results show as the benchmarking methodology can be a tool for improving the strategy. Collaborative benchmarking can be useful to share models and experiences between partners and also global benchmarking is important for the international research of the best practices.

L'articolo analizza in dettaglio l'implementazione del processo del benchmarking per il miglioramento dello sviluppo territoriale e turistico. Questa ricerca utilizza sia dati primari e secondari. I risultati mostrano come la metodologia di benchmarking può essere uno strumento per migliorare la strategia. Il benchmarking collaborativo può essere utile per condividere modelli e esperienza tra i partner, inoltre, si evidenzia l'importanza del global benchmarking per una ricerca a livello internazionale delle migliori pratiche e processi.

Keywords: sustainable development, benchmarking, touristic and territorial strategy, innovation, strategy

1 – Introduction

This paper studies how the strategy of sustainable territorial and touristic development can use the benchmarking methodology to improve its performance (Bhutta & Huq, 1999; Porter, 1996; Kotler et al. 1993; Camp 1989; Mella 2012, 2021; Pilotti 2011; Spendolini 1992; Riva and Pilotti 2019 a,b; 2020a,b; Aaker, 1999; Turchetti 2013; Grant 1997; Gazzola et al. 2014, 2018, 2020; Valdani and Ancarani 2000).

The benchmarking can be defined as:

[a] “continuous analysis of strategies, functions, processes, products or services, performances, etc. compared within or between best-in-class organizations by obtaining information through appropriate data collection method, to assess an organization’s current standards and thereby carry out self-improvement by implementing changes to scale or exceed those standards” (Kumar et al., 2006).

Based on the past studies about benchmarking and sustainable development (Camp 1989; Chamber of Commerce of Padua 2004; Kathleen et al. 1992; Rizzi et al. 2009; Rizzi 2006; De Lotto 2008; Hammer et al. 1993,

Hammer, 1990; Guido et al. 2010; Coda 1988; Hammer and Champy 1993; Mella 2014 a,b; Gazzola et Mella 2003, 2006, 2017, 2018; Mintzberger 1994; Shoettl, 2003; Varaldo and Caroli 1999; Pilotti and Ganzaroli 2006; Cook, 1995; Krugman 1995; Anderson, 2004; Latusi 2002; Nonaka et al. 2000) we develop specific detailed research questions:

R1) *How is the process of territorial benchmarking for sustainable and touristic development?*

R2) *What is the critical success factor in the application of benchmarking process?*

While there is a different study of the benchmarking in the private sector (Cook 1995; Zairi 1996; Burch 1994; Bogan 1994; Hagel and al. 1993, Hax and Majluf 1996; Hall et al. 1993) only a few studies are about territorial and sustainable development (Camagni and Gibelli 1999; Argyris, 1991); there is a lack of the clear description of the organization of this process during the time for improving the strategy in a long term. The organization of the paper is as follows: the second section analyses the theoretical review and the methodological approach; the thirds section describes the case of Pavia; in the fourth section there is a discussion and the fifth one concludes.

2 – Theoretical background and methodological approach

2.1 – Theoretical background

During the time there is an evolution for the model of benchmarking (see Fig. 1) (Miclosevic et al. 2013; Dembowski 2013; Ciurea and Marian 2017; Bocchino, 1995; Imuti and Kathawala 1997; Riva and Pilotti 2019a,b; 2020a,b; Pilotti 2019; Lizza 2005; Morris and Brandon 1995; Riva 2009, 2010, 2012; Lucianelli and Tanese 2002; Hamdouch and Maman 1995; Moriarty and Smallman 2009).

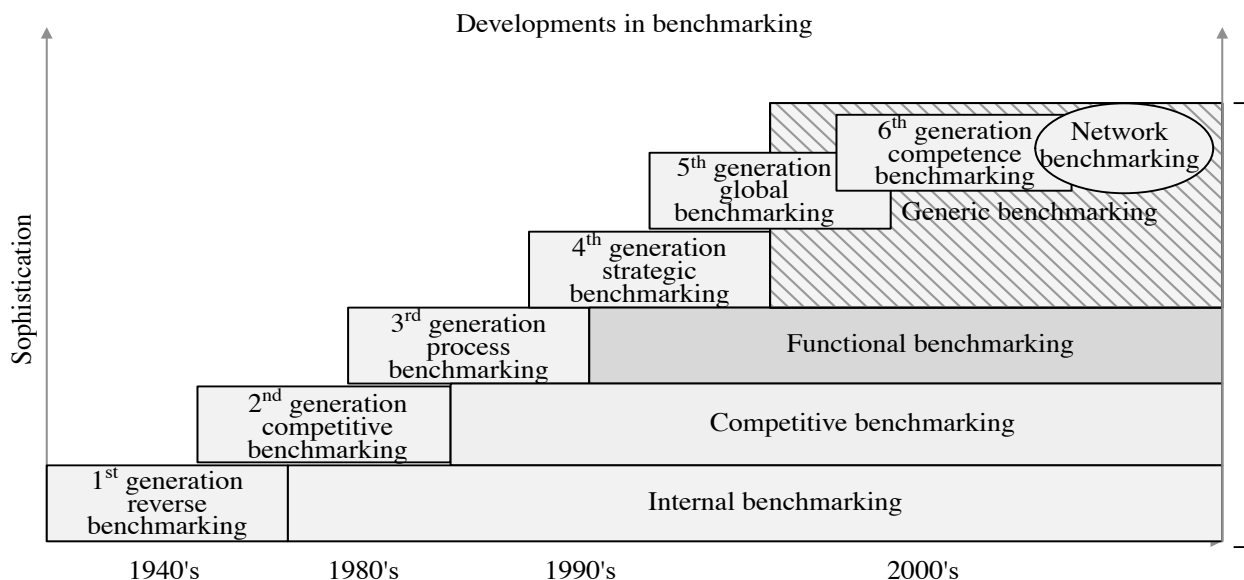


Fig. 1 – Evolution of benchmarking (Source: elaboration from Moriarty and Smallman 2009).

In origin Camp (1989) analyses the model of R. Xerox of benchmarking can be defined as the continuous process of evaluating their services and methods - comparison with those of the best in the sector. There is an evolution of benchmarking model with many contributions based on different taxonomy (see Tab. 1).

TAXONOMY	BENCHMARKING MODEL
ACADEMIC /RESEARCH- BASED MODELS	ANDERSON AND MOEN (1999) ANDERSEN AND PETERSEN (1996) FONG ET AL. (1998) YASIN AND ZIMMERER (1995) BATEMAN'S (1989) MODEL (ELMUTI AND KATHAWALA, 1997) FREYTAG AND HOLLENSEN (2001) DREW'S MODEL (CARPINETTI AND DE MELO, 2002) LONGBOTTOM (2000)
CONSULTANT/ EXPERT-BASED MODELS	CAMP (1989) CODLING (1992) VAZIRI (1992) BOXWELL (1994) SPENDOLINI (1992) WATSON (1993) SOLE AND BIST (1995) BALM (1992) HARRINGTON AND HARRINGTON (1996) MACDONALD AND TANNER (1996) MATTERS AND EVANS (1997) PULAT (1994) TUTCHER (1994) LEIBFRIED AND MCNAIR (1992) MAAS AND FLAKE (2001) KEEHLEY AND MACBRIDE (1997) FINNIGAN (1996)
ORGANIZATION- BASED MODEL	SHETTY'S MODEL (LEMA AND PRICE, 1995) XEROX (FINNIGAN, 1996) NPC INDIA (NANDI, 1995) AT&T (BEMOWSKI, 1991) ALCOA (BEMOWSKI, 1991) SOCIETY OF MANUFACTURING ENGINEERS (FRIDLEY ET AL., 1997) CORNING COMPANY (SWEENEY, 1994) YELLOW PAGES (SIMPSON AND KONDOULI, 2000) THE EMPLOYMENT SERVICE (SIMPSON AND KONDOULI, 2000) AVON PRODUCT'S BENCHMARKING (LEIBFRIED-MCNAIR, 1992)

Tab. 1 – Benchmarking taxonomy and model (Source: our elaboration from Riva and Pilotti 2019; Riva 2007; Anand and Kodary 2008).

Halleck et al. (1991) describe the importance of benchmarking world-class performance (see Tab. 2) across industries not only to quantifies the performance gap.

TYOLOGY	FOCUS
WORLD IN CLASS	selection of world in class process
COMPETITIVE BENCHMARKING	benchmarking is performed versus competitors
PROCESS BENCHMARKING	processes in different organizations

PEER BENCHMARKING-	benchmark report where companies very similar
GENERIC BENCHMARKING	focus on technological aspects
INTERNAL BENCHMARKING	process in organizations having multiple units
COLLABORATIVE BENCHMARKING-	benchmarking as a part of a network
SWOT BENCHMARKING	gather data about strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, and threats

Tab. 2 – Typologies of benchmarking (Source: our elaboration from Riva and Pilotti 2018; Riva 2007).

Cook (1995) describes the basic elements of benchmarking. Important is the comparison of different experiences of reality management through the use of qualitatively measurable indicators (see Fig. 2)

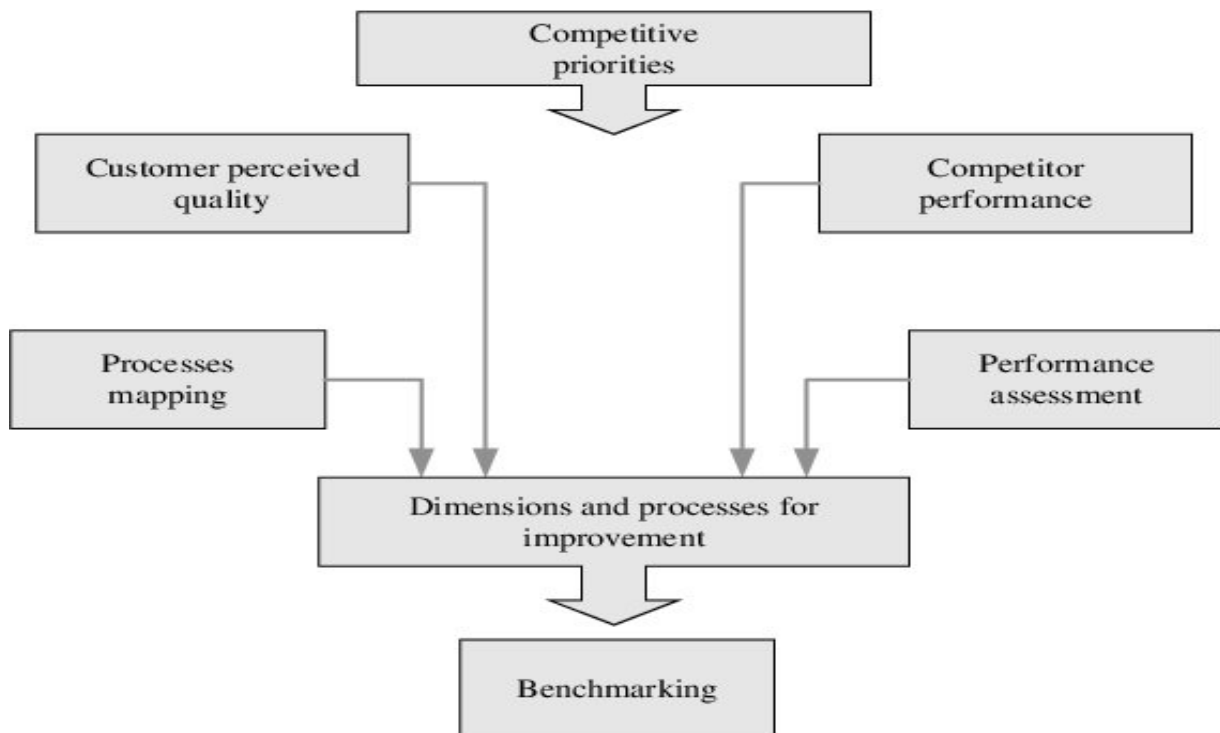


Fig. 2 – Dimension of benchmarking (Source: elaboration from Cook 1995; Carpinetti and De Mello 2002).

The highly successful organizations understanding the importance of benchmarking, instituting best practices, and creating innovative projects to determine the appropriate product or service that the consumer wants (see Fig. 3).

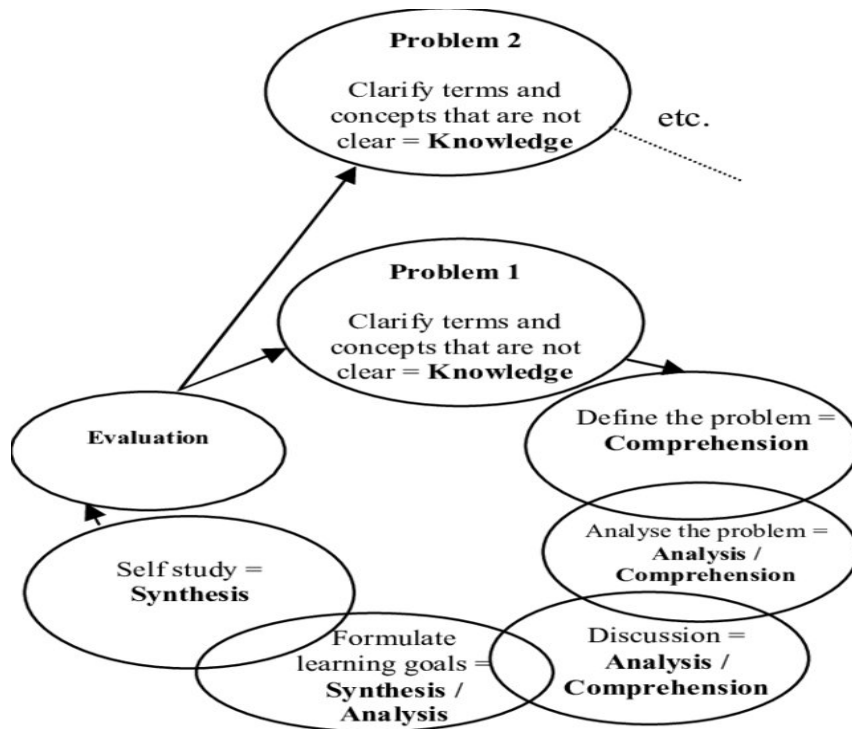


Fig. 3 – Benchmarking and process improvement (Source: elaboration from Tick, 2007).

Pilotti (2011,2019), Riva and Pilotti (2019, 2020a,b), Pilotti and Rinaldin (2004), Riva (2009, 2010, 2012) describe the importance of the sustainability strategy and also benchmarking for improving the strategy (see Fig.4).

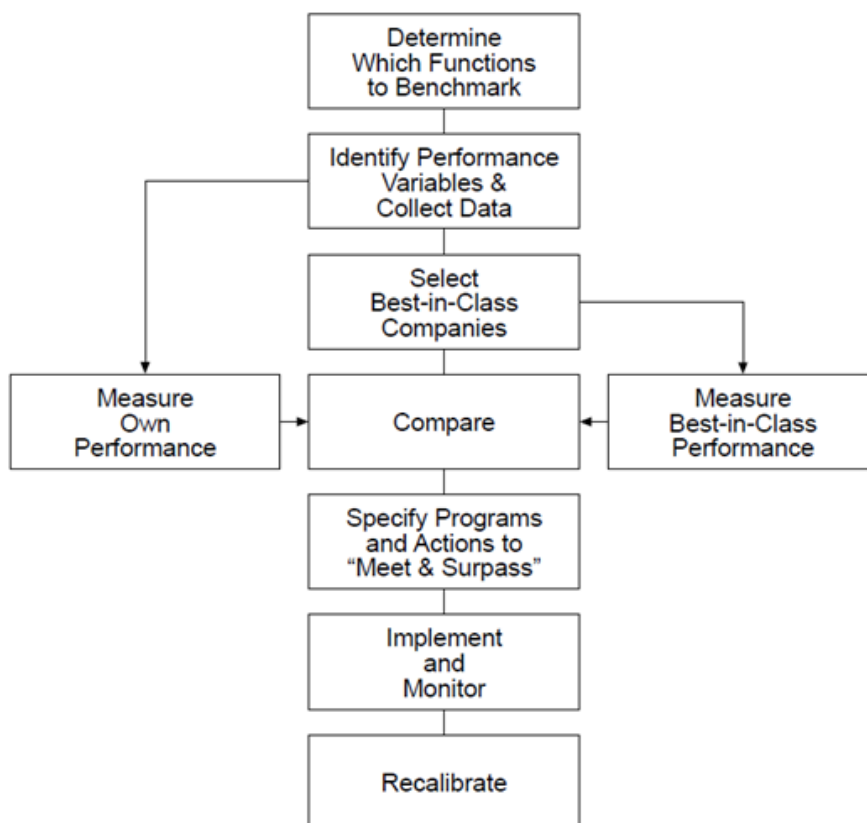


Fig. 4 – The process for improving (Source: Milosevic and al. 2003, p. 366).

There is an evolution during the time of this important methodology not only in the private sector (Hammer et al. 1993; Halleck et al. 1991; Young et al. 1994; Friedman et al. 1992; Cook 1995; Uysal et al. 2000; Head et al. 1999; Kathleen et al. 1992; Yasar and Zari 2000; Hammer 2000; Dattakumar and Jagadeesh 2003; Shoettl 2003; Anand and Kodary 2008; Dembowski 2013; Ammons et al. 2014; Ciurea et al. 2017; Gafurov et al. 2013; Tickell and Dicken 2016; Nielsen et al. 2017).

2.2 – Methodology

The empirical method of this analysis follows the logic of grounded theory (Glaser and Strauss, 1967) developing a case study methodology (Eisenhardt, 1989). We collect data using primary and secondary data (see Tab. 3) and information by contact and interviewees with the experts of Pavia (see Tab. 4) about the area of research (see Tab. 5).

	MAIN SECONDARY DATA FOR PAVIA	FOCUS
I	Piano Annuale promozione turistica 2017, 2018, 2019, 2020, 2021 (Source: Regione Lombardia)	focus on strategy and tourism
II	Pavia tourism communication 2020 (Source: <i>www.visit Pavia.it</i>)	focus on strategy and communication
III	"Indagine sul ruolo delle infrastrutture di mobilità e trasporto per lo sviluppo socio-economico in provincia di Pavia" (2014) (Source: University Pavia)	focus territorial strategy
IV	Piano Regolatore Provincia di Pavia 2018 (Source: Mayor of Pavia)	focus on strategy
V	"Analisi competitive e benchmarking territorial" (Source: Chamber of Commerce of Pavia 2006)	focus on benchmarking
VI	Corsi interaziendali per la crescita e lo sviluppo impresa (Source: Pavia Sviluppo 2021)	focus benchmarking and strategy
VII	Pavia Tourism Annual reports 2009-2019 (Source: ISTAT e Polis Istituto Regionale per il supporto delle politiche della Lombardia)	focus on strategy

Tab. 3 – Secondary data used in this research (Source: our elaboration).

We analyze during the time the evolution of the strategy of this city with an important historical and cultural tradition.

Experts about Tourism of Pavia	9 interviews
Members of Public Administration	1 interview

Tab. 4 – Interviews (Source: our elaboration).

Regarding secondary data, we study also the public reports of the cities and territorial plans.

(1) <i>How is it possible to develop a strategic plan for sustainable city and tourism development?</i>	- strategic planning process-strategic planning priorities- long and short-run
(2) <i>What are the FCSs (critical strategic factors) planning and control methodology in the case of a smart city?</i>	- the strategic planning - strategic vision- a practical framework

Tab. 5 – Main issues covering during the interviews (Source: our elaboration).

The method of case study is used because it permits to underline of the main innovations in the strategy.

3 –The case developmental strategy and benchmarking in the city of Pavia

3.1 – *The main tools for sustainable development and territorial marketing*

Pavia is a town of Lombardy in northern Italy 22 miles south of Milan on the lower Ticino river near its confluence with the Po (Regione Lombardia 2021-2017; De Lotto 2008) (see Fig. 5).



Fig 5- The Romanic bridge of city of Pavia (Source: Pavia Office Tourism).

The main tools applied in the case of Pavia for territorial benchmarking are:

- a) interviews with privileged subjects indicating in detail the problems that have arisen, the strategies put in place to deal with them;
- b) desk analysis of the competing areas and the selected cases of excellence and selected area of performance and process;
- c) marketing and “mystery customers” a technique that directly tests the provision of local services: from information (environmental, cultural, service);
- d) positioning maps to compare the results;

e) define the main KPIs for benchmarking (structure, actions, results) consider the sustainable development (ecological, community, and economic dimension);

f) focus group and swot analysis.

These tools permit understanding the situation and define the difference between the actual situation (“*as is*”) situation and the desirable situation (“*to be a situation*”) (see Tab. 6).

	TOOLS	BENEFITS
1	Interviews with privileged subjects	comprehension main problem
2	Positioning maps	comparison of performance
3	Desk analysis	comparison
4	Marketing and mystery customers	information
5	Defining KPIs	defining the priorities
6	Swot Analysis	Valuation
7	Focus Group	new ideas

Tab. 6 – Main tools and benefits (Source: our elaboration from Regione Lombardia 2021,2020, 2019, 2018, 2017; Rizzi 2006; Rizzi and Dioli 2010).

3.2 – *The area of study and the network in the process of benchmarking*

The network of benchmarking is based on partners: a) provincial city; b) metropolitan city c) city of foreign cities (UK) (see Tab. 7). A network of partners permits to compare some areas of benchmarking (see Tab. 8).

BECHMARKING PARTNERS FIRST LEVEL (PROVINCIAL)	SECOND LEVEL (METROPOLITAN)	THIRD LEVEL (INTERNATIONAL)
Alessandria	Milano metropoli	North East (UK)
Cremona	Torino	Galles (UK)
Ferrara	Catania	
Novara	Treviso	
Piacenza	Modena	
Polesine		

Tab. 7 – Main benchmarking partner (Source our elaboration from Regione Lombardia 2021,2020, 2019,2018,2017; Rizzi 2006, Rizzi and Dioli 2010).

FCS	AREA-PROCESS IN BENCHMARKING STUDY
1	Analysis of the Territory
2	Feasibility Analysis
3	Advice on Funding
4	Support for Business Creation
5	Training
6	Census Areas
7	Management Areas
8	Incubator

Tab. 8 – Main area-process of benchmarking (Source: our elaboration Regione Lombardia 2021,2020, 2019 ,2018,2017; Rizzi 2006; Rizzi and Dioli 2010).

3.3 – *The main area for improvement in Pavia*

The analysis of the gaps with the other cities permits understand the difference between the actual and the desired situation and to develop an integrated strategy for the future. The benchmarking process in Pavia is based on some dimension (see Tab. 9).

DIMENSION	TYPE	CHARACTERISTIC	LEVEL * = Low ***** = High
NATURE OF REFERENT OTHER	Internal	Comparing in the internal organization	**
	Territorial	Comparing with other cities	****
	Industry	Comparing in the same industry	*
	International	extends beyond industry boundaries	*****
	Global	In every place in the world	***
CONTENT	Process	About discrete work processes and operating systems	***
	Functional	Application of some function	**
	Performance	Outcome characteristics,	***
	Strategic	Involving assessment of strategic rather than operational matters	**
PURPOSE FOR THE RELATIONSHIP	Competitive	Comparison of performance	**
	Collaborative	Comparison for developing learning and find new ideas	*****

Tab. 9 –Benchmarking nature, contest, and purpose of Pavia (our elaboration from (Source: our elaboration Regione Lombardia 2021,2020, 2019,2018, 2017).

Some main areas and actions for improving are focus on:

- 1) creation online database on provincial location opportunities;
- 2) digital marketing and website for the territory;
- 3) disseminating greater knowledge of the territorial characteristics of the Pavia area with vocation analysis of homogeneous sub-provincial areas (the South Milan axis and the Broni-Stradella-Mortara axis) planning conferences on territorial animation and targeted territorial marketing actions;
- 4) challenges competition with other important cities;
- 5) creation an operational for promoting knowledge and economic development of the provincial territory;
- 6) production cartograms, and photos of touristic areas;
- 7) training courses and formation in touristic sectors.

This case study case shows how the general advantages of benchmarking are to be a new model for the improvement (Camp, 1989; Porter 1985,1989,1996). It can be structured and applied as a methodology of the process re-engineering to facilitate the improvement of the results. This method is based on finding the best methodology to perform a specific task to achieve the best results. It is important to broaden the perspective and not to be limited to the areas compared with the territory of the province of Pavia (competitors) and study the solutions in specific problems, for the realization of particular initiatives (best practices) (Kathleen et al. 1996).

4 – Discussion

The case of Pavia's Chamber of commerce shows how benchmarking allows locating data and information to measure the effectiveness, efficiency, cost of the programming of an institution (see Fig. 6). The case of Pavia describes a strategy for sustainable development and the importance of global and international benchmarking.

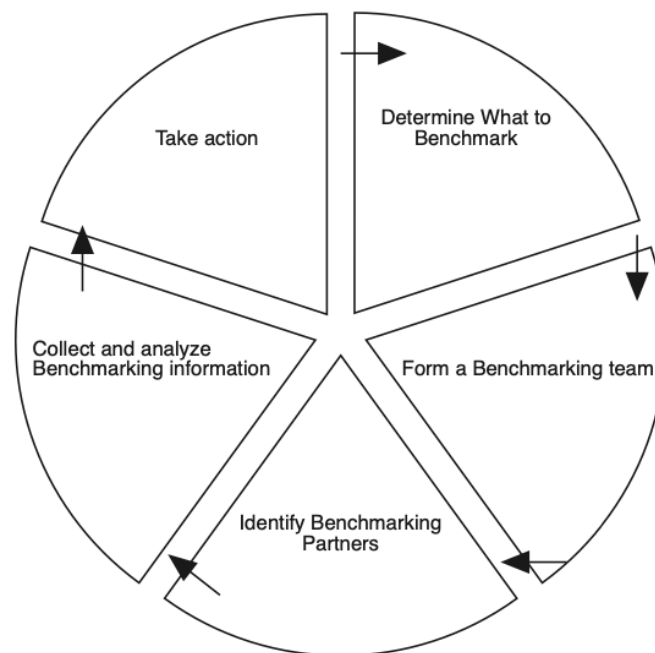


Fig. 6 – The benchmarking process applied in Pavia (Source: Bhutta & Huq 1999, p. 258, adapted from Camp 1989).

The process of benchmarking for territorial marketing in Pavia is based on some phases:

I) Define what to benchmark, team and partners:

1. define benchmarking subject;
2. find benchmarking partners.

II) Collect and analyze benchmarking information:

3. implement benchmarking study;
4. determine current competitive gap).

III) Take action:

5. establish functional goals;
6. develop action plans;
7. implement of action plans to bridge the gap;
8. recalibrate the benchmark;
9. understand the current situation by collecting and analyzing the existing information on the subject to be benchmarked.

IV) Control and improvement (Kaplan and Norton 1996, 2004a,b; Kaplan 1998):

10. monitor results of the implemented actions;
11. identify the critical success factors or indicators of the subject to be benchmarked).

In the case of Pavia, we can find some important benefits of benchmarking also the global and international benchmarking can be very useful (see Tab. 10) for finding a new solution and to have an objective evaluation of the real situation and the performance gaps.

	WITH BENCHMARKING	WITHOUT BENCHMARKING
1	Defining stakeholders and customers requirements	
	arbitrary perception	objective evaluation
2	Establish goal and objectives	
	Subjunctive	objective
3	Application of best practice	
	few solutions	many solutions
4	Creativity	
	lack of external vision	proactive
5	Learning strategy	
	syndrome of "not invented here"	search for changing
6	Understanding of the process	
	strength and weakness not understood	understood the results

Tab. 10 -Benchmarking benefits (Source: our elaboration Regione Lombardia 2021,2020, 2019, 2018, 2017, Rizzi 2006; Camp 1989; Schoettl 2003).

5 – Conclusion

Benchmarking focuses on continuous improvement and the creation of value for all stakeholders for sustainable territorial and touristic development (Regione Lombardia 2017-2021). Over time there is an evolution of this methodology.

CONCERNING THE FIRST RESEARCH QUESTION: “How is the process of territorial benchmarking for the sustainable and touristic development?” we discover:

A – *FIRST*. There are some benefits of benchmarking strategy for the possibility to focus on some aspects (see Fig. 7): I) define the stakeholders and customers’ requirements; II) establish goal and objectives; III) determine the best practice and improving the creativity; IV) learning the best ideas; V) understanding the process.

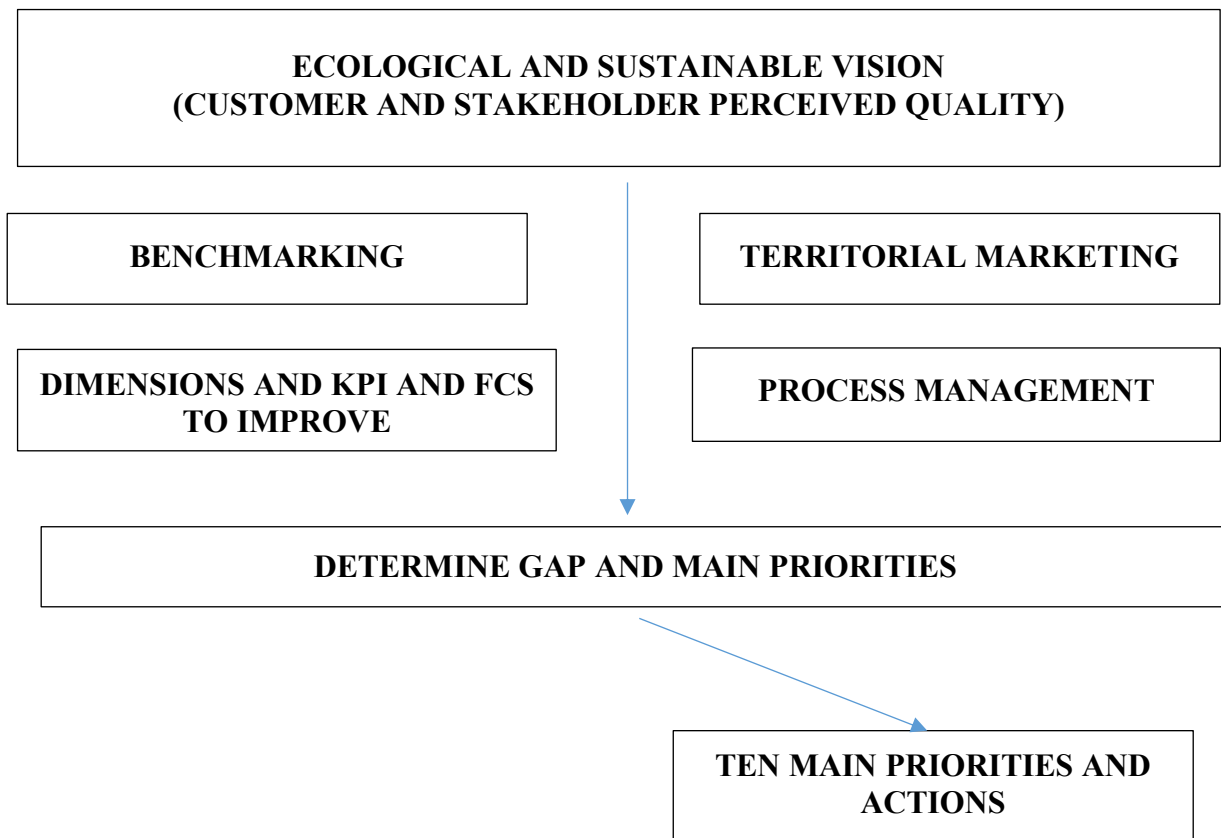


Fig. 7 – Benchmarking process in Pavia Case (Source: our elaboration Regione Lombardia 2021, 2020, 2019, 2018; Rizzi 2006).

B – *SECOND*. The strategy for territorial and touristic development can be improved by using some specific ten actions and priorities with different levels of importance (see Tab. 11).

N°	PRIORITY AND ACTIONS	IMPORTANCE * = Low ***** = High
1	Ecological and sustainable vision	*****
2	Digital and online communication and website;	*****
3	Operational function, internally, aimed at promoting knowledge and economic development;	***

4	Use cards with data, cartograms, and photos, of the production areas;	***
5	Participant to challenges competition	**
6	Targeted territorial marketing and touristic strategy	*****
7	Wide-ranging analysis and study pathway aimed at disseminating greater knowledge of the territorial ;	***
8	Conferences on territorial animation	***
9	Actions of communication to make it more attractive;	**
10	Training courses	****

Tab.11 – Ten main priority and actions for improving the territorial marketing in Pavia (Source: our elaboration Regione Lombardia 2021-2017; Rizzi 2006, Rizzi and Dioli 2010).

C – THIRD. It is possible to define a set of areas and KPIs to control the strategy for sustainable and touristic development (see Tab. 12).

FCS	AREA	FOCUS AND KPIs
1	TOURISM	Tourism music, theater, food, and wine, thermal baths, and wellness
2	NATURAL ENVIRONMENT	Protect the environment and territory
3	TRANSPORTATION	Public transport, traffic congestion
4	ECONOMIC ENVIRONMENT	Currency exchange regulations, banking services
5	SECURITY	Political stability, crime, law enforcement
6	RECREATION AND CULTURAL EVENTS	Restaurants, theatres, cinemas, sports, and leisure
7	SYSTEM OF CONTROL	Balanced scorecard, table de bord, strategic planning

Tab. 12 – Benchmarking strategy and KPIs (Source: our elaboration from Regione Lombardia 2021,2020, 2019; Rizzi 2006; Rizzi and Dioli 2010).

D – FOURTH. The answers to the first question are consistent with past studies (Kotler et al. 1993; Pilotti, 2011, 2019; Hankinson 2010; Holloway et al.1999; Scozzese 2005; Mella 1997, 2018, 2021; Gazzola et al. 2018, 2020; Head et al. 1999; Ostroff and Smith 1992; Stack et al. 1992; Riva and Pilotti 2019b, 2020a; Paoletto 1996; Riva 2009).

FOR WHAT CONCERNS THE SECOND RESEARCH QUESTION: “*What is the critical success factor in the application of benchmarking process?*” we discover:

a – FIRST. Benchmarking process is an ongoing process that permits to focus on the main priorities (see Fig.8) and it is based on the creation of new knowledge (Nonaka 1995, 1998, Nonaka et al. 2000; Coda 1988; Bocchino, 1995; Pilotti 2019; Imai 1986; Hall et al. 1993; Hammer and Champy 1993; Hammer 1990; Pilotti 2011; Riva ad Pilotti 2019; Ciurea et. al. 2017; Tick 2007; Yasar and Zairi 1996).

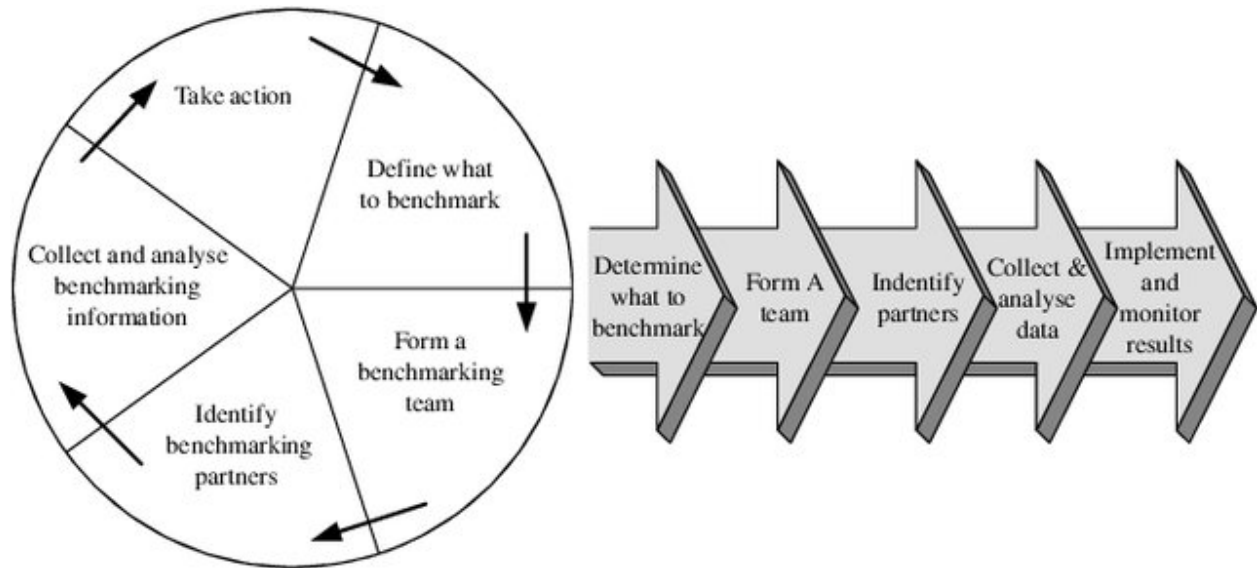


Fig. 8 – Benchmarking process an continuous improvement (Source: elaboration from Camp, Spendolini 1992; Regione Lombardia 2021,2020, 2019; 2018; Rizzi 2006; Riva Pilotti 2019a).

b – SECOND. The use of a standard organized procedure can be very useful for territorial marketing. The process of benchmarking for territorial marketing in Pavia is based on some phases:

- 1) define what to benchmark, team and partners;
- 2) collect and analyze benchmarking information;
- 3) take action;
- 4) control and improve.

c – THIRD. There is an evolution of benchmarking and the tendency is to consider the importance of global benchmarking for searching the best practices in the world (best-in-class benchmarking). While competitive analysis is limited to firms of the same sector, the world-class benchmarking permits us to learn from the best (Kim 1993; O'Dell and Grayson 1997; Oriani 1996) in class and focus on the processes more important at the international level (see Fig. 9).

d – FOURTH. The answer to the second question is in part consistent with past research (Chamber of Commerce of Padua 2004; Riva and Pilotti 2019a,b; Pilotti 2019, Mella 2012, 2014a,b; 2021; Schoettl 2003; Scozzese 2005; Gazzola et al. 2018; 2020; Rizzi and Dioli 2010; Nielsen et al. 2017; Rondo-Brovetto and Saliterer 2007). It is important to consider many dimension for sustainable development for benchmarking process (see Fig. 10).

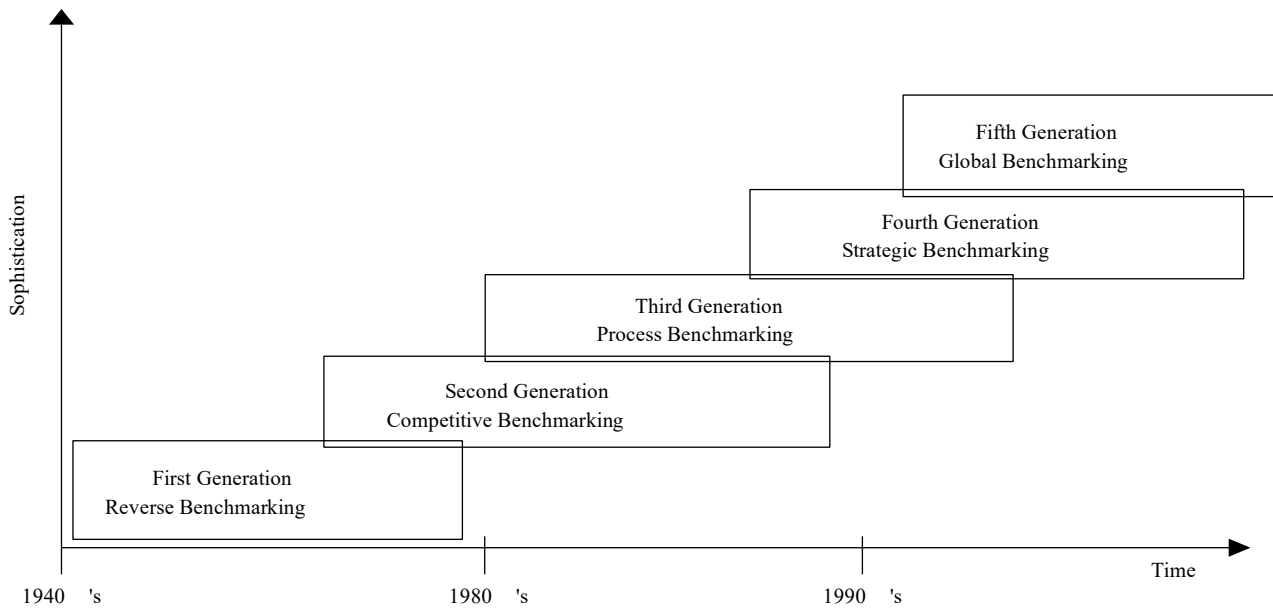


Fig 9 – The evolution of benchmarking (Source: our elaboration from Anand and Kodary 2008; Regione Lombardia 2021,2020, 2019; Kathleen et Leibfried 1992).

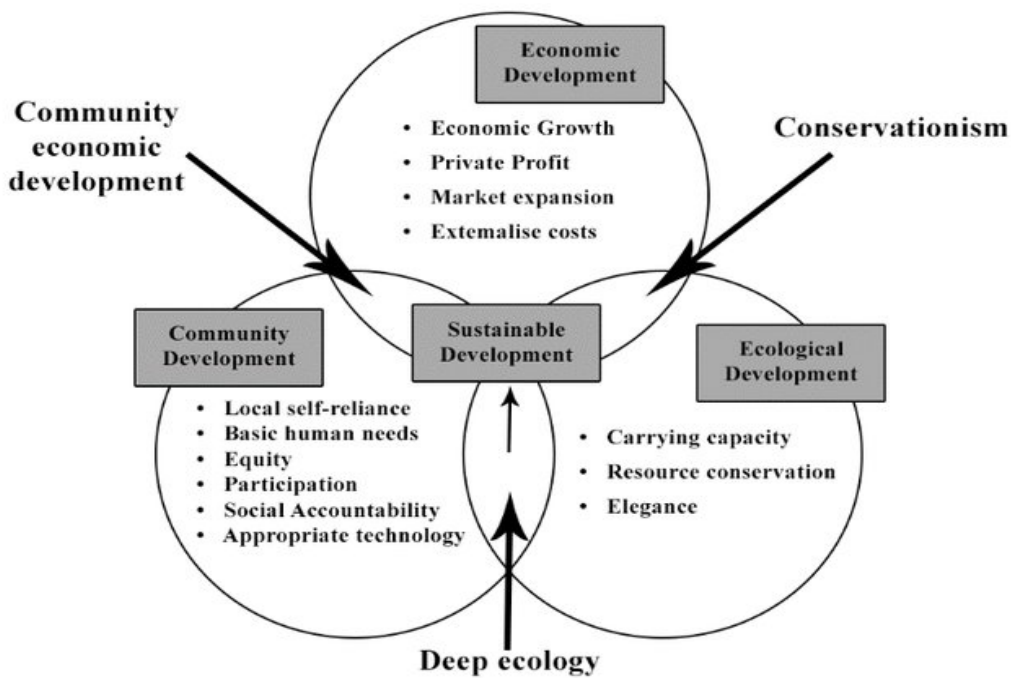


Fig. 10 – The Sustainable development (Source: elaboration from Bhutta & Huq 1999, Camp 1989, Riva & Pilotti, 2019b).

The original contribution of this paper and the production of new knowledge in the field are:

- a) the specific description and analysis of innovative real case study for territorial and touristic development and its process of benchmarking.

b) analysis of the critical success factors and benefits of this benchmarking process and the strategy for improving territorial and touristic sustainable development;

c) definition of the evolution of benchmarking and the evidence of the importance of global benchmarking (international-world class).

Future research can study more cities at the international level. The limit of this study is to analyze only a single case. In conclusion, the application of benchmarking methodology can be a model for positive implementation for territorial and touristic sustainable development.

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