Tourism Seasons on Lake Garda
From Elitist Winter to Crowded Summer, 1870–1970

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Abstract
Between the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, Lake Garda experienced an increasing integration into international tourist flows. Often thanks to people and capital coming from outside, tourism and its associated infrastructures offered new development opportunities for a region that was experiencing a substantial marginalization of its agricultural and manufacturing activities. This article examines the transformations undergone by Lake Garda during the period 1870–1970 by looking at the seasonal dynamics of its tourism growth. The objective is two-fold. First, to shed light on the impact of tourist flows on the times and rhythms of accommodation activity in order to better understand the assumptions and reasons behind the choices made by private operators and local institutions in the formulation of the regional tourism offer. Second, to highlight the significant features and changing trajectories of lake tourism in Italy.

Introduction
As Luca Mocarelli and Paolo Tedeschi underline, Lake Garda (also known as Benaco) was an area that succeeded in gaining a significant economic role in Lombardy from the pre-industrial age,[1] when some of its villages and areas managed to specialize in certain productions and trades.[2] Desenzano del Garda and its market became reference points for the transit of goods, which opted for waterways in place of roads in order to save time and costs.[3] The primary sector could rely on some high-value productions: at the time, particularly relevant were the citrus fruit production in the areas of Limone, Gargnano, and Malcesine,[4] and the olive growing and viticulture on the Morainic Hills.[5] In the manufacturing field, the textile sector was undoubtedly significant and could count on a number of specializations, while other activities were more locally characterized: from the 1720s, Campione and the northern shore of Lake Garda developed their own iron manufacturing following the estab-

1 Cfr. Mocarelli/Tedeschi, Note sull'economia, p. 29.
2 Cfr. Borelli (ed.), Un lago.
3 Cfr. Bertoni, Il mercato; Paris, Economia e mercato.
4 Cfr. Fava, I limoni; Cazzani/Sarti, Le limonaie; Tedeschi, I "nobili imprenditori"; Tedeschi, The Noble Entrepreneurs.
5 Cfr. Scaglia, L'agricoltura; Marchetti, L'olivo.

lishment of a great production settlement,[6] while Toscolano and Maderno witnessed a notable development in papermaking.[7]

The technological innovations of the industrial revolution effected significant changes in the economic structure of the Benaco region.[8] Such changes acquired relevance, especially in the second half of the nineteenth century, when the railway phased out the waterways, local agricultural productions were drastically reduced as the cereal yields of the plain increased,[9] and the recession of the traditional silk, linen, and paper manufacturing activities was compensated by the development of the cotton industry. In such a dynamic context, fostered by the advent of steam navigation and the spread of the Swiss luxury *hotellerie* model, the first significant developments in the tourism sector began to emerge. After the incorporation of the Kingdom of Lombardy-Venetia into the Kingdom of Italy, the High Garda on the Trentino side became the southwestern part of the Austro-Hungarian Empire and, due to its Mediterranean climate, the area gained a certain reputation as a health resort. Arco and Riva del Garda (hereafter Riva) were the first towns to become involved in such dynamics, which were later extended to other important Riviera centers on the Brescia side and found additional impetus in the concurrent valorization of the Sirmione spa springs.[10]

In the first half of the twentieth century, the development of the tourism sector had to cope the severe consequences of the war. During the Great War, Benaco was still a border area of conflict; during the Second World War, Saló became the capital of the Italian Social Republic.[11] The new turning point for tourism on the lake came in the post war period, when its impact in economic terms became particularly noteworthy: an increasingly significant transition from agriculture, farming, and fishing to restaurant and hotel management took place.[12] Driven by the enhanced infrastructures and the renewed appeal to the Northern European population, the growth of the number of tourists led Lake Garda into the age of mass tourism.[13]

Investments in construction were gradually steered toward tourism reception by transforming houses into inns, wineries into *trattorie*, and fields near the lake into campsites.[14] A new type of tourism emerged, distinct from the

6 Cfr. Mocarelli, Cure; Mocarelli, Le diverse vie.
7 Cfr. Zalin, L'arte cartaria.
8 Cfr. Mocarelli/Tedeschi, Note sull'economia, pp. 38–46.
9 Cfr. Semeraro, Olio e agrumi.
10 Cfr. Simoni, Economie; Onger, L'industria termale.
11 Cfr. Gregorini, Tra Ottocento e Novecento; Grazioli, Il turismo sul Garda.
12 Cfr. Pasini, Il turismo sul Garda; Taccolini, Tra ricostruzione e sviluppo.
13 Cfr. Mocarelli/Tedeschi, Note sull'economia, pp. 51–53.
14 Cfr. Festa, Le scelte, p. 171.

eighteenth-century *ville di delizia*,[15] and the great hotels of the nineteenth century; it was tourism with a new clientele, new demands, and new dynamics. In other words, it was no longer a tourist offer for the elite in search of milder and healthier climate conditions during the cooler months. It became a form of tourism that increasingly opened up to new social strata of the population and followed the emerging trends of the summer vacation on the Mediterranean coasts. To date, these transformations still profoundly affect the region,[16] which is one of the main tourist hubs in Italy and the world.[17]

Drawing on the available scientific literature on the subject, periodicals of the time, statistical data from the *Ente Nazionale Industrie Turistiche* (ENIT), and documentary material available at the Historical Archive of the Bank of Italy, the study investigates the changes that characterized the tourist activity on the shores of the largest Italian lake in the 1870–1970 period. The goal is to shed light on the repercussions of changing tourist flows on the seasonality of accommodation activity in order to better understand the assumptions and motivations behind the choices made by private operators and local institutions in developing the tourist offer. Such an analysis will be instrumental in highlighting the characteristics and trajectories of lake tourism in Italy: although sidelined in the specialized literature, this is a topic that deserves to be explored in greater detail in light of the time series on tourist activity at lake destinations.[18]

Between 1800 and 1900: in search of treatments and leisure

With the end of the Italian independence wars, the region of Lake Garda became a borderland between the Kingdom of Italy and the Austro-Hungarian Empire, whose territories stretched until the northern end of the lake. This was

15 Cfr. Centorbi, Antiche ville.

16 Cfr. Servizio Studi e Ricerca della Camera di Commercio di Verona (ed.), I turisti nei comuni della DMO Lago di Garda. Profili, indicatori e tendenze, Verona 2020, URL: https://www.vr.camcom.it/sites/default/files/uploads/statistica/turismo/report turismo DMO Garda agg agosto 2020.pdf [9. 5. 2023]; Valerio Morabito, Il Garda poco conosciuto tra i giovani, ma cresce il turismo sostenibile. In: Corriere Brescia, 22 December 2022, URL: https://brescia.corriere.it/notizie/cronaca/22_dicembre_22/garda-poco-conosciuto-giovani-ma-cresce-turismo-sostenibile-2a39b1ac-815a-11ed-8ba5-271245d4d84e.shtml [9. 5. 2023].

17 Cfr. Carlo Andrea Finotto, Vacanze al lago: il Garda guida la classifica in Italia. In: Il Sole 24 Ore, 15 August 2017, URL: https://www.ilsole24ore.com/art/vacanze-lago-garda-guida-classifica-italia-AEoST0CC [23. 5. 2023]; Lago di Garda, boom di presenze straniere: solo ad agosto 3 milioni di turisti. In: Il Gazzettino, 25 October 2021, URL: https://www.ilgazzettino.it/nordest/verona/lago_di_garda_turismo_presenze_2021-6279797.html [23. 5. 2023]; L.A., Il lago di Garda e la val di Fassa si confermano locomotive del turismo trentino da record ma l'Alpe Cimbra batte tutti con un +13% di crescita. In: il Dolomiti, 17 November 2022, URL: https://www.ildolomiti.it/economia/2022/il-lago-di-garda-e-la-val-di-fassa-si-confermano-locomotive-del-turismo-trentino-da-record-ma-lalpe-cimbra-batte-tutti-con-un-13-di-crescita [23. 5. 2023]; Valerio Morabito, La sfida è prolungare il soggiorno dei turisti. In: Corriere Brescia, 4 January 2023, URL: https://brescia.corriere.it/notizie/cronaca/23_gennaio_04/sfida-prolungare-soggiorno-turisti-35bd1fd6-8b83-11ed-8037-0e7a9204e628.shtml [23. 5. 2023].

18 Cfr. Berrino, Studi recenti, p. 157.

a region that was already notable at the time for its scenic beauty, climate, and flora and fauna: placed, between mountains and plains, it represented a sort of prelude to the Mediterranean coasts. The reputation of this area had been built up over the previous centuries on the basis of the experiences and diaries of early modern travelers[19] and, in the second half of the nineteenth century, it was beginning to take advantage of the new tourist opportunities offered by the first Austrian and German guesthouses and hotels.[20]

According to the aforementioned premises, the Trentino side of the lake in Austro-Hungarian territory, specifically the towns of Arco and Riva, was the first area to develop.[21] Thanks to Austrian expertise and capital, as well as infrastructural works by Habsburg institutions, the northern shore of the lake was involved in the spread of health resorts and tourism in Central Europe.[22] This shore was accessible from both the north, via a road from the city of Trento, and the south, via steamships stopping at Salò and Desenzano, whose embarkation could exploit the nearby local station of the Milan–Venice railway line. In addition, there was the Mori–Arco–Riva railway line, in operation between 1891 and 1936, which connected the Brenner railway with the northern shore of the lake.[23]

Although not directly overlooking the lake, Arco was able to take advantage of its proximity and climate to treat respiratory ailments. Health tourism came to Arco in the early 1870s following the presence of prominent notable figures, such as the Archduke Albert of Hasburg Lorraine, and the consolidation of therapeutic claims concerning the local climate. By means of local resources, but above all with the aid of capitals from across the Alps, the town was able to shape a tourist offer that was capable of intercepting the desire of the Central European bourgeoisie to experience a holiday stay in pursuit of health, wellness, culture, and social relations. In the last thirty years of the nineteenth century, some fifty new villas, over twenty hotels and pensions, shops and services were built to provide a comfortable stay for those who came to Arco during the winter.[24] Transport services on horse-drawn omnibuses allowed guests to reach the hotels after traveling by steamship or train, and specific regulations were introduced both to safeguard the tranquility of tourists and to handle nautical traffic.[25]

19 Cfr. Pocar, Il lago di Garda.
20 Cfr. Mazza, Gardone Riviera, p. 95. On high hôtellerie in Italy, see Kawamura, Alberghi; Carera (ed.), L'alta hôtellerie.
21 Cfr. Grazioli, L'industria del forestiere, pp. 41–54.
22 Cfr. Leonardi, L'importanza economica, p. 185; D'Agostino/Cunaccia, Clima e benessere, p. 383.
23 Cfr. Aresi, Il sistema infrastrutturale, p. 81.
24 Cfr. Grazioli, "Arco felix": realtà e miti, pp. 225–226.
25 Cfr. Zane, Quel che la storia insegna, p. 15.

Arco acted as a driving force for Riva and, in turn, benefited from the latter's concurrent tourist development. From the 1840s onwards, Riva had begun to establish its own lakeside tourist scene, albeit a modest one: as well as proposing itself as a hub for trade, thanks to the new communication routes and its location, it began to welcome travelers who wished to discover the lake.[26] In other words, in the years of the Risorgimento, the town focused on improving its services and preparing for a new phase for the local economy. Despite the uncertainties caused by the wars for Italian independence, the increase in local incomes, linked to a surge in traffic and the town's lakeside location, allowed for the improvement of the logistic infrastructure and modernization of Riva, attributing to it a central role in the dynamics of the Upper Garda. Some important decisions began to take shape around the rich and wealthy local families and the places they visited. These contributed to animating the local panorama and serving as an attraction for the tourists who began to flock to Riva at the end of the Risorgimento.[27] At the end of the nineteenth century, when signs of a decline began to appear in Arco due to an almost exclusively curative dimension,[28] Riva hosted around 10,000 visitors per year, and in 1904, this figure increased to 30,000[29].

A sort of complementary dualism emerged and consolidated: on the one hand, Arco, bucolic and peaceful, suitable for welcoming sick people and foreigners in the winter season; on the other hand, Riva, a place to visit in the middle seasons, a lively and animated center, also sought after for a period of mild rest.[30] In this context, the promising tourist sector also extended to the Brescia side of Benaco in the Kingdom of Italy.[31]

In the last quarter of the nineteenth century, Gardone Riviera (hereafter Gardone) transformed from a small fishing and farming village into a tourist resort known throughout Europe for its therapeutic practices and leisure activities. Luigi Wimmer, the town's German mayor; Dr. Ludwig Rohden, a famous doctor from Bad Lippspringe and director of Nordney's marine hospice; and Angelo Fuchs, an engineer, were instrumental in bringing about the change.[32] In 1875, thanks to a good number of financial resources, Wimmer bought the Cargnacco property and realized that Gardone could become a winter resort. Shortly afterwards, he had *Wimmer* (or *Pizzocolo*) *Hotel* built on the lakeshore, the initial nucleus of what would become *Grand Hotel Gardone Riviera*.[33]

26 Cfr. Grazioli, Quando il Garda sognava.
27 Cfr. Grazioli, L'industria del forestiere, pp. 69–74; Scala, La Riva del Garda.
28 Cfr. Grazioli, "Arco felix": realtà e miti, pp. 251–255.
29 Cfr. Marri Tonelli, Profili, p. 71.
30 Cfr. Grazioli, L'industria del forestiere, p. 78; Grazioli, Arco Felix. Da borgo rurale, p. 124; Tonelli, Ai confini.
31 Cfr. Onger, I luoghi della salute.
32 Cfr. Solitro, Benaco, p. 752; Mazza, Gardone Riviera.
33 Cfr. Mazza, Grand Hotel Gardone.

Drs. Rohden and Fuchs worked on this fortunate intuition. Dr. Rohden studied the climate of the lake and, thanks to the financial support of the widow Wimmer, published the results of his research in Austria and Germany, thus encouraging other specialists, such as Dr. Karl Königer, to devote further study to the subject. Dr. Fuchs became the *de facto* builder of the garden city into which Gardone was being transformed at the time, embellishing and transforming "l'ancor rude paesaggio peschereccio in una moderna stazione climatica: e ne fece la migliore, la più elegante del Garda"[34], as a local magazine recalled in the early 1920s.

From autumn to spring, important families from Central Europe began to visit Gardone on a regular basis and build sumptuous residences there. In this way, large foreign properties spread, characterizing the town's urban development, including those of the aforementioned Wimmer in Gardone Sopra (Cargnacco) and Gardone Sotto (Grand Hotel), those of Dr. Königer, and those belonging to important industrialists such as the Langensiepen and Heydweiller families.[35] These real estate operations were often linked to a series of hotel projects that gave Gardone a new tourist reputation. Several hotels were built, such as *Hotel Garda et Suisse*, *Grand Hotel Fasano*, and *Hotel Montebaldo*.[36] Most of these were visited by Austrians and Germans who came to the lakeshores in search of a milder climate during the winter months. The magazine *Italia Bella* described what was happening in Gardone at the turn of the nineteenth and twentieth centuries:

"Gardone Riviera, povero villaggio di pescatori sino al 1883, e da allora in poi diventato una delle più celebri stazioni climatico-alpine di Europa, rinomata per la dolcezza e regolarità del suo clima durante l'inverno, e frequentata in quella stagione, e più ancora sulla primavera, specialmente da tedeschi, come pure da russi, polacchi, norvegesi."[37]

Further evidence of these developments can be found in the reconstruction of Giuseppe Solitro, a professor from Split who had moved to Lake Garda. In 1897 he depicted the tourist movement in these terms:

"Sull'aprirsi di settembre incominciano a farsi vedere nella regione i primi tedeschi, da principio alla spicciolata, poi a piccoli gruppi, finalmente in grosse compagnie […]. Vengono per la via ferrata di Verona, a Desenzano, o per l'altra Mori-Riva: i piroscafi ne sono pieni, ogni corsa ne carica a cento e cento, ogni paese ne aspetta la sua parte. Gli alberghi, le pensioni, le ville, riattati, rinfrescati, puliti, lucenti, sono pronti a riceverli […] Sul finir del dicembre la colonia è completa: gli alberghi, le ville riboccano, ma gli arrivi non cessano […] In questi mesi la regione cambia aspetto, sembra tramutata in terra tedesca."[38]

34 A. B., Un pioniere del Garda. In: Rivista del Garda X–II (1922-23), pp. 3–4.
35 Cfr. Mazza, Gardone Riviera, pp. 146–147.
36 Cfr. Aresi, Tra caratteri internazionali e paesaggio locale.
37 Italia Bella, 6 July 1913, cit. in Mazza, Gardone Riviera, p. 83.
38 Solitro, Benaco, pp. 755–757.

Solitro's reference to the "region" does not seem out of place: the entire Riviera between Salò and Gargnano became a *loisir* space for a cultured and refined tourism. Little by little, this area became a sort of, a German-speaking enclave in Italian territory, equipped with the main amenities and services: hotels, meeting places, a casino, a Protestant church and a newspaper called *Der Bote vom Gardasee*.[39] In the 1906–1907 season, there were 8,000 guests in the local accomodation facilities, for a total of 166,000 visitors, of whom 63 percent were in Gardone, 20 percent in Salò, 16 percent in Maderno, and 1 percent in Gargnano.[40] In Salò, *Hotel Salò* was particularly important and was fully renovated in 1890. The following year, it was also equipped with a hydrotherapy bathing facility. In addition to the possibility of reserving baths on the lake or taking a trip on a rowing boat, the hotel offered medicated baths, massages, and steam baths, as a result of the collaboration with the local hospital and the University of Padua.[41] In 1907, several hotels were operating in Maderno: *Strand Hotel Bristol*, *Hotel-Pension Lignet*, *Hotel San Marco*, *Hotel-Pension Maderno & Pension Villa delle Rose*, *Park Hotel*, *Pension Victoria*, and *Hotel Cavallino Bianco*.[42] With these words, Dr. Königer described the tourist offer on the Riviera during that period:

"Die Gelegenheit zur Unterkunft ist jetzt in Salò, Gardone mit Fasano und Maderno, welche drei Orte zusammengefaßt werden müssen, soweit entwickelt, daß gleichzeitig etwa 1400 Personen bequem Quartier finden. Im März und April wird dies Zahl überschritten; es ist dann notwendig, vorher Wohnung zu bestellen. Ungefähr 40 Hotels und Pensionen liegen an der Riviera am See, an der Landstraße oder etwas höher am Bergabhang zerstreut. Fast in allen Häusern ist die Bedienung deutsch, ebenso auch die Kost. Für gute Betten sowie Heizung und elektrische Beleuchtung ist überall gesorgt. Die Hotels sind alle auch auf Pensionsgäste eingerichtet. Auch möblierte Zimmer werden in mehreren Villen vermietet, wie überhaupt die bescheidensten und verwöhntesten Ansprüche hier befriedigt werden können."[43]

Towards the end of the nineteenth century, Sirmione became also involved in the tourist take off thanks to its sulfurous water. After several technical and bureaucratic problems, in 1896, the Boiola spring was granted in concession for 22 years to Giuseppe Piana, a hydraulic industrialist from Badia Polesine, who built a spa within a couple of years. In 1889, Angelo Gennari, a local fishmonger, set up a small ten-room hotel called *I Promessi Sposi*. Gennari had sulfurous water transported here and made it available to his guests. The structure and its facilities were certainly rudimentary, but this did not prevent

39 Cfr. Simoni, Economie, paesaggi, identità, pp. 164–166; Mor (ed.), Der Bote vom Gardasee; Lombardi/Mor/Rossbach (eds.), Der Gardasee.
40 Cfr. Mazza, Maderno, p. 191.
41 Cfr. Zane, Quel che la storia insegna, p. 15.
42 Cfr. Mazza, Maderno, p. 191.
43 Koeniger, Gardone Riviera.

Gennari from planning the construction of the first wing of *Hotel Sirmione* in 1892 and then two extensions in 1896 and 1900.[44]

In the first decade of the twentieth century, Sirmione still lacked drinking water and services that would allow it to be valued at the same level as Gardone and Riva. However, this municipality on the southern shore of the lake also made it into the mundane chronicles with its 3,400 curative guests, as well as hosting many high-ranking personalities, such as Arrigo Boito and Margherita of Savoy. In this context, Gennari further increased his fortunes: he built the *Regie Terme* spa, acquired the *Piana* spa in 1911, and thus secured himself the hotel and spa monopoly on the Sirmione peninsula.[45]

The development of the eastern part of the lake was more difficult. [46] At the beginning of the twentieth century, in spite of some signs of novelty, such as the construction of a few hotels and introduction of electrical lighting in Malcesine and Cassone, the Verona side of the lake was still defined as the "Cinderella" of Benaco. The main obstacle to local development was the poor transport infrastructure. In order to foster tourism also in this part of the region, plans to build a railway and a road between Riva and Malcesine were discussed on several occasions. However, both hypotheses were put aside due to the different priorities and mutual mistrust of the Austrian and Italian authorities. Some improvements were made possible by the construction of the Verona–Caprino–Garda railway. It came into operation in the early twentieth century and stopped at several strategic locations for trips to the lake and Monte Baldo.[47]

In those years, two associative initiatives that aimed to increase the synergies between the various local operators led to the consolidation of the development of tourism on the lake. First, on February 17, 1907, *Associazione Pro Benàco* was founded with the aim of coordinating the development of the entire Benaco region.[48] Among the founding members of this new organization were prince Scipione Borghese, member of the Italian parliament and owner of the island of Garda, senator Ugo da Como, and historian Pompeo Molmenti. As well as managing its own newsletter to promote and encourage the prosperity of the region, the new body set up various sectoral commissions to deal with important issues for local development.[49]

On March 6, 1907, *Società Anonima Cooperativa Stazione Climatica di Gardone Riviera* was set up, with 101 members subscribing shares of 25 lire,

44 Cfr. Onger, Gli stabilimenti termali, p. 102.
45 Cfr. Onger, I luoghi della salute, pp. 41–42.
46 Cfr. Simoni, Economie, paesaggi, identità, p. 162.
47 Cfr. Dalla Rosa, Aspetti dello sviluppo, p. 2949.
48 Cfr. La "Pro Benàco" costituita. In: L'Eco del Baldo, 19 febbraio 1907; L'Assemblea generale della "Pro Benàco". La relazione del Presidente on. Luigi Lucchini. In: L'Eco del Baldo, 20 ottobre 1907.
49 Cfr. Mazza, Gardone mitteleuropea, p. 157.

each in 5 lire monthly instalments. The company's charter stated that its aims included buying, receiving and renting buildings, constructing buildings for hotels, cafés, beer gardens, meeting places and the like in Gardone and nearby, as well as setting up entertainment clubs, libraries, and other works aimed at making the town more attractive.[50] This is how Königer described the work of this association in those years:

"Es wird ein Kurbeitrag von 30 Cts. pro Tag bis höchstens 16,80 Lire erhoben, von dem Ärzte, Kinder unter 12 Jahren und Dienstboten befreit sind. Die Verwaltung der Einnahmen geschieht durch den hiesigen Kurverein, welchem eine größere Zahl hier ansässiger Deutscher und Einheimischer als zahlende Mitglieder angehört. Derselbe sorgt für Herstellung, Instandhaltung und Reinigung der Spazierwege, Aufstellung von Ruhebänken, Anbringung von Wegweisern, für öffentliche Konzerte, Herstellung der jetzt als Beilage zu der deutschen Zeitung 'Der Bote vom Gardasee' wöchentlich erscheinenden Fremdenliste, Auskunftserteilung usw. Er hat insbesondere die Promenade von Barbano bis Fasano geschaffen, ebenso den Kurgarten mit dem Casino und die daran anstoßenden Anlagen um die evangelische Kirche und in der Wimmerschlucht."[51]

Thus, there were two pillars on which tourism in the Lake Garda region relied during this phase: care and recreation. On these foundations, the Benaco area was able to leave behind the problems of its primary and secondary sectors and find a new path for its economic and social development. Albeit with emphatic expressions, this was also underlined by the report given by Alfredo Guastalla (mayor of Salò) and Alfredo Panza (director of *Rivista del Garda*) on the occasion of the congress of the Veneto and Garda section of *Associazione nazionale italiana per il movimento dei forestieri*, which took place between the end of May and the beginning of June 1913:

"L'agricoltura e le industrie languivano e vivevano stentamente, mentre i proprietari non avevano il coraggio di abbandonare i vecchi sistemi di colture per i nuovi portati dal progresso, e gli industriali vedevano allontanarsi le clientele attratte dalla produzione a macchina, più sollecitata e più economica, che fioriva velocemente nei grandi centri forniti di mezzi di trasporti […]. Possiamo ben essere grati a coloro i quali furono gli iniziatori della fortuna del Garda, a coloro i quali vi stabilirono le prime colonie di forestieri, ancorché fossero degli stranieri non dei nostri connazionali. I primi coraggiosi tentativi che ebbero giustamente felicissimo esito, diedero impulso al progredire di ogni ramo della vita comune: il progresso divenne necessità il giorno in cui le popolazioni del Garda si trovarono a contatto con gente che assai più di loro era avanzata nelle nuove vie del sapere e del vivere. Quando a Riva, sulla Riviera, a Garda e Desenzano si stabilirono le prime colonie fluttuanti di stranieri, gli abitanti compresero che il loro utile sarebbe maggiore qualora ai nuovi venuti fosse stato reso più piacevole e più gradito il soggiorno. Così le pubbliche amministrazioni cominciarono a meglio curare la pulizia, l'igiene e l'illuminazione, e gli istituti di credito ed il privato risparmio cominciarono ad appoggiare i tentativi di nuove imprese. Sorsero così i

50 Cfr. Mazza, Gardone mitteleuropea, pp. 156–157.
51 Koeniger, Gardone Riviera, pp. 48–49.

primi alberghi, le strade furono meglio tenute e le case private si ripulirono ed abbellirono […]. Migliorarono in non lungo volgere di anni tutte le condizioni sulle due sponde del lago: sulla bresciana segnatamente, a causa della posizione geografica, l'industria del forestiero prese in breve tempo sì grande sviluppo che i bilanci comunali salirono a cifre non sperate ed i miglioramenti crebbero di giorno in giorno. Alberghi e ville private sorsero in gran numero e fecero aumentare in misura rilevante il valore dei terreni […]. E le popolazioni locali conobbero in breve una agiatezza insperata che ha condotto alla sparizione quasi assoluta dell'analfabetismo e della pellagra, alla diminuzione delle malattie infettive col progredire dell'igiene, alla quasi sparizione delle forti correnti di emigrati che una volta rendevano deserti di uomini i paesi."[52]

Transition in the interwar period

The events of the Great War significantly changed the tourist scene on Lake Garda. With the First World War, the intense Central European season that had taken shape between the nineteenth and twentieth centuries came to an end. The region, a border area between two warring powers, was invaded by military troops, and the Italian government seized all the properties that Austrians and Germans owned on the lakeshores. The requisitions led to the degradation of many hotels, pensions, villas, and inns, the war brought tourist activity to a standstill, and at the end of the conflict, there were strong doubts about a possible resumption. The operators in the sector had to reckon with the loss of the demand previously expressed by the Central Empires, which had been the main source of tourists for the lake, and with a general economic crisis that would last for five years.[53]

Some of the most pressing issues of local tourist development were dealt with by *Comitato Nazionale del Garda*, which picked up the baton of *Associazione Pro Benàco* and Habsburg tourism institutions, such as the *Landesverkehrsrat,* with the aim of fostering the revival of tourism in the area.[54] The committee emphasized the need to modernize the lakeside towns, produce unified advertising, present the climatic and landscape qualities of the region in modern and up-to-date terms, and enhance transport infrastructures to facilitate access to the shores of the lake.[55]

In the following years, local municipalities tried to act along these lines but often lacked the coordination for which the committee had been set up. In 1929, the section of the *Gardesana orientale* between Malcesine and Torbole was inaugurated and two years later the *Gardesana occidentale* between Gargnano and Riva was opened.[56] Due to the departure of the Central European aristocracy, Arco lost part of its tourist importance and strengthened its curative dimension by continuing to host foreigners, especially during the

52 Alfredo Guastalla/Alfredo Panza, Per l'avvenire del Garda: relazione, Verona 1913, pp. 3–7, cit. in Grazioli, L'industria del forestiere, pp. 175–176.
53 Cfr. Bonardi, Suso, pp. 66, 72; Mariotti, La politica alberghiera.
54 Cfr. D'Agostino/Cunaccia, Clima e benessere, p. 393.
55 Cfr. Gerelli, I problemi; Grazioli, L'industria del forestiere, pp. 203–204.
56 Cfr. Adami, La strada Gardesana Orientale (Veronese); Zezza, La strada Gardesana.

winter.[57] Despite some fluctuations, Riva and Gardone tried to confirm their tourist dynamism: in these resorts, tourism was opening up to a new scenario, as it was becoming increasingly significant in the warmer months.[58] On the whole, Lake Garda became oriented towards a less elitist tourism, that sought to exploit multiple factors: beaches, spas, alpine stays, health resorts, rock walls, and hotels of various categories.[59]

Gardone was able to leverage the figure of D'Annunzio, who settled there on February 2, 1921; the poet's fame rekindled attention to the name of Gardone and its tourist dimension.[60] In 1921, the state began to sell Austrian and German properties. Many of them were sold to the highest bidder, allotted, and then resold;[61] the structures previously owned by foreigners were transferred to Italians, who then proceeded to renovate them. In September 1925, *Hotel du Lac* reopened after modernization. A few months later, an entrepreneur from Cremona took over *Hotel Pension Belleuve* and reopened it; the same happened to *Hotel Pensione Centrale*. In 1932, there were 22 active hotels. At the same time, Gardone benefited from new establishments dedicated to food and entertainment: patisseries, tea rooms, cafés, restaurants, and dance halls were opened.[62]

While channeling its urban development through a far-sighted town-planning scheme that maintained the park-city concept inherited from the prewar years, Gardone became an international center, quite different from the Central European one of a few decades earlier.[63] The guests, mostly foreigners but with a good percentage of Italians,[64] returned in increasing numbers: in 1930 there were 15,159 arrivals (11,167 foreigners) for a total of 154,907 nights of stay, compared to 11,087 arrivals and 105,708 nights of stay in 1929[65]. The new tourists were mainly interested in social life: they came to the Riviera in search for parties, balls, and concerts. Some hotels specialized in welcoming guests from particular countries, such as *Hotel Bella Riva* in Fasano, which catered mostly to the British, and the winter season became mainly summer around 1930[66].

57 Cfr. Tegani, Gemme del Trentino, II: Arco; Caratteri e necessità dell'industria alberghiera trentina, p. 188; Capuzzo, Italiani, p. 229.
58 Cfr. Vecchi, Il Garda è una stazione estiva.
59 Cfr. Capuzzo, Italiani, pp. 230–231.
60 Cfr. Mazza, Gardone Riviera, pp. 113–114.
61 Cfr. Mazza, Gardone mitteleuropea, p. 190.
62 Cfr. Mazza, Gardone Riviera, pp. 114–115.
63 Cfr. Ibidem, pp. 116–119.
64 During those years, the arrival on the shores of Benaco of tourists from all over the world can also be witnessed in the experience of a hotel owned by a British hotelier on the eastern shore of the lake. Cfr. Sargint, Leonardo Walsh, pp. 51–58.
65 In 1930, the nationalities of the 11,167 foreigners were as follows: 849 British, 752 Germans, 643 Austrians, 436 North Americans, 384 Swiss, 317 Dutch and Scandinavians, 244 Czechoslovaks, 222 French, 150 Hungarians, 129 Poles, 123 Central and South Americans, 66 Belgians, 30 Balkans, 20 Yugoslavs, 16 Spanish and Portuguese, 3 Egyptians, 3 Russians, 57 other nationalities. Cfr. Riepilogo annuale del movimento Forestieri avvenuto in Gardone Riviera nell'anno 1930. In: Gardone Riviera e il Lago di Garda 23 (1931), febbraio-marzo.
66 Cfr. Mazza, Gardone Riviera, pp. 119–120.

The dimension of care did not disappear from the tourist dynamics on the shores of Benaco. In some ways, it asserted itself more strongly than in the past. If, at the beginning of the twentieth century, some hotels refused to accept people suffering from tuberculosis, the fascist regime's failure to adopt a policy of prevention against TB required the costly construction of sanatoriums. Between the two world wars, a number of facilities that based their activity on the beneficial action of the sun's rays and heliotherapy treatments were built, such as the *Villa di Rose* sanatorium in Fasano and the *Villa del Sole* clinic in Desenzano. In addition, there were also children's prevention and prophylaxis colonies at *Villa Alba* in Gardone, former *Villa Zanardelli* in Maderno, and *Villa Bellini* in Salò. The controversy regarding rich and sick German-speaking guests that had characterized the early years of the twentieth century, amidst fear of contagion and an anti-Austrian spirit,[67] gave way to patriotic solidarity after the First World War. The hospitalization of war veterans and patients suffering from lung diseases in the sanatoriums of the Riviera paved the way for a popular climatic holiday, gradually removing the exclusively elitist character that had marked the beginning of Lake Garda tourism.[68]

At the end of the conflict, the economy of Riva was in tatters and its tourism sector had to start all over again on a path that had seemed unstoppable a short time before. At the beginning of the 1920s, despite the lack of customers from across the Brenner Pass, which was not completely counterbalanced by Italian visitors, the Upper Garda resort tried to recover by renovating its hotels, opening the New Casino, and organizing sports events thanks to the Benacense Sports Club. Around the middle of the decade, a fairly good period began for the local economy: the private initiative was flanked by the public one with the inauguration of the ENIT office in Riva, and the numbers of tourists were gradually improving, although still far from pre-war levels. In 1926, in the district of Riva, 38,408 arrivals were reported for a total of 242,957 nights of stay.[69]

At the end of the 1920s, there were more than twenty hotels and a thousand beds between Torbole and Riva, not counting trattorias with accommodations. There were luxurious hotels that were part of international circuits, such as the *Grand Hotel Riva*, *Grand Hotel Sole d'Oro*, and *Palace Hotel Lido*, but there were also facilities that tried to intercept customers looking for accommodations at lower price.[70] Even on the Trentino side of Lake Garda, new trends were beginning to surface. While continuing to emphasize the

67 Cfr. Bagnaresi/Wedekind, Turisti per cosa; Paris, Conflitti; Pasini, The Disputed Lake.
68 Cfr. Onger, I luoghi della salute, pp. 42–43.
69 Cfr. Grazioli, L'industria del forestiere, pp. 207–211.
70 Cfr. Tegani, Gemme del Trentino, III: Riva del Garda; G.S., Torbole.

reception of the most prestigious guests, the local tourist offer was trying to broaden the pool of its potential customers. In other words, from an exclusively elite tourism, Riva opened up to middle-class tourism. As in Gardone, in order to attract these tourists, advertising increasingly used photographs linked to sun exposure and bathing activities: the portraits were mainly of women in bathing attire. The spring and summer holidays were becoming popular and attractive,[71] with the shores of the lake echoing what was beginning to happen on the northern Tyrrhenian and Adriatic coasts.[72]

This new clientele, their new habits, and the significant infrastructural improvements that marked the early 1930s[73] were not enough to counterbalance the negative effects of a series of national and international events on local tourism. The Quota 90, Germany's political and economic instability, and the stock market crash of 1929 hit the tourism hard. After a recovery in the three years 1925–1927, it quickly lost ground. Between 1930 and 1933, the arrivals of foreigners in Riva showed a continuous decline, as did employment in general in the other economic sectors. Some hotels, such as *Sanatorium von Hartungen* and *Gran Hotel Torbole*, were transformed into prevention centers; others, such as *Hotel Riva* and *Hotel Lido*, were forced to struggle with several difficulties, emphasizing the lack of quality customers.[74] As Grazioli underlines, it was not until tourism definitively ceased to be elitist and transformed into a mass phenomenon that the numbers of visitors increased.[75]

Mass summer tourism in the post-war period

As the Great War, the Second World War brought the flow of tourists to Lake Garda to a halt. In particular, during the six hundred days of the Italian Social Republic, which had established its headquarters on Benaco's shores, the structure of this region underwent profound changes. Many large hotels were requisitioned and transformed into hospitals. The most prestigious villas became the headquarters of ministries or the private residences of prominent members of the fascist regime and Nazi military apparatus.[76] Roads and railways were severely compromised by bombings, while the few boats in service on the lake were largely damaged by the fighting and usage.[77]

71 Cfr. Caratteri e necessità, p. 188; Grazioli, L'industria del forestiere, pp. 219–220.
72 Cfr. Battilani, Vacanze di pochi, pp. 256–257.
73 Cfr. Silvestri, La strada gardesana; Bonardi, La strada gardesana occidentale; Adami, La strada gardesana orientale; Costanzo Gatta, La gardesana di D'Annunzio. In: Corriere della Sera, 10 May 2018, URL: https://brescia.corriere.it/notizie/cronaca/18_maggio_10/gardesana-d-annunzio-5784a6aa-542b-11e8-9a5b-9f97999a0713.shtml [23. 5. 2023].
74 Cfr. Grazioli, L'industria del forestiere, pp. 225–228.
75 Cfr. Ibidem, pp. 227–228.
76 Cfr. Chiarini (ed.), Mussolini ultimo atto; Galante, La presenza militare tedesca; Festa, Polvere nera.
77 Cfr. Pasini, La rinascita.

The difficulties affected all Lake Garda's main centers, but they particularly resonated with those that had benefited the most from the influx of foreigners.[78] At the beginning of the 1950s, when the affluence of Italian tourists allowed various localities in Trentino to look to the future with confidence, Riva was still described by the reports of the local branch of the Bank of Italy as fallen.[79] The local population, largely made up of hotel staff, souvenir dealers, and boatmen, was employed for five-six months of the year, and during the winter, being out of work, lived off the few savings of the summer season. In light of the 130,000 registered visitors and the estimated average daily expenditure of 2,000 liras per tourist, it was calculated that Riva generated from the tourist activity a monetary contribution of 260 million liras in one year, a figure far removed from those of other smaller Trentino municipalities, such as Cavalese (468 million liras), Levico (428 million liras), and Folgaria (426 million liras).[80]

Despite these difficult conditions, institutions and local operators did not give up on relaunching the tourist vocation that Benaco had cultivated between the nineteenth and twentieth centuries and consolidated in the period between the two world wars. As early as the winter of 1945, work began on resuming navigation, *Ente del Garda* was founded in 1946, and extensive debates on the lake's future as a tourist destination took place in institutional bodies and newspapers. A number of major issues became the center of attention to relaunch the lake: restoration of hospitality facilities, especially the historic hotels; reconstruction of roads and railways; modernization of the lake navigation system; strengthening of promotional activities; and reorganization of the regional institutional system to foster cooperation.[81]

After the Second World War, owing to the great efforts of local public and private operators,[82] the tourism dynamics on the shores of Lake Garda underwent significant changes. The first tourists were the allied soldiers stationed in Italy and Germany,[83] but soon the resumption of the arrival of visitors resembled the developments of the 1930s. The process that had pushed holidays on the lake to follow the trends established in Mediterranean seaside resorts resumed with greater vigor: beaches, sun, and warmth to be enjoyed during the summer season were definitively affirmed as the new elements of attraction

78 Cfr. Roma, Archivio Storico della Banca d'Italia (ASBI), Banca d'Italia (BI), Studi, Pratiche, n. 452, f.1, sf. 7.
79 ASBI, BI, Studi, Pratiche, n. 463, f. 1, sf. 16.
80 Cfr. Ibidem.
81 Cfr. Comini, La Comunità del Garda, pp. 13–15; Pasini, La rinascita, pp. 111–116; Pasini, Il turismo sul lago di Garda; Pasini/Semeraro, Endogenous or Exogenous Recovery, pp. 35–40.
82 Cfr. Pasini/Semeraro, Endogenous or Exogenous Recovery, pp. 47–48.
83 Cfr. Pasini, I soldati alleati.

for an increasingly wide and diversified clientele, both in terms of nationality and social extraction.[84]

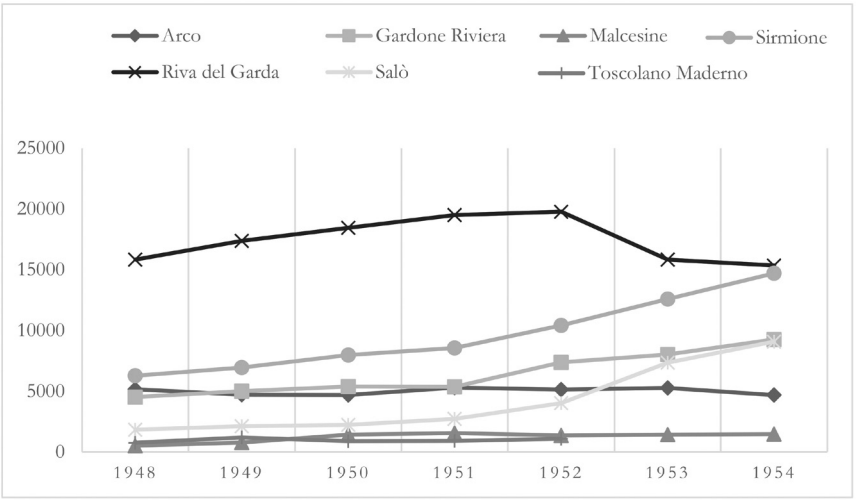


Fig. 1: Italian arrivals, 1948–1954.[85]

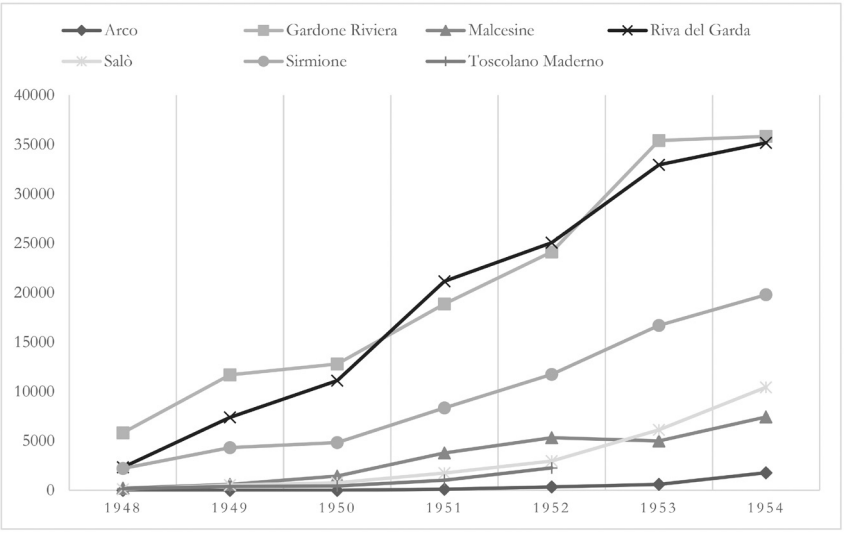


Fig. 2: Foreign arrivals, 1948–1954.[86]

84 Cfr. L'afflusso dei turisti stranieri ha superato tutti i precedenti. In: Corriere della Sera, 21 April 1957, p. 8; Mario Cervi, Il Garda di buon umore. In: Corriere della Sera, 21 July 1959, p. 7; Mario Cervi, Il Garda è diventato un "lago per famiglie". In: Corriere della Sera, 3 August 1965, p. 4.

85 ENIT, Statistica del turismo. Bollettino tecnico trimestrale dell'Ente Nazionale Industrie Turistiche, Roma 1949–55 (data processed by the author).

86 ENIT, Statistica del turismo. Bollettino tecnico trimestrale dell'Ente Nazionale Industrie Turistiche, Roma 1949–55 (data processed by the author).

The recovery of tourist flows after the Second World War is confirmed by the data concerning the movement of tourists accommodated in the lake resorts included in the quarterly bulletins of ENIT. Taking into consideration the resorts of Arco, Gardone, Malcesine, Riva, Salò, Sirmione, and Toscolano Maderno, we found that in 1948, the main Lake Garda resorts had already approached the 35,000 Italian arrivals, a threshold that they would surpass in 1949 thanks to the constant increase in the following years (Figure 1). Foreign tourist arrivals grew even more significantly, and they once again became a real driving force in the region's tourism dynamics. Most of the visitors to the shores of Lake Garda were Germans from West Germany,[87] but there were also British, Swedes, Austrians, Americans, Belgians, French, and Dutch.[88] Within six years – i.e., almost a decade after the end of the Second World War – the number of foreigners arriving in the main Lake Garda resorts rose by 918.7 percent, from 10,838 in 1948 to 110,409 in 1954. Riva[89] (+1,413.33 %), Gardone (+515.27 %) and Sirmione[90] (+797.05 %) stood out in terms of growth in foreign arrivals (Figure 2). At the same time, there was also an increase in the number of nights of stay, which, as in the case of arrivals, were mainly foreigners (Figures 3 and 4). The total number of nights attributable to foreign tourists grew from 40,046 in 1948 to 384,975 in 1954; a percentage increase of 861.33 percent driven primarily by the numbers registered in Riva (+3,336.18 %).

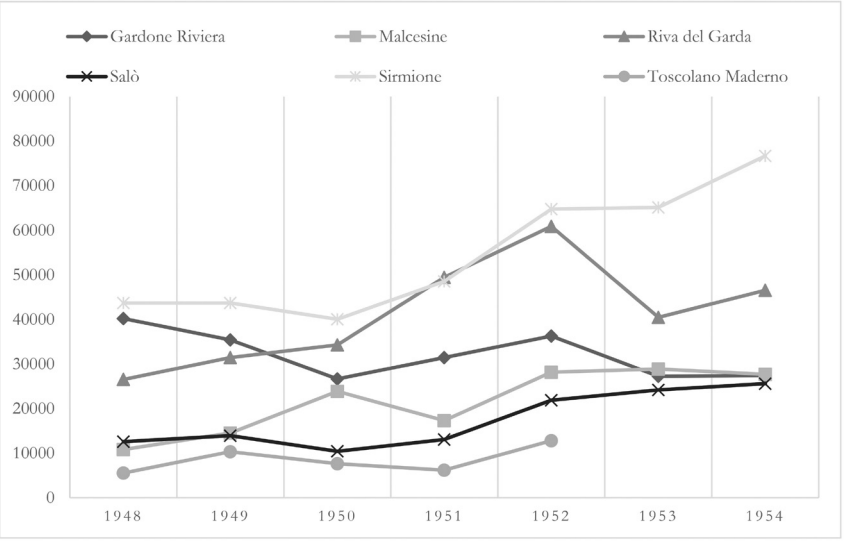


Fig. 3: Italian nights of stay, 1948–1954.[91]

87 Cfr. ASBI, BI, Studi, Pratiche, n. 469, f. 1, sf. 5; ASBI, BI, Studi, Pratiche, n. 472, f. 1; ASBI, BI, Studi, Pratiche, n. 473, f. 1, sf. 11.
88 Cfr. Rapetti, La ripresa turistica.
89 Cfr. ASBI, BI, Studi, Pratiche, n. 462, f. 1, sf. 19.
90 Cfr. ASBI, BI, Studi, Pratiche, n. 472, f. 1.
91 ENIT, Statistica del turismo. Bollettino tecnico trimestrale dell'Ente Nazionale Industrie Turistiche, Roma 1949–55 (data processed by the author).

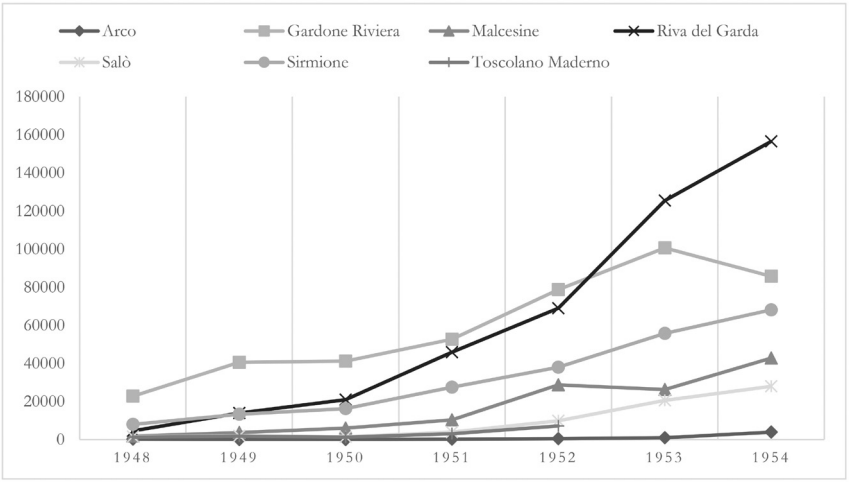


Fig. 4: Foreign nights of stay, 1948–1954.[92]

In addition to displaying the recovery of tourist flows after the Second World War, the statistical data collected by ENIT also confirm the seasonal nature of these flows. In other words, they demonstrate how the tendency established in the 1930s for a holiday on the shores of Lake Garda to be spent mainly in the summer months found new vigor in the 1950s. The return of foreigners to Benaco was once again driven by the open-air holiday, in search of sun and beaches. Figure 5 shows a graphic representation of the concentration of arrivals of both Italian and foreign tourists in the hottest months of the year, with dizzying peaks in August. In 1948, Italian arrivals between June and September accounted for more than 59 percent of total Italian arrivals in that year, a trend that was maintained over time since similar values (57 %) were recorded six years later, in 1954. Regarding foreigners, the concentration of arrivals in the summer months was even more marked: they accounted for 74.67 percent in 1948 and 70.10 percent in 1954.[93] Not considering Arco, which was affected by quite singular dynamics linked to its curative dimension, we can observe that the clear majority of nights of stay were registered between June and September (Figure 6). In these four months as far as Italians were concerned, 56.85 percent of the nights of stay were recorded in 1948 and 66.35 percent in 1954; as regards foreigners, 64.91 percent of the nights of stay were listed in 1948 and 73.54 percent in 1954.[94]

92 ENIT, Statistica del turismo. Bollettino tecnico trimestrale dell'Ente Nazionale Industrie Turistiche, Roma 1949–55 (data processed by the author).
93 Cfr. ENIT, Statistica del turismo. Bollettino tecnico trimestrale dell'Ente Nazionale Industrie Turistiche, Roma 1949–55.
94 Cfr. Ibidem.

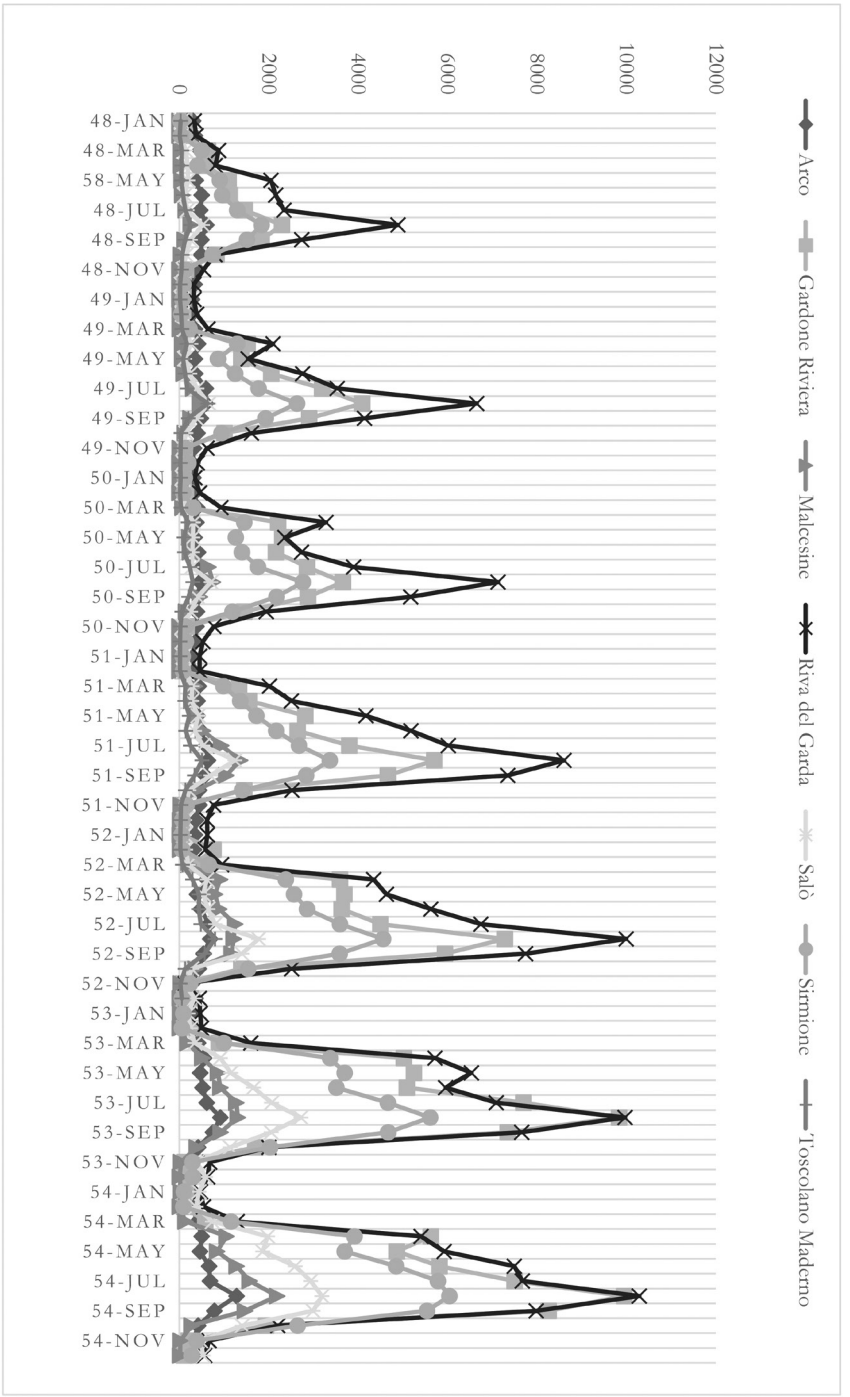


Fig. 5: Arrivals per month, 1948–1954.[95]

95 ENIT, Statistica del turismo. Bollettino tecnico trimestrale dell'Ente Nazionale Industrie Turistiche, Roma 1949–55 (data processed by the author).

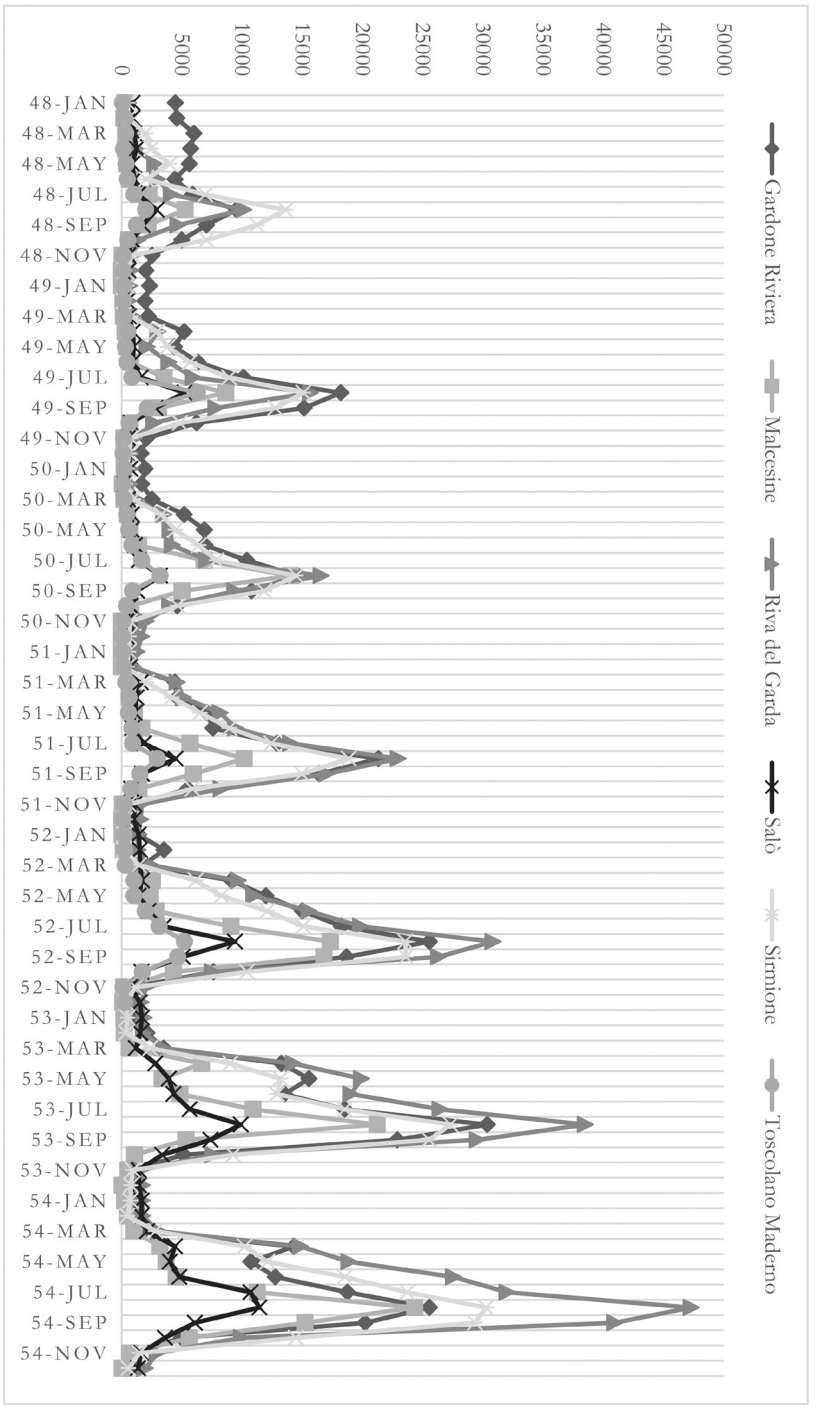


Fig. 6: Nights of stay per month, 1948–1954.[96]

96 ENIT, Statistica del turismo. Bollettino tecnico trimestrale dell'Ente Nazionale Industrie Turistiche, Roma 1949–55 (data processed by the author).

Clearly, the desire to return to welcoming tourists and to meet the demands of an increasingly varied clientele also involved the need to renovate and update the accommodation offer. An interesting example of the efforts made by Benaco's tourist operators after the Second World War is *Società anonima Terme e Grandi Alberghi di Sirmione*. After approving several capital increases and obtaining access to a long-term loan from *Cassa di Risparmio delle Province Lombarde*, the new shareholders decided to heavily intervene on its facilities. The aim was to achieve an overall improvement in the accommodation offer by pursuing a strategy based on diversification and innovation. Diversification took the form of a complex of hotels of different sizes and levels: the company acquired three hotels aimed at welcoming customers with different needs and spending powers. Innovative elements were introduced especially in the spa infrastructure: the equipment was renewed, a new large spa was built, and the staff became specialized in the treatment of rhinogenic deafness. This prepared the basis for the company to relaunch the development of tourism in Sirmione and welcome the large flow of mass tourism that would mark the post-war period.[97]

The information available in the annual reports drawn up by the Brescia and Verona branches of the Bank of Italy confirms that accommodation based on large luxury hotels was no longer a priority[98] for Lake Garda. During the 1950s, there was an increase in the number of second-category hotels designed to accommodate the growing numbers of Italian, German, French, English, Dutch, Belgian, Austrian, Scandinavian, and American tourists,[99] who came to Benaco by means of a transport system that was being strengthened at the time.[100] Also campsites became particularly popular as this kind of accommodation was well suited to exploiting the lake, its climate, and its spaces during the hottest months of the year. Some sources identify the first example of a structure of this type in a business started in 1952 following the initiative of the municipal administration of Lazise, in the province of Verona.[101] As early as 1954, on the Brescia shores of the lake, there were 16 camp parks with a total capacity of 1,390 tent and RV sites, which were estimated to offer accommodation to about 40,000 people, mostly foreigners, during the year.[102] In the second half of the 1950s, despite careful supervision aimed at avoiding

97 Cfr. Semeraro/Pasini, Strategies.

98 In any case, luxury accommodation structures continued to exist, and more were in development at the time. In 1958, on the Verona shore, a small luxury village was built; it included a main structure with bar and restaurant services and was surrounded by 10 annexed buildings which offered a total of 40 beds. Cfr. ASBI, BI, Pratiche, n. 882, doc. 12.

99 Cfr. ASBI, BI, Studi, Pratiche, n. 478, f. 1, sf. 9; ASBI, BI, Studi, Pratiche, n. 877, doc. 6; ASBI, BI, Studi, Pratiche, n. 890, doc. 5; ASBI, BI, Studi, Pratiche, n. 897, doc. 14.

100 Works for the road Verona–Lake were completed and the construction for the motorway Brescia–Padua was officially announced. Cfr. ASBI, BI, Studi, Pratiche, n. 869, doc. 12.

101 Cfr. Turismo in ottima salute. In: Corriere del Garda 1 (1966), 1, p. 5; Pino Casarola, "Braccio di ferro" sul Veronese fra albergatori e "campeggiatori". In: Corriere del Garda 1 (1966), 3, p. 1.

102 Cfr. ASBI, BI, Studi, Pratiche, n. 472, f. 1.

abusive forms of tourism and owing to the introduction of good management practices already adopted abroad, the number of these structures continued to grow on both the Brescia and Verona shores of the lake. In addition to mobile campsites, fixed campsites were spreading, with a total number of Italian and foreign visitors exceeding 300,000.[103]

During the 1960s, the growth of tourist flows toward Lake Garda did not stop, and their dynamics were enriched with new factors and dynamics. This emerges in particular from the sources describing the significant ferment that characterized the development of tourism on the eastern shore of the lake, now far removed from the difficulties of the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries.[104] Foreigners not only continued to increase in terms of arrivals and nights of stay, but also better structured their trips and presence in the area.[105] The Germans, Dutch, French, and Danes organized efficient tourist villages for their compatriots, who were sent in large groups to the lake by the travel agencies of their own countries.[106] In other words, through the construction and management of new accommodation facilities and the intermediation of agencies at home, foreigners were no longer limited to taking advantage of the region's tourist offer: they themselves shaped it by adapting it to the needs of their compatriots.

If tourist accommodations and intermediaries were undergoing significant changes, the same cannot be said regarding the seasonal dynamics of local tourism. The fact that tourism on Lake Garda continued to develop in the summer months, with the season opening at Easter and closing between September and October, is confirmed by the chronicles of the time.[107] There were frequent references to the need to plan tourist activities beyond the warmer months of the year: conferences were organized to study the relaunch of winter tourism,[108] proposals were made in local newspapers,[109] and the climatic qualities of the region in the colder months were promoted.[110] However, finding solutions that would allow the various resorts on Lake Garda to coordinate and specialize, strengthening and expanding the lake's attractiveness in seasonal terms, was

103 Cfr. ASBI, BI, Studi, Pratiche, n. 479, f. 1; ASBI, BI, Studi, Pratiche, n. 874, doc. 14; ASBI, BI, Studi, Pratiche, n. 877, doc. 6; ASBI, BI, Studi, Pratiche, n. 879, doc. 14; ASBI, BI, Pratiche, n. 882, doc. 12; ASBI, BI, Studi, Pratiche, n. 885, doc. 9; ASBI, BI, Studi, Pratiche, n. 889, doc. 4.

104 Cfr. Simoni, Le due riviere.

105 In particular, the Germans continued to represent the majority of foreign tourists and purchased numerous properties in the region. Cfr. Robert Spagnolo, Il Benaco diventerà un lago tedesco?. In: Corriere del Garda 2 (1967), 11, p. 1; Bernhard, Vieni un po' in Italia.

106 Cfr. ASBI, BI, Studi, Pratiche, n. 903, doc. 8; ASBI, BI, Studi, Pratiche, n. 920, doc. 6; Pagenstecher, L'immagine dell'Italia, pp. 118–120.

107 Cfr. Iniziata la stagione turistica: molti problemi da risolvere. In: Corriere del Garda 2 (1967), 7-8, p. 1.

108 Cfr. ASBI, BI, Studi, Pratiche, n. 885, doc. 9.

109 Cfr. Angelo Candeli, Troppo breve a Sirmione la stagione turistica. In: Corriere del Garda 1 (1966), 5, p. 5; Prolungare la stagione turistica. In: Corriere del Garda 2 (1967), 15, p. 3.

110 Cfr. Mariano Messini, Il clima invernale del Garda aiuta a mantenerci in salute. In: Corriere del Garda 1 (1966), 4, p. 3; Idem, Molto distensivo il clima invernale del Garda. In: Corriere del Garda 1 (1966), 5, p. 3.

not easy. Indeed, the administrative division of the region into three different provinces was a major obstacle to regional development.[111]

Conclusions

The article has reconstructed the main phases of Lake Garda's tourism development between the nineteenth and twentieth centuries. By focusing on the analysis of its seasonal dynamics, the study identified the crucial elements in the transformation of tourism demand and offer in the region. Three main phases shaped the context in which a complete paradigm shift took place. The initial winter tourism, that developed in the second half of the nineteenth century, was followed by a transitional phase in the interwar period, which definitely shifted into summer tourism after the Second World War. In many ways, the development of tourism at Lake Garda seems to have followed the trajectory of some Mediterranean resorts and other Italian lakes.

In the second half of the nineteenth century, when this region was still divided between the Austro-Hungarian Empire and the Kingdom of Italy, tourism developed in a similar way to other winter resorts. Its path was fully embedded in the broader European dynamics of spa, climate and curative stays.[112] The intervention of doctors, such as Rohden, Koeniger, and Nistler, promoted the climatic properties of the lake and increased the interest of the Central European bourgeoisie, who became the protagonists of the development of the area. Through the purchase of villas, the establishment of accommodation facilities, and their direct intervention in the choices of local administrations, wealthy Austrians and Germans provided new opportunities to a backward region that had experienced an intreasing marginalization of both its agriculture and manufacturing activities.

As in Liguria in the late nineteenth century,[113] on Benaco's shores, *hivernants* sought not only care and tranquility, but also leisure and entertainment. Public works aimed at enhancing recreational and entertainment facilities were added to those already planned for the improvement of hygiene conditions. This trend was confirmed and intensified between the two world wars, when the sheltering of Great War veterans and the need to provide a refuge for TB patients strengthened the curative dimension of the lake, without however preventing the main towns, such as Gardone, from a new search for mundanity.

The interwar period was an important transitional phase because a new seasonality began to take hold of the dynamics of tourism on the lake. From the late 1920s onwards, encouraged by enhanced road connections, tourists chose to spend their holidays on the shores of Lake Garda mainly in the warmer months. Here, as on the Côte d'Azur or on parts of the Tyrrhenian and

111 Cfr. Tino Bino, Programmare il futuro turistico del Benaco. In: Corriere del Garda 1 (1966), 9, p. 1.
112 Cfr. Battilani, Vacanze di pochi, pp. 112–118; Berrino, Studi recenti, p. 165.
113 Cfr. Berrino, Storia del turismo, p. 66; Zanini, Un secolo di turismo, pp. 17–39.

Adriatic coasts, an interest in summer bathing also developed. There were two main reasons for this, as with the above-mentioned seaside resorts. Firstly, the consequences of the Great War: the defeat of the Central Empires led to the decline of the landed aristocracy and the post-war crisis dealt a serious blow to the rentiers who were the traditional *hivernants*.[114] Secondly, the new concept of sun and water: the myth of sunbathing was born, the beach took on a central role in bathing life as bathing lost its therapeutic function and became a moment of leisure.[115] On this basis, in the interwar years, like other lakes, Benaco participated in the emerging democratization of tourism by becoming the destination for trips and stays of larger segments of the population.[116]

These new trends, interrupted by the events of the Second World War, became definitively established after the conflict, when Lake Garda took a new crucial step forward in its specialization as a tourist destination. The increase in economic prosperity that produced a corresponding increase in demand for beaches, water, and sunshine generated a tourist movement never experienced before.[117] Like other Italian tourist resorts, by reacting quickly to the destruction left by the war and developing a diversified range of accommodations,[118] Benaco entered the age of mass tourism as a true protagonist. Renovated old structures, new medium-level facilities, and a growing number of campsites allowed local operators to intercept international tourist flows and meet the varied needs of a clientele that came once again to the shores of the lake mainly to enjoy its tourist offer during the summer season.

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114 Cfr. Berrino, Storia del turismo, pp. 203–204.
115 Cfr. Battilani, Vacanze di pochi, pp. 119–120.
116 Cfr. Berrino, Studi recenti, pp. 169–171.
117 Cfr. Berrino, Storia del turismo, pp. 247–248.
118 Cfr. Battilani, Vacanze di pochi, pp. 264–267.

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Riccardo Semeraro, Le stagioni turistiche del Lago di Garda. Dall'inverno elitario all'estate di massa, 1870–1970

Le innovazioni tecnologiche della rivoluzione industriale determinarono significativi stravolgimenti sui consolidati assetti economici della regione del Benaco. Tali mutamenti si resero particolarmente evidenti soprattutto nel secondo Ottocento, allorquando la ferrovia ridimensionò il ruolo delle acque come vie di trasporto, le produzioni agricole locali videro la propria rilevanza sensibilmente ridotta a fronte della crescita delle rendite cerealicole nella pianura e l'arretramento di attività tradizionali legate a seta, lino e carta venne compensato dallo sviluppo dell'industria cotoniera. Anche in conseguenza dell'avvento della navigazione a vapore e della diffusione del modello dell'hotellerie svizzera di lusso, si registrarono i primi significativi sviluppi del settore turistico. Negli anni del passaggio del Veneto al Regno d'Italia, l'Alto Garda trentino divenne la provincia meridionale dell'impero austro-ungarico rappresentandone una sorta di promontorio dal clima mediterraneo. Su queste basi, questa regione conobbe una notorietà fino ad allora sconosciuta e che dipendeva dall'assunzione di una fisionomia per molti versi nuova, quella del luogo di cura. Arco e Riva furono i primi comuni a venire coinvolti in tali dinamiche che si estesero successivamente a importanti centri della Riviera bresciana e che trovarono ulteriore spinta nella contestuale valorizzazione delle acque termali di Sirmione.

Gli anni tra le due guerre rappresentarono una significativa fase di transizione visto che una nuova stagionalità dell'attività turistica cominciò ad affermarsi. Verso la fine degli anni Venti, sulla base di un potenziamento della rete infrastrutturale oltre che dell'affermazione di una "cultura del sole", i turisti sceglievano in maniera crescente di visitare il Benaco nei mesi più caldi dell'anno. Ad ogni modo, per assistere a un definitivo punto di svolta nelle sorti turistiche del lago si dovette attendere il secondo dopoguerra. L'affermazione del turismo quale "scelta" preponderante sul Garda, infatti, si impose in termini numericamente e qualitativamente straordinari a partire dagli anni Cinquanta, sino a divenire l'asse portante dell'economia della regione. Trasformare le case in locande, le cantine in trattorie e i prati vicino al lago in campeggi rappresentò la prima via intrapresa per abbracciare definitivamente la vocazione turistica; attraverso di essa prese corpo un travaso sempre più significativo

dall'agricoltura, dall'allevamento e dalla pesca alla gestione di ristoranti e alberghi. Parallelamente gli investimenti nell'edilizia vennero progressivamente indirizzati alla ricezione turistica condizionando, a loro volta, le scelte delle pubbliche amministrazioni e segnando profondamente, in non pochi casi, il territorio e la fisionomia dei paesi.

L'impatto del turismo in termini economici divenne sempre più rilevante. La crescita vertiginosa del numero di visitatori, sospinta dalla infrastrutturazione del territorio e dal rinnovato appeal esercitato sulle popolazioni del nord Europa, fece entrare pienamente il Benaco nell'età del turismo di massa. Si delineava una nuova forma di turismo, assai diverso da quello delle ville di delizia del Settecento e dei grandi alberghi del secolo successivo, un turismo caratterizzato da nuove clientele, nuove esigenze e nuove dinamiche. In altre parole, non si trattava più di un'industria del forestiero per élite alla ricerca di benessere e salutari condizioni climatiche nei mesi meno caldi, ma un turismo che progressivamente si apriva a nuove fasce sociali della popolazione e seguiva le tendenze che andavano imponendosi sulle coste del Mediterraneo. Cambiavano pertanto strutture e momenti della vacanza, delineando nuove dinamiche nella stagionalità del turismo benacense: centrali divenivano strutture ricettive di medio livello, seconde case, campeggi da sfruttarsi nei mesi estivi, in particolare tra luglio e agosto.

Su questi aspetti si sofferma il presente articolo. Facendo ricorso alla letteratura scientifica disponibile sul tema, a periodici d'epoca, a dati statistici dell'Ente Nazionale Industrie Turistiche (ENIT), così come a materiale documentale conservato presso l'Archivio Storico della Banca d'Italia, l'articolo indaga le mutazioni che caratterizzarono l'attività turistica sulle rive del più grande lago d'Italia tra tardo Ottocento e secondo dopoguerra. L'obiettivo è duplice: gettare luce sulle ripercussioni che la trasformazione dei flussi turistici determinò nei tempi e ritmi dell'attività ricettiva al fine di poter meglio comprendere presupposti e ragioni delle scelte compiute da operatori privati e istituzioni locali nella formulazione dell'offerta turistica; mettere in evidenza profili e traiettorie del turismo lacuale in Italia.

Riccardo Semeraro, Die Tourismussaisonen am Gardasee. Vom elitären Winter zum überfüllten Sommer, 1870–1970

Die technologischen Erfindungen im Zuge der industriellen Revolution führten in den konsolidierten Wirtschaftsverhältnissen rund um den Gardasee zu einschneidenden Umwälzungen. Besonders deutlich traten diese in der zweiten Hälfte des 19. Jahrhunderts hervor, als die Eisenbahn die Bedeutung der Wasserwege als Transportwege zurückdrängte, die lokalen Agrarprodukte angesichts der steigenden Erträge aus dem Getreideanbau in der Ebene an Relevanz verloren und der Rückgang des traditionellen Seiden-, Leinen- und Papiergewerbes durch den Ausbau der Baumwollindustrie kompensiert wurde. Auch im Tourismussektor kam es in Folge der Einführung der Dampfschifffahrt und der Verbreitung des Schweizer Models der Luxushotellerie zu ersten bedeutenden Veränderungen. Durch den Übergang von Venetien zum *Regno d'Italia* wurde das Trentiner Gebiet *Alto Garda* zur südwestlichsten Region der Habsburgermonarchie, die mit ihrem mediterranen Klima bald einen bis dahin ungeahnten Bekanntheitsgrad erlangte, was auch mit ihrem neuen Auftreten als Kurort zusammenhing. Diesen Wandel vollzogen am Gardasee zuerst die Ortschaften Arco und Riva im Norden, bald auch die wichtigsten Zentren an der Seeküste von Brescia; die Aufwertung des Thermalwassers von Sirmione lieferte einen weiteren Anschub in diese Richtung.

Die Zwischenkriegszeit stellte eine wichtige Übergangsphase in der Neuausrichtung der Tourismussaison dar. Ab Ende der 1920er Jahre setzte der Ausbau der Infrastruktur ein, parallel dazu kam die „Sonnen-Kultur" auf, sodass bald die touristische Nachfrage aufkam, den Gardasee auch in den warmen Monaten des Jahres zu besuchen. Zu einem definitiven Wendepunkt im Seetourismus kam es aber erst in der zweiten Nachkriegszeit. Ab den 1950er Jahren wuchs der Tourismussektor am Gardasee in quantitativer und qualitativer Hinsicht erheblich, sodass er sich zur tragenden Säule der regionalen Wirtschaft etablierte. Häuser wurden in Gaststätten, Keller in Tavernen und Wiesen am Seeufer in Campingplätze umgewandelt. Im Rahmen der allmählichen Ausrichtung der regionalen Wirtschaft auf den Tourismus wurden Tätigkeiten in der Landwirtschaft, Viehzucht und Fischfang zugunsten von solchen in Restaurants und Hotels aufgegeben. Parallel dazu konzentrierten sich Investitionen im Bausektor immer stärker auf den Tourismus und auch die Entscheidungsträger der öffentlichen Verwaltung stießen in dieselbe Richtung. Dies hinterließ in nicht wenigen Fällen tiefgreifende Spuren im Landschaftsbild wie auch in der Gestaltung ganzer Ortschaften.

Die wirtschaftliche Bedeutung des Tourismus wuchs immer mehr. Der schwindelerregende Anstieg der Besucherzahlen, angefacht durch den regionalen Infrastrukturausbau und der neuen Ausstrahlungskraft des Gardasees als Destination für Tourist*innen aus Nordeuropa, führte die Region voll und ganz

in das Zeitalter des Massentourismus über. Diese neue Form des Tourismus unterschied sich maßgeblich von jenem der Villen des 18. und jenem der Grand Hotels des 19. Jahrhunderts: Er war nun auf eine neue Klientel mit neuen Bedürfnissen ausgerichtet und unterlag somit neuen Dynamiken. Er zielte nicht mehr auf eine Elite, die auf der Suche nach Wohlergehen und einem der Gesundheit gewogenem Klima in den kälteren Monaten des Jahres den Gardasee besuchte. Nun wurden andere soziale Bevölkerungsschichten zentral, was die Strukturen und den Zeitpunkt des Urlaubs und somit auch die saisonalen Dynamiken des Tourismus am Gardasee grundlegend veränderte: Aufnahmestrukturen von mittlerem Niveau, Zweitwohnungen und Campingplätze gewannen an Bedeutung und parallel dazu wurden die Sommersmonate, vor allem Juli und August, zur wichtigsten Zeitachse des Jahres.

Diesen Aspekten widmet sich der vorliegende Aufsatz. Er stützt sich auf einschlägige Forschungsliteratur, auf zeitgenössische Periodika, auf statistische Daten der *Ente Nazionale Industrie Turistiche* (ENIT, Nationales Institut Tourismusindustrie) wie auch auf Archivmaterial aus dem Historischen Archiv der *Banca d'Italia*. Er analysiert die Veränderungen in der Tourismusbranche am Gardasee zwischen dem ausgehenden 19. Jahrhundert und der zweiten Nachkriegszeit und verfolgt dabei ein zweifaches Ziel: Zum einen beleuchtet er, wie die gewandelten Tourist*innenströme sich auf die Zeiten und Rhythmen des Tourismussektors auswirkten, was zu einem besseren Verständnis der Voraussetzungen und Motivlagen für das Handeln von privaten und lokalöffentlichen Entscheidungsträgern im Rahmen der Ausarbeitung des touristischen Angebots führt. Zum anderen zeigt er Profile und Entwicklungslinien in der Geschichte des italienischen Seetourismus auf.