

# Cycle Adamclisi. A multi channel project of sustainable development through cycle tourism

*Cycle Adamclisi. Um projeto multicanal de desenvolvimento sustentável através do ciclo de turismo*

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**ABSTRACT:** The article is about a process of analysis and research that leads to a multichannel sustainable strategy applied to the town of Adamclisi, immersed in the land of southern Dobruja region in Romania, with the purpose to draft a sustainable model to follow. The research enhances the historical heritage through the symbolic monument of Tropaeum Traiani, that represents the definitive conquest of Dacia by the Roman Empire and is considered the certificate of origin of the Romanian people. The field of study is the municipality of Adamclisi, where the researcher was able to identify the territorial needs thanks to the interviews and the participant observation.

**KEYWORDS:** cycle tourism, sustainable tourism, Tropaeum Traiani, Adamclisi, Eurovelo

**RESUMO:** O artigo trata de um processo de análise e pesquisa que leva a uma estratégia sustentável multicanal aplicada à cidade de Adamclisi, localizada na região de Dobruja, na Romênia, com o objetivo de elaborar um modelo sustentável a seguir. A pesquisa suporta o patrimônio histórico a partir do monumento simbólico de Tropaeum Traiani, que representa a conquista definitiva da Dacia pelo Império Romano e é considerado o certificado de origem do povo romeno. O campo de estudo é o município de Adamclisi, onde o pesquisador foi capaz de identificar as necessidades territoriais graças às entrevistas e à observação participativa.

**PALAVRAS-CHAVE:** ciclo turismo, turismo sustentável, Tropaeum Traiani, Adamclisi, Eurovelo

## 1. Introduction

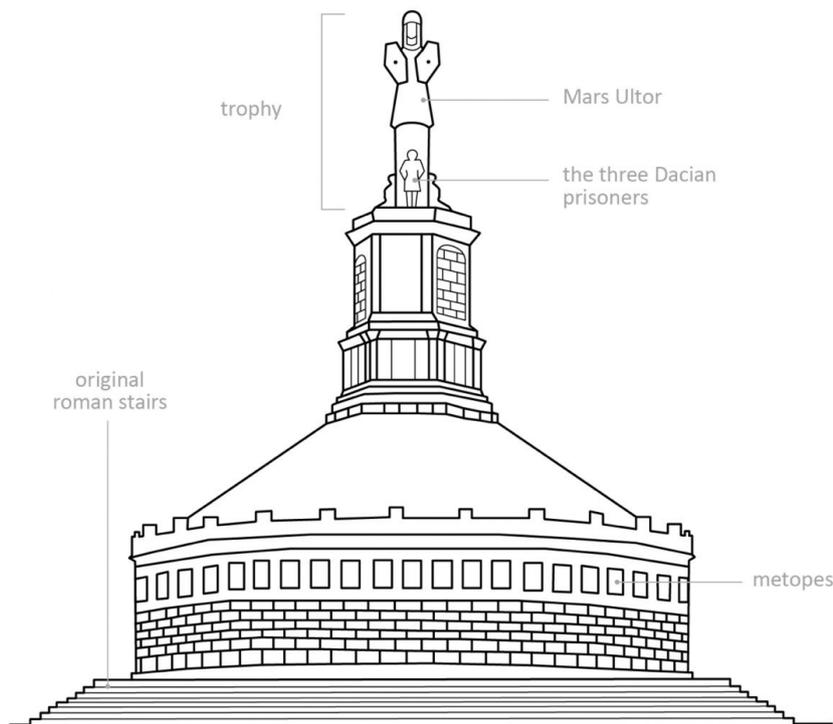
Cycle Adamclisi is the project of the author's master thesis degree in Communication Design at Politecnico di Milano, that promotes the municipality of Adamclisi through the powerful meaning of Tropaeum Traiani, a monument erected by the will of the Roman emperor Trajan. Next to the monument, there are other Roman artefacts preserved within the city museum and a Roman castrum built immediately after the battle around 106. From a historical heritage point of view, the town has a lot to offer, but the task of the designer is to seize also what is not expressed, bring it to light and enhance it. The study was fuelled by the desire to discover why the Adamclisi monument is little known abroad and what is the best path to follow in order to promote it. The first phase of the study is grounded on collection of data from the existing literature about the local history such as Poenaru (1983) and Miclea & Florescu (1980), on a desk research about the town and the region, and on online tourist statistics provided by the INS Department of Constanta region and MDRAP. The second phase focuses on the collection of information on the territory, going directly to interview the major stakeholders of Adamclisi and its surroundings, from which the main needs of the municipality emerged. In the third phase we analyse the case studies of sustainable tourism and the results of a survey conducted on a sample of cycling tourists. The fourth and last part describes the long-term multichannel marketing and communication strategy adopted through the use of concept maps and the synthesis of collected data.

### 1.2 Historical overview

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 honour of the Roman soldiers who fell in the battles held in the area in 102 B.C (Poenaru, 1983). Petrut Mariana, the director of the museum of Adamclisi, stands that the monument, the mausoleum and the altar are considered an integral part of a single complex, designed in the shape of an isosceles triangle, having as a base the monument and the funeral mound, and as the upper point the altar (Serbanescu, 2018, 05:18). At the time it was thought to be a cult monument of antiquity, and was named Adam Klisse, from the Turkish "church of Adam" or "the mankind church". The one who is responsible for the discovery of the significance of the monument is Grigore Tocilescu, the historian and archaeologist, who in 1882 undertook the first archaeological excavations in the area. Tocilescu was flanked during the excavations and research period by the Viennese architect and lecturer Georg Nieman and the ancient history specialist Otto Benndorf. Thanks to their contribution, he published the book *Monumentul triumfal Tropaeum Traiani de la Adamklissi*, which discusses the problems faced in reconstructing and reinterpreting historical events. In 1974 work began on the museum and the arrangement of the archaeological material inside, while in 1977 those for the restoration of the Tropaeum Traiani. As Petrut Mariana states, the original metopes are placed inside the museum along with other parts of the monument, whose faithful reproduction is incorporated into the restored monument (Serbanescu, 2018, 16:30). What

we see today of the monument of Adamclisi is a faithful reproduction of which only the steps and some stones are original.

**Fig.1** – Illustration of the triumphal monument Tropaeum Traiani



Source: Sampetru 1984, p.68.

### 1.3 The area of Adamclisi

The area of Adamclisi is part of the southern plain of Dobruja, an ancient and complex geological land, with a rich network of ramified valleys, which have large terraces generously exposed to the sun. The municipality Adamclisi consists of the towns of Abrud, Hateg, Urluia and Zorile, located at a distance of 63 km from the regional capital of Costanta. It is an area away from the busy life of large cities and traffic, the nearest train station is at a distance of 25 km at the Cobadin municipality, but the fastest way to reach the municipality is through the national road DN3 via the bus service or directly by car. The area of Adamclisi is included in the European network of Natura 2000, an ecological network spread over the whole Europe with the aim of preserving natural habitats and threatened or rare species of flora and fauna, taking into consideration the regional economic, social and cultural needs in a logic sustainable development. The municipality must in fact respect the EU regulation, avoiding that the agricultural cultivation of the land leads to degradation or destruction of natural habitats together with plants and animals of protected species (Rete Natura 2000, 2018). Adamclisi also contributes to the heritage of the Constanta region, which boasts a wide historical value, having been invaded over time by the Greek, Roman and Byzantine civilizations that have left traces of their passage with countless archaeological sites. Besides the historical aspect, the region is characterized by the innumerable Orthodox churches and monasteries that enrich the cultural heritage with their Byzantine decorations and which host frequent pilgrims.

## 2. Analysis of the territory

Romania is an emerging country, demonstrating the accelerated economic growth of 2017 GDP of 6.7%, which reached a post-crisis peak, far exceeding the European average that was around 2.5% (Winter 2018 Economic Forecast, 2018). The main engine that led to this growth was private consumption, supported by wage increases. Tourism has also improved in recent years, in fact the country enjoys tourist growth, according to data from INSSE Romania almost 2.5 million tourists visited the country in 2016 with an increase of about 13.85% compared to the previous year and a 3.6% increase in foreign tourism. Adamclisi fits into this national and regional overview, where it suffers from a type of seaside tourism, given its proximity to the Black Sea, which sees the arrival of the largest number of tourists especially during the summer. This is a point of weakness since it is necessary to guarantee a type of tourism that is equally distributed throughout the year. To better understand the needs of the municipality of Adamclisi, we went to the site to interview key people, as the major stakeholders of the territory, because any detailed investigation of particular assets or heritage sites will soon reveal a wide range of actors and stakeholders (Schröder-Esch and Ulbricht, 2006). The needs of the municipality and the stories of the inhabitants emerged from the survey conducted on the territory through interviews made to the mayor, the director of the museum of Adamclisi, the farmers and the manager of the only hotel in the town. What citizens need most, alongside efficient bureaucracy, is to sell their products. The breeder Badea Ionel, a resident of Abrud, claims to have a low-paid job because it is difficult to sell what he produces, taking into account that there is no municipal market yet. Badea argues that a promotion of the municipality is certainly one of the first needs to be met alongside the creation of certain tourist itineraries. The local beekeeper Munteanu Valerica reiterates the same concept: "What we need most is

territorial promotion. [...] The shortcomings are many, as in any other municipality, but with small steps, once the municipality is promoted as a tourist destination the rest will come by itself.” (Serbanescu, 2018, 05:39). The need for territorial promotion has also emerged from an interview with Petrut Mariana, who claims that the museum doesn't have its own web or social page where it can present itself. The establishment of a city market would facilitate the sale of local products and also create new jobs. Currently there are no funds allocated for the promotion of the municipality, for to the maintenance of historical heritage, which is instead managed directly by the Regional Council of Costanta. The mayor Serbanescu Dorina argues that although there are no such funds, in the future the situation could change, thanks to other projects currently in negotiations, which would bring revenue within the municipality. As the mayor said, another important problem is the poor quality of the infrastructures, in fact the condition of some roads still unpaved, causes inconvenience in the movements from one town to another, lowering the level of life of the inhabitants (Serbanescu, 2018, 03:30). The businessman Lupu Petre, owner of a 20-room hotel-restaurant, claims that his hotel is the only one within a radius of 30 km from Adamclisi (Serbanescu, 2018, 15:03). Even taking into consideration the surrounding monasteries, which can accommodate pilgrims, the town and the surrounding area is not ready to welcome a large number of tourists. The interviews were conducted according to a set of questions previously drawn up, divided between generic questions and other more specific in order to bring to light the values, the weaknesses and the needs of the municipality. Subsequently, the data extrapolated from the video interviews were revised, marking the highlights on the timeline of each interview. Afterwards we compared the interviews from which common opinions emerged and finally we reorganized the results in a summary chart.

**Fig.2** – Map of territorial needs



Source: Author.

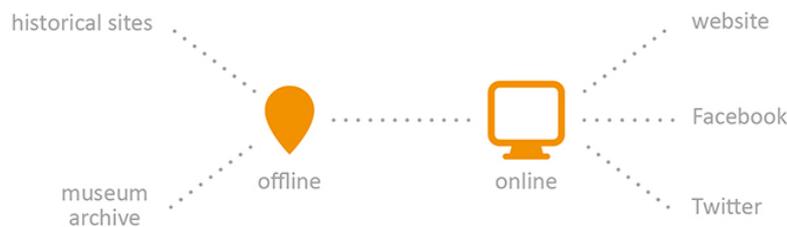
### 3. Sustainable tourism

From the previous chapter we understood that the territory is not ready for a type of mass tourism, because on the one hand there aren't enough facilities to accommodate tourists and on the other the rural natural area should be preserved. From these needs we began to investigate forms of sustainable tourism, taking as an example the structure of the ecomuseums. The term Ecomuseum was coined by Hugues de Varine in 1971; with this neologism he wanted to refer to a museum dedicated to the territory as a whole, something that represents what a territory is, and what its inhabitants are, starting from the living culture of people, from their environment, from what they have inherited from the past, from what they love and wish to show to their guests and pass on to their children (Ribaldi, 2006). The ecomuseum is a museum without walls, a community initiative that connects existing and new attractions in order to preserve the heritage and the local traditions, creating a collective sense of identity (Davis, 2005). It is clear that the Ecomuseums are not limited to a building or even a museum site, but they contain everything in the region that refers to its territory: a cultural heritage, which includes memories, folklore, music and song, local skills, behavioral models, social structure and transition; and an intangible heritage as tangible evidence of landscapes, geology, wildlife, vernacular construction or material culture (Graham & Howard, 2008). The ecomuseum structure is therefore able to offer various types of routes, which allow you to discover the concerned area and at the same time respect the environment. It doesn't exclude a kind of pre-cognitive experience of the territory through transmedial narration, which allows stories to flow through multiple multimedia platforms (Jenkins, Purushotma, Clinton, Weigel & Robison, 2006), creating an imaginary in which the tourist can immerse himself before coming into contact with the real territory. In conclusion, the ecomuseum is a dynamic process with which communities preserve, interpret and enhance their heritage according to sustainable development.

#### 3.1 Flodden case study

Flodden is an ecomuseum that uses the Battle of Flodden as a starting point. During the Battle of Flodden many Scottish soldiers, English and the Scottish king James IV died. The ecomuseum consists of 41 offline physical sites that include the battlefield, churches, walls, towers, statues and tombstones. The sites are also presented on the Flodden site, where you can find community stories and educational material used for schools. The Flodden 1513 project supported and trained a large number of community volunteers who took part in archaeological and documentary research. The ecomuseum adopts an interdisciplinary approach, involving archaeology, education and archiving, to promote tourism and involve the community. Their goal is, on the one hand, to promote the territory and recount what happened to Flodden in 1513, through the collection of testimonies on the battle and on the other hand to create a lasting legacy through the education of children. In fact, through the project's learning program, we have seen the story of Flodden (Joicey, 2017). The project consists of various historical sites and the museum archive and an online part communicated through a very structured website, where you can find a forum in addition to the various references to the social pages.

**Fig.3** – Map with online and offline touchpoints



Source: Author.

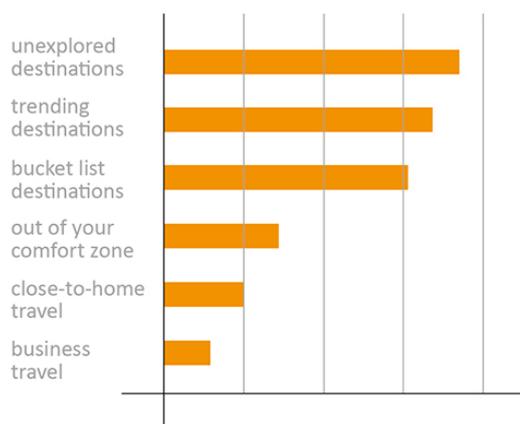
### 3.2 Calabria case study

Calabria is a region with low population density, modest processes of industrialization and significant natural resources, partly uncontaminated thanks to the poverty of the productive fabric and the outskirts of its geographical position (Ferrari & Adamo, 2011). Despite the wealth of natural resources which represent a strong point, until now it has mainly constituted a weakness, since the tourist offer was based only on seaside tourism that in the summer months showed a high seasonality of the demand. The region is affected by a certain peripheral nature, with difficulties in transport and high travel costs, but also has some strong points, such as the mild climate, which would attract tourists all year round and partly untouched natural resources, still to be discovered. All this implies the need to diversify and differentiate the offer and to redistribute the tourist flows in time and space. Natural resources, however, have not yet been fully used to encourage the development of forms of tourism other than the mass seaside resort (Il Turismo in Calabria, 2003). Given these premises, it was decided to create a tourist package that would offer accommodation, gastronomy, culture and indigenous traditions to entertain tourists throughout the year. Specifically, events were created to highlight the authenticity of the territory, such as the *Peperoncino Festival*, given that chili is considered a symbol of Calabria and the spring festival in the city of Tropea.

## 4. Market analysis and Cycle tourism

What are tourists looking for in a destination? On a sample of 145 companies surveyed it emerged that the new destinations exceed the trendy destinations, the tourist is no longer content with the pleasure trip for its own sake, but seeks new adventures pushing himself beyond his limits, trying to get out of his own area of comfort. From this point of view Romania has to offer places not yet explored, a wild and uncontaminated nature, an authentic culture, a rural lifestyle and a Byzantine Latin heritage.

Fig.4 – Graphic of travel trend report

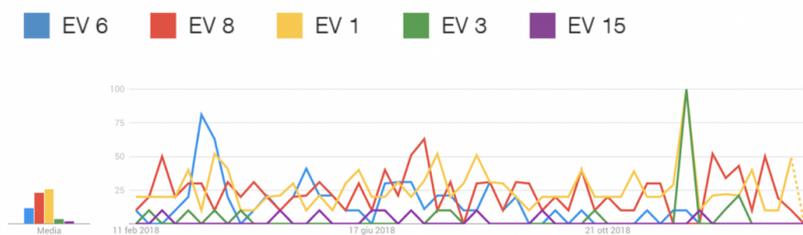


Source: Treksoft Travel trend report 2017.

Today's tourist doesn't just want to take pictures during the trip, but wants to go home with something more, with an experience that allows him to fully live the tradition of a country. According to *Booking Trend Report 2018* the most popular experiences from tourists are visits to traditional wonders of the world (47%), eat traditional food of the place visited (35%), participate in a unique cultural event (28%), learn how to do something again (27%), make a fantastic road trip or a train ride (25%) and visit an isolated or difficult to reach place (25%). Traveling to know a territory well and its culture is one of the most important reasons that pushes the tourist to move, a quarter of travellers think it is important to have a host who can provide information on local cuisine and places to see with stays at holiday homes. The search for inedited journeys in places not yet explored is due to the desire to escape from the crowds and the most popular places. Travellers will focus mainly on destinations outside the radar in the months to come, similar to large cities, but without the crowd and with the ability to spend less (Momondo, 2018). Tomorrow's tourist is more and more demanding, in fact one of the decisional factors before starting a holiday is to get to know the destination and the accommodation chosen, even before arriving on site. According to *Booking* 64% of tourists say they want to "try before buying" through a

virtual reality preview, while 50% think that having personalized advice on destinations and things to do can encourage them to book a trip (2017). The tourist of tomorrow would prefer to have a preview of the place he will visit, therefore immersive experiences and the creation of a collective imaginary of the territory will be a discriminating factor when choosing one place over another. Nostalgic holidays are also growing, in fact more than a third of travellers will consider a trip already experienced during their childhood (Booking, 2017). Based on what was previously said, the town of Adamclisi is a yet-to-be-discovered place, immersed in a rural and quiet landscape, out of the crowded city, ready to offer an authentic culture and tradition, inherited from the ancient Dacians. Therefore, it is very important to be able to preserve the authenticity of the territory, without the risk of ruining it with mass tourism. In this case cyclists have been identified as targets, because they are environmentally friendly and a significant economic resource. Cycle tourism has recorded a steady growth 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 trips with overnight stays in Europe each year. In Europe, the value of cycling tourism is calculated at 44 billion euro, well above the cruise market price which is slightly over 39 billion euro. European Cyclists' Federation (ECF) is a federation that takes care of national cycling urban mobility organizations with the aim of promoting and encouraging the use of cycling inside and outside Europe. The European Cyclists' Federation is promoting cycling as a sustainable and healthy means of transportation (ECF). *EuroVelo6* - Atlantic-Black Sea, is one of the most popular route among all *EuroVelo* routes, as confirmed by the fact that it is the third most sought on *Google* in 2018. The famous sections along the rivers of the Loire and the Danube are known for cyclists all over the world. This route stretches from Nantes to Constance, crossing 10 countries, for a distance of 3600 km. The final part of the itinerary, the one that passes through Romania, is still under approval, but is supposed to pass only 20 km far from Adamclisi. Radu Mititean, president of the cycling federation in Romania, who has been working on the EV6 project for 20 years, explained that the situation is not so positive, because the Ministry of Internal Affairs refuses to approve the project, continuing to postpone and suggesting further changes to be made. On the other hand, the Ministry of Tourism supports the initiative by promoting the project several times in the inter-ministerial consultative circuit, but without any result (R. Mititean, personal communication, March 12, 2018).

**Fig.5** – EuroVelo routes comparison



Source: *Google trends* 2018.

## 4.2 Cyclist's needs

To discover the needs of the target, we started to investigate cycling forums and blogs, trying to be part of their world and follow the *Facebook* pages dedicated to cycling tours and bike packing, thus becoming part of a good number of closed groups such as *Brompton Bicycle*, *The Slow Bicycle Movement* and *Bicycle Touring & Bikepacking*, where we had the opportunity to get in direct contact with a high number of cycle tourists around the world. The study is based in part on the social listening of content, or posts, comments, discussions, videos, photos and links. On the one hand there are users generated content created by the group members, on the other republished content from other sources outside the group. From this first analysis it emerged that part of the members has their own personal blog on which they dispense advice and share articles within the closed group. Most of the users prefer to share photos of their bike inserted in contexts, not only aesthetically beautiful, but representative of the place visited. As a second step, in concomitance with the online observations, we interviewed Ben a cyclist amateur. Then we decided to take advantage of the answers obtained to create a questionnaire<sup>1</sup> through the *Google* forms function.

The questionnaire obtained 108 responses from the cyclists' target and is structured in 33 questions distributed in 5 parts. The first one deals with collecting the demographic data, the second one investigates the needs of the cyclist, the third and the four phase are aimed at exploring what happens and what behaviours characterize the target before, during and after the trip. The survey ends by asking if they have ever heard of Tropaeum Traiani. Most of the questions are of a cognitive type, in which we try to understand what the cyclists take with them on the road, where they stay and what kind of device they use to orient themselves. The first part is characterized by quantitative questions, referred to gender, age, nationality and studies. By going through the heart of the questionnaire, you can find multiple-choice or open-ended questions that reflect a qualitative research. We have summarized the needs that emerged from the questionnaire in the graph below, acknowledging that 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.

### Cycle tourist needs

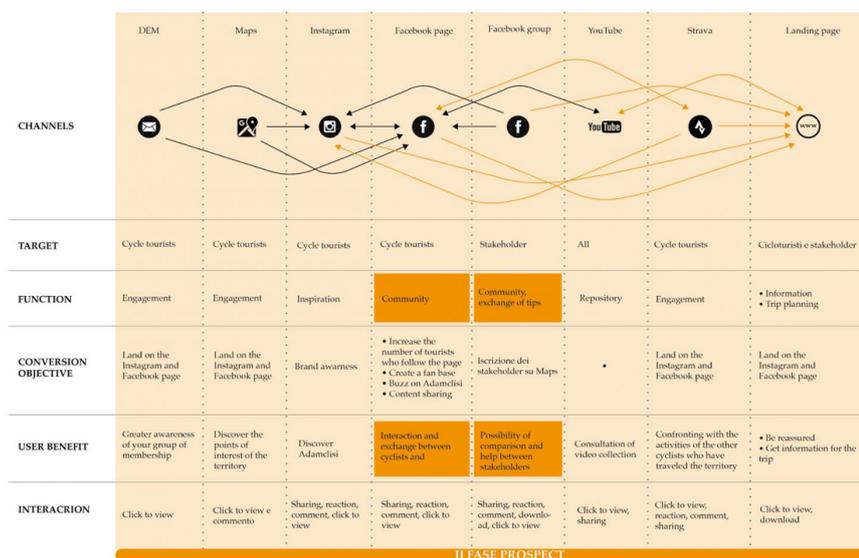
- Cycle path / equipped and tidy roads
  - Facilities with the possibility of catering under one roof
  - Fountains, water dispenser
  - Bars, shops, food along the way
  - Camping area with the possibility of taking a shower
  - Bike parts
  - Safe place to leave the bike
  - Bike rent

## 5. Project

The project aims to attract cyclists to the territory to create a type of sustainable tourism, which does not alter the environment, and allows to preserve the territory as it is, highlighting what it has to offer. The cyclists' target is not a demanding target and their essential needs are easily satisfied and sustainable from an economic point of view. Cyclists are a virtuous target, which sets an example for all other indirect targets and are attracted to the territory thanks to a multi-channel strategy that involves the *Facebook* and *Instagram* page. At the same time the potential of this target is communicated to the territorial stakeholders and the benefits that they can bring to the territory either in a first and more immediate phase or in a long-term perspective.

Taking into account the results of the questionnaire, a map of the channels was drawn up according to the decision making phases (see Fig.6) and for each phase the channels that best meet the needs of the individual phases were chosen. *Instagram* is the channel that best represents the first phase, of inspiration, because it is a growing social media, with more than 700 M registered users, that lends itself perfectly to suggestive photographs and short videos, which intrigue and attract attention user. Thanks to the intuitive hashtag system, the images are divided according to their content and it is much easier to reach the target category concerned. Although *Facebook* doesn't appear among the first choices in the results of the survey, it is suitable because it can offer the information that the cycle tourists look for in the decision-making phase, or in the choice of the destination. *Facebook* can contain a friend's advice, reviews, blog articles/forums/magazines and link to other external links. Cyclists, during the planning phase, need to be reassured through an official and reliable source such as the landing page, where you can find more information about the territory, the map of points of interest, events related to the municipality and a way to enter contact with the stakeholders and book the holiday. In this phase of the project, it was decided to carry out, in part, the function of the landing page on the *Facebook* page, and to postpone the creation of the website in the near future. As for the apps used on site, cyclists use several for different needs. *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, because they synchronize it to the bicycle computer placed on the bicycle, recording their goals and their personal records. During the journey, users will produce content that will publish step by step or at the end of the holiday.

Fig.6 – Map regarding the focus of digital channels



Source: Author.

Many cyclists have their own personal blog where they describe the cycling route to the smallest detail and link the link to various forums in the sector, but especially on *Facebook*. We have tried to map all online and offline channels related to the territory and the type of cycling tourism. Starting from the stakeholder map, we identified the major entrepreneurs in the area and started a search on social networks to identify those companies in the area that have a public profile and those that have the physical place as a unique meeting point.

## 5. Conclusions

The project has the initial objective of making the monument known outside Romania. Through the survey conducted on the territory, the attention has shifted from the Tropaeum Traiani to the municipality of Adamclisi, as well as to the surrounding area with its points of interest. So listening to the territory began by trying to identify the values, resources and needs, so as to reach a global awareness of the real meaning of Adamclisi. We have chosen to undertake a double communication, one for local stakeholders and another for cyclists. The project initially joins two seemingly parallel tracks, which find a way to meet through the *Facebook* channel. On the one hand we have guaranteed the tools to allow stakeholders to meet the needs of cyclists and make their activity visible; on the other the way to discover the identity of the municipality with the monument that marked the history of Romania, which otherwise would have gone unnoticed. The first phase of the project is low budget and aims to allow stakeholders to see the possibility of territorial development, communicating the culture of the area according to the needs of cyclists. On a practical level, after having drawn up a list of needs of both the territory and the cyclists, we identified what was missing and tried to satisfy both targets. We reflected on what was immediately achievable with a low budget and proposed suggestions on how to welcome

cyclists, how to sign up for *Google Maps* and *Google+* in order to report their position along the way.

The *Facebook* page is in an incipient stage, where the contents posted are monitored to understand the period suitable for publication rather than attract more traffic through the *Instagram* channel. The closed group dedicated to stakeholders has been completed by informational contents about the territorial and cycle tourism potential and a satisfaction survey. The questionnaire showed that information about the benefits of cycling for the territory was very useful, since none of the survey respondents knew about the *EuroVelo6* cycling route. Stakeholders are convinced that the construction of a cycle path can implement the influx of cyclists, but the absence of funding cuts the possibility of growth in this direction. They are also aware that by attracting tourism by bike, they can be the direct beneficiaries of the revenues on a commercial level. The project is not only concerned with a territorial promotion, but is also a vehicle for information, highlighting new perspectives.

## Endnotes

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