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### A New Model for the 'Tourism Renaissance': the Case Study of the Tuscan Village of San Pellegrino in Alpe

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#### ABSTRACT

In the contemporary age of big data and sharing intelligence, tourism market has constantly changing scenario thanks to the unceasing communication technologies' revolution. According to this growth perspective, cultural heritage tourism is increasing his offer quality standards, by giving evidence of its social and territorial identity value. In light of this, the research is focused on the study of hospitality places located along the Vie ROMEE maiores (Via Francigena, Via Romea Strata and Via Romea Germanica), the most famous slow tourism product in Italy, that has recently been promoted in such original ways. In particular, the paper describes the touristic system of San Pellegrino in Alpe, a village located on the Tuscan and Emilian Via Francigena route, with the final aim to suggest a touristic renovation model in light of the current Covid-19 changing scenario. Therefore, the research study shows how local stakeholders are able to foster territorial promotion activities, both for residents and for tourists, in order to empower local tourism system and local community awareness. In this context, the new marketing tools for virtual tourism, videomaking and crowdfunding play a strategic role for local tourism development; especially when they are used by stakeholders, such as Film Commissions and small local museums to assure a better quality of life in sustainable tourism destinations.

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**Keywords:** Digital tourism; pilgrimage itineraries; sustainability; touristic renovation; Covid-19 tourism

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## **Introduction and methodology of research<sup>1</sup>**

The new age of tourism is now changing vision because of the Coronavirus pandemic effects, both for tourism operators and for tourist segments. Tourism, as a social and cultural phenomenon, is constantly affected by world ecosystem shifts reflecting on tourism organization and on tourists' behaviors. In this instable panorama, global tourism market opens new travel opportunities to local tourism, by reason of the increasing tourist profile diversification and thanks to a general sensitization to: sustainability values, cultural heritage rediscovering and environmental preservation (Lemmi 2019).

Post-Covid19 tourism will be, on one side, a complex challenge oriented to a recovery tourism plan and, on the other side, a great opportunity for a better sustainable, responsible and culture-led way to travel. In fact, tourism regeneration naturally triggers to undertourism development, as opposed to overtourism trends, with a few number of tourists visiting unconventional tourist destinations, off the beaten paths. Inbound tourism and proximity tourism will be further developing trends for the so-called restarting tourism, which mainly refers to: local traditions and cultural identity rediscovery, slow tourism increasing, outdoor tourism, social tourism and second-residence tourism (Angelini, 2020).

Such touristic phenomena redesign many touristic systems, according to a resilience vision of tourism, in which the society plays a strategic role for civic economy issues. The promotion of a resilience tourism implies a socio-cultural transformational approach with the aim to reactivate the ecosystem starting balance, with particular attention human-environment relationship (Giorda, Puttilli, 2011).

Therefore, 'resilience' and 'sustainability' are some key concepts of an integrated 'local renaissance' based on the network valorization of territorial economy drivers, among which: gastronomy, handicrafts, and also, tourism. Consequently, tourist destinations has to reorganize their tourism policies and tourism marketing strategies towards the place identity achievement; besides, tourist approach to travel will be mostly focused on the place authenticity knowledge, by supporting social dialogue dynamics and cultural exchange processes (Lemmi, 2020). This premise has the aim to introduce the main focus of the paper, that refers to the touristic attraction value of Vie ROMEE maiores (Via Francigena, Via Romea Strata and Via Romea Germanica): pilgrimage routes with a renowned historical value passing through attractive hamlets, countryside, mountain places and hill landscapes.

San Pellegrino in Alpe is a small medieval hamlet located in the Province of Lucca, in Tuscany, and partially in Emilia-Romagna, in the Province of Modena. It is specifically located between the Tuscan municipality of Castiglione di Garfagnana and the Emilian municipality of Frassinoro (where the most of accommodation structures are located). San Pellegrino in Alpe is known for Saint Pellegrino history and also as a pilgrimage

destination, since the village is crossed by the Via Francigena, which conveys the touristic and spiritual vocation to the place, rich in cultural heritage and historical values. San Pellegrino in Alpe is not just a slow tourism destination, it is an ethnographic tank, as well. From the past history of wayfarers passing through San Pellegrino in Alpe, to the Saint Pellegrino remembrances, the Tuscan small village boasts a priceless heritage value to promote in touristic and socio-cultural terms. By reason of this, the present study paper is aimed to show how private and public local stakeholders could be actually involved in requalification activities, by taking advantage of digital tools and professional experience in destination management.

Nowadays, the meet between the tourist of the post-modernity and residents overcomes the traditional travel processes to exploit the high potentiality of new communication technologies. Digital communication is founded on emotionality and social engagement; sometimes they are real time events acting by travel experience storytelling and place narration. In light on this, it can be claimed that tourist destination narration is today one the most powerful marketing instruments, ever more frequently used by tourists on trip and also by private and public local stakeholders, in an organic or strategic way (Ejarque, 2009).

Digital strategies, together with the current renewed tourism governance approaches in Italy and abroad, represent some essential elements for the 'restarting tourism age' during and after the Coronavirus pandemic. The case study of San Pellegrino in Alpe could be a representative community-base touristic model grounded on a cross-sectoral tourism combining: digital tourism, sustainable tourism and cultural heritage tourism. This integrated approach fosters a requalification model that could be implemented in the interest of an innovative and humanistic tourism vision. It is well oriented to a renaissance touristic model based on a new strategic and marketing formulas.

As regards the research methodology, the theoretical framework has been realized on sociological and geographical literature on tourism, with particular interest to sustainable tourism and cultural-heritage based tourism. Empirical case studies in destination management have also been relevant to understand which successful measures have to be implemented in critical socio-economic situations. The case study of San Pellegrino in Alpe has been analysed in terms of tourist relevance and tourist appeal: firstly, by collecting regional and provincial data of the tourism geographical context and, secondly, by describing San Pellegrino in Alpe touristic resources. Starting from a general vision of the small village tourist system, the final chapter of the research proposes a 'rebirth model' based on the plural dimensions of local tourism development. This section shows some realistic actions to carry out, in view of a new Covid-19 touristic paradigm, in Italian and in European cultural destinations.

## **1. San Pellegrino in Alpe hospitality: a sustainable and humanistic tourist destination**

Cultural heritage tourism finds multiple theoretical definitions in social science frameworks, specifically with focus on history, geography and political studies. The

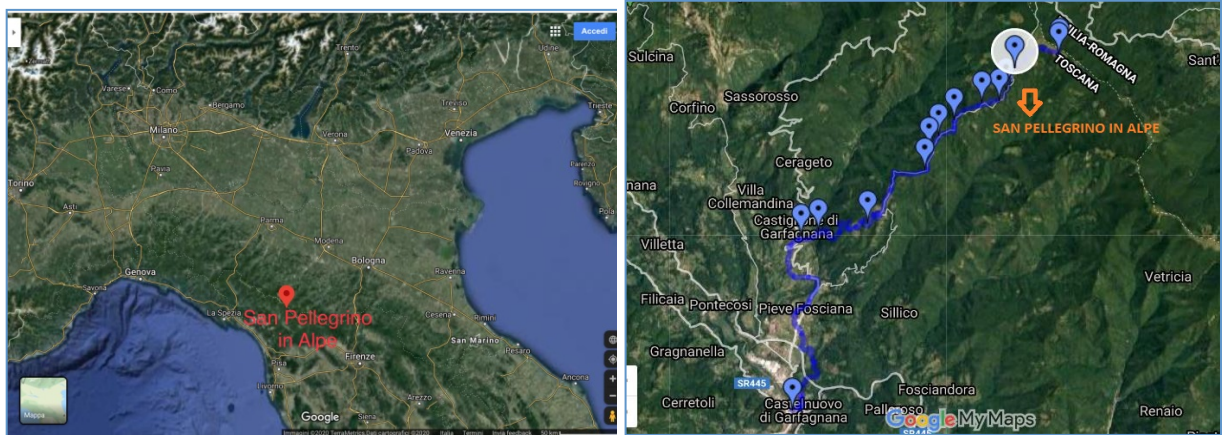
relationship between heritage and politics is usually expressed by cultural heritage-base valorization policies for tourism requalification aims, where tourism is promoted by tangible and intangible signs inherited by past civilizations (j.Thimothy, W. Boyd, 2007). Heritage tourism has seen as a kind of sustainable tourism, mostly associated to the ecotourism latest arise, practiced by visitors particularly interested in preserving territorial local identity and minor cultural heritage sites (Simonicca, 2003).

Small villages and unpopular tourist destination usually host little number of tourists, essentially culture-oriented, searching for nature, relax, authenticity, knowledge of past remains, traditions and social communities. The Via Francigena has been declared the cultural itineraries of the Council of Europe in 1994, as it is inherently material and immaterial cultural heritage. The Via Romea Germanica, as European cultural itineraries, and also the Romea Strata (European cultural itinerary candidate in 2019) are further cultural roots meeting on the same itineraries, along which many small villages wealthy of history and traditions has become attractive tourist destinations, both for pilgrims and for nature seekers.

San Pellegrino in Alpe is a small medieval village counting only 38 inhabitants; it is located at 1525-meters of altitude, on the boundary of Emilia Romagna and Tuscany (between the Provinces of Lucca and Modena, in the municipalities of Castiglione di Garfagnana and Frassinoro).

This hamlet, with a long pilgrimage tradition, is characterized by unspoilt mountain landscapes and pathway among the Appenines and the Apuan Alps: ideal places for trekking and green tourism practise. The spiritual history of San Pellegrino dates back to the VI century A.D., when Saint Pellegrino, the son of Roman, king of Scotland, chose to abdicate and began to pilgrimage throughout Europe, to establish in Garfagnana. The most practice itinerary made by pilgrims started along a pathway from Lucca to the Serchio Valley, up to Castelnuovo Garfagnana and the Pieve Fosciana: climbing Mount Chiozza, it passed the Appenines and descended to Emilia, passing through San Pellegrino in Alpe and Frassinoro. Saint Pellegrino used to host pilgrims crossing this Via Francigena's stretch, with the support of volunteers living in communities and operating in hospices for wayferers. San Pellegrino's shrine is located exactly halfway between the Provinces of Modena and Lucca; it is still today a tourist attraction, essentially for its religious and historical appeal, enclosed in the ethnographic museum of the rural life (containing about 4.000 artifacts; entitled to the founder: Don Luigi Pellegrini). The figure below illustrates The Via Francigena route starting from Emilia-Romagna, passing through San Pellegrino in Alpe and arriving to Castelnuovo di Garfagnana (as shown by Figure 1 below).

**Figure 1** The Via Francigena path crossing through San Pellegrino in Alpe



Source: Google Maps

**Figure 2** Map of San Pellegrino in Alpe and its touristic context

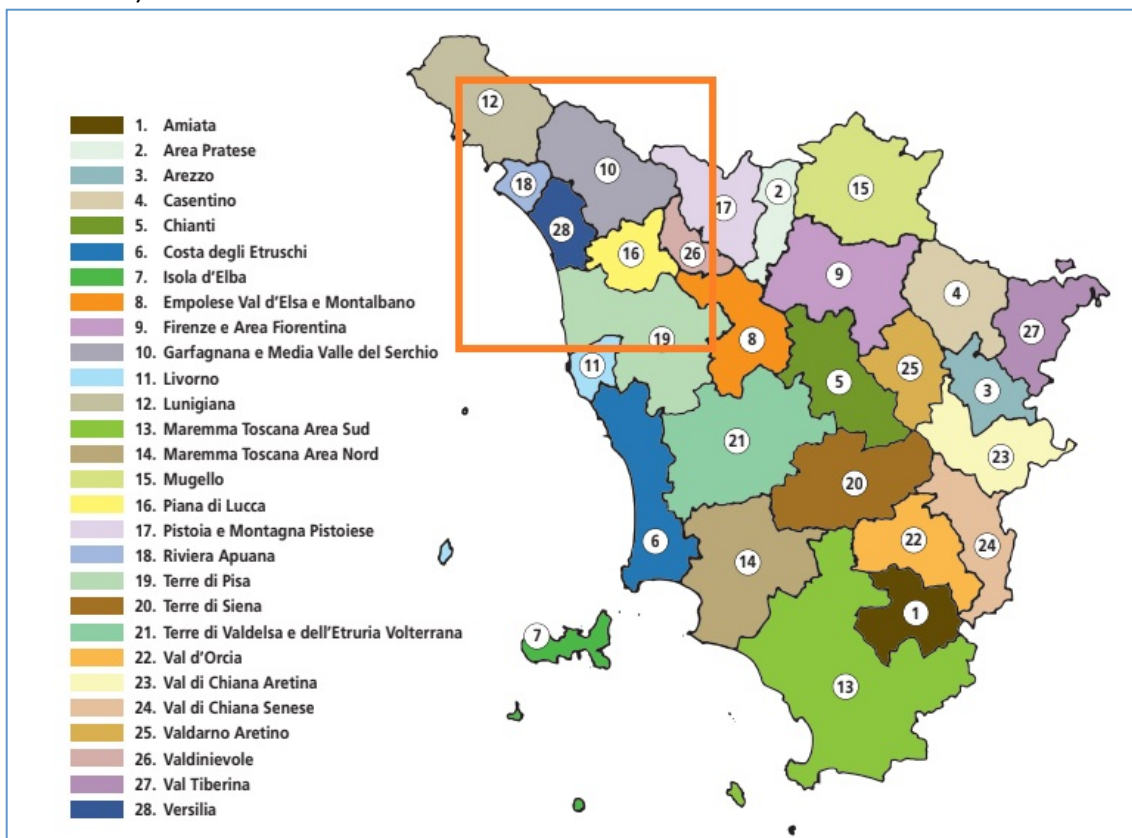


Source: [www.sungallicana.it](http://www.sungallicana.it)

San Pellegrino in Alpe, as a small tourist destination, takes advantage of its closest area of the Province of Lucca and of Garfagnana area. The above map of San Pellegrino in Alpe shows the touristic sights and road connections set on the nearby of the pilgrimage hamlet: on the North of San Pellegrino, the Tuscan Mount Abetone represents a popular ski destination situated at 1,000 meters of altitude, along the boundary between Emilia-Romagna Region. Mount Cimone is another very popular ski station at 1577 meters high along the northern Tuscan-Emilian Appenine chain in the Province of Modena. On the North East side, Aulla is a pilgrimage location set on the Via Francigena, in the Lunigiana area. On the South, the Serchio Valley and the Piana of Lucca includes multiple tourist attractions, such as: medieval towns (Barga, Castelnuovo di Garfagnana, etc.), natural parks (Orrido di Botri Reserve; Massaciuccoli Lake), ski stations (Casone di Profecchia in Castiglione di Garfagnana) and cities of art like Lucca. On the South East of Lucca, tourists can reach the world famous Florence city and, on the South West, the city of Pisa. The Tuscan Eastern Coast is bathed by the Tyrrhenian Sea dotted with some élite seaside towns (Viareggio, Lido di Camaiore, Forte dei Marmi). As a simplified tourist attraction description, the above map is aimed to give evidence of the worthy touristic basin that surrounds San Pellegrino in Alpe. It is rich in different kind of tourist sights, such as: historical, artistic, cultural, religious, seaside and mountain resources characterizing the homogeneous tourist offer of North Eastern Tuscany. In fact, this area includes about 7 'touristic territorial area' of the 28 ones, as has been defined by the Region Tuscany<sup>2</sup>:

- Lunigiana area: Aulla, Bagnone, Casola in Lunigiana, Comano, Filattiera, Fivizzano, Fosdinovo, Licciana Nardi, Mulazzo, Podenzana, Pontremoli, Tresana, Villafranca in Lunigiana, Zeri;
- Riviera Apuana area: Carrara, Massa, Montignoso;
- Garfagnana and Valle del Serchio area: Bagni di Lucca, Barga, Borgo a Mozzano, Camporgiano, Careggine, Castelnuovo di Garfagnana, Castiglione di Garfagnana, Coreglia Antelminelli, Fabbriche di Vergemoli, Fosciadora, Galliciano, Minucciano, Molazzana, Pescaglia, Piazza al Serchio, Pieve Fosciana, San Romano in Garfagnana, Sillano Giungugnano, Vagli Sotto, Villa Collemantina;
- Versilia area: Camaiore, Forte dei Marmi, Massarosa, Pietrasanta, Seravezza, Stazzema, Viareggio;
- Piana di Lucca area: Altopascio, Capannori, Lucca, Montecarlo, Porcari, Villa Basilicata;
- Pistoia e Montagna Pistoiese area: Abetone, Cutigliano, Agliana, Marliana, Montale, Pistoia, Quarrata, Sambuca Pistoiese, San Marcello Piteglio, Serravalle Pistoiese;
- Terre di Pisa area: Bientina, Buti, Calci, Calcinaia, Capannoli, Casciana Terme Lari, Cascina, Castelfranco di Sotto, Chianni, Crespina Lorenzana, Fauglia, Lajatico, Montopoli in Val d'Arno, Orciano Pisano, Palaia, Peccioli, Pisa, Ponsacco, Pontedera, San Giuliano Terme, San Miniato, Santa Croce sull'Arno, Santa Maria a Monte, Terricciola, Vecchiano, Vicopisano.

**Figure 3** Map of the 'Touristic territorial areas' of Tuscany Region (Ambiti turistici territoriali)



Source: [www.toscanapromozioneturistica.it](http://www.toscanapromozioneturistica.it)

The most recent law<sup>3</sup> adopted by the Tuscany Region in 2016 has introduced a tourist territorial division in 28 touristic homogeneous areas, on the basis of the specific territorial characteristics of each regional area. Such areas includes neighbouring municipalities, with respect for the main touristic attraction hubs, in order to foster a cooperative managing tourism system in terms of: governance, promotion, data processing, tourist welcoming, information and accommodation. Consequently, tourism decision makers had to reorganize their destination management activities to act in associated formulas (like municipality associations) with the partnership of Toscana Promozione Turistica, the regional tourism agency. This multilevel governance promotes a synergy approach to regional tourism design strategies, by supporting tourist destination development and requalification, both in small tourist locations and in big and popular holiday destinations. The final purpose of Tuscan legislation is to constitute a network governance approach including the whole region, despite its wide tourist attraction variety. In light of the regional touristic framework, with its supervisory and managing role, it is also relevant to consider the touristic territorial area of Piana di Lucca as the spatial context of Garfagnana area, where San Pellegrino in Alpe village is located.

**Chart 1.** Tourist flows in Tuscany Region - 2017, 2018, 2019

Italians-Foreigners	2017		2018		2019	
	Arrivals	Presences	Arrivals	Presences	Arrivals	Presences
<b>Italians</b>	6.198.386	21.214.573	6.420.886	21.942.583	6.552.354	22.475.422
<b>Foreigners</b>	7.573.788	25.215.793	7.968.468	26.255.891	7.950.778	25.937.834
<b>Total</b>	<b>13.772.174</b>	<b>46.430.366</b>	<b>14.389.354</b>	<b>48.198.474</b>	<b>14.503.132</b>	<b>48.413.256</b>

Source: own elaboration on Tuscany Region data

The contextual analysis of Tuscany Region tourism phenomenon in the last three years (2017, 2018, 2019) shows a quite steady trend in terms of arrivals and presences.

It can be noticed that foreign tourist arrivals and presences overcome the Italian ones (14.503.132 total arrivals and 48.413.256 total presences in 2019).

These regional data represent a great outgoing tourist basin that could also interest the Via Francigena Route, and thereby, San Pellegrino in Alpe Village.

**Chart 2.** Tourist flows in the territorial area of Piana di Lucca<sup>4</sup> - 2018

I SEMESTER 2018	HOTEL ARRIVALS	HOTEL PRESENCES	I SEMESTER 2018	EXTRA-HOTEL ARRIVALS	EXTRA-HOTEL PRESENCES
	+12,5	+5		+39,1	-0,5
II SEMESTER 2018	HOTEL ARRIVALS	HOTEL PRESENCES	II SEMESTRE 2018	EXTRA-HOTEL ARRIVALS	EXTRA-HOTEL PRESENCES
	+2,2	+0,2		+7,5	-0,2
III SEMESTER 2018	HOTEL ARRIVALS	HOTEL PRESENCES	III SEMESTER 2018	EXTRA-HOTEL ARRIVALS	EXTRA-HOTEL PRESENCES
	+1,7	-0,9		-3,0	-2,0

Source: Istat data elaborated by the Province of Lucca<sup>5</sup>

In particular, concerning Piana di Lucca tourism flows, it has been noted a general increasing trend in 2018 in comparison with 2017 (+1,7 millions of tourist presences, equal to +4,7%)<sup>6</sup>, with an average stay of 3,3 nights per person. In particular, tourist arrivals, especially extra-hotel arrivals, have gained a positive development, as opposed to extra-hotel presences. Chart 1 exposes some tourism data of the Province of Lucca, which is the principal touristic hub driving tourist flows towards Garfagnana.

The growing number of extra-hotels arrivals represent a positive element for extra-urban tourism, usually preferred by foreign tourists searching for quietness and relax in mountain landscapes.

On the other side, extra-hotel presences have a negative trend, while hotel arrivals show a positive trend (although less than extra-hotel arrivals) with good presence data. Definitely, the strategic position of Garfagnana area, as an international tourist destination, known for its environment sights, could take advantage of their closely to



Piana of Lucca, where tourist prefers extra-hotel accommodation, but they do not choose a long-term stay.

The following Chart 3 is specifically focused on Garfagnana touristic area, that is the closest travel destination in Tuscany to which San Pellegrino in Alpe belongs. The following data show a three-year trend of touristic arrivals and presences for each Garfagnana municipality. The general trend presents a growing evolution in terms of presences in 2019, especially for Barga (118.792), followed by Castelnuovo di Garfagnana (28.104) and Castiglione di Garfagnana (24.026). These municipalities have seen a slight decline in 2018 with a pickup in 2019.

Other municipalities with good numbers in terms of touristic presences in the three-year period are: Villa Collemandina (12.258), Minucciano (10.462), Camporgiano (9.093), Pieve Fosciana (8.042) and Gallicano (6.509)<sup>7</sup>; the other Garfagnana municipalities has registered lower data. Generally, 2017 has been the most profitable years for tourism sector in Garfagnana.

**Chart 3.** Tourist flows: Garfagnana area, 2017-2018-2019

Municipalities	2017		2018		2019	
	Arrivals	Presences	Arrivals	Presences	Arrivals	Presences
<b>Barga</b>	<b>31.426</b>	<b>108.541</b>	<b>30.800</b>	<b>103.097</b>	<b>33.780</b>	<b>118.792</b>
<b>Camporgiano</b>	<b>1.953</b>	<b>9.679</b>	<b>2.025</b>	<b>10.873</b>	<b>1.547</b>	<b>9.093</b>
<b>Careggine</b>	1.104	3.217	1.144	2.920	1.096	2.212
<b>Castelnuovo di Garfagnana</b>	<b>8.927</b>	<b>28.916</b>	<b>9.625</b>	<b>25.393</b>	<b>10.413</b>	<b>28.104</b>
<b>Castiglione di Garfagnana</b>	<b>6.954</b>	<b>23.051</b>	<b>5.828</b>	<b>17.311</b>	<b>6.759</b>	<b>24.026</b>
<b>Fabbriche di Vergemoli</b>	160	748	71	403	173	2.090
<b>Fosciandora</b>	565	2.124	733	3.175	433	2.578
<b>Gallicano</b>	2.010	6.374	1.709	6.158	1.989	6.509
<b>Minucciano</b>	<b>3.713</b>	<b>10.977</b>	<b>3.195</b>	<b>10.252</b>	<b>3.258</b>	<b>10.462</b>
<b>Molazzana</b>	781	5.882	676	5.194	711	5.703
<b>Piazza al Serchio</b>	3.976	6.719	768	3.018	452	2.511
<b>Pieve Fosciana</b>	<b>2.182</b>	<b>8.821</b>	<b>2.138</b>	<b>9.050</b>	<b>1.984</b>	<b>8.042</b>
<b>San Romano in Garfagnana</b>	638	3.385	851	3.282	618	2.602
<b>Sillano Giuncugnano</b>	1.967	7.511	1.408	5.646	1.678	5.279
<b>Vagli Sotto</b>	977	3.768	1.063	4.257	1.507	5.937
<b>Villa Collemandina</b>	<b>3.858</b>	<b>14.405</b>	<b>4.328</b>	<b>15.414</b>	<b>3.437</b>	<b>12.258</b>

Source: Istat data elaborate by Tuscany Region

As stated above, the village of San Pellegrino in Alpe is geographically located between the municipalities of Castiglione di Garfagnana and Frassinoro, respectively belonging to the Provinces of Lucca and Modena (Emilia-Romagna).

Emilia-Romagna is a high touristic Region driving touristic flows to Tuscany, like from the regional capital of Bologna (with substantial university students' flows) and also from Fidenza, one the most renowned villages on the Via Francigena. This central Italy region combines fascinating cities of art with seaside attractions, cultural heritage sites and a typical culinary tradition.

As shown by the following charts 3 and 4, Emilia-Romagna region is an attractive tourist basin (with 3.448.319 total arrivals and 6.801.130 total presences in 2018), directly linked with the bordering Tuscany Region. Specifically, the closest Emilian touristic hub to San Pellegrino in Alpe is represented by the Province of Modena, counting 270.411 arrivals and 571.425 presences in 2018<sup>8</sup>. This touristic area involves Mount Cimone site, which boasts a popular well-equipped ski area located near the traditional ski station of the past, set in Sant'Annapelago: nowadays a touristic second-home area.

**Chart 4.** Tourist flows: Emilia-Romagna area – 2018

Località	Provenienza				Totale	
	Italiani		Stranieri			
	Arrivi	Presenze	Arrivi	Presenze	Arrivi	Presenze
<b>Piacenza</b>	107.476	218.549	49.239	84.175	156.715	302.724
<b>Parma</b>	233.552	443.095	152.608	292.032	386.160	735.127
<b>Reggio nell'Emilia</b>	142.026	242.973	57.545	124.674	199.571	367.647
<b>Carpi</b>	26.667	48.635	11.552	22.836	38.219	71.471
<b>Modena</b>	176.686	380.704	93.725	190.721	270.411	571.425
<b>Bologna</b>	826.518	1.476.192	716.535	1.583.354	1.543.053	3.059.546
<b>Imola</b>	63.756	144.960	34.466	59.736	98.222	204.696
<b>Ferrara</b>	166.526	303.539	81.620	146.897	248.146	450.436
<b>Faenza</b>	44.923	110.122	15.415	43.269	60.338	153.391
<b>Ravenna Centro Storico</b>	191.857	357.091	65.397	146.991	257.254	504.082
<b>Cesena</b>	68.275	126.545	13.526	29.687	81.801	156.232
<b>Forlì</b>	90.679	168.172	17.750	56.189	108.429	224.361
<b>Totale</b>	2.138.941	4.020.577	1.309.378	2.780.561	3.448.319	6.801.138

Source: [www.statistica.regione.emilia-romagna.it](http://www.statistica.regione.emilia-romagna.it)

**Chart 5. Tourist Flows: municipalities of the Province of Modena – 2019**

Destinazione	TURISTI						PERNOTTAMENTI					
	Italiani	VAR. %	Esteri	VAR. %	Totali	VAR. %	Italiani	VAR. %	Esteri	VAR. %	Totali	VAR. %
Modena	192.259	8,8	101.151	7,9	293.410	8,5	396.160	4,1	197.344	3,5	593.504	3,9
Carpi	26.019	-2,4	11.639	0,8	37.658	-1,5	46.999	-3,4	22.499	-1,5	69.498	-2,8
Sassuolo	19.390	-5,8	10.413	5,5	29.803	-2,1	38.111	-1,0	24.369	6,9	62.480	2,0
Fanano	11.195	14,9	430	22,5	11.625	15,2	30.083	6,6	1.797	8,8	31.880	6,7
Pavullo nel Frignano	5.850	57,3	985	30,8	6.835	52,8	26.226	76,7	4.466	-14,0	30.692	53,2
Pievepelago	7.361	-6,5	380	0,5	7.741	-6,2	20.181	-4,1	697	-6,3	20.878	-4,2
Sestola	23.922	6,4	972	32,8	24.894	7,3	81.127	7,7	3.623	34,3	84.750	8,6
Altri comuni Appennino modenese	29.267	14,9	2.398	9,6	31.665	14,5	84.873	15,3	8.593	12,7	93.466	15,1
Castelvetro di Modena	19.593	13,3	8.712	10,3	28.305	12,3	38.235	6,2	17.363	3,2	55.598	5,2
Maranello	32.259	11,0	35.996	3,7	68.255	7,0	78.746	-1,8	70.109	-4,3	148.855	-3,0
Vignola	6.580	4,9	1.795	11,1	8.375	6,2	21.261	86,2	5.285	11,2	26.546	64,1
Altri comuni collinari modenesi	11.059	-24,7	5.227	-29,4	16.286	-26,3	33.403	-7,7	13.679	-35,7	47.082	-18,1
Campogalliano	17.272	3,0	7.873	15,2	25.145	6,5	35.340	-26,7	14.616	-4,2	49.956	-21,3
Castelfranco Emilia	6.209	8,7	2.318	18,3	8.527	11,2	12.860	-5,5	4.912	7,2	17.772	-2,3
Formigine	39.617	3,3	16.636	14,8	56.253	6,5	118.229	4,2	39.328	3,2	157.557	3,9
Altri comuni modenesi	53.648	3,3	12.792	2,5	66.440	3,1	141.771	5,0	33.149	-5,3	174.920	2,9
PROVINCIA DI MODENA	501.500	6,0	219.717	6,2	721.217	6,0	1.203.605	4,2	461.829	-0,3	1.665.434	2,9

Source: [www.statistica.regione.emilia-romagna.it](http://www.statistica.regione.emilia-romagna.it)

The strategic position of San Pellegrino in Alpe village, located on the Appenine ridge dividing Emilia-Romagna and Tuscany represents, on one side, an element of tourist attraction and, on the other side, a technical downside for hoteliers in terms of professional licenses. Most of hotels are mountain huts that are mainly set in Frassinoro municipality (in the Province of Modena), but they often economically operates with the Province of Lucca too. Concerning tourist data collecting, all hoteliers must give host presences to local police departments, that usually refers to the province of Modena. Therefore, San Pellegrino in Alpe tourist data analysis include both provinces' data (Lucca and Modena), but sometimes especially refers to the Municipality of Castiglione di Garfagnana (in the Province of Lucca), and particularly to the ski station of Casone di Profecchia.

Definitely, in a wider tourist vision, the regional and provincial context of the tourist turnout is a pull factor for San Pellegrino in Alpe tourism phenomenon, specifically thanks to: the great number of tourist flows passing through the main provinces of Lucca and Modena, the tourist offer heterogeneity and the tourist product integration opportunity. As regards a tourist integration approach, the Memorandum of understanding 2019-2021 that has been drawn between Tuscany Region and Emilia-Romagna Region must be mentioned<sup>9</sup>. It includes a cooperation plan between the two regional tourist boards, with the aim to promote a new offer of experiential-based tourism along the Tosco-Emilian appennine, with focus on green, mountain and walking tourism. Regional councillors for tourism operates in a synergic vision in order to launch four tourist products identifying the two Regions: environmental tourism, winter tourism, cycle tourism and cultural tourism. These tourism segments partially reflects on San Pellegrino in Alpe tourist destination offer and they also represents a worthy framework to develop according the contemporary tourism market changes.

**Chart. 6** The touristic system of San Pellegrino in Alpe

<b>ACCOMMODATION<sup>10</sup></b>	Albergo ristorante L'ALPINO;  Albergo ristorante IL CASONE	Albergo ristorante L'APPENNINO da Pacetto	Casa vacanze B&B LA TAVERNA DEL PELLEGRINO	Albergo ristorante LUNARDI <sup>11</sup>	Rifugio Burigone;  Rifugio il Pradaccio
<b>HISTORICAL and CULTURAL SIGHTS</b>	Ethnographic museum the rural culture "Don Luigi Pellegrini"	Ancient hospices for pilgrims in the Middle Ages	The Church of San Pellegrino in Alpe	The library of San Pellegrino in Alpe (set in Castelnuovo di Garfagnana)	The Legend of Saint Pellegrino
<b>RELIGIOUS SIGHTS</b>	San Pellegrino in Alpe holy shrine	San Bianco holy shrine	Via Francigena		
<b>NATURE SIGHTS</b>	Apuan Alps	Tuscan-Emilian Appenine	Trekking pathways	Cycling itineraries	
<b>AGRIFOOD PRODUCTS AND EVENTS</b>	Km Zero agrifood products (chestnut flour, mushrooms, wild berries, etc.)	Christmas folkore: - <u>The Natalecci</u> : ritual fires at Christmas eve - <u>The Befanate</u> : offertory epiphany songs			

Source: [www.centrotradizionipopolari.it](http://www.centrotradizionipopolari.it); [www.turismo.lucca.it](http://www.turismo.lucca.it)

Considering the touristic context of San Pellegrino in Alpe and its tourist attraction value, that is primarily culture-oriented, it can be claimed that this small Garfagnana village is an exemplary case study for the emerging humanistic tourism approach. San Pellegrino in Alpe can be identified as a sustainable and humanistic tourist location attracting pilgrims along the Via Francigena, as well as cultural travellers visiting the ancient city centre, with relation to the legend of Saint Pellegrino and to the ethnographic museum. As a mountain destination, San Pellegrino in Alpe also attracts sport lovers practicing trekking and cycling. Definitely, the key concepts of the current tourist product of San Pellegrino in Alpe are: nature, spirituality and cultural heritage. In light of these assumptions, the following chapter is dedicated to the study the tourism profile of San Pellegrino in Alpe, together with some renovation and recovery measures to implement, in order to improve and diversify the local tourism system, by considering the Covid-19 post-outbreak situation in Italy and abroad.

## **2. A renovation touristic model: digitalization and network approaches for cultural heritage tourism**

The contemporary heterogeneity of different kinds of tourism reflects on tourist destination competitiveness, since the variety of multiple sights are often concentrated in a unique location. In fact, the main touristic product characterizing a travel destination can be the result of a successful promotion strategy or it can simply represent an organic incoming flow due to direct or indirect market reasons. The reason for travelling is one of the most studied topics by tourism sociology, with a great attention by anthropologist, specifically in terms of: tourist behavior on holiday and the relationship between the tourist and the resident. In the seventies, these studies of sociological and philosophical matrice open a field of research that have generated a tourism classification in well-defined categories. Such categories connote the earliest literature on tourism sciences, in combination with economical and spatial models of study on tourist destination development.

Nowadays tourism is one of the most dynamic and instable markets suffering world ecosystems changes; therefore, tourist behaviour are constantly adapting to the evolving society, so the tourist is not defined as a single kind of traveller. In fact, there are blurring boundaries between post-modern tourist typologies, whilst literature assumptions are still relevant to understand lots of touristic phenomena. According to this vision, the figure of sustainable tourist is related to the 21<sup>st</sup> sustainable tourism paradigm, including various tourism formulas focused on: green tourism, agritourism, sport tourism, eco-tourism, slow tourism, etc. (Lemmi, 2009). The reply to a destructive mass tourism practice has implemented sustainable tourism systems welcoming ever more responsible tourists. The attitude to sustainable tourism has changed touristic trends, touristic needs, destination management tourism, by generating a steady search for: authenticity, local identity knowledge, socio-cultural exchange and quality growth (Lemmi, 2015). This tourist profile reflects the changing tourism scenario, from the sustainable paradigm arise to the current tourism challenging referred to the Covid-19 age. The figure of cultural heritage tourist can partially identifies in the tourist type defined by Cohen as an 'escape tourist'. He is in search of unknown cultures because of its alienation referring to urban values (Gubert R., Pollini G., 2003).

As concerns the figure of sustainable tourism, according to the sociological studies of Cohen identifying some tourist categories, the 'experimental tourist' embodies some of the contemporary values of experiential tourists. He wants to discover and experience new ways of life and new tourist activities with the aim to understand different cultural values; finally, during the multiple experience sequences, the tourist become an 'eternal researcher' (Cohen, 1979).

The post-modern tourism has revealed the common concepts of 'authenticity', sometimes overused, referred to the way to practice tourism, as well as to the holiday place. The research of authenticity is a concept studied by the sociologist MacCannel in the seventies with focus on the relationship between the tourist and the local communities. The sociologist considered the tourist as an active part of the

local context, since he is in search of engagement and integration with the local society.

This is one of the key elements of sustainable and cultural heritage tourism, that are centred on the respect for local environment and local communities, with the aim to reduce negative impacts of tourism (Paolo Corvo, 2003). Finally, authenticity-based tourism concerns multiple kinds of tourism segments, such as: slow tourism, adventure tourism, eco-tourism, cultural tourism, food and wine tourism and many types of niche tourism. MacCannell also claimed that tourism phenomenon was a kind of modern religion based on ritualization and sacralization processes. In light of this, the pilgrimage routes set along the Via Francigena, as well as the Vie Romee, like Via Romea Strata and Via Romea Germanica, reveal, today, the main concepts of authenticity. In fact, they boast historical and natural sights representing some pull factors for tourists travelling for spirituality reasons. Spirituality, knowledge and sustainability are some factors connoting the pilgrimage as an itinerary maintaining religious characteristics from the past and hedonist elements related to contemporary tourism.

In relation to an empiric vision for the post-Covid19 tourism rebirth, with particular attention to minor destinations, it is worth mentioning some Italian case histories and best practices, especially referred to small inland towns and mountain village tourism. Some relevant case studies regard mountain villages, historically plagued by depopulation phenomena, although with a small resilient economy boasting a high social and environmental value. Such inland areas, often poorly known, take advantage of their geomorphology and cultural heritage appeal, which have represented a successful element both to reduce the Coronavirus pandemic transmission and for tourism and repopulation local governance planning.

From the point of view of community resilience, the current emergency situation for the tourism sector shows a powerful ability of adaptation of territories in reason of: preserving local identity through private and public professional skills that could be able to activate socio-cultural integrity and community contamination, in a civic economy development vision. In view of this, tourism in Italian small villages may represent a new sustainable economy with the aim to raise up the weakest territorial ecosystems.

Some Italian case studies are mentioned below:

- 2017 was declared "the year of the Italian villages" by the Italian Minister of tourism (MIBACT); in this occasion the project called "Borghi italiani", promoted by Airbnb, has given the opportunity of restoration and renovation to many small villages, with the financial support of Fondazione Cariplo<sup>12</sup>.

Within this project, the Lombard mountain village of Lavenone (Province of Brescia), counting only 550 inhabitants, boasts an extremely fascinating environment set in the mountain community of the Valle della Sabbia.

It is a lake and mountain destination of Northern Italy that have been requalified by the restoration activity of a local hostel called Borgo Venno by local community. It isn't a simply hostel but also a multifunctional center: on one hand, as a space to welcome tourists; on the other hand, as a social

space for local community where local disabled people have found employment.

The hostel renovation process had included decoration activities by local artists as well as a space conception with flexible living modules for any collective occasion. This tourism project has contributed to valorize a sustainable tourism approach and, at the same time, it has represented a factual element for local culture of hospitality and also for social inclusion issues.

- Ostana is a very small Piedmont village, counting 89 inhabitants, set in Northern Italy, in the Province of Cuneo, along the Po Valley. It is well known as one of the smallest and most beautiful villages of Italy and it has been revitalized by last summer proximity tourism phenomenon influenced by the Coronavirus pandemic emergency. It represents a new balance between city and mountain lifestyle, especially during a lockdown way of life, affecting working behaviors and summer tourism flows. It could be a case study for a sustainable and better quality model of life based on local cooperation and slow tourism. Since the 1990s, Ostana has been requalified to attract residents by means of community cooperatives; consequently the village became a multicultural area hosting language festivals, Alpin architecture labs and manifestation of the Occitan culture. Today, the small village has been valorizing the mountain heritage, by realizing a multi-building hotel and by investing in innovation technologies, with the purpose to attract new residents from urban areas and tourists from the most popular cities of art, by offering a social, economical and environmental tourism destination.
- Vallo di Nera: in the so-called Umbrian 'Valnerina', the medieval village of Vallo di Nera, rich in historical and cultural attractions, gives evidence of the authentic heart of the Region Umbria. It has declared one of the most beautiful villages of Italy and it has been revalued starting from the 2016 post-earthquake totally rebirth programme, including some measures: restoration of historical buildings, such as medieval castles, churches and frescoes; promotion of immaterial heritage, such as, stories told by the elders, gastronomy specialties; requalification of naturalistic itineraries and cycling paths.  
This virtuous project is realized in cooperation with local stakeholders, among which the University of Perugia and the Park TreA.

The above mentioned case histories show the high potential of territories in terms of resilience and capacity for renewal in such critical situations. Coronavirus pandemic has transformed traditional tourist destination governance approach and it also has laid the basis to build new minor tourist destinations. The success keys of the post-Coronavirus paradigmatic approach for tourism lie in new citizenship rebirth, economical and cultural rebirth for a holistic village renovation concerning: village productivity, empowerment of social capital, creative production, digital transformation and repopulation.

Social involvement is a crucial element to foster socio-economic growth, empowered by solidarity networks, digital innovation and cultural creativity. Renovating means reactivating territories by job creation and circular economy dimensions.

**Chart. 7** Renovation measures for San Pellegrino in Alpe tourism

<b>GOVERNANCE</b>			
Interregional tourism partnership: Emilia-Romagna Region and Tuscany	Network approach between different regional territorial areas, such as: Garfagnana+Piana di Lucca+Versilia	Private and public partnerships to launch new sustainable tourism products	Tourism projects with Toscana Promozione Turistica and AEFV (European Association of Vie Francigene)
<b>TOURISTIC OFFER AND HOSPITALITY</b>			
Interregional pilgrimage routes along the Via Francigena, the Romea Strata and the Romea Germanica	New network tourist product throughout Garfagnana: slow tourism + cultural heritage tourism	Hybrid tourist products in San Pellegrino in Alpe: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Pilgrimage+ agricultural tourism</li> <li>• Cycling+ mountain tourism</li> <li>• Ethnographic tourism + spiritual/religious tourism</li> <li>• Experiential tourism based on rural and gastronomy tourism</li> </ul>	Empowerment of sport tourism as single tourist product related to cycle tourism
<b>MARKETING DIGITAL STRATEGIES</b>			
	Digital Brand/ App for pilgrimage hospitality places in San Pellegrino in Alpe.	Digitalization of ethnographic and cultural heritage: virtual itineraries of agricultural society; holographic	Informative and promotional totems to know local resources to create personalized



	Video marketing and Social media marketing made by local communities to promote: the legend of San Pellegrino, local agricultural products, local cultural heritage	representation of the past way of life	itineraries (info point 4.0)
<b>CINETOURISM STRATEGIES</b>			
	Partnerships with Toscana Film Commission to integrate San Pellegrino in Alpe in film-documentaries focus on the Via Francigena	Empowerment of partnership between: AEFV (European Association of Vie Francigene) and Toscana Promozione Turistica to realize a specific cinetourism product	

All these requalification and renovation measures have been suggested by considering the relevant touristic context of San Pellegrino in Alpe and with the purpose to renovate the local tourism system in terms of: governance, tourist offer and destination marketing.

Nowadays, some of the most innovative elements of a destination management plan are related to digital strategies, thanks to the huge promotional value of digital tools. Among the above action measures, cinetourism strategies represent valuable promotional opportunities with a wide impact on pilgrimage communities and on potential slow tourists. The Film-documentary entitled 'I volti della Via Francigena'<sup>13</sup> is a cinetourism project involving some Tuscan public and private stakeholders. It has its own website and it has been shown in many cinemas throughout Italy.

As concerns digital fruition of cultural heritage, some Tuscan best practice are represented by:

1. Castello dei Vicari in Lari<sup>14</sup>: holographic representation of the medieval past history animating the castle.
2. Entry Point Lucca Via Francigena<sup>15</sup> offering digital tools to know cultural and touristic resources for pilgrimages; it includes a museums and a restoring area.
3. Fortezza delle Verrucole Archeopark<sup>16</sup> (San Romano Garfagnana) offering a theatrical reconstruction of medieval times, with guided tours and educational labs for adults and children.

Regarding governance and tourist offer measures, the Covid-19 tourism age is a fundamental changing scenario to be considered. The current pandemic tourism situation has fostered different ways to travel and new travelers' behavior. In

particular, Italian tourists prefer a proximity tourism near the places of residence, in order to avoid potential pandemic lockdowns. Mountain tourism, small village tourism, slow tourism (trekking, cycling, sport tourism) are the most favourite tourism activities during the Covid-19 age and they will represent new opportunities for the Italian post-Covid tourism. Consequently, some tourist destinations are registering new domestic tourist flows, in spite of a great loss of foreign tourist flows. Italian rediscovery of agricultural tourism in extra-urban areas has been reinforced by national governance policies towards: intermodal transport services, social tourism, virtual tourism and sustainable tourism. Eco-tourism and heritage tourism are the main replies to the massive seaside tourism.

Definitely, trekking and pilgrimage tourism are promoted by numerous tourism projects in Tuscany and all over Italy, since they represent some of the safest and the easiest tourism products to practise very close to home. Finally, the new model for restarting tourism is a need for tourism operators and for tourist destinations, and also an opportunity for local cultural identity rediscovering in the long term period, both for residents and for visitors. Tourist destination will be involved in requalification plans with measures oriented to different kinds of experiential tourism; as regards the case study of San Pellegrino in Alpe, local stakeholders should increase their tourist offer by combining the wide variety of local tourist resources, among which ethnographic attractions as well as agricultural heritage and gastronomy traditions.

Small village renaissance models can be actually implemented by means of European<sup>17</sup> and Italian public and private funds for restarting tourism programmes, such as: MIBACT calls for Italian tourism recovery<sup>18</sup> and European calls for innovation, digitalization and sustainable tourism<sup>19</sup>. In this perspective, European and national tourist destination policies should be implemented in order to overcome the Covid-19 tourism crisis in two fields of actions: planning and promotion (European Commission, 2020).

Firstly, accessibility and transport policies should be oriented towards sustainability and interoperability, it means, to generate a high integrated tourist offer, mainly widespread on the territory and easily accessible by multiple and complementary means of transport. In these terms, technology and new professional skills to manage tourist flows and, consequently, to avoid waste of resources, in order to enhance the quality level of tourism offer and tourism fruition. Therefore, minority destination tourism will be promoted to suit a culture-led small tourist flows, by preserving local authenticity and ecosystem integrity, both in high season and in low season.

On managing hand, a horizontal and vertical strategy policy for a multilevel network is crucial; it could be realized through interregional and intermunicipality agreement for the national tourism rebirth, in a networking operating approach for private operators in tourism and also for public stakeholders.

On promotion and communication hand, tourism has to be renovated starting from tourism digitalization strategy and big data analysis, which are essential instruments

both for managing tourist flows and also to know tourist trends for making predictions.

Digital innovation is also a fundamental element for social narration in tourism, which acquires an essential role with special regard to social awareness and social communication of local identity and also to promote an actual resilient and community tourism. At this light, crowdfunding projects and civic economy could represent a relevant socio-economic tool for tourism ecosystem sustainability.

## Conclusions

The nostalgic sense of cultural heritage tourists gives back to the past antropologic origins of societies, that re-lives in post-modern tourism dynamics. Surely, contemporary tourists want to rediscover old lifestyles and ethnographic memories in new experiential tourist dimensions. In this way, cultural heritage sites reveal the most authentic sense of place where historical remains preserve their socio-cultural value, although heritage is sometimes re-created by surviving memories to suit tourists' needs (Asworth, 1992). This still existing dichotomy between authenticity and non-authenticity reflects on the current digitalization process of cultural sites, like multimedia appliances for museums, storytelling experiences and socio-cultural platforms (Bonacini, 2012). In this perspective, the tourism digital revolution is now evolving, especially during the current transition paradigm of tourism opening towards new opportunities to virtual tourism. The global unsteady tourism framework is now creating the basis for a 'tourism renaissance', which will introduce new tourism visions: from resilience tourism to civil economy issues for tourism and local recovery.

About resilience tourism, social communities suffering Covid-19 effects are founding their economy drivers on local socio-economical and cultural resources, among which, tourism is a valuable driver promoting tourism business networks founded on sustainable principles. In such international tourism crisis, that have been estimated for an international arrival decreasing between 60% and 80%, tour operators can reinvent tourism offer, both in quantitative and in qualitative terms. Local and global destinations will face with a higher level of international competition.

According to these assumptions, destination management need to be redesigned with focus on:

- Multilevel and bottom-up governance with high local community engagement;
- Tourist offer renovation and restyling according to new tourist trends (product and process innovation);
- Vertical and horizontal enterprise networks;
- New tourist business models founded on European and regional projects, crowdfunding campaigns and civil economy projects;
- New place marketing strategies taking advantage of new communication technologies and sharing intelligence tools;

- Tourist destination accessibility with sustainable plans and intermodal transport systems;
- Hospitality recovery plan with safety and digitalization systems;
- Cultural heritage and sustainable tourist product increasing;
- New professional profiles specialized in cultural heritage digitalization, sustainable destination management, accommodation strategies, etc.

In this panorama, technology revolution plays a fundamental role, not only for musealization actions, but also for slow tourism fruition, as well as in governance plans. As has been demonstrated by this study research on San Pellegrino in Alpe, local tourism in unpopular tourism places will have a good opportunity to grow, especially during this uncertain socio-historic conjuncture.

Big data analysis, sharing economy platforms and social media communication are also relevant tools that should have been used in sustainable tourism. In fact, videomarketing and social networking campaigns are some of the first organic ways to broadcast pilgrimage travel experiences<sup>20</sup>. Sustainable tourism and cultural heritage tourism will gain a special competitive position in post-Covid19 tourism; consequently, ethnographic-led tourism is a new humanistic approach combining: socio-cultural exchange between tourists and local communities and social dialogue at local, national and international level.

A 'cultural diplomacy' vision is a favorable approach to tourism, in its multisectoral nature: it is a way to valorize Italy tourism beauty starting from agricultural heritage to iconic Italian heritage, with a successful integration of all territorial elements (Bellini, Campostrini, Pasquinelli, Triunfio, 2020).

Finally, sustainability approach is the right reply to a world ecosystem crisis, in order to reduce environmental ecosystem exploit, and also for establishing a better citizens quality of life (Moroni, 2016). Thus, travellers' social and ethic values are a co-creation result made by relational and creative processes. In this perspective, famous sustainable tourist products, such as pilgrimage routes, have to empower their communicative and promotional appeal, in order to stimulate socio-cultural awareness to a better resilient and well-integrated geo-tourism.

According to this vision, the main purpose of the paper is to suggest a new model for the 'renaissance' of Italian tourism, on the basis of a renewed tourism paradigm founding on the values of tradition and innovation. This touristic model of the future could be a reply to Covid-19 tourism emergency and, moreover, it should represent a new tourist formula to export in European culture-based destinations (such as European walking routes).

A new model for the tourism rebirth, away from mass tourism approach, with the purpose to face the world tourism incoming crisis in the medium-long term, especially for 'alternative' tourist destinations. Small tourist destinations with great tourism potential, like San Pellegrino in Alpe, will take advantage of the present renovation vision of tourism promoted by public and private stakeholders.

The 'rebirth model' of tourism is based on: new ways to discover Italy by creating socio-economic benefits for suburban hubs; new axiological models directed to a geographical rediscovery of Grand Tour past traditions along European cultural

routes, that are places rich in historical and human identity elements. A new experiment combining sustainable, humanistic and social tourism approach will be the successful factor for a restarting tourism model. It will be a social-driven innovation tourism as well as a technology and data driven tourism.

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<https://www.pressreader.com/>

<https://www.valnerinaoggi.it/notizie/vallo-nera-lantico-borgo-festeggia-suoi-primi-800-anni-9094/>

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<sup>1</sup> Although this paper is the result of a collective reflection, the first and second paragraphs are by Phd Student Maria Grazia Deri, while the third and fourth paragraphs are by Professor Enrica Lemmi.

<sup>2</sup> <https://www.regione.toscana.it/-/nuova-legge-sul-turismo-e-costituzione-ambiti-turistici>

<sup>3</sup> Regional law n.86/2016: [www.regionetoscana.it](http://www.regionetoscana.it)

<sup>4</sup> The Region Tuscany has divided the Tuscan Region in touristic territorial areas according to their homogeneity elements (Testo Unico del Turismo: Legge Regionale 86/2016)

<sup>5</sup> Data partially own elaborated.

<sup>6</sup> Information supplied by the Province of Lucca

<sup>7</sup> 2019 data. We consider presences as the relevant element to analyse since it represents the total number of night stays by tourists: it is a considerable data for hospitality occupancy analysis.

<sup>8</sup> Provincial data shown by chart 3 referred to 2018.

<sup>9</sup> <http://www.toscanapromozione.it/magazine/turismo-emilia-romagna-e-toscana-rinnovano-lalleanza-per-la-promozione-della-montagna/>

<sup>10</sup> Most of these accommodation structures are located in the Emilian municipality of Frassinoro.

<sup>11</sup> It is under renovation.

<sup>12</sup> Within the intersectorial financing project called Attivaree:

<http://attivaree.fondazionecriplo.it/it/index.html>

<sup>13</sup> <https://www.viafrancigenadocumentary.com/trailer/>

<sup>14</sup> <http://www.castellodilari.it/it/>

<sup>15</sup> <http://www.turismo.lucca.it/it/francigena-entry-point>

<sup>16</sup> <https://www.fortezzaverrucolarcheopark.it/it/>

<sup>17</sup> The European agenda for sustainable, resilient and innovative tourism.



<sup>18</sup> <https://ponculturaesviluppo.beniculturali.it/bando-borghi-e-centri-storici/>

<sup>19</sup> Cosme programme: <https://www.europainnovazione.com/cosme-innovazione-e-digitalizzazione-del-turismo/>

<sup>20</sup> Such as the Facebook Campaign created by Movimento Lento tour operator. It was opened during COVID-19 lockdown to promote projects and tourism initiatives among travellers and slow tourism operators, all over Italy.