AI.conometrics

2026 Prompt (Preliminary Round): **Tourism**

Artificial Intelligence in Social Sciences Research Lab (AISS)

Bocconi University

1 Prompt

Your task is to identify and estimate a causal effect relating to tourism and the local society and economy. Some examples are discussed below.

A first strand of the literature asks whether tourism makes the places that receive it better off. Faber and Gaubert (2019) exploit the quasi-random placement of tourist attractiveness along Mexico's coastline and find that tourism raises local employment and wages, with sizeable spillovers onto the traded sector; they also show that a large share of the gains accrues outside the tourism industry itself. The central empirical difficulty in this literature is that tourists go where amenities already are, so naive comparisons between destinations and non-destinations confound the effect of tourism with whatever attracted the tourists in the first place.

A second strand studies the arrival of short-term rental platforms and their effect on housing. Barron et al. (2021) instrument Airbnb penetration using a measure of local tourist attractiveness interacted with national search interest, and find that home-sharing raises both house prices and rents, with the effect concentrated in neighbourhoods with a low share of owner-occupiers. García-López et al. (2020) document similar pressures in Barcelona, finding that Airbnb increased both rents and house prices, while Horn and Merante (2017) find comparable rent effects in Boston. Koster et al. (2021) exploit the introduction of home-sharing ordinances across Los Angeles municipalities and use a panel regression discontinuity design around the municipalities' borders to recover the effect of short-term rentals on house prices.

Finally, a growing literature asks how tourism reshapes what a neighbourhood contains rather than what it costs. Hidalgo et al. (2023) find that the diffusion of Airbnb in Madrid is associated with a shift in the composition of local commerce away from resident-oriented businesses and towards tourist-oriented ones. Almagro and Domínguez-Iino (2025) go further and treat the amenities themselves as an equilibrium object: in their dynamic model of residential choice for Amsterdam, the shops, bars and restaurants a neighbourhood contains are the outcome of a market for non-tradables, so that an inflow of tourists or high-income residents changes the amenity mix, which in turn changes who wants to live there.

You are not required to work on any of the questions above. You are required to state a clearly defined causal question involving tourism (in a broad sense), to be explicit about the variation you use to identify it, and to defend your identifying assumptions.

2 Data

Replication packages

Some of the papers discussed above make their data and code public. These could be a good place to start:

- Faber and Gaubert (2019) exploit the quasi-random placement of tourist attractiveness along Mexico's coastline, combining economic census, household survey and satellite data with a quantitative spatial equilibrium model. Click here for the replication materials.
- Biagi et al. (2012) ask whether tourist inflows raise crime across Italian provinces between 1985 and 2003, estimating a dynamic panel by system GMM and separating the effect of tourist presence from that of resident population. Click here for data and code.

Public data sources

- **Inside Airbnb** provides listing-level scrapes for a large number of cities worldwide, including Rome, Milan, Florence, Venice, Barcelona, Paris and Amsterdam. Each snapshot contains geographic coordinates, room and property type, price, minimum stay, host identifiers, availability and review counts, together with a separate file of individual reviews that can be used to proxy occupancy. Note that the downloadable archives generally cover only the most recent 12 months. Available here.

- **MappaRoma** publishes neighbourhood-level socioeconomic and urban indicators for Rome, including analyses of the spatial distribution of short-term rentals. These indicators can be useful for descriptive analysis and as neighbourhood-level covariates. Available here.

- **Elenco delle attività produttive del SUAP di Roma Capitale** is the administrative dataset of business establishments in Rome, released annually on the national open data portal. Each record carries an activity category and an address, so establishments can be classified into resident- and tourist-oriented categories and aggregated to the *municipio* or to finer geographies. Available here.

Important: you are free to supplement these datasets with others, provided that they are open data or otherwise accessible by other participants. However, at least one of the datasets listed within the "Data" section [2] should be integral to your analysis.

References

Almagro, M. and Domínguez-Iino, T. (2025). Location sorting and endogenous amenities: Evidence from amsterdam. *Econometrica*, 93(3):1031–1071.

Barron, K., Kung, E., and Proserpio, D. (2021). The effect of home-sharing on house prices and rents: Evidence from airbnb. *Marketing Science*, 40(1):23–47.

Biagi, B., Brandano, M. G., and Detotto, C. (2012). The effect of tourism on crime in italy: A dynamic panel approach. *Economics: The Open-Access, Open-Assessment E-Journal*, 6(2012-25).

Faber, B. and Gaubert, C. (2019). Tourism and economic development: Evidence from mexico's coastline. *American Economic Review*, 109(6):2245–2293.

García-López, M.-À., Jofre-Monseny, J., Martínez-Mazza, R., and Segú, M. (2020). Do short-term rental platforms affect housing markets? evidence from airbnb in barcelona. *Journal of Urban Economics*, 119:103278.

Hidalgo, A., Riccaboni, M., and Velazquez, F. J. (2023). When local business faded away: The uneven impact of airbnb on the geography of economic activities. *Cambridge Journal of Regions, Economy and Society*, pages 1–14.

Horn, K. and Merante, M. (2017). Is home sharing driving up rents? evidence from airbnb in boston. *Journal of Housing Economics*, 38:14–24.

Koster, H. R. A., van Ommeren, J., and Volkhausen, N. (2021). Short-term rentals and the housing market: Quasi-experimental evidence from airbnb in los angeles. *Journal of Urban Economics*, 124:103356.