

**Tropaeum Traiani Monument.  
A Multi-Channel Strategy for Sustainable Development  
of the Territory through Cycle Tourism**

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**Abstract.** The article explores the methodological approach of the designer around the promotion and communication project of the Tropaeum Traiani and the municipality of Adamclisi, located in the Dobruja region in Romania. The designer's ability consists in adapting to new scenarios, storing and reprocessing new information, taking note of the change and reasserting the project management. In this case the research has doubled between two targets, on the one hand, the stakeholders of the territory and on the other hand, the cyclists. The first phase of the project deals with the collection of data regarding the identity of the territory and the case studies of sustainable tourism. The second phase focuses on the data analysis and the field research, while the third phase deals with a target trend tourism research. At the end we collect some feedback from the stakeholders and the cyclists on the project and analyse the results from which to draw conclusions for future developments.

**Keywords:** Adamclisi, cyclists, action research, survey.

## **1. Introduction**

Why is the Adamclisi monument little known outside of Romania? How can digital channels help in the promotion of the monument? These were the questions we have asked at the beginning of the project, which sees the Tropaeum Traiani, as the protagonist of the territorial promotion of the municipality of Adamclisi. In Valea Urluei, in Dobruja, there is a Roman settlement called Civitas Tropaeum Traiani, flanked by the triumphal monument Tropaeum Traiani, a mausoleum and a military funerary altar, erected in honor of the Roman soldiers who fell in the battles held in the area in 102 (Poenaru, 1983). The monument and the Trajan's column in Rome are a fundamental and evident proof of the Daco-Roman war between Trajan and Decebalus, which through its epigraphic sources and metopes allowed us to reconstruct historical events. These two monuments are contradictory for certain details but converging on the essential traits, they speak about the drama that underlies the origin of the Romanian people (Florescu, 1980). Tropaeum Traiani also called the Adamclisi monument, derives from the Turkish word *Adamklissi*, the Adam's church, that was probably a reference to the mound-like shape of the monument, which evoked the shape of a church's dome (Mitrovici, 2016). The first who reported the existence of the monument were some travellers, soldiers and scientists, but nobody stopped to give a scientific definition of the monument if not

Grigore Tocilescu, who in 1882 undertook the first archaeological excavations in the area and published his results in the “Monumentul triumfal Tropaeum Traiani de la Adamklissi” book (Miclea & Florescu, 1980). Tocilescu was also the first to carry out scientific research and to discover that it was a war trophy, built by the emperor Trajan around 106. The tropaeum represents the certificate of origin of the Romanian people, because it is thanks to the Roman conquest that the Dacians assimilated and adopted the language and Roman culture (Poenaru, 1983). In 1974 the building of the museum and the setting up of the archaeological material inside it began, while the restoration of the monument ended in 1977. In the self-supporting building of the monument some of the original stone blocks are visible, while the original metopes are placed inside the museum and faithfully reproduced on the restored structure (Serbanescu, 2017). Once the historical background of the monument and the millennial significance connected to the city of Adamclisi has been clarified, we have extended the research to the surrounding territory through the action research, participant observation and video-interviews to the main stakeholders in the area. Thanks to this collection of qualitative data we identified the needs of the inhabitants and the municipality. It has emerged that the territory does not have the necessary structures to accommodate a large number of tourists. The need arose to find a way through which to promote tourism without the risk of excessive overexposure of the monument that would inevitably lead to the distortion of the territory. The solution was to try to adopt a sustainable approach to territorial development and attract a trend target that respects the principles of environmental sustainability.

## **2. Related Work**

The project starts with the aim of promoting the monument, but we realise that we cannot promote the monument without taking into consideration the territory within which it is inserted. The online researches show that the communication about the monument is not properly conducted, because the territorial needs were not considered. “How to promote the monument in relation to the territory and attract a sustainable tourism?” is the question this article tries to answer. In this article we will talk about sustainable tourism and ecomuseums. We will move on to a global search and analysis of the recent trend target, focusing on Millennials and cycle tourists. The challenge is to grasp the true essence of the territory and find its values and weaknesses, from which to develop the communication strategy, thus creating a methodological research model universally applicable to unpromoted territories.

The concept of sustainability has a dual value, on one side, ecological, regarding the balance conservation between the components of the natural habitat; on the other side, anthropological, referring to the tourists enjoyment experience of the environment (Bizzarri, & Querini, 2006). World Tourism Organization defined sustainable tourism at the “Euro-Mediterranean Conference on Tourism and Sustainable Development” (1993) as: “[...] a way that economic, social, and aesthetic needs can be fulfilled while

maintaining cultural integrity, essential ecological processes, biological diversity, and life support systems.” (UNTWO, 2014, p. 3). As set out in Agenda 21 for the travel and tourism sector in 1996, sustainable development is based on three pillars: social, environmental and economic sustainability (Ceccherelli, 2016). It implies a drive towards the diffusion of lifestyles oriented through efficiency, reduction of waste and reuse of resources (Caroli, 2006). The management of a territory and the use of available resources should optimize the results in the present or at least maintain the wealth of currently available ones over time.

The ecomuseum is a good way to attract tourists and make them understand the museum from a sustainable point of view. The term “ecomuseum” was coined by Hugues de Varine (1978) and it referred to a museum dedicated to the entire territory, that can represent its inhabitants, their culture and what they have inherited from the past (Varine, 2005). The ecomuseum is a museum without walls, a community-led initiative that connects existing and new attractions to preserve heritage and local traditions around a central theme; people themselves have strong links with the place and a collective sense of identity (Reale, 2000; Davis 2005). It is clear that ecomuseums contain everything in the region that refers to its territory as an intangible heritage and tangible evidence of landscapes, wildlife, vernacular construction or material culture (McDowell, 2008). We can look at case studies already applied to the territory, as the Flodden ecomuseum, where a monument was erected in memory of the Battle of Flodden, which took place in northern England in 1513. The ecomuseum is made up of 41 offline physical sites and has supported and trained a large number of community volunteers to actively contribute to the collection of historical testimonies, with the will to pass them on to the future generations (Joicey, 2017). Another case study can be found in the tourism management of Seychelles, where the goal is to improve the quality of visitor experiences. The purpose is to encourage Seychelles hotels to integrate sustainability practices into their commercial operations to safeguard the biodiversity and culture of the islands. The government imposes very strict rules for any activity linked to tourism to a long process of approval. Furthermore a Sustainable Label Commission, that involves a tourism management and a certification program, was designed to inspire more efficient and sustainable ways of working (GSTC, 2017). The models of Flodden and Seychelles have in common the involvement of the locals, the communication through online and offline channels and the aspiration to improve the territory for future generations.

Once the examples of strategic approaches have been identified, we consulted the data of travel agencies such as *Booking* and *Trekkssoft* to get an overview of the types of tourists and their behavior related to holidays. According to *Trekkssoft's Travel Trend Report 2017*, on a sample of 145 companies, it emerged that the tourist is no longer satisfied with a pleasure trip, but he or shee seeks new adventures trying to get out of its comfort zone. According to *Booking Trend Report 2018*, the most popular experiences among tourists are visiting the traditional wonders of the world (47%), eating traditional local food (35%), participating in a unique cultural event (28%), learning something new (27%), making a fantastic road trip (25%) and visiting an isolated or difficult place to

reach (25%). Traveling to discover a place and its culture is one of the most important reasons that makes tourists move from one place to another. The search for new journeys in not yet explored territories is due to the desire to escape from the crowds and most popular cities with the possibility of spending less (Momondo, 2018). So what is that specific trend target that lends itself to a type of experiential journey, with a sustainable attitude towards the environment? Sustainability is fully within the values of the Millennials. The *Travel Pirates* survey, the largest social travel community in the world on sustainable tourism, confirms that the philosophy of travel based on sustainability is much more widespread than we think. Among the 1.357 participants in a *Travel Pirates* survey, 66% said that the respect for the environment is essential when traveling, while 34% said they try to adopt sustainable behaviors (Adnkronos, 2017). Another trend target is the category of cycle tourists, which is constantly growing in recent years. A study commissioned by the European Parliament in 2012 estimated that there are over 2.2 billion bicycle trips and 20 million with overnight stays in Europe each year (Lumsdon et al., 2009). The cycle tourism market is a safe investment, in fact according to the European study *Regionalwirtschaftliche Effekte des Radtourismus*, in Germany the turnover of bicycle touring grew from 5 billion in 2000 to 9 billion in 2009. Investments made in cycle tourism infrastructure, especially in cycle paths, have been recovered in less than two years (ETI, 2007).

About 20 km away from Adamclisi the trans-European cycle route Atlantic-Black Sea crosses the Romanian country. EuroVelo6 is the most popular route among all EuroVelo routes, as you can see from the *Google Trends* chart (Fig. 1). The famous sections along the rivers of the Loire and the Danube are known for cyclists all over the world, but what are the reasons that drive to cycle? According to the 2017 CHIP survey, more than half of the interviewed cyclists pedal for health issues, or to keep fit. 11% are motivated by reduced time to travel from home to work, while 10% prefer to save money (Ruebens, 2017).

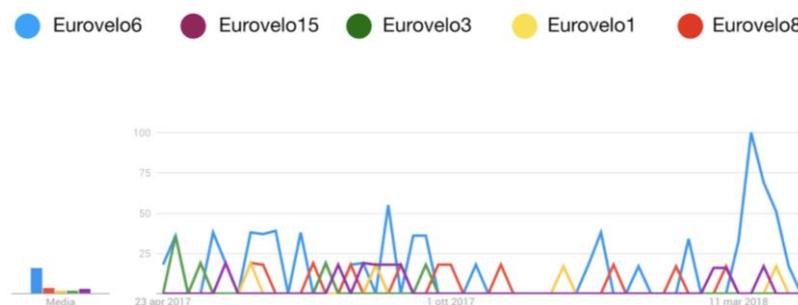


Figure 1. Google Trends, 2017-2018 (Source: extrapolate data from Google Trends)

### 3. Project Workflow

The project directly focuses on the territory, using design as a bridge between the complexity of the problem and the contingency of the solution and at the same time focusing on the creation of the relationship between problems and solutions (Chow & Jonas, 2009). The role of the designer is to adopt the learning by doing process, that means “creating while constantly testing out visual or spatial outcomes of ideas” (Özkar, 2007, p.100). We do not have to follow a preset path. According to Frayling (1993), design is a practice that involves the thinking and the doing part, for example actions can follow reflections and reflections can follow actions. During the research phase the designer unconsciously or consciously faces a path that refers to the double diamond structure, featured by a divergent and convergent thinking. Divergent thinking emphasizes a broader exploration, focusing on identifying significant new customer problems and opportunities, while convergent thinking prioritizes opportunities and emphasizes customer needs and desires (Laurel, 2003). The divergent phase, applied to our project, is characterized by literature review, desk and action research. The desk research focuses on the identity of Adamclisi compared to other cities with similar historical heritage, strategic models of sustainable tourism and research on type of sustainable target. The outputs of this first phase are two: the positioning of Adamclisi and the identification of its local needs. In the convergent phase, the needs of the chosen cyclists' targets were identified through a survey and finally the concept of the project was defined: a multi-channel strategy through the *Facebook* and *Instagram* platforms.

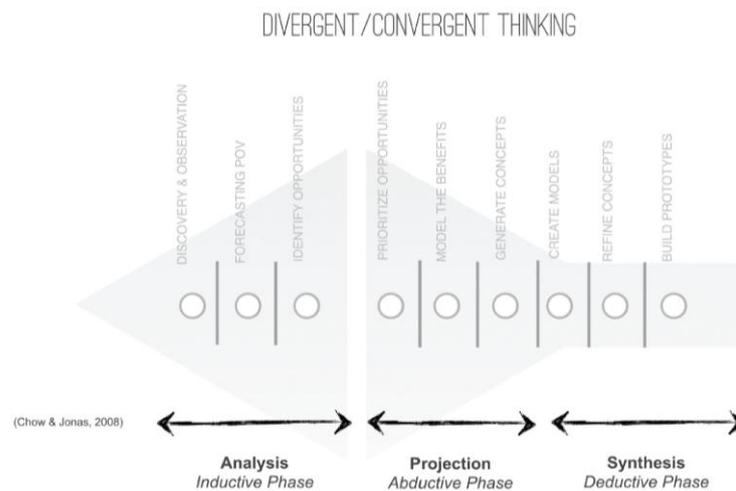


Figure 2. Scheme of the research phases that combines the developed model from Chow and Jonas (2008), with the "Fuzzy Front End" process (Rhea, 2003).

### 3.1 Data research

The research started from the focus on the monument, its history meaning, incorporating the entire region, that has a strongly seasonal seaside tourism, especially concentrated during the weekends. It is important to consider examples of cities that have managed to successfully promote themselves from which to take a cue and have a wide-ranging vision of the surrounding environment before entering the project specifications. For example, Sibiu is one of the best known cities in Romania, the 2016 INSSE data confirm that it is the 3 most visited city in the country, having increased by 29% compared to the previous year. In 2007 Sibiu was one of the capitals of European culture and it was well promoted thanks to the organization of events on the territory and the updated website on the activities to be done on the spot (Loghin, 2018). By comparison with the other cities, we can say that Adamclisi has a significant different element for which it is known: Tropaeum Traiani, the monument that represents the origin of the Romanian people. As can be seen from the *Google Trends* graph (Fig.3), the monument is not widely known abroad and the term “Tropaeum Traiani” is mostly sought by Romanians, followed by the Moldavians, Italians and Spanish. The question spontaneously arises, how can we attract a type of international tourism? So we decided to undertake a field participatory action research, using video interviews as tools and participant observation as a technique.

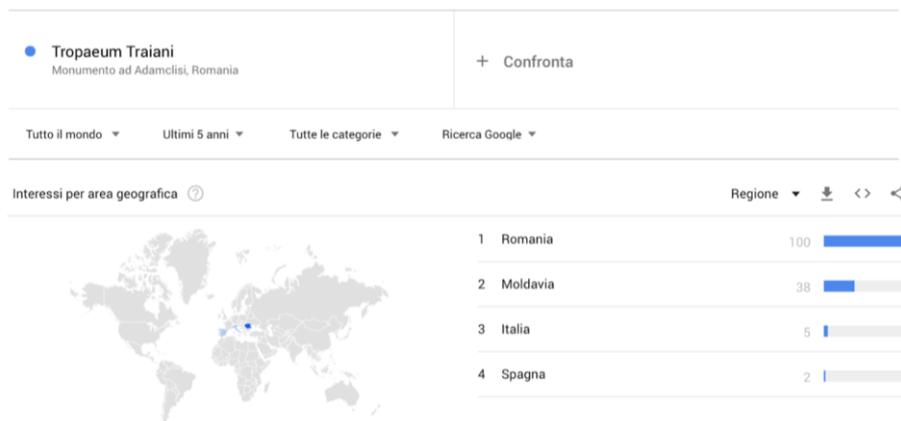


Figure 3. Research of the term Tropaeum Traiani, last 5 years.  
(Source: extrapolate data from Google Trends)

### 3.2 Adamclisi: identity, local and needs

As a first step we interviewed two main archeology experts, Costantin Chera and Gheorghe Papuc, who personally participated in the restoration of the Tropaeum Traiani. They spoke about the monument related to its history by adding personal insights. Ion Nicolae, the sculptor of the trophy, was also interviewed on the same topic to obtain a greater awareness of the monument from a technical and compositive point of view. On the one hand, there are the opinions of those who experienced the period of restoration and what that involved on the historical level; on the other hand, the mayor and the citizens living side by side with such a big resource. The historians' interviews helped us to frame and confirm the identity of the monument while the interviews with the citizens revealed the community identity of Adamclisi. The interviews were carried out through a mediator, a person who acted as an intermediary between the designer and the interviewees. To use an unknown person during an interview involves the lack of trust on the interlocutor side, therefore the sculptor of the monument started a dialogue with the mayor of Adamclisi aimed at explaining the idea of promoting the town. The interviews were structured according to the following aspects: presentation of ourselves and the project, presentation of the questions to the interviewee, assembly of the camera and microphone, consent of personal data treatment, and video interview.

At the end we agreed that the mayor would schedule the appointments with some previously identified citizens: a farmer, a beekeeper, a breeder, a priest and the director of the museum. The interviewees corresponded to the main stakeholders, those who mostly frequented the municipal administration. For the mayor, the types of questions were about the administrative and management of the municipality. Interviewing the stakeholders we wanted to bring out the values, the shortcomings and the needs. Then we proceeded to a re-elaboration phase of the data in which we reviewed the notes taken during the interviews. We also listened to the footages and extrapolated the most important topics, drawing a lineup in which each key concept was punctuated by the duration of the frame. After completing these steps, we compared the interviews to identify common ideas and reorganized the results of the qualitative analysis through a synthetic scheme, that represents the emerged common needs (Fig.4).

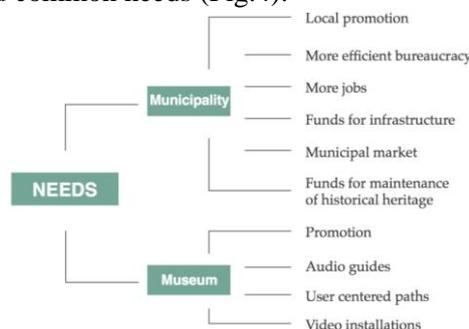


Figure 4. Chart of the needs of Adamclisi

The strong point of the territory is the protected area, that is included in the European Nature 2000 program, an ecological network that aims to preserve natural habitats, taking into account the economical, social, cultural interests in a logic of sustainable development (Rete Natura 2000, 2018). The territory is not ready to accommodate a type of mass tourism, because there are not enough facilities to receive tourists. So how could one attract a trend tourism without damaging the territory? We can look for an answer in the sustainable tourism and further investigate particular assets or heritage sites in a wide range of actors and stakeholders (Ulbricht & Schröder-Esch, 2006).

### 3.3 Target research

This part of the quantitative research takes place online, accumulating statistical data and comparing generational tourism and growing tourist trends in recent years. Coinciding with this research, it has been discovered that the cycle tourists are an incipient existing target in Adamclisi. Cyclists have a different lifestyle and characteristics based on the place chosen to ride. According to a CIRM survey on bicycle use, the city cyclist cannot stand the traffic and is convinced that he/ she has the mission to improve the air quality; he/ she also has a strong respect for the environment and uses the bike especially for Sunday outings (Cillo, 2012). In reality there are no real categories in which to pigeonhole cyclists, because the types varies according to different situations, for example, a person can daily move by bike to go to work and in the weekend to be a cycle tourist. According to the results of an analysis conducted by EuroVelo on *La Loire à Vélo* cycle path we prefer to refer to the three main categories of cyclists (La Loire à Vélo, 2016):

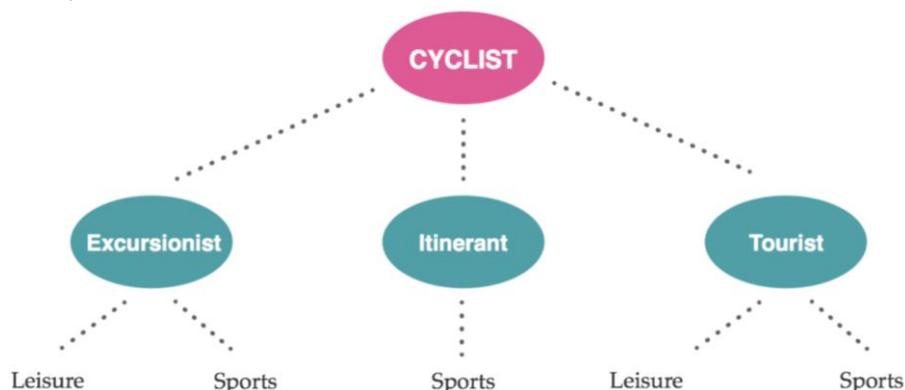


Figure 5. Types of cyclists (La Loire à Vélo, 2016)

- The excursionist is a cyclist who rides a day or less, or returns home at the end of the day.
- The itinerant cyclist is a cyclist who travels by bicycle, he changes his lodging as he moves forward. This category does not include cyclists who use vehicles other than bikes to move from one accommodation to another.
- The tourist is a cyclist who spends at least one night away from home.

These three categories are further divided between sports cyclist, who uses special equipment to travel for long distances (>50 km a day) and leisure cyclist, who uses the bicycle for short distances (<50 km per day). Once the potential of this target emerged, we began to investigate cycling routes and we discovered EuroVelo, a network of 15 cycle paths that crosses 42 European countries with spread over 45,000 km away (Bodor et al., 2016). EuroVelo6 Atlantic-Black Sea is a cycle circuit that stretches from Nantes to Constanza, passing only 20 km far from Adamclisi.

To reach the cycle tourists target, first we must find their needs and secondly identify their behavior before, during and after the trip in order to understand the effective touchpoints that allows to reach them. For this reason we created a survey aimed at studying cycle tourists. To determine the questions of the survey (Fig. 6) as a first step, we interviewed an itinerant cyclist amateur who travels several times a year by cycling for more than a week. Then we developed thematic guidelines, in a generic form, which after the interview were refined in specific questions, giving form to the final survey (Ronzon, 2008). We used the *Google Form* as a tool to spread the survey, that was structured into six sections, each of which corresponded to a different topic. Part of the questions were of a cognitive type, thanks to which we understood what the cyclists took with them on the road, where they stayed and what kind of devices they used to orient themselves.

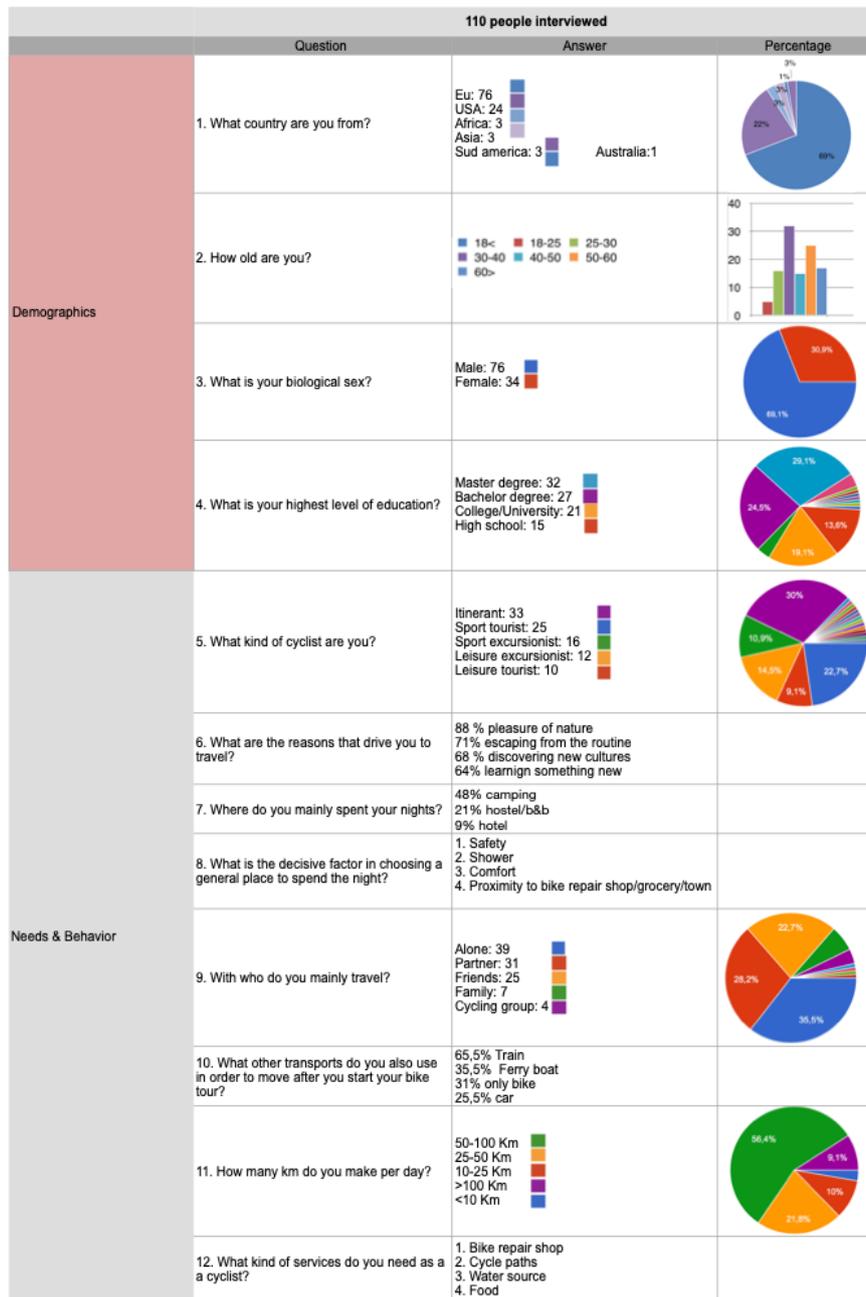


Figure 6. Part of cycle tourism survey results (you can find more here: <https://docs.google.com/forms/d/e/1FAIpQLSd5OnRfrlottedXkd7tJFuFlpWWXdKiuO2uLiesHh4FuTRaNFw/viewanalytics>)

On the one hand, we obtained quantitative results linked to demography, in which we tried to identify gender, age, nationality and studies and on the other hand, open-ended questions reflected a qualitative aftermath. The answers were structured into three categories: single, multiple-choice and free answers. The interview was conducted on a sample of 110 people, all over the age of 18, including one third women and two thirds men. This type of target is well-educated, in fact more than 70% have a university degree. 30% consider themselves as itinerant cyclists, while another 30% as sporty and more than 50% of cycle tourists say they travel between 50-100 km per day. As you can see in the chart (Fig. 6) the main reason why cyclists are driven to travel is the pleasure of being in contact with nature, escaping from the routine and discovering new cultures. Cyclists love to explore parks and nature, sampling local foods and visiting historical and cultural sites. What they most need is a shower and a comfortable place to spend the night, but also some spots along the bike path where they can eat and have the opportunity to repair and rent their bike. The presence of a cycle path is very important for them, since greater safety is guaranteed. As it also confirmed by a ENIT study, those who decide to embark on a cycling holiday pay close attention to the possibility of staying in welcoming facilities, with a guaranteed shelter for bicycles, cycle shops and info points.

One of the fundamental aspects in choosing the destination of the trip is the word of mouth, in fact the stories of friends are an important decision-making factor. Cyclists will share their experience, producing content on blogs and forums themselves. This type of target is present, active and participates on social platforms, creating and sharing contents of travel experiences. They choose the places to visit based on already existing cycle paths or roads with little traffic, opting for pre-established routes from which deviate from time to time. During the holiday, a good number of cycle tourists orient themselves mainly thanks to *Google Maps* or using specific apps like *Strava* and *Maps.me*. We can conclude that the cycle tourists fully satisfy a sustainable development of the territory. Having identified their needs and those of the stakeholders, we confronted each other trying to understand the links between them. How could one satisfy the needs of both targets?

### **3.4 Analysis of Results and Future Developments**

According to the decision making phases (Fig. 7) and the survey results, a map of channels was drawn and for each phase the channels that best meet the specific needs were chosen. *Instagram* is the channel that best represents the phase of inspiration, because it is a growing social media, with more than 700 million registered users, that embeds suggestive pictures and short videos. Thanks to the intuitive hashtag system is much easier to reach the target of interest. Although *Facebook* does not appear among the first choices in the results of the survey, it can provide information that the cycle tourists look for in the decision-making phase, or in the choice of the destination. Cyclists need to be reassured during the planning phase, through an official and reliable source such as a

landing page, where you can find more information about the territory, a map with the points of interest, events and a way to enter contact with stakeholders and book the holiday. In the first phase of the project it was decided that the *Facebook* page would carry the function of the landing page, which will be later created. *Google Maps* is the most popular app for orientation among cyclists, as confirmed by the survey 77/109 people use it, but *Strava* is their favorite, as already identified in chapter 4, because they synchronize it to the bike computer placed on the bicycle, recording their goals and their personal records.

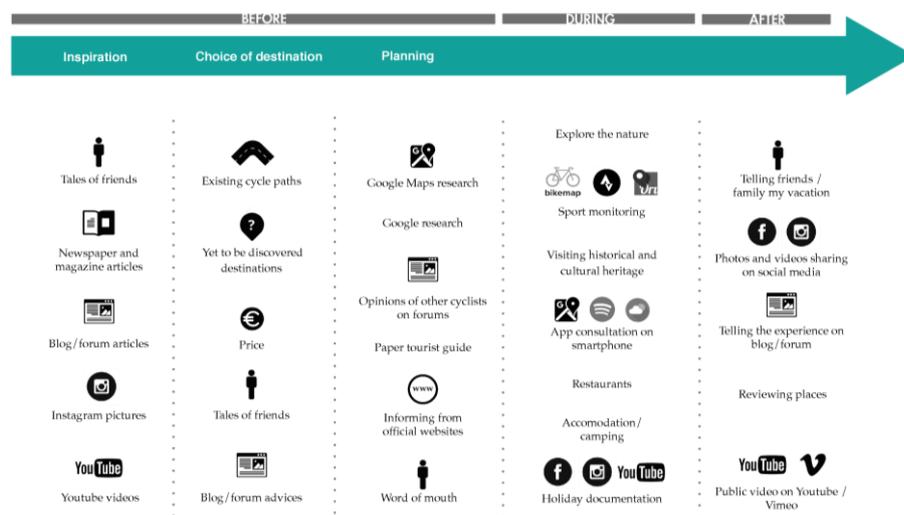


Figure 7. Map of channels inserted in the various phases of decision making

The engagement from *Maps* and *Strava* takes place while the target explores the territory. Based on the awareness of the importance of the various decision-making phases that the cyclist has to face, we decided to map all the offline and online channels related to the target and the stakeholders, combining the territorial offer with the needs of cyclists. We identified the major entrepreneurs in the area by searching on social networks those companies that had a media profile or just a physical meeting point. The data were synthesized in a map of channels on which we tried to find the right connections between the territory and the cyclists. As can be seen in fig. 8, the afflux is concentrated in the same way on both *Instagram* and the cycle tourist *Facebook* page, this is due to a natural flow by both targets but also to the designer's choice to reinforce the existing flow, creating engagement and focusing the spotlight on those two pages. So it was decided to create a multichannel promotion, through the *Instagram* page "The Roots Rider" whose goal is to inspire the target and through the *Facebook* page "Cycle Adamclisi" whose goal is to inform and connect cyclists with stakeholders. The entire

project is communicated in a *Facebook* group, designed for the target of stakeholders. Future developments of the project include the opening of a landing page, which will have an institutional role and will replace the functions of the current *Facebook* page and those of *Strava*, designed as a further engagement of cyclists on the territory. In this case, the *Facebook* page would become a community in which cyclists can exchange opinions and feedback. We talk about a long-term strategy whose real expected results will take place next summer, in the meantime the effectiveness of the various profiles will be studied, correcting the strategy where it will be necessary. The behavior of the users will be further studied on the social pages of the project, monitoring the type of content and determining the decisions to be taken in order to best satisfy the users. Based on the data collected by social monitoring, the landing page and its structure will be established. Thanks to this project we have been able to create a local awareness for the stakeholders of the municipality and an easily identifiable imaginary for cyclists. We hope that in the future we can open a dialogue between cyclists and stakeholders.

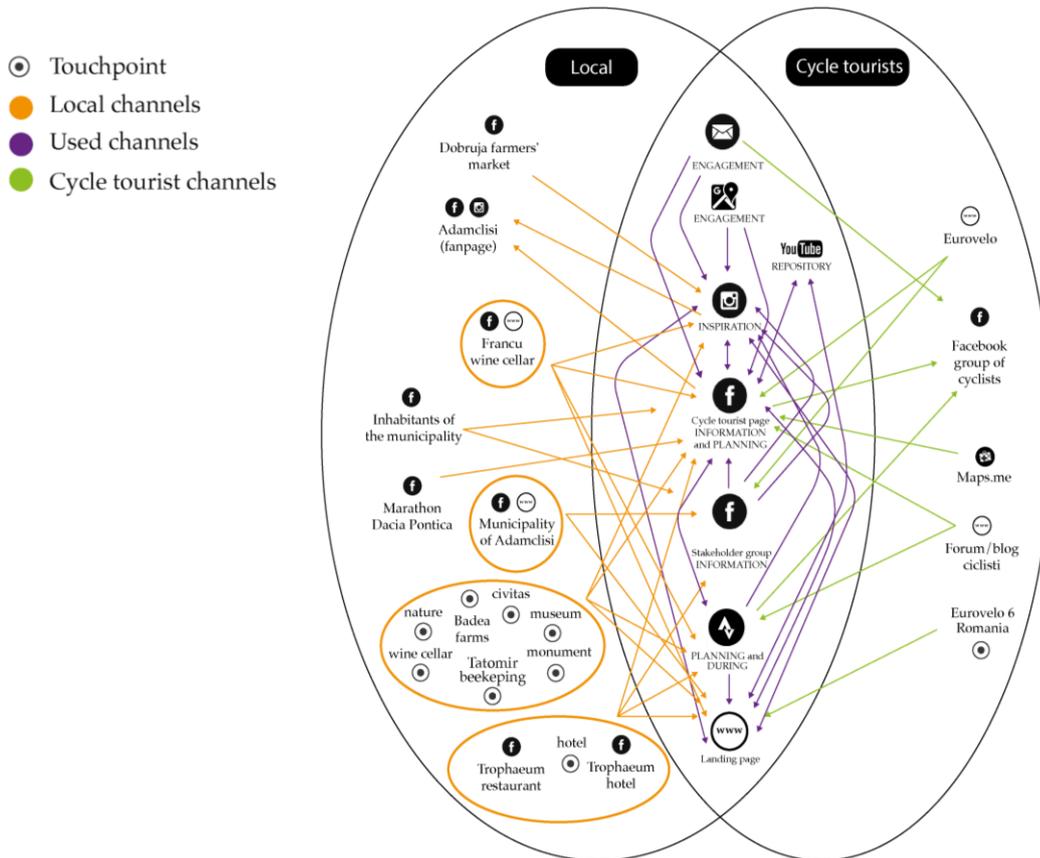


Figure 8. Map of channels and touchpoints

#### 4. Conclusions

To conclude the design process and give a more complete answer to the initial question *How can digital channels help in the promotion of the monument?*, we asked both cyclists and stakeholders for a feedback on the project. The strategy is re-proposed to both targets through semi-structured interviews: 5 via *Google Forms* addressed to stakeholders and one e-mail discussion with Mr. Struck, the influencer and administrator of the *Facebook* group *Bicycle Touring & Bikepacking*. He suggested: "It would help to have some pictures of people enjoying themselves, both locals and visitors" (Struck, personal communication, July 9, 2018). Mr. Struck claimed that it never fails to present the idea of fun, safety, and a community that welcomes visitors.

On the other side, we gave to stakeholders the information about the benefits of cycling for the municipality. Those explanations were very useful, since none of the respondents knew about the EV6 cycling route. Stakeholders are aware that by attracting cycle tourists, they will be able to increase their commercial development. This project is not only concerned with promoting the territory, but also becomes a vehicle for information, highlighting new perspectives. The stakeholders believe in the realization of the project and they are also convinced that the construction of a cycle path can implement the influx of cyclists, though the absence of funding cuts the possibility of growth in this direction.

The most effective way to develop a type of sustainable tourism is to 'grasp' the territory without a pre-setting methodological approach to follow. It is necessary to understand within which market the project is placed, to look at those who made similar projects to what you intend to do and to take them as inspiration. The role of the designer is to observe, listen, store and manage information, analyze data, produce output in line with the needs of the territory and tourists and finally reflect on feedback. In this case, the designer stands as a mediator between reality and planning, having the flexibility to change the direction of the project, to improve the impact and the benefits on the territory. We hope that the undertaken work might be a structural model in the construction of a sustainable project.

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