WALKING TOURISM: OPPORTUNITIES AND THREATS FOR SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT. THE CASE OF THE 'VA' SENTIERO' PROJECT

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Abstract

Purpose of the paper: Slow travel and tourism is a sustainable type of tourism from a social, economic and environmental point of view. The purpose of this research is to determine if and, particularly, how walking tourism can become an 'instrument' to share interests and protect the cultural, historical and natural heritage of a region. This research also seeks to investigate the ways in which funds for the development of walking tourism can be collected by exploiting mechanisms of citizen engagement.

Methodology: Considering that the research topic has been under-investigated until now, we selected a case-study approach for this initial foray. However, this study represents the first step of a major research effort that follows the action research method to gain in-depth knowledge of this issue.

Main findings: This study reveals the principal features of a project for the development of walking tourism and the principal opportunities and threats for all public and private stakeholders.

Practical implications: Understanding the principal features of such a project is an important topic for the tourism sector, public bodies, crowdfunding platforms, not-for-profit organisations and citizens.

Originality/value: To our knowledge, this is the first study to create a link between the development of walking tourism and instruments for funding it.

Type of paper: Research paper

1. Introduction

Slow tourism is a sustainable type of tourism from a social, economic and environmental point of view (Dickinson & Lumsdon, 2010). Considering the expected growth of tourism over the next years (UNWTO, 2011), issues pertaining to sustainable development are becoming increasingly important (Weston, Mota, 2012). From this perspective, longer walking and cycling trips for leisure could play a leading role; in particular, walking tourism has important impacts in rural areas (Midmore, 2000) and, in general, is growing (WTO, 2019).

In light of the above, the purpose of this research is to determine if and how walking tourism could become an instrument to share interests and protect the cultural, historical and natural heritage of a region. As in the case of the Camøno walking trail (Gyimóthy & Meged, 2018) in southern Denmark, we seek to understand if and how to trigger sustainable development, via a bottom-up approach and through transformation of non-market (or not-yet-market) resources into commodities. Gyimóthy and Meged, analysing the Camøno walking trail development, identify three domains of collaborative governance: the governance of affect, the governance of ownership and the governance of exchange.

All these aspects are present and important also for the project that we used as a case study in this research—the Va' Sentiero Project, which aims to bring to attention the Sentiero Italia, the longest trek across mountains in the world. 2019 is the ideal year to start this project, because the Italian government has declared it the National Year for Slow Traveling.

This research also investigates the ways in which funds for the development of walking tourism can be collected by exploiting mechanisms of collective engagement. Collective engagement can be defined as the collective effort of a crowd that networks and pools resources to support projects promoted by other people or organisations (Marchegiani, 2018). Crowdfunding involves the collective effort of many individuals to fund specific projects; it is an instrument strictly connected to collective engagement. Crowdfunding is a way to engage the community and to foster activities or projects, and this is critical when the community thus engaged could become end-users of the projects, as in the tourism sector. Moreover, referring to projects connected to the protection of historical, cultural and natural heritage, as is the case for walking tourism, crowdfunding has the potential to serve as an instrument for the sustainable development of these projects. The Va Sentiero case study is also useful for obtaining insights into the potential of crowdfunding for fostering the walking tourism sector, since a successful crowdfunding campaign was promoted on a reward-based platform to support the project.

Considering that the research topic has been under-investigated until now, we selected a case-study approach for this initial foray. More precisely, to our knowledge, this is the first study that attempts to create a link between the concept of crowdfunding and walking tourism. However, this study represents the first step of a major research effort that follows an action research method to gain in-depth knowledge of this issue.

In this article, after a review of the literature on the concept of walking tourism and the role of crowdfunding in tourism ventures and collective engagement, we present the principal results, and close with a discussion of the implications and the limitations of this research.

2. Literature review

2.1 Highlights of walking tourism

Walking is a moderate and popular physical activity (Ekkekakis, Backhouse, Gray, & Lind, 2008) that has a wide array of known health, environmental, economic and social benefits (Leyden, 2003). It requires no special equipment, facilities or training (e.g. Forsyth, Oakes, Lee, & Schmitz, 2009).

In the context of tourism and leisure, walking may be motivated at first by the number and availability of footpaths and the attractiveness of the route (Nyaupane et al., 2014). Walking tourism allows people to experience the tourist destination and interpret the environment, and provides opportunities to enjoy nature, culture and the landscape (Nyaupane et al., 2014). Walking tourism development can also contribute to the achievement of competitive advantage in tourist destinations (Nepal, 2005).

Nevertheless, not all destinations are equally suitable for walking tourism. For instance, in the case of a mountain destination, Melnyk (2016) proposes classification into four categories: most favourable, rather favourable, weakly favourable and least favourable. This type of description of category, tested by the author in the Ukrainian Carpathian mountains, is a simple way of promoting suitable walking tourism.

In addition, accommodation issues are a significant consideration in developing walking tourism, particularly when considering long-distance walking tracks. From an economic point of view, Cook (2008) highlighted that the recreation value would be expected to increase if accommodation huts or lodges were built. Further, investment in more and different facilities would make hiking trails more appealing to a wider population: younger and older, multicultural, domestic and foreign, etc. Moreover, attention must be paid to the potential development of the collaborative economy and its impact on the relationship between businesses, tourists and the destination (Londoño & Medina, 2018).

However, it should be taken into consideration that attributes of a pedestrian destination as observed by tourists to explain perceived quality can differ significantly; for example, clearly, attributes relevant to a quality evaluation differ substantially between high-density places and low-/medium-density counterparts. Yang et al. (2019) concluded that the two principal attributes in tourist perceptions for a traffic-free and high-density destination are crowding and cleanliness. Kelley et al. (2016) queried trail attributes for their geographical context (Irish trails), and found natural endowments and infrastructure emerged as the primary influences affecting demand.

In addition, the motivations that affect participation in a walking tour could be very different. Hyun et al (2016), with reference to the Jeju Ollegil in South Korea (which comprises 18 walking tours totalling 350 kilometres passing through various landscapes including small villages, beaches, farms and forests), developed a scale to identify the factors that affect participation in a walking tour. The authors formulated a reliable and valid scale of 13 items, grouped into four dimensions (self-mind arrangement, novelty, self-achievement and self-introspection), and found the first results for their analysed destination. Through their

study, they concluded that there is not only one walking tourist, and it is necessary to segment this market and explore the specific features of each. Davies et al. (2012), who analysed recreational walkers in near-urban areas, reached the same conclusion: even in this case, the findings emphasise the variety of walkers' needs and motivations to walk.

Currently, studies have mostly focused on specific types of walking tourism and tourists, the most important being walking pilgrimages and studies on their physiological effects (Harris, 2019) and on the connection between physical activity and psycho-spiritual wellbeing (Slavin, 2003). With regard to modern pilgrimages, many cases highlight the need to identify ways of reducing the impact of this tourism on the visited territories. Eppig (2009) claimed that the pilgrimage landscape could be better preserved, and even restored, if awareness of environmental issues was raised, particularly the interaction between humans and the natural world.

In conclusion, without doubt, walking tourism is growing rapidly. For the Jeju Ollegil trail, for example, the number of visitors increased from 3,027 in 2007 to 950,541 in 2017. Considering European walking destinations, for the Camino de Santiago, between 2000 and 2017, the number of pilgrims using the trail increased from 55,000 to 300,000. The Via Francigena in Italy has seen numbers increase by 20% in the last year, to reach 50,000. Consequently, the Sentiero Italia, which is eight times longer than the Camino de Santiago and four times longer than the Via Francigena, could face a similar growth in demand. In addition, the wide variety of landscapes and experiences the trail offers could satisfy different types of tourists.

2.2 Crowdfunding for tourism ventures and collective engagement: outstanding issues

Crowdfunding is based on the collective effort of many individuals who pool their resources to fulfil a project or an idea initiated by others but that they are interested in.

Especially during and in the aftermath of the financial crisis, crowdfunding has been considered a new channel for raising funds for new ventures or projects, which often face difficulties in collecting funds. Indeed, given the power of the Internet and web platforms, this phenomenon has the potential to reach small potential investors from all over the world. Considering the difficulties in raising funds faced by young and innovative firms or projects in the tourism sector, the potential of fundraising through a crowdfunding platform needs to be exploited (Damilano et al., 2018).

Literature on crowdfunding is rapidly expanding, but research focused mainly on the tourism sector is still lacking; the opportunities and threats connected to the use of crowdfunding in the tourism sector have not yet been exploited.

Taking their cue from previous literature on influencing factors on successful crowdfunding rounds, scholars have tried to replicate the same type of analysis by focusing exclusively on ventures in the tourism sector searching for funds on crowdfunding platforms.

Beier and Wagner (2015) focused their analysis on Switzerland, using a dataset of 104 tourism projects to test how project-related factors can influence fundraising outcomes. The factors they used were number of project initiators, listing in the national currency, number of rewards, use of photos and videos, use of supplementary homepage and use of social networks to communicate. They concluded that some specific project features, such as team

size and national proximity, positively influence fundraising success, while mixed results were obtained for other factors. More specifically, they concluded that no effect exists for the use of photos and videos, while there is a significant effect from the use of Twitter for crowdfunding campaigns for tourism projects.

A similar analysis was carried out by Li et al. (2016), who identified factors that influence the fundraising performance of tourism projects. This study was based on a dataset of 1,701 projects from an online global tourism crowdfunding website. They concluded that factors related to information quality and charity orientation of the projects positively affected the performance of the crowdfunding campaigns. Moreover, they claimed that social networks established by backers or pledgers were related to the success of tourism crowdfunding projects.

Wang et al. (2017), in their study of tourism crowdfunding campaigns, found that projects with a more charity-oriented theme, a smaller funding goal and more high-quality images have a better fundraising performance. This study confirmed the existence of an inverted U-shaped relationship between rewards and crowdfunding success, indicating that too many rewards can negatively affect fundraising campaigns.

Considering the heterogeneous groups of potential ventures or projects inside the tourism sector, this type of study also faces difficulties in the identification of tourist projects. Grezes et al. (2015) categorised tourism projects searching for funds on crowdfunding platforms according to the following criteria: industry classification, description of the project and attractivity of the locality in which the project is located. They then divided projects between profit and not-for-profit, and, finally, also took into consideration 'potentially touristic' projects, many of which were classified as cultural or leisure projects.

It is important to bear in mind this complex landscape in the analysis of slow and walking tourism. Previous literature on the potential for and risks of using crowdfunding for fulfilment of a slow and walking tourism project is lacking. To the best of our knowledge, this is the first attempt to analyse the relationship between walking tourism, crowdfunding and collective engagement.

Indeed, for the analysis of slow and walking tourism, it is fundamental to highlight how crowdfunding is strictly connected to collective engagement (Marchegiani, 2018), since crowdfunding is a way to foster activities or projects by engaging the community comprised of citizens, end-users and potential investors. This feature is even more critical if crowdfunded projects are connected to the protection of historical, cultural and natural heritage, as walking tourism is.

The composition of the community is one of the key drivers for understanding the potential of crowdfunding as an instrument for fundraising walking tourism initiatives. In light of the above, the relationship between investors and recipients of tourism services requires more attention and in-depth analysis from academia.

If crowdfunded tourism projects might also attract the recipients of tourism services, that as end-users are interested in using the services and improving their quality, another outstanding issue is related to the motivations for funding. According to Bretschneider and Leimeister (2017), backers fund because they aspire to receive recognition from others, they want a certain project to be realised, they like a certain venture and they want to be liked by others. Indeed, backers have several self-interested motivations for funding, but some also fund for prosocial motives, and these two types of motivations can co-exist. Exploring

motivations for funding is a critical element for the understanding of the potential of crowdfunding. This is especially important for slow tourism, in light of becoming an instrument to share interests and to protect the cultural, historical and natural heritage.

Finally, as far as the potential of crowdfunding to foster tourism ventures, another outstanding issue should be taken into account: investors' sensitivity to distance. Investors' behaviours show significant home bias (Guo et al., 2018). Guenther et al. (2018) found that geographical distance is negatively correlated with investment probability for home country investors, but that overseas investors are not sensitive to distance. Moreover, it is fundamental to highlight that sensitivity to distance becomes even more important if investors are also potential recipients of the project and if the crowdfunding campaign is promoted on a foreign/international platform.

3. Methodology

Following a review of the literature with regard to walking tourism and crowdfunding for tourism ventures and collective engagement, this research employs a qualitative case-study approach to present and discuss the results.

Several authors have encouraged qualitative methodologies for tourism research (e.g. Pernecky & Jamal, 2010; Riley & Love, 2000; Ryan, 2010).

The chosen research strategy was a single case study (Yin, 2009): the Va' Sentiero Project on Sentiero Italia, the longest trail through mountains in the world. This case was selected because it includes all aspects regarding sustainable tourism development (sharing interests and protecting the cultural, historical and natural heritage of a region) and, at the same time, involved a crowdfunding instrument to collect funds by exploiting mechanisms of citizens' engagement.

According to Stake (2005), this case study may be considered 'intrinsic' where the interest is in the subject and the researcher seeks for an in-depth understanding. This case study can be or not representative of similar cases.

To gain in-depth knowledge of this subject, an action research method characterised by collaboration between the researchers and members of organisations has been undertaken (Bryman & Bell, 2011; Levin & Martin, 2007). With this approach, there is an initial phase of diagnosis of the problem, followed by a phase of acting and developing a solution, with continuous reflection on the processes and results. This paper represents the first phase. The data were collected through participant observations and fieldwork interviews. Ultimately, we were able to employ primary and secondary data.

As Siggelkow (2007) recommended, we have provided a description of the theories on walking tourism and crowdfunding for tourism ventures; we now present the principal findings of this research and discuss these in the context of the research objective and question. In this way, this case study may generate new ideas and suggestions, and motivate new research questions.

4. Findings

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4.1 The 'Va' Sentiero Project': principal features and current results

Some 70% of Italy's surface area is covered by mountainous areas. The country has 25 mountain ranges, which contain an enormous amount of biodiversity. A forgotten hiking trail, the Sentiero Italia crosses all of these ranges, uniting the Italian Boot from sea to sea and across the mountains, forming the longest trek in the world (Fig. 1). Volunteers of the Italian Alpine Club have worked over the last few years to officially reopen the trail by 2019.

Fig. 1: The Sentiero Italia map

Source: Va' Sentiero Association, *Discovering the Sentiero Italia*, 2019

The landscapes are very varied, as is the cultural diversity. Along the Sentiero, there are ancient villages and mountain communities that are testimonies to and heirs of an Italy often unknown, but that has much to offer—above all, a priceless natural and cultural heritage.

The trail covers 6,880 km (4,275 miles), gains 3,500 meters of elevation (11,500 feet), and passes through 20 regions, 360 municipalities, six natural UNESCO sites and 368 stages.

The Va' Sentiero Project was initiated to relaunch this trail and promote Italy's mountain landscapes and communities. The promoter of this project is the Va' Sentiero Association, established in 2017 by a group of young people bound by a love of traveling and especially for the mountains. On the first of May 2019, this group started a hike that will last about 16 months. During these months, they have the objectives of:
- sharing their experience through social media
- collecting useful and technical information about the trail on a dedicated web platform
- attracting other walkers who want to join the hike, even just for a small part
- organising public events at some stages of the journey, such as talks, workshops, concerts and dinners.

At the end of the experience, they aim to publish a photographic book and documentary about the experience, with the final goal to inspire people to discover the Sentiero Italia.

Indeed, at the moment, with the exception of a few old websites that list the stages of the trail and the mountain shelters along the route (without descriptions, maps or pictures), there is no official complete documentation of the trail. This distinguishes the trail from other long-distance trails in the world, which are well advertised and extensively documented on modern websites containing exhaustive information for hikers.

To reach all of these objectives, clearly, it is necessary to collect the funds necessary to carry out each described activity.

4.2 Va' Sentiero's campaign on Indiegogo: does the community matter?

To collect the necessary funds, the promoters of the Va' Sentiero Project launched a reward-based crowdfunding campaign. The campaign was launched on Indiegogo, with a first phase running from the end of February until 26 March 2019. Six days before the deadline of the campaign, the promoters reached the target amount (25,000 euros), and on 26 March, a sum of 28,000 euros. After taking advantage of an opportunity to postpone the campaign end-date to 16 April, they collected 31,170 euros in total, thanks to the contributions of 424 backers—an overfunding percentage compared with the target of 124%.

This flexible fundraising round enabled them to reach the final goal through multiple subsequent steps: 20,000 euros for the cost of the journey, 5,000 euros for the photo book, 15,000 euros for the video reportage, 15,000 euros for customising a van for logistics support during the journey and, finally, 5,000 euros for creating a multi-themed web platform.

Va Sentiero's promoters defined the project as a 'collective and inclusive journey' to enhance the value of mountain areas. The journey was defined as collective and inclusive because the promoters invited other people to hike with them and because the journey was to be narrated on a dedicated website in real time.

The idea of this collective and inclusive journey and the declared goals were of critical importance in light of the choice of using crowdfunding to fulfil the project. Indeed, crowdfunding was defined by the promoters as the 'natural and coherent way to grow Va' Sentiero'.

The basic idea, the declared goal and the choice of crowdfunding make this project a perfect case study to evaluate the potential of crowdfunding as an instrument of collective engagement.

This brief analysis of the structure of the Va' Sentiero fundraising campaign was essential to evaluate the outstanding issues described in the previous paragraph: first, the nationality of the backers to test sensitivity to distance, second, the motivations for their funding, and third, connected to the previous issues, the presence of an overlap between investors and potential recipients of the services.

To exploit the potential of crowdfunding as an instrument of collective engagement, it is therefore fundamental to analyse in depth the configuration of the community created by the fundraising campaign and their motivations for funding the campaign. These goals will be achieved through a survey of backers that will take place in autumn 2019.

5. Discussion

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Given the differences between walking tourists underlined in the literature review, the differences in the attributes they observe (Yang et al., 2019) and the motivations that affect participation in a walking tour (Hyun et al., 2016), and, in addition, the need to analyse in depth the configuration of the community created by the fundraising campaign and their motivations for funding the campaign, we formulated a survey based on a questionnaire, as described below. The questionnaire, to be sent out in late 2019, is divided into five sections:

1. information on the respondents
2. information on how the respondents spend their free time
3. information on any relationship to the Va' Sentiero Project
4. information on the crowdfunding campaign
5. personal data.

In the following, for each section, we provide the basic questions and type (method) of questions. It is important to note that, in the actual survey, some questions are conditional on previous answers (in the following table, these specifications are not present).

Table 1: Proposed questionnaire for backers of the first crowdfunding campaign

SECTION	1. Information on the respondents
METHOD	Closed-ended multiple-choice questions
BASIC QUESTIONS	- How many times did you go walking/hiking in the mountains in the last 12 months? - Who do you usually go with to the mountains? - Please select one or more outdoor activities you take part in - What is your sporting level in these activities?

SECTION	2. Information on how the respondents spend their free time
METHOD	5-point Likert scale on frequency: Always Very Often Sometimes Rarely Never
BASIC QUESTIONS	- Sports activities - Body care - Restaurant / Pizzeria / Pub - Participation in cultural clubs / associations - Volunteer activities - Museums / Shows /Exhibitions - Traveling - Cinema / Theatre / Concerts - Reading - Technology and computers - Photography - Other (please specify) …

SECTION	3. Information on any relationship with the Va' Sentiero Project
METHOD	Closed-ended multiple-choice questions, and * 5-point Likert scale on importance: Very Important

	Important Moderately Important Of Little Importance Unimportant

BASIC QUESTIONS	- How did you come across the Va' Sentiero Project?
	- Please indicate the level of attractiveness of the following elements of the project (* Likert scale):
	  o Adventure
	  o Nature
	  o Sharing and exchanging among people
	  o Places that the project wants to promote and make known
	  o Other (please specify) …
	- What were the reasons for you to join the Va' Sentiero Project (subscription to newsletters, social networks or other channels)?
	- If you follow Va' Sentiero on social networks, which network do you use?
	- Are you willing to walk a part of the path with the founders of Va' Sentiero?
	- Which part are you willing to walk with them?
	- Which are the objectives you would like this project to help to achieve? (* Likert scale)
	  o Restoring the entire path of Sentiero Italia
	  o Promoting hiking and walking-related tourism
	  o Promoting sustainability in tourism in general
	  o Drawing public attention to the existence of this natural and cultural resource in Italy
	  o Raising economic resources to fund future development and improvement activities for Sentiero Italia
	  o Stimulating the revitalisation of mountain areas and communities that are now abandoned
	  o Creating a large group of promotors for Sentiero Italia
	  o Raising community awareness about Sentiero Italia and promoting its history
	  o Other (please specify) …

SECTION	4. Information on the crowdfunding campaign
METHOD	** Open-ended questions, and Closed-ended multiple-choice questions, and * 5-point Likert scale on importance: Very Important Important Moderately Important Of Little Importance Unimportant
BASIC QUESTIONS	- How did you come to know of the existence of the crowdfunding campaign for Va' Sentiero? - Is this the first time you have participated in crowdfunding? - How many other times did you participate in crowdfunding in the last 3 years? - Did you participate only in Indiegogo campaigns? - Which other platforms did you use for crowdfunding campaigns? (** Open-ended question) - Did you mainly fund campaigns with objectives similar to the Va' Sentiero Project? (e.g. Restoration of natural areas, sustainable tourism, etc.) (* Likert scale) - To what extent did these motivations affect your choice to fund Va' Sentiero? (* Likert scale) o I personally know the founders of the project

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	o I like helping projects and initiatives like Va' Sentiero
	o I want the Va' Sentiero Project to be implemented, to have the possibility to use it in the future
	o I would like to receive a reward
	o I was convinced by the appealing description of the project
	o I am pleased to be acknowledged as a Va' Sentiero financier by the investor community
	o Other (please specify) …
	- How much is your contribution (in euros or US dollars)? (** Open-ended question)

SECTION	5. Personal data
METHOD	Closed-ended multiple-choice questions
BASIC QUESTIONS	- Gender - Age - Education - Home town - Job position

Source: our elaboration

Via this questionnaire, we will be able to collect the first important information about the motivations of tourists to share interests and to protect the cultural, historical and natural heritage of the region. Nevertheless, the most important output of this survey will be the comprehension of the way in which funds for the development of walking tourism can be collected by exploiting mechanisms of citizens' engagement.

Some important results can already be obtained from this first step in the broader research project. This study shows the principal features of a project for the development of walking tourism:

- the usefulness of a first test phase and knowledge of the path to better contextualise this path, identify its opportunities and threats and thus be able to narrate its features
- the need to be able to start from an inventory of what is on the track (not only from a naturalistic point of view, but also from the point of view of already existing or easily developed commodities and facilities)
- the opportunity to be in all choices 'natural and coherent'. These principles (in other words, vision, mission and values) lay the foundation for positive long-term strategic development.

The promoters of the project, for example, firmly believe in the need for knowledge and knowledge development before putting the product (the Sentiero Italia) on the market; even in their trial journey, they chose the starting point carefully, declaring that 'We have two reasons for choosing to begin in the north: on the one hand, the northern area is better equipped (reception and signage) and beginning there gives us the opportunity to efficiently launch our project; on the other hand, we hope that our project will become better known as time passes and we would like to have this greater attention focused on the southern parts of the trail, which are less known and have greater needs'.

From this research, we are also able to identify the principal opportunities and threats for the public and private stakeholders of this project. The main opportunities, principally arising from the media communication and event organisation during the trip, are that:

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- there is a possibility to draw public attention to the existence of this national treasure and to the importance of protecting it

- there is a great opportunity to stimulate local socio-economic development, showing the locals the great attention this trail may receive.

As the international crowdfunding platform used was open to foreign potential tourists and interested people in general, stakeholder groups include an international perspective.

There is one main threat that has to be taken into consideration, regarding the group conformation. These very enthusiastic, determined but few people engaged in the project have knowledge and skills limited 'only' to aspects of upgrading a mountain trail. There is a lack of managerial and marketing of tourism skills, and little knowledge on fundraising. For example, with regards to the crowdfunding campaign, the founders had the objective to start a new one during the trekking to reach the sum necessary to finish the trail and cover the expenses of all scheduled activities, but until now, nothing is present. In addition, it was not considered whether the level of rewards was in agreement with the charity (or not) orientation of the project, as Wang et al. (2017) discussed.

6. Conclusion

This paper shows the first results of a major research project that will take at least two years to complete. These first results are useful in demonstrating that walking tourism can become an 'instrument' to share interests and to protect the cultural, historical and natural heritage of a region, and that crowdfunding is a suitable instrument, at least as the first step in a similar project.

This study showed the principal features of a project for the development of walking tourism, which include, above all, the need to study and test a trail before putting it on the market. Further, the substantial environmental, social and economic opportunities were summarised, and also the principal threat; that linked to the promoter group.

This work has practical implications for the tourism sector, public bodies, crowdfunding platforms, not-for-profit organisations and citizens. All of these can see the potential of this touristic product, and evaluate if and, as in this case, how much to invest knowing the possible benefits.

From an academic point of view, we have taken a step forward in research on a subject that is still little investigated; in particular, to our best knowledge, this is the first study that creates a link between the development of walking tourism and instruments for funding it. Finally, we proposed a questionnaire that can be used to expand the walking tourist motivation scale, as discussed in Hyun (2016).

The principal limit of this research is connected to the fact that this is the first step of a longer major research project, and consequently, there is much further research to conduct. First, on collecting the results from the survey, we will present other in-depth analysis on attributes and motivations of walking tourists (demand-side factors), and the economic impact of the development of this trail (supply-side factors).

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