

Commentary on “The effect of tourism on crime in Italy: A dynamic panel approach”

The paper shows that, in Italy, tourist areas tend to have higher crime than non-tourist areas. Yet, no significant differences are found between the tourists' likelihood to be victimized and that of non-tourists. Based on this evidence, authors argue that the relationship between crime and tourism should be attributed to agglomeration and urbanization effects. The paper is generally well written and I found it interesting to read. I would like to comment briefly on the intro and then on data, empirical model and results.

Introduction

In my opinion the paper's contribution lies in the attempt to identify whether the positive relationship between tourism and crime is to be attributable to the fact that tourists are more likely to be victimized (i.e. they are an easier target) or to the fact that tourism leads to a higher population density in certain urban spots thereby creating an environment that facilitates certain crime activities. This is potentially important to the extent that appropriate policies to contain or reduce crime in tourist destination might well depend on the nature of the relationship between tourism and crime. If my interpretation is correct, then the introduction should reflect this punchline more clearly and effectively.

Data, empirical model and results

I would like to comment on three separate issues: 1. economic variables; 2. Data on types of crime; 3. Estimation approach. As far as the set of explanatory variables include it would be useful to have an explanation of why both the growth rate, the level of income and unemployment are included. After all one would tend to think that these variables are simultaneously determined. About data on crime, I wonder whether data on types of crime are available. For instance, if data on pickpocketing or other forms of crime that become easier when the density increases, then introducing some measure of the intensity of such types of crime and interacting it with the density variable could provide further evidence in support of the underlying hypothesis. Finally, about the estimation approach I wonder whether a more structural approach where for instance the equation for the propensity to be victimized is estimated simultaneously with the crime equation could give more insights into the nature of the relationship between crime and tourism. After all one could well think that the crime equation lacks one variable, namely the propensity to be victimized of individuals in a given region (whether tourists or residents).