

# Western Silk Road Brand Italy - SWOT Analysis:

## Key Findings

Paolo Baraldi - MS Tourism Economics and Management - Unibo  
Marketing & Sales - Vacanzattiva Network

Alessia Mariotti - Head of Center for Advanced Studies in Tourism  
University of Bologna

[www.turismo.unibo.it](http://www.turismo.unibo.it)  
[cast.info@unibo.it](mailto:cast.info@unibo.it)



# SWOT Analysis Summary

## S

- Wide Italian cultural heritage related to the Silk Road
- Silk Road-related experiential tourism activities
- Opening of Italian industrial and manufacturing firms to tourism
- Silk Cycleway
- Marco Polo committee within Italian Cultural Routes Board
- Marco Polo's brand image recognition

## W

- No integrated knowledge about Silk Road heritage
- Low awareness of Italy as Silk Road destination
- Low formation of local tourism industry with reference to eastern markets
- Low experience in cultural routes as tools for tourism promotion

## O

- Cultural differentiation in mature/overcrowded destinations
- Development of new upward trending markets
- Cooperation with academic institutions
- Existing initiatives promoted by local associations
- Coherence with Italian Strategic Tourism Plan
- Most famous cities as gateways to marginal areas

## T

- Risk that classic Italian destinations will stand out without valorising the less-known heritage
- No linear route pattern = more difficult to implement a Network of the sites
- Fragmentation of tourism supply



# Strengths

---

## SILK ROAD CULTURAL HERITAGE

- Evidences in many cities involved in the trades with the East (Venice, Genoa, Pisa, Ravenna..)
- Silk Museums and Silk Road exhibitions
- Intangible cultural heritage

## SILK ROAD TOURISM EXPERIENTIAL ACTIVITIES

- Local artisans, visits to ancient silk factories, sailing excursions, oriental atmospheres tours
- Provided by local tourism operators that would benefit from the WSR Initiative



Fondaco dei Turchi, Venice



Workshop in an ancient spinning mill, Treviso (picture from VivoVenetia.com)



# Strengths

---

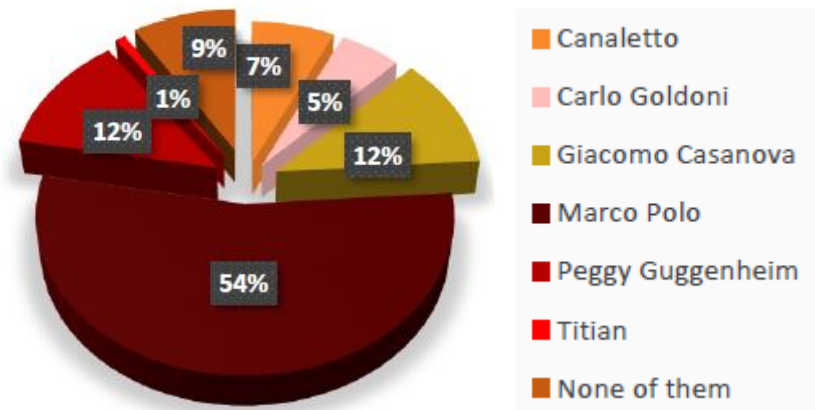
## SILK CYCLE ROUTE

- From Venice to Livorno, crossing Ferrara, Bologna, Lucca and Pisa
- Built around the Silk production and distribution heritage in Italy
- Gpx track available, official signage in one direction
- Cycle tourism is a booming market



## MARCO POLO BRAND IMAGE RECOGNITION

- Tourists' significant awareness of the connection Venice-Silk Road and Marco Polo is the most recognised personality associated to Venice
- Build communication and narrative



# Opportunities

---

## SILK ROAD-RELATED EXISTING INITIATIVES

- “Venice - Beijing: Cultural Hub”: camper caravan round trip, involving tourists and entrepreneurs along the Silk Road (by Aikal and Overland)
- VeroTour: Venetian sailing routes



## STRATEGIC TOURISM PLAN 2017-2022

- Transregional routes to innovate cultural tourism and elaboration of themed tourism products
- Improve infrastructure network
- Foster the integration of tourism supply and business networks



# Opportunities – Venice focus

---

## **OVERCROWDING MANAGEMENT AND CULTURAL REQUALIFICATION**

- Opportunity to make tourism in Venice more sustainable and valorise cultural assets outside the “touristic triangle”
- Destination image restyling
- Fill the gap between tourists’ low awareness and high interest in a set of Silk Road related activities
- Positive perception and active commitment by accommodation sector in developing a Western Silk Road product together with other operators and in providing tourists with on site information

## **COOPERATION WITH ACADEMIC INSTITUTIONS**

- Ca’ Foscari University in Venice: Programmes in Eastern Languages and Culture
- Projects involving students in online/offline linguistic mediation for small/medium tourism businesses
- A replicable model to help operators in meeting the expectations and needs of Eastern markets’ tourists.



# To conclude...

---

- Need for a wider analysis on the whole national territory of the Silk Road tangible and intangible heritage assets and their integration within a shared database
- A great effort of “trans scalar” coordination should be foreseen
- Updates from “Marco Polo Network” within Italian Cultural Routes Board



Thank you for the attention.

