

Benchmarking for Attracting Territorial Investments: Evidence of the Pavia's Chamber of Commerce

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Abstract

The paper examines the benchmarking strategy of Pavia's Chamber of Commerce for attracting territorial investments. Based on the past studies, we develop a specific detailed research questions:

- 1) How is the benchmarking strategy of Chamber of Pavia's Commerce for attracting investments?*
- 2) What is the specificity of benchmarking in public service sector?*

The paper intends to answer to these questions; it offers a unique description of a successful strategy implementation of benchmarking in Pavia's Chamber of Commerce case. It analyzes in detail the management implementation and the process of benchmarking for improving the performances.

1. Introduction

In this paper, we analyze the case of Pavia's Chamber of Commerce and its strategy of benchmarking (Camp, 1989; Bogan, 1994; Bocchino, 1995; Pilotti et al. 2006; Riva, 2007; Dembowski, 2013; Ciurea et al. 2017) for attracting territorial investments (Lattusi 2002; Gafurov et al. 2013). Some studies have shown how the methodology of benchmarking can be useful for learning from best practices (Zairi, 1996; Kathleen et al. 2002).

In the globalized economy territories are in competition to attract investments; in order to deal with this competition, they use different tools (strategic and marketing plan, territorial branding actions, etc.) (Kotler et al. 1993; Aaker, 1999; Valdani and Ancarani 2000; Varaldo and Caroli 1999).

In our knowledge, no researches are available on this important topic on international level on this process for attracting investment in service public sector; while there is a broad range of literature on benchmarking on manufacturing sector (Cook, 1995; Anderson, 2004; Spendolini 1992; Riva, 2005, 2006a, 2006b, 2007; Pilotti et al. 2006) still few papers are written on the process to determine critical success factor in process of benchmarking for improving the process of attracting the investment. With this in mind, this study intends to investigate on this problem. Based on the interesting experience of Pavia's Chamber Commerce (Rizzi et al. 2009; 2006; De Lotto 2008) this paper analyzes the implementation of a set of methodologies of process of benchmarking (Bocchino, 1995) for attracting investment (Tickell and Dickenm, 2016). The objective of benchmarking is not only reducing cost (Zairi, 1996) but also improve the quality of the strategy; this methodology (Anderson, 2004; Bocchino, 1995) is related to the continuous improvement towards the implementation of practices of excellence. Given these premises, this paper analyzes the strategy of benchmarking for attracting territorial investments.

Based on the past studies we develop a specific detailed research questions:

- Q1: How is the benchmarking strategy of Chamber of Pavia's Commerce for attracting investments?*
- Q2: What is the specificity of benchmarking in service public sector?*

For answering the first question, we analyze the case of Pavia's Chamber of Commerce based on the previous literature. For analyzing the second question, we define a model of benchmarking in service public sector. Recently the service sector begins to apply the principles of BPR (Business Process Reengineering and benchmarking) (Hammer et al. 1993, Hammer, 2000; Camp 1989; Cook 1995; Shoettl, 2003; Kathleen et al. 1996), quality and lean management (Liker, 2004; Liker and Meier, 2006) and BPM (Business process management) and change management and knowledge creation. This paper explores the challenges and the opportunities of benchmarking (Bocchino, 1995). Benchmarking is a comparative analysis which shall exercise in respect of some standards.

It represents one decisive tool to guide the strategy (Pilott 2005, 2017), for improving (Dixon et al. 1994; Imai 1986) and for reengineering the processes (Hall et al. 1993; Hammer and Champy 1993; Hammer 1990) and for creating new knowledge (Nonaka 1995, 1998, 2000; Pilotti et. al. 2016; Stack et al. 1992; Ciurea et. al. 2017)

The outline of the paper is as follows: the second section describes the theoretical review and the methodological approach; the third section describes the case of benchmarking in Pavia's Chamber of Commerce; the fourth section examines the process of benchmarking, the fifth one concludes.

2. Theoretical review and methodological approach

The empirical method of this analysis follows the logic of grounded theory (Glaser and Strauss, 1967) developing a case study methodology (Eisenhardt, 1989). In this section, some scientific paradigms (Kuhn, 1970) are described both on *territorial investment's attraction* studies (Friedman et al. 1992; Young et al. 1994, Head et al. 1999; Gafurov, et al. 2013; Nielsen et al. 2017) and on *benchmarking* (Dattakumar and Jagadeesh 2003). The integration of these two-different paradigms of research can permit to discover interesting possibility for understanding the logic of the best processes for attracting financial investment.

Territorial investment's attraction studies

For what concerns the relevant studies on how attract the investments in territories particular some scholars (Nielsen et al. 2017; Kotler et al 1993; Krugman, 1995; Valdani and Ancarani 2000; Tickell and Dicken, 2016, Varaldo and Caroli 1999; Hankinson, 2001) describe the importance of territorial marketing.

They show how attracting financial investment by an integrated series of actions:

- a) *increase conscience of territorial marketing and its importance in the development of cities and territories;* activate the role of communications to build a good image and identity of territory (such as newspapers, radio, the Internet, etc.);
- b) *the use of information and communication technology* for the development of the city;
- c) *the interest in the development of infrastructure such as transportation and communications;*
- d) *improve the territory is an attractive destination by promotion of all sectors of tourism culture, industry, environment, etc.*

Friedman et al. (1992) describe what attracts foreign Multinational Corporation's investment. The case is based on *branch plant location in the United States*. The results indicate *that access to markets, labor market conditions, state promotional efforts to attract foreign investment and state and local personal taxes are significant factors in the location decision*. The decision determinants for Japanese and European MNCs are found to be different.

Young et al. (1994), describe the targeting policy and the competitive strategy of the *European inward investment agencies*; they propose an approach using techniques applied in industrial marketing based on a segment's level of economic impact indicators and their weighted importance to determine the competitive advantages of countries and regions. *The methodology is based on assessment of the country's strengths and weaknesses for each segment's requirements*.

Head et al. (1999) study the strategy for attracting foreign manufacturing investment. They study *Japanese investments between 1980 and 1992 to assess the effectiveness of US state promotion efforts for attracting the investment*. The benefit of *foreign trade zones, lower taxes, and job-creation subsidies* have statistically significant effects in attracting the investment. Uysal et al. (2000) study the *case of Virginia* on its strong reputation for quality natural and cultural attractions. It is also important *that destination promotional activities focus on differentiating features of places in a regional context so that complementary tourism products within the region can also be developed*

Gafurov, I. et al. (2013) describe the importance of territorial marketing for increasing attractiveness of a territory; *the public and regional agency on Russia use marketing*. The results show *how marketing method can be used successful in commercialization of the territories*. The benefits of territorial marketing are a better stabilization of the country.

Tickell and Dicken (2016) describe role of inward investment promotion in economic development strategies based on the *case of northern England*. The Investment in Britain Bureau (IBB) estimate in 332 the company that decided to invest in production in Britain. The *proactive strategy* permit to improve the attraction of foreign investment.

Nielsen et al. (2017), describe the *location choice of foreign direct investments and the importance of each territory to identify the important qualities for improving the territory's image and identity* their advantages, in the definition of the distinctive places.

Benchmarking studies

In this part, there is a chronological description of some of more important research in the international literature on the topic of benchmarking. *This methodology is used by the Pavia Chamber of Commerce to improve the process of attracting investments.*

Camp (1989) describe 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*. The introduction of benchmarking is based on fact that in 1979 Xerox had a problem for losing market share in the copies business. The process of benchmarking is organized in 10 steps. The idea is to parameterize the performance of a organization compared to that of other, taken as reference points. Benchmarking itself was born in the late 70s early 80s when the Xerox and large companies began to develop the discipline of the comparison.

Halleck et al. (1991) describe the importance of *benchmarking world-class performance* across industries not only to quantifies performance gap but also to compare and manufacturing and management processes. While competitive analysis is limited to firms of the same sector, *the world class benchmarking permits to learn from the best in class and focus on the processes more important*. The typical output measure of a quality process is: cost, quality, time. To start a benchmarking process there is analysis of the supply chain of the firm and the definition of the key processes to be benchmarked. The most advanced formula of this tool is the analysis of the best practices of the present in the world (*best-in-class benchmarking*),

Hammer et al. (1993), study the *integration between the process of reengineering and benchmarking*. Among the main phases of a project reengineering integrated with benchmarking are: a) launch a working group; b) definition of areas and indicators for benchmarking; c) constant for the improvement according to the philosophy of continuous improvement.

Cook (1995) describe *benchmarking methodology can have an increasingly important role also in the public service for the comparison and learning of best practices*. The aim is to highlight the experiences of the excellence and to study the key elements to repeat the good results in similar contexts, explaining good practices (best practices). In this research, the basic elements of benchmarking were analyzed. It Involves the comparison of different experiences of reality management through the use of indicators which are qualitatively measurable.

Kathleen et al. (1996) show how the methodology of benchmarking can be used to improve the performance in different organization AT&T, Janssen Pharmaceutica, Avon Product. *There are some different types of benchmarking: functional, process, competitive, strategic and world class*. The principle of benchmarking is based on understanding the gap of processes between the organization. Benchmarking involves the detailed study of different areas and activities in relation to the performance of some other subject.

Yassar et al. (2000) study a group of 227 organization for identify the critical success factors for effective *internal transfer of best practices*. The results show the importance of training and open communication for best practices transfer. The benchmarking methodology has found its first application in the organizations which are more exposed to the problems of measurement competitiveness. The study describes the importance of formation, motivation and culture in the process to transfer best practices.

Hammer (2000) describes as the technique of benchmarking has the objective of *measurement of performance and its comparison with the "first class"* and to do a process of reengineering to reach the targets.

Shoettl (2003) shows how the *process of benchmarking* can be divided into several stages: a) analysis and evaluation of their specific processes; b) decision on the subject and the object of benchmark; c) data collection; d) data analysis and understanding of the differences e) improvement scheduling; f) review. *The principle behind benchmarking is simple: to improve a particular aspect of an organization or services, it is important to find other players with great skill and use them as a point of reference against which to fix the standards.*

Dattakumar and Jagadeesh (2003) describe the evolution on the literature on benchmarking; the paper *analyzes 382 publications on benchmarking*; these publications can be divided in forth category: a) general and fundamental models; b) specific application and case studies; c) innovations and extension or new approaches on benchmarking; d) benchmarking in service and educations.

There are studies in different area (public sector, banks, finance, accounting process, core competence). Through this technique it is possible of improving quality by obtaining of the maximum potential in all processes.

Broveto et al. (2007) study the process of local benchmarking to describe how it is possible to *distinguish between sector and horizontal benchmarking*. The *sector benchmarking* identifies and analyzes the cases of the excellence at a national or international level in order to facilitate a learning process, by comparison, similar problems are addressed on how or under what conditions the same sectorial policies have achieved better results. On the contrary *horizontal benchmarking analyzes territorial systems* similar (for population size, socio-economic structure, etc.) and then potentially competing and a comparison is made in order to highlight the different degree of territorial competitiveness that these systems can present.

Dembowski (2013) *analyzes the processes of importance to use benchmarking* in the general organization. There are several questions that guide a project of benchmarking: a) what are the critical areas and improvement of desirable results? ; b) what is the current situation and organization of space? ; c) what can we do to improve? d) what are the best investments to promote change and improvement? The highly successful organizations understanding the importance of benchmarking, instituting best practices and to create innovative projects to determine the appropriate product or service that the consumer wants.

Ammons et al. (2014) describe the presence of different kinds of benchmarking and develop a theory of public sector benchmarking and stress *the difference between public organization and private organization in implementation of benchmarking. The benchmarking in public sector has some difference for the different mission and criteria for comparing the performance.*

Ciurea et. al. (2017) show the possibility *to use benchmarking in performance analysis of human resources in the public sector*. Benchmarking is an effective tool to improve the performance through continuous monitoring and comparison with similar organizations. The process of benchmarking can permit a substantial improvement in performance in service public sector.

3.The case of Chamber of Commerce de Pavia: benchmarking for improving the ability to attract investment

Pavia is a town of Lombardy, northern Italy, 22 miles south of Milan on the lower Ticino river near its confluence with the Po. It has a population of about 70000. The city was the capital of the Kingdom of the Lombards from 572 to 774. The methodology of Pavia's Chamber of Commerce is based on both longitudinal and sectorial benchmarking. *For longitudinal benchmarking is based on comparison of city of some dimensions* (for example Cremona). On the contrary, *the sectorial benchmarking is based on important bigger cities* (for example Milan). In particular for the *longitudinal benchmarking* the Chamber of Commerce has analyzed the case of Alexandria, Cremona, Ferrara, Novara, Piacenza, Polesine (see Tab. 1).

Instead, for *sectorial benchmarking* the best practices of some important cities are analyzed:

- a) Turin: the deindustrialization attraction of investments;
- b) Modena: the selective attraction of investments;
- c) Treviso: relocation to the territorial communication;
- d) Catania: towards new technologies;
- e) Milan: the reuse and economic development of renewable;
- f) the experiences of some foreign regions.

The results and the lessons of this experience are important to improve the strategy of the city of Pavia in attracting the investments. Several research centers worldwide have addressed the analysis of the systems in order to understand the time evolution of the relationship between the public administration and the environment (Pilotti, 2011) also developing models and archetypes to describe the interaction. The city that performs benchmarking with seriousness and commitment makes use of a network of partners both within the organization and externally in relation to a wide range of activities

Table 1 Benchmarking Pavia to six cities: action of territorial marketing

PROCESSES	Pavia	Alessandria	Ferrara	Cremona	Novara	Piacenza	Polesine
Analysis of the territory	Yes	yes	yes	yes	yes	no	yes
Feasibility Analysis	No	no	yes	yes	yes	no	yes
Advice on funding	Yes	yes	yes	yes	yes	no	yes
Support for business creation	Yes	yes	yes	no	No	no	no
Training	Yes	no	no	no	No	no	no
Census areas	Yes	no	yes	yes	yes	yes	No
Management areas	No	no	yes	yes	No	no	no
Incubator	No	yes	no	no	No	no	no

The analysis of the gaps with the other city permits to develop an integrated strategy. As a matter of fact, the Chamber of Commerce has developed a territorial marketing for attracting the investment; this permits to emergence the local vocations of the territories (Hankinson, 2001) and attracting new resources and investment.

The strategy is based on in particular on:

- 1) the provision of a structured web site to provide the potential investor with information on the socio-economic-cultural-environmental characteristics of the province of Pavia;
- 2) the creation of an on-line database on provincial localization opportunities in which there are data, cartograms and photos;
- 2) the implementation of studies to spread a greater understanding of the territorial features of Pavia and creation of territorial brand (Aaker, 1996).
- 3) the realization of congress and initiatives of animation territorial and diffusion of communication and promotion documents (brochures, etc.);
- 4) the creation of an operational function inside the Chamber of Commerce to attract investment.

This case study case shows how general advantages of the benchmarking are new model for the improvement and strategy definition (Camp, 1989; Porter 1985,1989,1996). It can be structured and applied as a methodology of the process re-engineering in order to facilitate the improvement of the results.

This method is based on finding the best methodology to perform a specific task in order to achieve the best results. It is important to broaden the perspective and not to be limited to the areas comparable 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 Discussions

The case of Pavia's Chamber of commerce shows how benchmarking allows to locate data and information to measure the effectiveness, efficiency, cost the programming of an institution (see Figure 1).

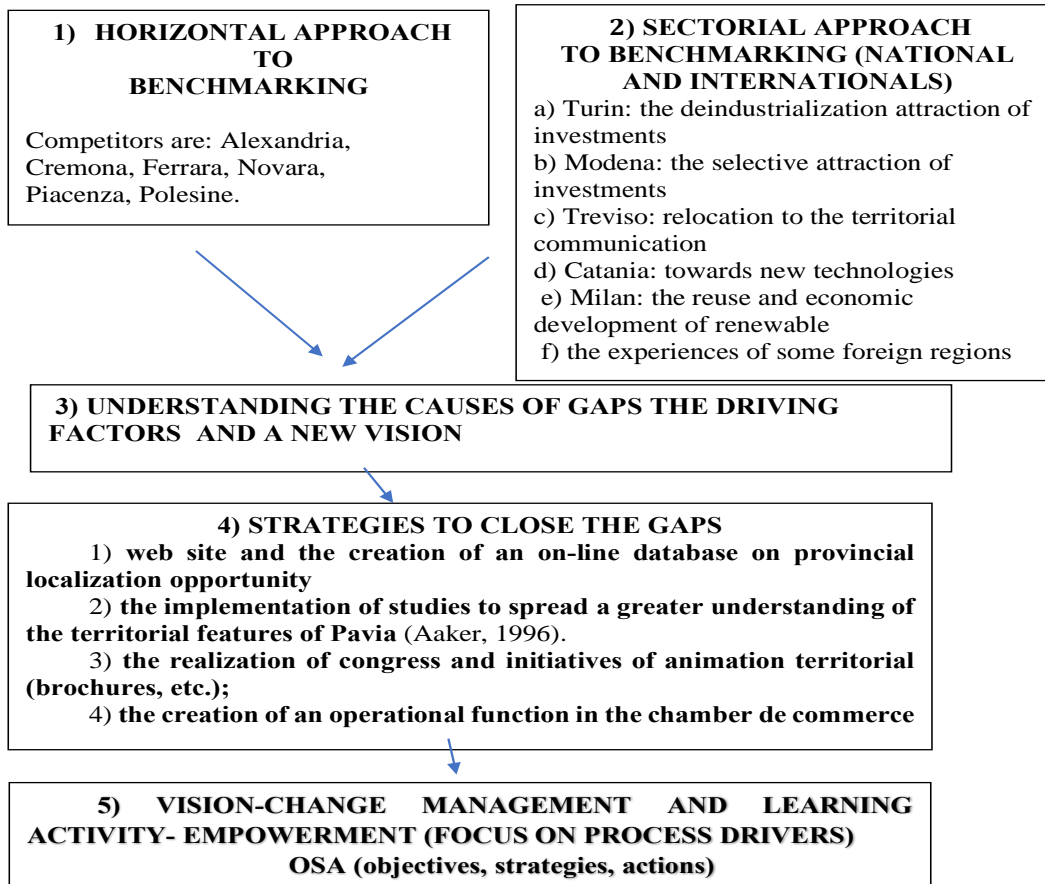


Figure 1 The phases of strategy of Pavia's Chamber Commerce strategy for attracting investments

The most promising frontier of benchmarking is to not only focus on measures but also on the internal - external process measures "lead" (driving) to improve the performance (Anderson 2004).

In addition, the benchmarking permits new ways to learn (*vicarious learning*).

The case of Pavia's Chamber of Commerce shows how to improve the ability of attracting investment by using of benchmarking (Camp, 1989; Rizzi 2006; De Lotto 2008; Camagli et al.1999).

During the benchmarking studies, there are different forms of learning (Argyris, 1991):

- a) *learning of first type* (single loop): managers are concerned with their personal goals and try to correct the specific errors;
- b) *learning of the second type* (double loop): in which there is also a change of the rules, procedures, and objectives of the organization;
- c) *higher learning*: the ability to understand how a company identifies and correct errors (identifies and corrects its mistakes) (Hamdouch and Maman, 1995).

The benchmarking process can be in the public administration a very valuable tool for improving the management in the public sector.

5. Conclusion

Benchmarking focuses on *continuous improvement* and the creation of value for all stakeholders by adopting organizational behavior best practice. *With reference to the first question* (the characteristic of the benchmarking strategy of Pavia's Chamber of Commerce for attracting investments) we discover:

First, the Pavia's chamber of commerce uses both *longitudinal approach* to benchmarking (that benchmarking permits to see the distance compared to local nears player) that *sectorial approach* to benchmarking (based on the comparison with the best national and international players) the "gaps" is usually more elevated (Rizzi 2006).

Second, the strategy for attracting territorial investment can be improved by using:

- a) the creation *structured web site* to provide the potential investor with information on the socio-economic-cultural-environmental characteristics of the province of Pavia; and also on *database on provincial localization opportunities* in which there are data, cartograms and photos; the implementation of studies to spread a greater understanding of the territorial features of Pavia and creation of territorial brand (Aaker, 1996);
- b) the realization of *congress and initiatives of animation territorial and diffusion of communication and promotion documents* (brochures, etc.); also, the use of information and communication technology for the development of the city (Hankinson, 2001); each territory should seek to identify the important qualities for improving the territory's image and identity their advantages, in the definition of the distinctive places;
- c) the creation of an *operational function inside the Chamber of Commerce* to attract investment;
- d) the interest in the *development of infrastructure such as transportation and communications*;
- e) the *promotion of the territory, culture, industry, environment* as an attractive destination for the tourism sector (Uysal et al. 2000),

The answers at the first question are consistent with past studies (Kotler et al. 1993; Pilotti, 2011) and underline the importance territorial marketing in the development of cities and territories and the role of communications to build a good image and identity of territory (such as newspapers, radio).

For what concerns the second question (the specificity of benchmarking in service public sector), we discover:

First, the method of benchmarking in public service sector allows the development of a series of policy change and continuous improvement (Dembowski, 2013; Valdani and Ancarani, 2000; Pilotti et al. 2006; Stack et al. 1992). There are some ways to facilitate this process:

- a) *systematic methods of problem solving with the use of statistical diagrams* (cause and effect, histograms, Pareto charts, analysis of correlations);
- b) *experimentation and through innovative programs* that produce radical changes;
- c) *reflection on past experiences with the philosophy that the analysis of the past allows you to avoid the same mistakes*, even with the analysis of the problems and failures (those who do not learn from the past are condemned to make the same mistakes);
- d) *the transfer of knowledge* through the creation of a management structure of knowledge. Second, the keys factors (Chamber of commerce of Padua, 2004) for the success of this methodology in the case analyzed are: *focusing on the search for better methods, openness to change and the introduction of new ideas and processes, an active mobilization of all the members.*

Also important are the depth knowledge of their processes to compare them with the practices that best; *the formation of a specific group who works on benchmarking.*

Third, the most promising frontier of benchmarking is to not only focus on measures but also on the *internal - external measures "lead"* (Anderson and McAdam 2004) (driving) to improve the performance. The benchmarking, the typical procedure involves collecting a database of performance indicators relevant to the case under consideration, drawing data from similar activities carried out in other parts of the company and other companies.

The answer at the second question are consistent with past studies (Ciurea et. al. 2017; Ammons et al. 2014). The objective of benchmarking is the continuous improvement of the results, and it can be applied to the service public administration. The limit of this study is to analyze only a case of Pavia's Chamber of Commerce. Future research can study the impact of new technology and the internationalization of the market and the effect on the global competition. The case of Pavia's Chamber of Commerce is an interesting positive example of the application of benchmarking in service public sector for attracting the investments.

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