
Strategic Plan for *Adagio* startup: digital networking for experiencing and co-creating responsible tourism in Italy

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Abstract

The project work, structured as a Strategic Plan, intends to propose an idea of business with the objective of contributing to sustainable and responsible tourism development in Italy through the involvement of digital innovations. The work has both academic and business oriented goals. The literature review highlights the importance of taking responsible actions and asserts the central role of digital networking as a means to foster sustainable approaches. The market analysis underscores the centrality of sustainability and digitalisation in tourism and the role of associations as stakeholders and certifications as tools of guarantee, being that the internal analysis highlights the relevance of the human resources and the co-creation and community concepts in customer relationships within the proposed business. The confrontation of the two analyses defines the competitiveness that is at the basis of the strategy. Therefore, the Strategic Plan presents the decisions taken in order to develop the idea of business as a digital startup until the scale up phase. The business, named *Adagio*, is represented by a mobile application which operates as a not-for-profit organisation, and the strategy focuses on a niche target. In the implementation phase, the constant monitoring of the operations and the refinement of the proposal aim to answer to the visitors' needs, while preserving the values-oriented character. This work proposes an idea of business with the potential of positively changing the modalities of travel, from which can benefit the society and the environment.

Keywords

Strategic Plan, Startup, Sustainable and Responsible Tourism, Digital Innovation.

JEL Classification System

Z32 - Tourism and Development, M13 - New Firms • Startup.

Resumo

O trabalho do projecto, estruturado como um Plano Estratégico, pretende propor uma ideia de negócio com o objectivo de contribuir para o desenvolvimento turístico sustentável e responsável em Itália através do envolvimento de inovações digitais. O trabalho tem objectivos tanto académicos como empresariais. A revisão bibliográfica destaca a importância de tomar medidas responsáveis e, afirma o papel central das redes digitais como um meio de promover abordagens sustentáveis. A análise de mercado sublinha a centralidade da sustentabilidade e da digitalização no turismo e o papel das associações como partes interessadas e, das certificações como instrumentos de garantia, sendo que a análise interna destaca a relevância dos recursos humanos e dos conceitos de co-criação e comunidade nas relações com os clientes no âmbito do negócio proposto. O confronto das duas análises define a competitividade que está na base da estratégia. Por conseguinte, o Plano Estratégico apresenta as decisões tomadas a fim de desenvolver a ideia de negócio desde a fase de startup digital até à fase de aumento de escala. O negócio, denominado Adagio, é representado por uma aplicação móvel que funciona como uma organização sem fins lucrativos, e a estratégia centra-se num nicho de mercado. Na fase de implementação, o acompanhamento constante das operações e o aperfeiçoamento da proposta visam responder às necessidades dos visitantes, preservando ao mesmo tempo o carácter orientado para os valores. Este trabalho propõe uma ideia de negócio com o potencial de alterar positivamente as modalidades de viagem, das quais pode beneficiar a sociedade e o ambiente.

Palavras-chave

Plano Estratégico, Startup, Turismo Sustentável e Responsável, Inovação Digital.

Classificação JEL

Z32 - Tourism and Development, M13 - New Firms • Startup.

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Glossary of Acronyms

CEO: Chief Executive Officer

CISET: International Centre of Studies on the Tourism Economy - Ca' Foscari University of Venice

DMO: Destination Management Organisation

ICT: Information and communications technology

LBS: Location-based services

SaaS: Software as a Service

SDGs: Sustainable Development Goals

UI: User Interface design

UNWTO: United Nations World Tourism Organisation

UX: User Experience

WCED: World Commission on Environment and Development

WTTC: World Travel & Tourism Council

1. Identification of the innovative proposal

The discourse about sustainable tourism commenced in the 1980s because of the urgency of converting travel activities, which were resulting to be damaging for economy, society and environment in the long term. Nevertheless, the actualisation of the sustainability paradigm in the tourism industry and in the traveller's consciousness has been progressing at a slow pace. Travel is an activity that involves both tourists and actors at the destination, therefore the attitude of the former in planning and experiencing the trip and the approaches of the latter in offering their services determine the sustainability of tourism practices. A real change is expected to occur starting from the present disruptive times in the context of the global pandemic: trends are favouring the embracement of responsible behaviours and actions, with a consolidated aptitude of tourists and actors to support sustainable and responsible tourism.

Within this scenario, the idea of business presented in the thesis is determined to utilise the progressions brought by digital innovations with the purpose of contributing to reshape the tourism sector according to the recent trends. The business proposal is named *Adagio* and is positioned in Italy's tourism market. The decision of focusing on the latter geographical area is motivated by the fact that tourism is determinant for the country's economy and current policies are favouring the development of sustainable tourism and digital innovations. Therefore, the market dimension and the attention towards a more responsible form of tourism — which aspects are integrated with the advantages brought by ICTs — constitute a business opportunity. With reference to the demand, the increased awareness towards sustainable tourism on the side of tourists travelling to Italy and the centrality acquired by the use of digital platforms in planning and experiencing holidays are conditions that open to the possibility of developing dedicated services for travellers that effectively answer to the demand's needs.

The above described context — which is deepened in the subsequent sections of the present research — provided the conditions upon which the innovative proposal was stimulated. Hence, *Adagio* is constituted by a digital startup operating within the context of sustainable and responsible tourism in Italy. The services are delivered by means of a mobile application and the aims thereof are the following: favouring sustainable and responsible approaches towards tourism practices; enhancing the visitor experience at culture, nature, food&wine related attractions; facilitating the communication among tourists and tourism enterprises; providing a seamless process to the tourist in the holiday planning phase; improving networking functionalities and promotional capabilities of SMEs involved in the tourism sector.

Adagio is strictly values-driven, hence the choice to develop the business as a not-for-profit organisation. The latter entity is founded on the aspects of accountability, trustworthiness and honesty, with the purpose of operating for a public benefit and

reinvesting the income for the organisation's goals. As a consequence, a not-for-profit model is considered to be more effective for achieving the business objectives centred on value creation and involving tourists and enterprises in collaborating to reshape tourism through embracing responsible approaches. In addition, *Adagio* is involved in fostering tourism in Italy through the promotion of and support to actors that represent the beauty and authenticity of Italian culture and identity, which are manifested in the most diverse areas, e.g. cuisine, wine, hospitality, arts and crafts, natural landscapes, local traditions. Therefore, the latter purpose determines the activities carried out by the business, thus constituting an additional component of *Adagio*'s commitment for public benefit.

The innovative character of *Adagio* is founded on the values themselves, which direct consistently the business activities and differentiate the organisation from the majority of the platforms operating as SaaS in the tourism sector, and which are only partially committed to develop sustainable tourism. The concepts of responsibility, networking and community characterise the idea of business and their interconnectedness delineates the features of the service, the latter intercepting the trends in the tourism sector and contributing to sustainable development.

With the purpose of developing the innovative proposal described above, the Strategic Plan for innovative project here presented sets the following key goals:

- I. Support the innovative idea of business with the most recent advancements in the academic literature and evaluate the role of digital innovations in developing responsible tourism.
- II. Analyse the market where *Adagio* business will be positioned in order to direct the strategic decisions according to the broader tourism sector in Italy, the visitors' needs and the trends of the market.
- III. Analyse the internal characteristics of the business and its competitiveness.
- IV. Develop the strategy for *Adagio* as a startup.
- V. Define the implementation process.

2. Literature Review

2.1. Sustainability and responsible tourism contemporary debates and challenges

2.1.1. Towards sustainable tourism

The tourism phenomenon has been seen principally as an economic leverage within the neoliberal paradigm, where the trajectory of constant growth rooted in the marketplace has overcome society and environment related concerns. Governments have been favouring a capitalist approach by devising «strategies to grow tourism markets, to increase tourism visitation, spur greater visitor spending and foster repeat visitation» (Higgins-Desbiolles et al., 2019, p. 1929). Notwithstanding the conceptualisation of sustainable tourism in academic research, and the turning point occurred through the promulgation of the WCED's *Our Common Future* report in 1987 (Moyle et al., 2020), the actualisation of the latter in a form of tourism that considers economic, social and environmental impacts conjunctly necessitates further developments (McCool, 2016). In fact, nations worldwide agree on the vital importance of advancing in this direction.

The urgency of embracing a sustainable approach towards tourism was explicated by the UNWTO during the International Year of Sustainable Tourism for Development in 2017, by attempting to align the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) to the sector. As declared by the UNWTO, the change in tourism should be fostered by five key areas: inclusive and sustainable economic growth; social inclusiveness, employment and poverty reduction; resource efficiency, environmental protection and climate change; cultural values, diversity and heritage; mutual understanding, peace and security (UNWTO, 2016). Such definition on the direction to be incorporated in tourism development policy and practice represents a step forward; nonetheless, the perspective on sustainable tourism as proposed has further evolutions in the responsible tourism conceptualisation.

2.1.2. Responsible tourism

In order to achieve sustainable development, the sense of ethical and moral responsibility is paramount. Bramwell et al. (2008) individuate four main research perspectives on responsible tourism: consumption and production may be determined by the beliefs of conscious travellers and the 'corporate social responsibility' of tourism businesses; the relations 'consumer–producer', 'tourism sector–host population' and 'worker–employer' express a considerable potential for sustainability; social change occurs thanks to individual and collective moral responsibility and consequent actions; radical critics are important, although in capitalist societies small-scale improvements are more likely to be achieved. Within this articulated spectrum it is highlighted the centrality of individual attitudes and

behaviours from all the tourism-related actors, and responsibility constitutes the foundation to sustainability.

According to Mihalic (2016) «responsible tourism addresses the [...] sustainable tourism discourse in implementation», which is achievable passing through the Triple-A Model stages of awareness, agenda and action. Within each stage both the horizontal penetration and vertical progression must involve holistically the economic, socio-cultural and environmental aspects. The mentioned model (fig. 2.1) is applicable to all the actors at the destination and attempts to propose a method for reaching ‘responsustainable tourism’, which combines the concept and values-based facet of sustainability and the behaviour-based responsibility.

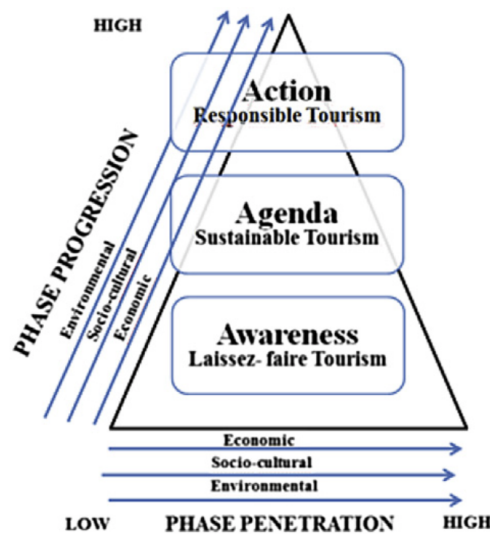


Fig. 2.1. The Triple-A Model — for responsustainable tourism (Mihalic, 2016, p. 467).

2.1.3. Network systems in responsible tourism

Within the framework of responsible tourism, relations empower individual actions through a collaborative dimension at different levels. Whether the involvement of the host community must revitalise the ideas of hospitality and connection (Higgins-Desbiolles et al., 2019), contextually to the tourist experience, the visitor is acquiring the role of co-creator along with actors. Furthermore, a network of tourism related SMEs represents a crucial driver for territorial development (Valeri & Fadlon, 2017). Hence, territory and shared values are the glue for a systemic dimension, which contributes to increase attractiveness and the internationalisation potential (Del Baldo, 2014). Thus, network systems in the tourism sector delineate an opportunity to develop regions sustainably.

In particular, the host community, comprising local administrations and bodies, tourism related enterprises, local community representatives, single citizens, associations involved in sustainable regional development (Fadini, 2013), constitutes the pillar of the mechanism needed for degrading tourism and re-localise the economy (Higgins-Desbiolles et al., 2019). The framework in fig. 2.2 shows that all the actors involved in the tourism scenario must

direct their attention to the host community, and simultaneously all the initiatives should originate from the intentions of the community itself.



Fig. 2.2. Community-Centred Tourism Framework as a mechanism for degrowing tourism (Higgins-Desbiolles et al., 2019, p.1937).

2.1.4. The contribution of responsible tourism from 2020 disruption

Whether the responsible tourism discourse has developed as a concrete answer to the issues brought by the model of commodified tourism, the standstill in the sector from 2020 is to be seen as the occasion to take responsible actions to face this historical period. Within the debate juxtaposing recovery and reform approaches as responses to the crisis caused by the COVID-19 pandemic, Higgins-Desbiolles (2020b, p. 565) affirms that

If we fail to address the larger context in which tourism operates, what we in fact do is assume a myopic view which works to sustain tourism, the tourism industry and tourism consumption with insufficient concern on how this may enact social and ecological injustices.

This vision confirms that tourism future should be planned considering not merely the market, but broadening the perspective on «ethics of care, social and environmental justice, and racial reconciliation» (Benjamin et al., 2020, p.479). Therefore, a macro-micro point of view is fundamental in a sector that is inserted in a local-global system.

The conscious tourist is shifting to decisive choices in sustainable travel and truly supports the local community (Benjamin et al., 2020), aspects that are pivotal to restart tourism. On the one hand, travellers are seeking to reinvent themselves embracing transformative and conscious travel (Ateljevic, 2020), where connectedness, localness,

slowness, experiences and communication are central to shape and live the trip. On the other hand, the recent and ongoing crisis has taught «the vital importance of community, social connections and society» (Higgins-Desbiolles, 2020a, pp.618), stimulating the development of local community centred tourism. Hence, these positive trends draw the direction towards responsible tourism in an historical period where a drastic shift is particularly needed.

2.2. Digital innovation

The concepts hereinafter presented attempt to provide an overview of the main subjects involved in the digital environment, and which, despite the constant evolution of the sector, are consolidated. Therefore, the following sections introduce the broader spectrum of digital innovations and the related implications for the present work.

2.2.1. Digital platforms

Digital technology platforms transformed business models and entrepreneurial culture by favouring high scalability and low entry barriers, thus fostering the so called digital innovation (Ciriello et al., 2018). Specifically, one of the main outcomes of digital innovations refers to service innovations or product-service systems, thereof development combines features of both services and products.

According to Bonina et al. (2021, p. 3) digital platforms present three principal attributes: «they are technologically mediated, enable interaction between user groups and allow those user groups to carry out defined tasks». Furthermore, they are divided in two different typologies: innovation and transaction platforms. Whether the former represent building blocks upon which can be built different products, services or technologies by third party companies, the latter facilitate transactions between different organisations, entities and individuals. Examples of transaction platforms are manifested in social media, sharing economy and knowledge sharing, which environments are often implemented in mobile applications.

2.2.2. Mobile applications

In the last decade the use of mobile devices has exponentially increased, that it revolutionised the modalities of search of information and networking among the web. Applications are amongst the most utilised digital platforms, and, notwithstanding the constant developments in technologies, they are conceptually grouped in three main categories (Jobe, 2013):

- Native Apps are applications written and developed for a particular operating system (i.e. Android, iOS). This typology of apps are particularly efficient in performance, consistency and user experience.

- Web-based Apps refer to applications that are designed to be executed in a web browser and the most common languages they are written with are HTML5, JavaScript, and CSS. These apps require internet access and they occupy minimum memory space in the device.
- Hybrid Apps are applications that are written with standard web languages inside a third party native app container. Despite being easier and faster to develop, these apps may lack in performance.

Hence, the choice of a specific typology from those listed above will depend in accordance to the service to be implemented through an application and its functionalities.

2.2.3. User Experience, User Interface

The concepts of User Experience (UX) and User Interface (UI) are determinant in developing a service, and specifically within applications. According to the definitions provided by the ISO 9241, UX corresponds to the «person's perceptions and responses resulting from the use and/or anticipated use of a product, system or service», whereas UI refers to «all components of an interactive system (software or hardware) that provide information and controls for the user to accomplish specific tasks with the interactive system» (ISO, 2010). From the above mentioned explanation it is noteworthy the centrality of the final user, where the latter must be considered attentively in designing a feasible service which may answer the particular needs.

2.2.4. Location-based services

In order to enhance the user experience, digital platforms incorporate location-based services (LBS), which combine GPS positioning information with data. LBS are defined as «services that integrate a mobile device's location or position with other information so as to provide added value to a user» (Schiller & Voisard, 2004, p. 10). In the case that an application utilises LBS, the user results connected to the surrounding physical space through the mobile device, thus expanding the spatial experience in the real world with the digital environment and viceversa.

2.2.5. User-generated contents and e-WOM

The digital environment is populated by individuals who share information among the virtual community. The term user-generated content (UGC) refers to media contents (e.g. text, audio, images, videos) that are posted publicly by users, thus providing their personal contribution outside of professional practices (Thanh Thao & Shurong, 2020). In addition, the collaborative and creative character of the contents published is intertwined to the connectivity that is typical of digital platforms. As a consequence, the phenomenon of word-of-mouth (WOM) acquires the 'electronic' connotation and determines the concept of e-

WOM. The latter describes the statements made by consumers about a product, service, brand, or company on the Internet in an exchange process with other users (Thanh Thao & Shurong, 2020). The implications of UGC and its use as e-WOM are prominent in marketing because of their authentic and influential values, which are sought especially from Millennials.

2.2.6. Digital storytelling

The practice of storytelling has continuously evolved with humankind, adopting different forms according to technological developments. Consequently, along with the diffusion of digital platforms, humans have spread their stories through the use of contemporary media. Therefore, the concept of digital storytelling defines the narrative entertainment which employs digital media platforms (Rizvic et al., 2020). Moreover, extending the latter definition, it can be stated that all the users are involved in this phenomenon when they share their personal stories and imaginings, thus contributing to a broader proliferation of narratives, which are shared online.

2.2.7. Edutainment

The combination of education and entertainment shapes the concept of edutainment, which involves in the learning process, in addition to knowledge, experience and emotions (Kiuru et al., 2019). Game and storytelling are two examples of techniques involved in edutainment, which are increasingly intertwined with technology and media. Particular attention to the topic is given in cultural fruition and practice, and thanks to its attribute of enjoyment contributes to create an engaging experience with the audience, which is not a mere spectator but interacts in the learning process.

2.2.8. Networking through digital platforms

Digital platforms, and specifically social networking sites, introduced new modalities in retrieving information and creating relations. In fact, socio-technical networks are transactive, portable and do not necessarily depend on geo-spatial connections, thus encouraging the creation of virtual communities as collectives based on a sense of belonging (Rosen et al., 2011). Although online native global networks are exponentially increasing, the collaborative traits of this typology of network can be also found in offline small-scale communities that developed their counterpart online.

An exemplary case of the socio-economic implications brought by internet-based applications and networks is the phenomenon of the 'sharing economy' (Arcidiacono et al., 2018). Contextually to the debate on the 'true' meaning of sharing that this model engenders, a distinction between user-driven and platform-driven sharing economy relates to the former communal purposes, while the latter is focused on commercial value (Netter et al., 2019). This vision is further supported by Gössling & Michael Hall (2019), who argue that sharing

economy platforms which are not-for-profit may contribute to pursue SDGs, whereas those profit oriented — and presenting global corporations as intermediaries — do not progress sustainable goals.

2.3. The role of digital innovation in the tourism sector

2.3.1. Tourism 4.0, Smart Tourism and connectivity

In the last decade the tourism sector experienced a revolutionary transformation thanks to the proliferation of digital platforms and their utilisation through mobile devices. Developments in ICT, and the feature of portability of smartphones, radically influenced the modalities of travelling, thus causing the phenomena outlined as Tourism 4.0 and Smart Tourism. In analysing the digital revolution in the travel and tourism industry, Pencarelli (2019, p. 460) delineates the characteristics of the aforementioned terms as follows.

While Tourism 4.0 mainly refers to the new hardware and software equipment of the technologies, the label “smart tourism” refers to a sustainability oriented use of the Internet and ICT, aimed at combining technological, human, and social resources to pursue sustainability principles in order to improve people’s quality of life and to enrich the customer’s tourism experience.

These facets, which are part of the broader concept of e-tourism, highlight the importance of digital innovations and their interrelation with the complex context characterising contemporary tourism.

In addition, the advancements brought by digital platforms are particularly manifested in connectivity: travellers are connected with both tourism providers and other tourists within the digital environment. Whether the relation with the former is focalised on travel information and booking services, fellow visitors who share similar interests and needs are fundamental players in recommending the service which was experienced (Hughes & Moscardo, 2019), by practicing e-WOM and posting UGC. Furthermore, location-based services and ‘real time’ sharing have become crucial in all the phases involved in travelling, given that the trip occurs in both the physical and digital spheres.

2.3.2. Visitors and users as prosumers: the tourism experience

Tourists acquired an active role in the creation of the tourist experience, and technologies are involved before, during and after the trip at the destination. In parallel, the concept of ‘prosumer tourist’, defined as «co-producer of tourist destinations together with local stakeholders» (Lemmi, 2020, p. 45), underlines the visitor’s centrality in designing the trip, in a constant process of co-creation permeated by ICT (Neuhofer et al., 2013). The latter situation, also defined as SoLoMo tourism (Ejarque, 2015), is favoured by Social media,

Location-based services and Mobile. Indeed, these drivers increase the involvement of the visitor in determining the tourism experience.

Whether the tourist has become the subject of co-creation, the objects of this process are value and experience (Neuhofer et al., 2013), influenced by digital information quality among all the pre-visit, onsite, and post-visit stages (Kullada & Michelle Kurniadjie, 2020). According to Godovykh & Tasci, (2020, p. 4), after the arousal of the personal need, the travel experience passes through the phases of «dreaming, motivation, information search, decision, purchase, planning, anticipation, visiting, remembering, and potentially planning to repurchase». Therefore, in order to create memorable experiences, it is required to adopt an overarching approach that considers all the stages of the trip, along with the integration of digital innovations and the assumption of the tourist's centrality.

2.3.3. Digital innovations and responsible tourism

The progresses brought by technological innovations cause a broader impact in the socio-cultural and environmental aspects of tourism, particularly with regard to its sustainability. Within the scenario of 'smart tourism', Pencarelli (2019, p. 462) argues that

The conceptualization of 'smart tourists' would be associated with tourists displaying more responsible behaviors and who are attentive to the environment and to the host communities.

Nevertheless, according to Gössling (2020, p. 855)

Technology and ICT make some, though marginal contributions to the SDGs. They allow for improvements (teaching) or support new views (reviews, virtual tours, foodstagramming), but there is no evidence of a systemic transition that in any of its dimensions is unambiguously beneficial to society.

The concept of 'smart tourism', as it is discussed by Pencarelli, underpins a broader integration between technology and individual responsibility, whereas Gössling affirms that ICT partially supports a sustainable approach towards tourism.

Although digital communication systems play a part in the enhancement of the travel experience in the context of responsible tourism (Lemmi, 2020), their role in promoting sustainable practices in the broader tourism sector is twofold, where information can lead to both sustainable and unsustainable outcomes (Dickinson et al., 2016). Therefore, the involvement of digital platforms, and the proliferation of information by these means, should be combined with an holistic perspective comprising environmental and social sustainability. Thus, it is pivotal that the potential of technological innovations is oriented at capitalising the development of responsible practices.

2.3.4. Online networks for responsible tourism

Online networking practices in tourism are diverse, where two models, here exemplified by two case studies, can be individuated at the opposites: digital platforms that favour

responsible visits and integration (e.g. CouchSurfing), and commercial intermediaries that connect tourists to providers (e.g. AirBnB). On the one side, CouchSurfing represents an hybrid online-offline community that facilitates to meet other people while travelling, surpassing geographical and cultural boundaries (Rosen et al., 2011). On the other side, AirBnB is a business reflecting the platform-driven model of sharing economy, where the online network is used for increasing the corporation's profit, at times at the expenses of small enterprises (Gössling & Michael Hall, 2019, Hughes & Moscardo, 2019). Therefore, the paradigm regulating the network determines the approach to tourism and may constitute an asset in developing or not sustainable practices.

In line with the responsible tourism perspective, a decentralised platform (Sutherland & Jarrahi, 2018) involving an online network is more socially embedded and community-oriented, thus potentially fostering virtuous connections among the users. In the case that an online network positions social and environmental values as priorities in respect to the economic objective, new opportunities arouse for destinations. For tourism enterprises, a digital ecosystem connecting stakeholders and favouring cooperation, knowledge sharing, and open innovation processes represents an opportunity for decreasing the efforts in developing sustainably (Pencarelli, 2019). Simultaneously, the relation between the service provider and the visitor may be fostered by a direct contact that facilitates the co-creation of the experience.

2.3.5. The contribution of digital innovations to tourism from 2020 disruption

The advancements fostered within the scenario of responsible tourism and digital innovations are at the centre of the debate since the crisis in the sector started concurrently to the spread of COVID-19 pandemic (Fennell, 2020). Besides the importance of increasing awareness towards morally oriented actions in travel, the crucial role of ICT in contemporary tourism and the predominant role of Millennials in the sector (Ketter, 2020, Pencarelli et al., 2021) are paramount questions to be considered in shaping the 'new tourism'. This historical period represents a chance to drastically shift from the model of commodified tourism to a sustainable approach towards the sector, which has been discussed for the last three decades but never found a complete actualisation. Digital innovations may contribute to accelerate this process and their involvement in tourism represents an opportunity that is not to be missed in order to foster and implement responsible tourism practices.

2.4. Key literature points

The following list provides an overall summary of the key literature issues individuated in the previous sections.

- Urgency of embracing a sustainable approach which considers economic, social and environmental impacts conjunctly towards tourism.

- Tourism actors' responsible attitudes and behaviours are crucial for the implementation of sustainable development.
- The focus on the local community and the enhancement of networking capabilities stimulates responsible tourism.
- The crisis in the sector from 2020 is the occasion to take responsible actions, in accordance with the trends which define a higher level of awareness in tourists.
- In the context of digital platforms, mobile applications are characterised by technological and cultural developments (i.e. UX, UI, LBS, UGC, e-WOM, digital storytelling, edutainment) which determine the new paradigms of connectivity and communication.
- Networking is a central trait of digital platforms, and the sharing economy, when user-driven or promoted by not-for-profit platforms, can contribute to sustainable development.
- Digital innovations define the contemporary scenarios of tourism 4.0 and smart tourism, where connectivity is manifested among the actors and in both physical and digital spheres.
- The visitor-user has a central role in designing the experience at all the stages of the trip, in a process of co-creation that is favoured by ICT.
- The potential of technological progresses and the proliferation of information necessitate to be oriented by an holistic perspective in order to be effective in favouring the development of responsible practices.
- An online network in the context of a decentralised platform which may connect enterprises among themselves, but also to visitors, represents a useful means in developing sustainable tourism.
- Digital innovations are determinant to reshape the 'new tourism' after the 2020 disruption in the sector.

3. Methodology

The methodology presented hereinafter describes the approach adopted and the activities of research, analysis and decision-making performed for each stage of the thesis.

The Literature Review illustrated in the previous section provided the academic perspective on the concepts involved in *Adagio* project. The scenario refers to two main areas of research: tourism — with particular focus on its relation to sustainability and responsibility — and digital innovation — where the developments brought by mobile applications are central. Consequently, the connections between these two sectors are highlighted in order to indicate their potentialities of integration. The bibliographical resources which support the literature review are selected among journals and books from recent publication. The majority of the scientific articles chosen are dated from 2018 onwards and several of them refer to studies carried out in 2020, when the global crisis required to rethink the current tourism model.

The subsequent sections of the present work are structured according to the strategic plan configuration. The information and data researched for the analyses of the market, the organisation and the competition aim at evaluating the feasibility of the project and determining the strategy for the development of *Adagio* organisation, thus representing a decision making tool for the implementation process. The strategic plan is a flexible document which evolves as requirements and circumstances change, nevertheless it consistently pursues the systematic coordination of resources and actions with the organisation's mission, vision and values.

The Market Analysis is carried out in order to define the context where the organisation will operate. Therefore, both macro and micro environments are analysed: the former is investigated in accordance with PESTEL analysis, which is completed by the trends in the tourism sector; the latter is studied by taking into consideration stakeholders, competitors, market segmentation and certifications for sustainable and responsible tourism. The sources involved in the research are the most recent available at the moment of writing the thesis and their typologies are diverse: statistical data, trade associations data, financial data, legislative and governmental documents, reports from international and national institutions.

The Internal Analysis diagnoses the *Adagio* organisation. Because the latter refers to an emerging business, the tool chosen for this section is the Business Model Canvas. In addition to schematise the internal features of the organisation, the model takes into consideration aspects that anticipate the development strategy. In particular, it will be possible to notice that the unique value proposition presented in the Canvas situates the subsequent strategy-related sections. The methodology adopted for determining the value proposition is based on: the identification of the benefits that the service offers and the description of the features that make them valuable; the definition of potential customers'

problems and needs and the connection of the service's value to them; the differentiation of the business as the preferred provider of the specific value.

The competitive analysis is carried out through the SWOT analysis. The choice of this model is explained by the fact that it highlights opportunities and threats from the external environment (individuated in the Market Analysis) and strengths and weaknesses from the internal environment (explicated in the Internal Analysis). Thus, the scheme contributes to identify the elements that represent a competitive advantage.

The aforementioned analyses are followed by strategic choices and actions. The Strategic Plan's Objectives draw the direction taken by the business proposal and set the goals to be reached within two main phases: the startup stage, referring to the development of the idea, and the scale up stage, when the business is affirmed and expanding its operations in the market. Subsequently, the Development Strategy describes *Adagio's* mission, vision, values and defines the target. The principal aspects of the unique value proposition are summarised in order to present the strategy chosen to develop the innovative proposal, and the critical success factors thereof are highlighted.

After introducing the steps that *Adagio* will follow in order to develop a service that can answer to the customer's needs and have a competitive advantage in the market, the Implementation section takes into consideration five determinant aspects to structure the business. Firstly, marketing operations are described through the 4Ps (marketing mix); secondly, *Adagio's* resources (organisational, human, material, financial) are defined; thirdly, an overview of the technology at the basis of the mobile application is presented; fourthly, the Organisation's Manifesto is explicated; fifthly, the implementation plan shows the activities to be carried out in the first six month — presented in the Gantt chart.

The last section, Requirements for Implementation, introduces the Italian legislative context and the necessary requirements to incorporate a startup in the form of a not-for-profit organisation. In addition, the importance of patents for the innovative proposal and the explication of the role of incubators and accelerators are illustrated.

4. Market Analysis

The Market Analysis presents both the macro and micro environments where *Adagio* will carry out its operations. On the one hand, the macro environment considers economic, political-legal, socio-cultural, technological and environmental contexts within the scenario of tourism in Italy, and it outlines the trends of the market. On the other hand, the micro environment describes stakeholders, competitors, market segmentation and certifications for sustainable and responsible tourism which will be directly involved in the *Adagio* business.

4.1. Macro Environment

According to The Travel & Tourism Competitiveness Report 2019 (World Economic Forum, 2019), Italy is ranked 8th globally (5th in Europe) for its competitiveness in the travel & tourism sector. The report's parameters are graded from 1 to 7, and those which predominantly contribute at Italy's favourable position are 'Cultural Resources & Business Travel' (6.5), 'Health & Hygiene' (6.3), 'Tourist Service Infrastructure' (6.0), Natural Resources (4.9), and 'Ground & Port Infrastructure' (4.7). Additional positive values are registered for 'ICT Readiness' (5.5), 'Air Transport Infrastructure' (4.4), and 'International Openness' (4.1). Italy's rank worsens referring to 'Safety & Security' (5.5), 'Prioritisation of T&T' (4.8), 'Human Resources & Labor Market' (4.6), and 'Environmental Sustainability' (4.3). The lowest grades are found in the areas of 'Business Environment' (4.0), and 'Price Competitiveness' (4.4). The ranking highlights the strengths of the country in infrastructure and natural and cultural resources, whereas the areas of policy and enabling environment and conditions are those that penalise Italy in its competitiveness in the sector worldwide.

4.1.1. Economic context

According to the WTTC (2021), the contribution of tourism & travel to Italy's GDP in 2019 was estimated in 13,1% (EUR 236,4BN) — including direct, indirect and induced impacts — while in 2020 constituted the 7% (EUR 115,8BN) of total economy. The employment in the sector equalled 15% (3,499M jobs) of total employment in 2019 and 13,8% (3,162M jobs) in 2020. The impact of domestic visitor spending was EUR 142,8BN in 2019 and EUR 71,9BN in 2020, while the international visitors corresponded respectively to EUR 45,6BN, and to EUR 17,3BN.

With reference to the tourists country of origin ("Istat Statistics", 2021; see Annex A for complete data), the overnight stays by people residing in Italy were 49% of the total in 2019, while in the third quarter of 2020 (July - September), when the tourist activity was not remarkably constricted by pandemic-related restrictions they represented the 70% — with a decrease in number of 14% compared to the same period in 2019. The main foreign markets for the sector calculated on the total of inbound tourists overnight stays in 2019 were Germany (27%), US (7%), France (6%), UK (6%), Netherlands (5%), and Austria (4%). The

remaining markets are represented by other European countries (29%) and other non-European countries (15%). Considering the same indicator for the period July - September 2020, the main groups of international tourists — the latter representing the 30% of total overnight stays and counting a decrease in number of 60% compared to the same period in 2019 — were Germany (62%), Switzerland (11%), Netherlands (10%), Austria (9%), France (7%), and US (1%).

The important weight of domestic tourism and the fact that European tourists are a considerable part of the international segment — thanks to the advantages related to the freedom of circulation — contribute to resilience. In fact, despite the drop in overnight stays which affected the sector worldwide, the European countries increased their market shares at the detriment of other international shares in the third quarter of 2020. Referring to non-European markets ("Istat Statistics", 2021), American tourists represented a solid and constant segment until 2019, and it is likely that with the ease of restrictions on travel they will regain their central role. Furthermore, Chinese tourists have been continually increasing in the pre-pandemic period, constituting the component with the highest potential for the sector.

Contextually to the macro-categories of tourism, a study conducted by Ciset on data from the Bank of Italy (Manente, 2020) estimates that in 2018 the average spending of tourists based on the overnight stays in Italy corresponded to EUR 91 for the category seaside tourism, EUR 107 for mountain tourism, EUR 94 for lake tourism, EUR 104 for cultural tourism, and EUR 100 for cultural landscape tourism. The study highlights the economic relevance of cultural and rural destinations, which confirms the importance of considering the trends presented in section 4.1.6 for structuring the post-pandemic recovery.

Subsequently to the crisis started in 2020, according to the forecasts of the Italian Government Tourist Board (ENIT, 2020), a first signal of recovery will occur in 2022 for the internal market and in 2024 for the international market. Within 2023 the sector will see a +3% total increase in visitors compared to 2019, with the main traction coming from domestic tourists, whereas international markets will still value -5%. Nevertheless, 'second waves' of the virus, the return of restrictions and uncertainty over long-haul travel may influence these forecasts.

4.1.2. Political-legal context

The reform of Title V of the Constitution, implemented with L. Cost. n. 3/2001, made tourism a matter of 'exclusive' competence of ordinary Regions, as it already was for Regions with special status (Servizio Studi del Senato, 2019). Nevertheless, the centrality assigned to regions must respect the state legislator for those matters of its competence that connect or overlap with the tourism matter. Furthermore, the Constitutional Court asserted that a united promotional activity which may contrast the fragmentation of the Italian tourism offer is needed. Thus, a constant dialogue in between state and regions is fundamental in order to

regulate the legislative aspects of the sector — which activity of mediation is institutionally operated in the State-Regions Conference.

The aforementioned setting highlights an articulated scenario in which the development of the sector is dependent at both regional and national level. Whether local administrations hold a central — and frequently differentiated from each other — role in structuring and managing the tourism offer at the destination, the central government — with the contribution of public authorities, e.g. the Italian Government Tourist Board (ENIT) — provides a broader support in national strategies and in promoting Italy abroad. In addition, it is important to cite the crucial role of DMOs, the latter's activity at times overarching the Region territory and strictly collaborating with administrations and in other cases covering a more limited area.

The most recent example of the central government activity is presented in the Strategic Plan for Tourism development (PST 2017-2022), which explicates a unitary vision at a national level in order to foster the tourism sector (MiBACT, 2017). The principles of sustainability, innovation and accessibility are transversal to a series of objectives, among which ones the 'B.1' and 'D.1' — referring to digitalisation of the Italian tourism system and the promotion of an integrated and participative management with the operators of the sector — deserve particular attention for the present work.

Despite the radical shift occurred because of the pandemic, it can be affirmed that the action taken by the government in 2017 was drawing a direction which is nowadays in line with the most recent reforms required by the EU. In fact, the NextGenerationEU and the National Recovery and Resilience Plan (PNRR), which takes into account the foremost reforms in digital and ecological transitions (Governo della Repubblica Italiana, 2021), represent an opportunity to further boost and improve the tourism sector. The PNRR expressly involves innovations for tourism in the mission 'M1C3 - Tourism and Culture 4.0', where some programmed reforms refer to the creation of both a digital platform for the cultural heritage and a digital tourism hub. In parallel, the government formed in 2021 and led by Professor Mario Draghi instituted the Ministry of Tourism (the competences thereof were previously administrated by the Ministry of Culture), the Ministry of Ecological Transition and the Ministry of Technological innovation and Digital transition. The above mentioned political actions are a signal of a new trajectory for the Italian government and for the interests towards innovating the tourism sector alike.

4.1.3. Socio-cultural context

As regards to Italian residents, the main purposes of trip (Istat Statistics, 2021; see Annex B) for leisure holidays within Italy in 2019 are the following: pleasure, relax (61,1%); artistic, historical and archaeological heritage (11,2%); natural beauty (13,3%); sport holiday (5,1%); cultural and folkloric events, shows, exhibitions, food and wine holidays (2,3%). The typologies of destination (see Annex B) preferred are seaside, cruise (48,8%); city (36,2%); mountain, hills, highlands (26,5%); country, lakes, rivers (9,9%). With reference to age

groups (see Annex B), it can be noted that people aged 45-54 are those who travel the most, and the incidence of younger travellers (aged 15-34) is higher for short stays compared to longer stays. The types of accommodation preferred are non-rented accommodations and hotels (see Annex B), while the main means of transport is the car (see Annex B). Regarding the type of booking, Italian tourists are more inclined to book directly the trip or not book (see Annex B), where the incidence of booking through agency increases for the accommodation (see Annex B).

On the other hand, concerning inbound tourists travels to Italy an increasing articulation has been recorded, where travels include multiple destinations and an extension in motivations to travel (Banca d'Italia, 2019). In fact, the share of tourists who declared a secondary reason for their trip increased from 16% in 2010 to 33% in 2017; the categories of primary and secondary motivations are defined as 'rural', 'cultural', 'seaside' and 'mountain', where the first two are more often integrated by the last two (see Annex C). From 2010 to 2017 cultural holidays contributed for more than two-thirds to the inbound tourists overnight stays increase — with particular relevance of UNESCO Heritage Site municipalities (see Annex C). Moreover, cultural holidays — especially to cities of art — are the major loyalty leverage for international visitors because they orient the choice of Italy as a destination for extra-European travellers and European tourists who visit Italy for the first time. Referring to the same period (2010-2017), seaside holidays constituted one-fourth of the growth and mountain holidays increased among destinations with a high level of urbanisation and cultural attractions. Moreover, it is noted that regarding rural holidays, municipalities recognised as "Bandiere Arancioni" (a certification assigned by Touring Club Italiano) have the potential to develop further this category of travel (see Annex C), in line with the PST 2017-2022 intention of fostering 'borghi' — the Italian typical villages. As regards to demographics, the average yearly growth of inbound arrivals for holiday reasons in between 2010 and 2017 was significant for travellers aged 25-34 (+7,7%), 15-24 (+4,5%) and over 65 (+6,1%). Furthermore, solo travellers, groups with under 14 children and couples represented a consistent part of arrivals increase.

From a socio-cultural analysis of the demand, a typology of travel that deserves attention for the purpose of this project is 'tourism of cultural landscape' (Minghetti, 2019). The latter represents an itinerant holiday involving a mix of attractions and experiences (i.e. food and wine tastings, typical products, rural areas, culture and traditions, nature, slow tourism activities). This segment is characterised by a higher growth compared to cultural tourism, and it is defined as 'quality niche', constituting the 5% of inbound tourists and being oriented towards experiences strictly related to the identity of the territory. The majority of tourists within this segment are over 45 (42%) and their origin is principally from neighbour countries (Austria, France, Germany, Switzerland, but also UK). It is important to highlight two attributes of this typology of tourism: firstly, it contributes to deseasonalization — where

spring and autumn are the favourite seasons — and secondly, three-fourth of visitors choose the accommodation online.

This analysis is completed by the identikits of the ‘food and wine tourist’, the ‘naturalistic tourist’ and the ‘cultural tourist’ drawn by the National Tourist Research Institute (ISNART, 2021). The main characteristics of these tourists, which have affinities with each other, are the following.

- Food and wine tourist: belongs to *Gen Y*; lives abroad; stay from 7 to 13 nights; is interested in food in all its aspects; uses the web to guide his choices.
- Naturalistic tourist: belongs to *Gen Z*; lives in Italy; stay from 4 to 6 nights; appreciates the glimpses, the landscapes and the authenticity of the natural environments; has food and wine products and experiences at the top of its shopping list.
- Cultural tourist: belongs to a senior age group; lives in Europe; stay from 4 to 6 nights; loves Italian Style; seeks its own cultural enrichment.

4.1.4. Technological context

According to a study undertaken by We Are Social and Hootsuite (2021), unique mobile phone users represent 66,6% of global population, internet users are 59,5% and active social media users are 53,6%, where all the parameters count an increase year-on-year (January 2020 - January 2021): respectively +1,8%, +7,3%, +13,2%. Moreover, 96,6% of internet users aged 16 to 64 own a smartphone and spend an average of 3h 39min using the internet on mobile devices — where 91,5% of users access the internet via smartphone — and 2h 25mins using social media. The share of web traffic by device is dominated by mobile phone (55,7%) and followed by laptops & desktops (41,4%). Researching places, travel and holidays constitutes 38,7% among the primary reasons why global internet users aged 16 to 64 use the internet. E-commerce spend for travel, mobility & accommodation was \$593,6BN in 2020, with a -51% drop year-on-year, which occurrence is justified by the overall crisis in the travel sector.

Referring to Italy, internet users are 83,7% of the total population and active social media users are 67,9% (We Are Social and Hootsuite, 2021). Moreover, among Italian residents, internet users in 2020 principally refer to the age groups 6-24 (90,1% use internet and 73,9% access internet daily), 25-44 (91,2% and 80,6%), and 45-64 (81,5% and 63,6%). In 2019 the segments who were more active in using internet as regards services related to travels and accommodation (see Annex D) were people aged 20-24 (46,9%), 25-34 (48,1%), 35-44 (43,1%), and 45-54 (39,1%). Furthermore, users aged over 14 who purchased and booked holiday stays over the internet were the 29.4%, whereas spends for other travel arrangements were undertaken by 26.7% of users from the same age group — with similar shares among all age groups, except lower values for Italians aged over 75 (see Annex D). Within this scenario, booking via internet for holiday trips occurred with a share of 48% for

only accommodation, 27,7% for only transport, and 24,3% for accommodation and transport (see Annex D).

On the businesses side, the tourism and mobility sector is the one most directly concerned with regard to digitalisation (ISTAT, 2020): 80% of companies active in accommodation services and with over 3 employees are present on digital platforms. Most of these enterprises are present on international platforms that sell tourist services (e.g. Booking.com, Expedia, TripAdvisor) or short-term rental services (e.g. AirBnB). Nevertheless, there are also Italian digital platforms which, mainly on a territorial basis, carry out intermediation activities online between local accommodation facilities and potential customers. In the people mobility sector (including air transport) the international platforms specialised in tourist services and, in particular, in the sale of flights tickets (e.g. Volagratis, Skyscanner) are the most active.

4.1.5. Environmental context

According to the sustainable travel report conducted by Booking.com (2019), 55% of travellers globally affirm they are more motivated to make sustainable travel choices than they were the previous year. Furthermore, «72% of travelers believe that people need to act now and make sustainable travel choices to save the planet for future generations. While results were relatively consistent across ages, [...] 74% of 46-55 year olds believe most strongly that this is needed, followed by millennials at 71%». Sustainable stays are increasing in demand and 73% of interviewees affirmed they would have liked to try an eco-sustainable or green facility at least once during the subsequent year. Despite 72% of travellers are not aware about the existence of eco-labels for tourist facilities, 37% affirm that the presence of an eco-label established by international standards would push them to choose eco-friendly accommodation, and 62% confirm that staying in an eco-labeled accommodation facility would make them feel better. Moreover, 41% request that travel companies offer tips on how to travel more sustainably.

Moving the focus towards responsible tourism practice on the side of Italian tourists specifically, within the study part of the report 'Italians, sustainable tourism and ecotourism' (Fondazione UniVerde, 2018), the interviewees confirmed an overall awareness towards the emergency regarding the damages that tourism can cause to the environment: 51% consider it as a problem which affects Italy in general, 18% think that the issue regards only some areas, and 29% assert that tourism is always a resource and not a problem. The main aspects intended as harming the environment are concreting, pollution and over tourism. In addition, 'ethically correct' (41%) and 'natural' (28%) are the most frequent adjectives associated to sustainable tourism. Referring to sustainability as a commitment for economic development in a tourist area, interviewees affirm that it is a necessity (42%) or an opportunity of growth (46%). Furthermore, 58% believe they are making decisions that do not damage the environment while planning a trip, and 46% are willing to spend 10-20% more if

they were guaranteed that the environment was not harmed. Among the interviewees, 41% inquire about the attention that a tourist facility has for the environment, where the main source of information is internet (75%). The sites inquired are browsers (58%), tourism-specific sites (30%) and other sites, i.e. TripAdvisor, Booking (51%). Regarding restaurants, the fact that organic or 0 km products are offered is always a reason to prefer it to another (34% and 41%), whereas in the case the price is the same the commitment increases (47% and 52%).

With reference to tourism related enterprises, determining whether an enterprise is environmentally sustainable or not involves several factors brought by a considerable degree of articulation of the matter. One method that guarantees the environmental sustainability is represented by certifications (i.e. eco-labels), which topic is deepened in section 4.2.4.

4.1.6. Trends in tourism typologies

The impact of the pandemic from 2020 is shaping a new reality in the tourism sector, which is characterised by emerging trends in travel individuated by the Travel Trend Report (Euronews, 2020), which explicates how «the Covid-19 pandemic is giving the travel industry a chance to rebuild itself in a more ethical, considerate and regenerative way for the planet and its people.» Firstly, it is highlighted the rise of tourists' responsibility in making choices and taking actions while being on holiday and planning a trip: slower and more sustainable travel is the direction that is defining the sector. In particular, eco-friendly travels which allow to reconnect with nature and rural setting, and to immerse in destinations and authentic experiences within the local community will be preferred to crowded cities and represent an answer to the overwhelming and constant presence online. In fact, conscious travellers had the opportunity to appreciate the damage of 'over tourism' and quest a deeper connection with places, exploring cultures and education at the detriment of packed itineraries. Furthermore, it is noted a tendency to privilege domestic locations and to consider the journey as the ultimate destination, in the form of nomadic trips distinguished by a slower pace. Lastly, improved health and immunity are determining the tourists' choices.

4.2. Micro Environment

4.2.1. Stakeholders

Given the articulated nature of the tourism sector, the collaboration with the entities listed hereinafter is considered as necessary in order to adopt an integrated and holistic approach towards the market at a national level.

- Responsible tourism and culture related nonprofit associations:

- 'Touring Club Italiano (TCI)' is committed in promoting tourism, environmental protection, the dissemination of knowledge, and a conscious and responsible culture of travel (TCI, 2021);
 - 'SlowFood' is involved in increasing the value of food. Particularly, 'SlowFood Travel' refers to destination development projects that offer territories the opportunity to develop their potential as a quality gastronomic destination (Rumiz, 2021);
 - 'Fondo Ambiente Italiano (FAI)' aims at protecting and enhancing the Italian historical, artistic and landscape heritage (FAI, 2021);
 - 'Legambiente' is committed in the protection of the environment in all its forms, the quality of life, a more equitable, just and supportive society (Legambiente, 2021);
 - 'Associazione Italiana Turismo Responsabile (AITR)' is promoting the culture and practice of responsible tourism travel (AITR, 2021);
 - 'Alleanza Mobilità Dolce (AMODO)' is a network of associations united to promote slow mobility and the regeneration of Italian territories (AMODO, 2021).
- Governance bodies: Regions; Ministry of Tourism and Ministry of Culture; Local administrations (i.e. municipalities); DMOs.
 - Cultural institutions (i.e. Universities);
 - Natural parks;
 - Trade associations and corporations which represent enterprises from the tourism sector (i.e. ISNART, Confcommercio, Assoturismo).

4.2.2. Competitors

As competitors are intended those businesses which provide a similar service, the latter consisting in a digital platform that creates a network among tourists and enterprises (where the main categories considered for the present project are accommodation facilities, restaurants, businesses in the agricultural sector which propose visits, local food and wine shops, local handicraft shops) the activity thereof is related to sustainable and responsible tourism practice in Italy.

- Direct competition:
 - Ecobnb presents an assortment of sustainable accommodation facilities and facilitates the connection between tourists and enterprises in Italy (Ecobnb, 2021);
 - Becountry connects visitors and 0 km farms in Italy for living experiences with producers at the local agricultural enterprise (Becountry, 2021).
- Indirect competition: OTAs, whose activity consists of packing and distributing services in the tourism sector. Although these operators facilitate the booking and purchase process for enterprises and tourists, the intermediation they carry out attempts to

avoid the creation of a direct connection. Some examples of international OTAs are OpenTable, Quandoo, TheFork, TripAdvisor, Booking.com, and Airbnb. Nevertheless, these platforms do not select enterprises adopting a sustainable and responsible approach. Exceptions within the platforms, but regarding specific functionalities, are represented by TheFork, which allows to filter restaurants serving 0 km and organic food, and Airbnb, where the guest can contact the host before checking in at the accommodation via a direct chat.

4.2.3. Market segmentation

Taking into account the context of sustainable and responsible tourism and the defined trends, which indicate the psychography and behaviour of tourists, the segmentation involves two additional parameters: geographical origin and demographic data.

As regards the geographical origin, the identified groups — on the basis of the overnight stays data by country of origin (see section 4.1.1) — are the following:

- International tourists: the major markets taken into consideration are represented by Germany, the US, France, the UK, Netherlands, and Austria.
- Domestic tourists: Italian residents.

With regard to demographic data, the respective psychological traits and the attitudes arisen in the context of the pandemic — as identified by Deiuri (2021) — are highlighted. The segmentation individuates the following groups:

- *Mature generation* (born between 1920 and 1945): they are interested in rural and natural tourism; they require tailor made and all-inclusive experiences; they seek detail and safety; they prefer professionalism in hotels; they use their own vehicles or pick up services.
- *Baby boomers* (born between 1946 and 1964): their traits are similar to those of the mature generation, where the main element of discontinuity is found in the choice of accommodation, for which the all-inclusive attribute is the favorite determinant .
- *Gen X* (born between 1965 and 1978): they are interested in family tourism; they require self-packaging experiences; they seek security; they prefer apartments with their own kitchens and own vehicles as means of transport.
- *Gen Y - Millennials* (born between 1979 and 1995): they are oriented towards a form of sophisticated tourism, whose offer can be proposed in the form of self-packaging or not; in addition to security, they seek simplicity and diversity; they are flexible in the choice of accommodation (hotels, B&B, apartments); they use own and non-own means.

- *Gen Z* (born between 1996 and 2012): they practice forms of sustainable tourism; they opt for self-packaging; they seek detail and safety; they choose accommodation based on the best price; they use their own and non-own means.

4.2.4. Certifications for sustainable and responsible tourism

Certifications, besides contributing to define a methodology in adopting sustainable and responsible approaches in the management of enterprises, constitute a tool of competitiveness thanks to their role in communicating and sharing the environmental and social commitment.

The principal certifications which interest the tourism sector in Italy are listed hereinafter.

- 'ISO 21401' is an international quality label that «specifies the environmental, social and economic requirements for implementing a sustainability management system in tourist accommodation» (ISO, 2018);
- 'EU Ecolabel' is a European label of environmental excellence which considers the whole life cycle of all consumer goods (except food, beverages and medicines) and services. Among the categories which can require the EU Ecolabel, tourist accommodation and campsite services are included (EC, 2021a);
- 'Legambiente Turismo' is an Italian eco-label that distinguishes accommodation and tourist facilities which adopt measures to reduce the impact of their activities on the environment and to promote the area in which they are located (Legambiente Turismo, 2021).

Whether the certifications mentioned above principally refer to accommodation and tourist facilities, diverse criteria may be considered as guarantee for other typologies of enterprises. Regarding restaurants and food and drink related enterprises in general, the typical or ethically sourced productions are identified by the following denominations.

- 'Protected geographical indications' (PGI), 'protected designation of origins' (PDO), and 'geographical indication of spirit drinks and aromatised wines' (GI) which are EU geographical indication schemes that protect specific know how, authenticity and agro-environmental conditions (EC, 2021b);
- 'Slow Food Presidia' «sustain quality production at risk of extinction, protect unique regions and ecosystems, recover traditional processing methods, safeguard native breeds and local plant varieties» (Slow Food Foundation, 2021);
- Organic food certifications, i.e. EU organic logo (EC, 2021c);
- Fairtrade mark (Fairtrade, 2021);
- Made in Italy marks.

5. Internal Analysis

The Business Model Canvas is the tool adopted for carrying out the internal analysis. The choice of this model is explained by the fact that the business presented in this work is an innovative proposal, which feature reflects the purposes of the above mentioned tool — an effective method for schematising strengths and weaknesses and structuring the components of an emerging business. The Business Model Canvas was developed by Alexander Osterwalder (2005) and it is composed by nine 'building blocks', which represent the nine necessary components to transform the customer's problems in a profitable enterprise.

For the purpose of the analysis, it is needed to specify the structural characteristics of the business, which is a digital startup with the form of a Software as a Service (SaaS) and operates as a not-for profit organisation.

Notwithstanding the elements individuated for the business proposal can be revised during the start up phase, the Business Model Canvas presented hereinafter is the starting point for defining the business.

5.1. Business Model Canvas

Value Propositions

- The value we deliver to the customer is about planning and experiencing sustainable holidays through facilitating the adoption of a responsible approach which involves building a direct relation with tourism related enterprises based in Italy.
- The customer's problems we are helping to solve are the following: difficulty in researching enterprises which deliver tourism related services while adopting sustainable approaches; low clarity in presenting sustainable approaches in the tourism sector; limits in contacting and booking tourism related services through a direct relation with enterprises.
- The service we are offering to the Customer Segments consists of a platform that filters enterprises which deliver tourism related services while adopting sustainable approaches and give the tourist the opportunity to acquire the necessary information for contacting enterprises and booking services.
- The customer needs we are satisfying are the following: find enterprises which deliver tourism related services while adopting sustainable approaches in a single platform; easily recognise services which adopt sustainable approaches; create a direct contact with enterprises without passing through multinational companies.

→ *Characteristics of the service*: design, risk reduction, usability.

Customer Segments

- The most important customers, for whom value is created, are found in tourists who adopt a responsible approach in planning and experiencing their holidays, with particular reference to the tourism of cultural landscape niche market.
- The market is diversified by country of origin of tourists (domestic and international) travelling to Italy and generations' psychological traits and attitudes (see section 4.2.3.).

Channels

Services

- The services are delivered by means of the owned digital application.

Communication

- Customer segments want to be reached through informal channels, with the purpose of fuelling community attachment and through trustable and authoritative channels (i.e. owned platform).
- The integration among channels occur by sharing complementary contents — whose form is adapted to the channel's typology and structure.
- Social networks, blogs, newsletter and the owned platform are the channels that work best and the most cost-efficient.
- The integration of channels with customer routines occurs through constantly and consistently sharing valuable contents while analysing awareness and equity in relationships.

Customer Relationships

- Customer segments expect us to establish and maintain relationships which allow co-creation and the structuring of a community whose members share similar values. Co-creation and community are founding aspects of the business idea.
- Personal assistance is crucial during the process of research undertaken by the customer.
- Establishing and maintaining relationships are not economically costly activities when occurring through social networks and the owned platform, although they require dedicated training for personnel involved in these care-requiring activities.

Revenue Streams

- Freemium model: customers are willing to pay for receiving dedicated support and discounts and benefits (premium version) in addition to the basic functionalities (free version). Contributing to sustainable tourism development is one of the main motives to pay.

- Customers are currently paying high fees to multinational booking companies. Customer segments would prefer to pay a membership subscription fee in order to sustain our values-driven business.
- Membership subscription, fundraising, crowdfunding, sponsors and investors, financial contributions from public bodies are the main sources of income.

Key Resources

The Key Resources required by our Value Propositions are the following:

- Physical: headquarter; computers and servers;
- Digital: owned platform for distribution; channels for customer relationships.
- Intellectual: partnerships; customers database; patents; labels and certifications.
- Human: mobile apps developers; qualified customer assistance personnel; digital marketing experts.
- Financial: fundraising, memberships.

Key Activities

The Key Activities required by our Value Propositions — and referring to the platform/network — are the following:

- Owned platform's maintenance and improvement;
- Customer Relationship Management (CRM);
- Selection of enterprises respecting sustainability related parameters;
- Fundraising and yield management.

Cost Structure

The most important costs inherent in our business model are the following:

- Fixed costs: computers and servers; salaries; rent; utilities.
- Variable costs: platform development, maintenance and improvement.
- Reductions due to economies of scale at increasing membership subscriptions.
- Reductions due to economies of scope not foreseen for the minimum viable product at the early startup phase.

Key Partners

- Responsible tourism and culture related nonprofit associations (Touring Club Italiano, SlowFood, Fondo Ambiente Italiano, Legambiente, Associazione Italiana Turismo

Responsabile, Alleanza Mobilità Dolce); governance bodies; cultural institutions; natural parks; trade associations and corporations (see section 4.2.1.).

- The Key Resources we acquire from partners are labels and certifications; funds.
- The Key Activity performed by partners is the selection of enterprises respecting sustainability related parameters.

→ *Motivations for partnership*: reduction of risk and uncertainty; acquisition of resources and activities listed above.

6. Competitive Analysis: SWOT

The competitive analysis consists of confronting internal factors, i.e. strengths and weaknesses, with external factors, i.e. opportunities and threats. The SWOT matrix is the model adopted to synthesise these aspects which derive from the market and internal analyses presented in the previous sections (see fig. 6.1 — the second part is at the following page).

STRENGTHS	WEAKNESSES
• Owned platform through which the service is provided. • Team and qualified personnel. • Owned platform where to share information. • Low barriers and costs to create an online community. • Control of channels internal to the organisation. • Community attachment. • Personal assistance. • Support of incubator/accelerator. • Key partners. • Design, risk reduction, usability of the service. • Accountability, trustworthiness and honesty values connected to the not-for-profit organisation structure. • Freemium model: premium version for the customers who want to support the business and receive additional benefits.	• Dependence on funding for the initial phase. • Small-scale organisation if compared to multinational booking companies in the sector. • Entrance in the market. • Brand awareness, customers acquisition for the premium version. • Initial investments (costs for physical resources).

OPPORTUNITIES	THREATS
• Overall Travel & Tourism competitiveness of Italy (ranked 8th globally), particularly in the areas of infrastructure and natural and cultural resources. • Economic relevance of tourism & travel to Italy's GDP. • Equal overnight stays share by domestic (49%) and international (51%) tourists contributes to resilience. • High average spending in cultural landscape tourism (EUR 100 per overnight stay). • Forecast of +3% total increase in visitors after the crisis (2023 compared to 2019). • Central government support to Regions in national strategies and in promoting Italy abroad. • Sustainability, innovation, digitalisation and accessibility are central principle of the national Strategic Plan for Tourism (PST 2017-2022). • Centrality of digital and ecological transitions in the National Recovery and Resilience Plan — within the context of the NextGenerationEU. • Second-visit inbound tourists. • Growth of the niche 'tourism of cultural landscape'. • Researching places, travel and holidays is a primary reason for using the internet. • Internet is a preferred channel for booking holiday trips. • Travellers are motivated to make sustainable travel choices. • Travellers willingness to spend more for guaranteed eco-friendly holidays. • Internet as main source of information to inquire about the attention that a tourist facility has for the environment. • Post-pandemic trends. • Responsible tourism and culture related nonprofit association. • Certifications for sustainable and responsible tourism. • Limited competition for the service provided with specific focus on sustainable and responsible tourism.	• Penalised Travel & Tourism competitiveness of Italy for the areas of policy and enabling environment and conditions. • 'Second waves' of the virus, the return of restrictions and uncertainty over long-haul travel. • Fragmentation of tourism governance in Italy (State-Regions competences). • Italian tourism related enterprises are already present on international digital platforms. • Direct and indirect competitors. • Tourists low awareness about the existence of eco-labels for tourist facilities. • Low diffusion of certifications for sustainable and responsible tourism. • Big companies difficult to compete with (OTAs).

Fig. 6.1. SWOT Analysis. (Author's elaboration)

7. Strategic Plan's Objectives

Two typologies of objectives are individuated for the present strategic plan: short-term and long-term objectives.

Short-term objectives refer to the first phase of startup development, from the idea of business until the implementation of the Product Market Fit (PMF). They are presented below.

- Deploy a minimum viable product (MVP) in the form of a digital application to test key features with national demand.
- From MVP to Product-User Fit — product that answers customers' needs — and Product Market Fit — product that satisfies a specific market demand (initially constituted by Early Adopters) and allows to transform potential customers in existing customers.
- First Investment Round — seed round.
- From start up to scale up: the business tested and iterated in customer discovery and validation reaches a repeatable, scalable business model.
- Accomplish the incubator/accelerator phase.

Long-term objectives, which are listed hereinafter, draw the direction of the business from the beginning of scale up phase for the subsequent 3 years of activity.

- Product validation: traction reaches the momentum — the growth of users becomes exponential.
- Reach a solid basis of loyal customers through the membership subscription.
- Customer creation: reach demand at both national and international level.
- Consolidate the finances and obtain new capitals necessary to growth.

8. Development Strategy

8.1. Mission, Vision, Values

Mission, vision and values define the attitude and the approach in activities and direct choices within the business; therefore, they are determinant components for the strategy. With reference to the present project, these specific concepts are hereinafter described.

- The mission of the business is to empower travellers who visit Italy sustainably.
- The vision is to be the organisation that inspires and fulfils the need of authentic and responsible discovery.
- Values:
 - Sustainability and responsibility are founding values, indeed the business aims at contributing to develop a sustainable approach towards tourism practices.
 - Trustworthiness and honesty are fundamental aspects for the not-for-profit organisation which operates with the purpose of public benefit.
 - Innovation is at the core of the startup identity, which develops with the intention of bringing a positive change to the sector.
 - Clarity is central in communicating within the business and in the relations with customers.
 - The concepts of community and sharing define the collaborative values that characterise the idea of business.
 - Curiosity is the variable that determines a creative approach in developing the business, and, simultaneously, it represents the need of discovery at the basis of each trip.

8.2. Targeting

The target is constituted by the market segments to whom the business is offering its service as an answer to their needs. The centrality of customers is paramount and understanding them and their needs is the first step to develop a fruitful business.

The market segmentation elaborated on the basis of the market analysis (see section 4.2.3.) provides the differentiation of potential customer segments from which are individuated the target groups for the present strategic plan. Whether the domain is represented by responsible tourists, with regard to the geographical origin parameter, both international and domestic tourists are selected, while referring to demographic data, *Gen X* and *Gen Y* segments are chosen as principal customers to whom direct marketing operations.

8.3. Unique value proposition

The unique value proposition, namely the elements that make the business unique for its customers and different from competitors is one of the most important factors for users conversion. In fact, within the development strategy, the unique value proposition highlights the business' features that create a competitive advantage.

As presented in the Business Model Canvas (see section 5.1.), *Adagio* answers to the responsible travellers' need to plan and experience their trips while adopting sustainable approaches. The service offered is a digital application that provides clear information about tourism related enterprises and facilitates the creation of a direct contact and a network with them. The main features that distinguish *Adagio* from the competition are the focus on enterprises which adopt sustainable approaches and the stimulation of a travellers community development, while embracing trustworthiness and honesty values intrinsic to a not-for-profit organisation.

8.4. Strategy of *Adagio*

The service offered answers to the needs of a specific niche — individuated by the targeting (see section 8.2.) — and it differs from the competition for the features indicated by the unique value proposition. Starting from these strategic decisions derived from the preceding analysis, it is assessed as effective to adopt a focused differentiation strategy (Porter, 1980). The latter consists on targeting a relatively narrow segment of potential customers by proposing an offer that fulfils the demands of the niche.

In order to acquire this target group, the strategy will follow a marketing strategy based on 'segment marking' (Sordi, 2013), which is based on leveraging on a variable at the margins of the market category. The business is not aiming at becoming a leader for the whole category, rather for the niche characterised by a specific need. Within the category, 'responsibility' is the variable that the business is marking, thus the marketing mix is tailored to the specialised niche market.

8.5. Critical success factors

Critical success factors (CSFs) are the aspects of the business which are necessary to accomplish its mission and deliver value to customers, while distinguishing itself from competitors. The CSFs individuated for the business are as follows:

- Team: within the startup the team is a determinant element for its success. Founders' skills and complementarity of members are seen from investors as a component that may lower the risk of supporting the business idea.
- Not-for-profit: the fact that the business is values-driven and profit is not contemplated, rather trustworthiness and honesty direct the organisation's decisions, favours an

increased cooperation with partners and a major support from customers who seek a responsible approach in tourism practices.

- Networking: creating a collaborative platform which facilitates direct communication among users brings added value to the business, where the community factor boosts the proliferation of conscious participation.
- Partners: involving the key partners individuated in the Internal Analysis is crucial in order to reduce the perceived risk and integrate the work of the different actors operating with the purpose of sustainably developing tourism in Italy.

9. Implementation

The implementation plan here presented refers to the creation of a new business, namely the launch of a startup. Therefore, the launch of *Adagio* will follow the subsequent startup phases: firstly, from the idea of business is developed a minimum viable product (MVP) in line with the value proposition; secondly, according to customers behaviours and feedbacks the service is improved in the Product User Fit; thirdly, by listening to the market, the Product Market Fit (PMF) is carried out, while early adopters are identified (Blank & Dorf, 2012; Ries, 2011). The phases listed above are constantly and consistently analysed through metrics — the PMF is an example of marketing metrics, whilst traction is a selling metric — with the purpose of monitoring the answers of the market and the effectiveness of the ongoing work.

Throughout all the aforementioned phases investors are sought and the startup finds support in an accelerator. Consequently to the completion of the validation phases, the business reaches a repeatable, scalable business model and the traction metric indicates when the service is purchased and/or used. At this stage, when the startup is progressing the scale up phase and the business is ready to grow, the strategic plan and the relative implementation operations are reviewed and adapted according to the level of advancement.

9.1. Marketing Mix

The role of marketing consists in providing solutions to the customer's needs with a product or service, thus creating an advantage to the business. Consequently, the customer is at the center of marketing operations, which are oriented to satisfy the demand. With this purpose, the marketing mix defines the specifics of four principal variables (4 Ps): product, price, promotion, place.

9.1.1. Product

Adagio's product/service is represented by the mobile application. The core features that underpin the initial idea of business and will be adapted during the startup development phases are listed hereinafter.

- Networking at two levels: among tourists and in between tourists and actors.
- Community character of the network among tourists.
- Certificate and communicate clearly in the app the sustainability standards of enterprises and destinations. The guarantee is provided in collaboration with Italian organisations and associations involved in the sector.
- Filter enterprises which respect criteria of authenticity, localness, resident community support. The typologies of enterprises which operate in the tourism sector are intended in a broad sense, including all those that can contribute to develop an experience at

the destination (e.g. accommodation facilities, restaurants, bars, wineries, farms, cultural organisations).

- Evaluate the responsibility involvement of visitors.
- Impart information about enterprises identity and related destinations' culture by creating a learning experience based on edutainment, with the purpose of raising awareness towards the visited place.
- User Experience, User Interface, Location-based services, User-generated contents, e-WOM and digital storytelling are all central concepts considered for the digital application development.
- In-app research through maps and visual contents (i.e. images, videos). The research of actors is based on the reason why the tourist is travelling — minor weight is given to the 'where' factor, although the area of reference is limited to Italy.
- Users reviews are focused on the sustainability aspects of enterprises, in addition to the elements related to the general quality of service.
- Users have the opportunity to describe the place where they live, thus collaborating to share knowledge about the destination with a local perspective.
- Chat functionality in order to communicate to the network's members.
- Languages at the moment of releasing the application: Italian and English — more will be added during the scale up phase.

9.1.2. Price

Adagio is proposed by following both a freemium model and a community model. The former is constituted by a simple and free version and a more articulated proposal under subscription (see fig. 9.1.).

- Free version: the customer can satisfy all the needs related to research and holiday planning. The complete list of enterprises is shown to the user who signs up for free and can contact the companies in order to organise the trip.
- Member version: in addition to the features of the free version, the user receives discounts (through dedicated promo codes) and/or additional benefits at the destination. While subscribing as a member, the user supports the organisation's activity and the improvement of the platform — the attention on the fact that the organisation is a not-for-profit is determinant in sensitising the customers to support the service.

The community model is based on fundraising operations by requesting donations from users and the enterprises shown in the application.

Features	Free version	Member version
Platform Accessibility	Total access	Total access
Assistance	FAQ	Dedicated support
Functionalities	Research, contact and planning	Research, contact and planning
Extras	-	Discounts and benefits

Fig. 9.1. Freemium model for *Adagio*. (Author's elaboration)

9.1.3. Promotion

Promotion-related operations are carried out principally through online channels, whereas the use of offline channels is integrated to the former. Promotional activities follow the progress of the startup development, therefore in a first phase they will be focused on communicating the idea of business and fundraising. Consequently, once the MVP will be developed, they will aim at involving early adopters in the validation stage. At the moment the business model will be consolidated and the product validated, the operations will target the niche segments more intensively and broadly. In parallel, online channels will be used to provide dedicated support to users and stimulate fundraising activities.

Channels and activities are organised online and offline as presented in the fig. 9.2.

	Channels	Activities
Online	Owned website	Tools: - Search Engine Optimisation (SEO); - AdWords. Contents: - Blog, articles.
	Social Networks <i>Instagram, Facebook</i>	Tools: - Sponsored posts. Contents: - Visual contents, i.e. video, images; - IG and FB Stories, IGTV; - Contents created in collaboration with Influencers/Ambassadors.
	Newsletter	Email Marketing
Offline	Flyers, editorials, leaflets	- Promotion at destinations (tourist office, info point)

	Channels	Activities
	Tourism related fairs	Selected fairs in Italy and Europe: - BIT Borsa Internazionale del Turismo (Milan, Italy); - TTG Travel Experience (Rimini, Italy); - ITB Berlin (Germany).

Fig. 9.2. Promotional operations for *Adagio*. (Author's elaboration)

9.1.4. Place

Adagio application will be developed for both Android and iOS operative systems, therefore it will be possible for the user to download it from both Google Play and App Store.

In addition to the internal direct sales team and the promotional operations mentioned in the previous section, the three main distribution channels that will be used to reach the target are the following:

- Collaboration with local DMOs and Regions to reach the tourists who are already at the destination.
- Collaboration with the Italian Government Tourist Board (ENIT), international partners (agencies operating for outbound tourism to Italy) and national partners (working as inbound tourism agencies) in order to reach foreign tourists.
- Ambassadors: selected influencers respecting *Adagio*'s values and members of the community in order to generate WoM and e-WoM and reach a broader audience within the niche.

9.2. Resources

9.2.1. Organisational resources

At the startup phase the business functional units are grouped in four principal areas: CEO, IT development, relations with partners and marketing. During an advanced phase of development (i.e. scale up) the departments acquire a higher degree of differentiation with more structural ladders. At this stage, the organisation chart, which represents the formal structure of the business, is as illustrated in fig. 9.3.

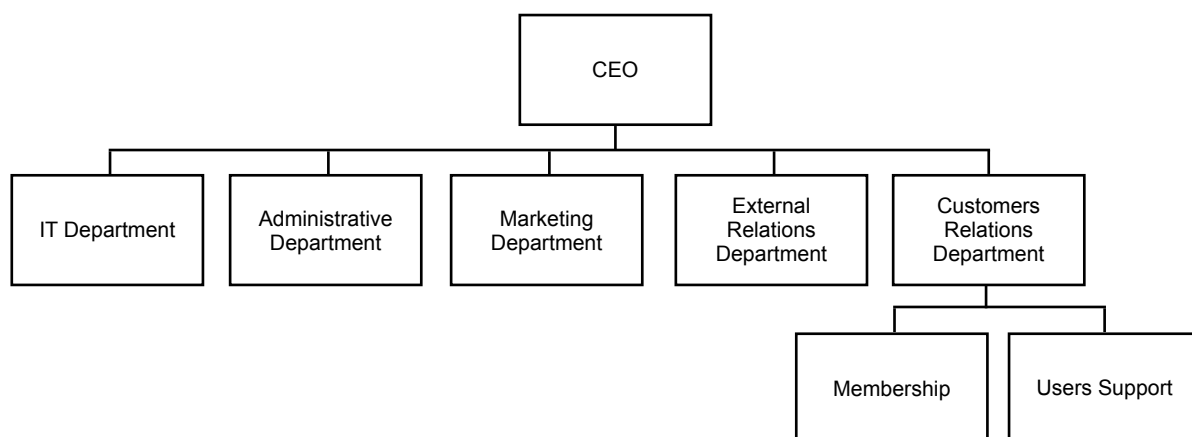


Fig. 9.3. *Adagio's* company organisation chart. (Author's elaboration)

The roles of each functional unit are described hereinafter.

- The CEO, given the small dimension of the business, is responsible of all the decisions taken. In *Adagio*, the CEO corresponds to the founder.
- The IT Department is involved in research, innovation and development of the application software.
- The Administrative Department constitutes the link in between the different departments of the organisation and ensures a well ordered flow of information among them.
- The Marketing Department carries out the operations regarding marketing analysis, strategy and implementation.
- The External Relations Department is responsible of the relations with partners and the external distribution channels.
- The Customers Relations Department is divided in two branches: Membership and Users Support. The former is involved in activities referred to *Adagio's* members and the latter offers assistance to all the customers.

9.2.2. Human Resources

In particular at the startup phase, the team is a fundamental aspect of the business. The initial *Adagio's* startup will be formed by the founder and CEO (responsible of relations with partners), the IT development expert and the marketing expert. Since professionalism and harmony among team members determine the success of the startup, the founder will carefully select the two team-mates.

Once the scale up phase is reached, new 'top' resources will have to be hired. An experienced manager will be decisive in the expansion process that the organisation will undergo. Moreover, specific resources will be required in order to foster the departments

illustrated in *Adagio's* company organisation chart. The selection of human resources will consistently occur taking into consideration the organisation's values.

9.2.3. Material resources

The principal material resources that are necessary to the business and have to be acquired in order to operate are represented by the head office (and furnitures) and hardwares (e.g. servers, computers). Because the business work will be carried out remotely for the most part, the head office will be structured as a co-working area. In this space the team members at a first stage, and the different departments' professionals in a second moment, can meet, share ideas and collaborate to *Adagio's* development.

9.2.4. Financial resources

At the startup phase, the financial resources are represented by investors who believe in the idea. The groups individuated for the financing cycle in the pre-seed and seed phases — which sustain research, development and personnel costs — are the following:

- Family, friends & fous: own savings and support from close people who are willing to invest in a high risk business.
- Regional calls (financed by the EU) supporting innovative startups.
- Donation based crowdfunding platforms. The operation is supported by a marketing campaign.

The choice of integrating different financial resources will contribute to increase the probabilities of gathering the necessary capitals to develop the startup.

During the early and later stages of the financing cycle — which phases occur at the moment the startup is defining the MVP and enters the market — the principal investors are as reported hereinafter:

- Business angels: individuals who provide capital for the development of the startup at their own risk. They will be selected among entrepreneurs from the tourism sector.
- Smart&Start incentives: funds from Invitalia (the National Agency for Inward Investment and Economic Development) directed to innovative startups.

Given the not-for-profit identity of *Adagio*, venture capitalists, who are usually involved in the financing cycle of a startup through equity investments, are not comprised.

In a second stage, when the business is scaling up and proposes a structured service in the market, financial resources will be gathered with the following modalities:

- Memberships: within the freemium model, the application's Member Version is under payment. The customer receives benefits in exchange of the economical support.

- Donations: *Adagio's* community factor is a leverage for gathering funds without economic reward for donors. This financing modality is possible because the organisation is operating for a public benefit and its character is purely social.

9.3. Technology

The mobile application will be developed as a native app, therefore a first version will be written for Android and a second one for iOS. The decision of developing a native app is motivated by the fact that this typology of platforms are particularly efficient in performance, consistency and user experience. The software will be developed in order to accomplish the features presented in the description of the product (see section 9.1.1.), where location-based services and networking functionalities are core aspects of the application. Moreover, UX and UI will be paramount in order to offer a service that guarantees the best usability to visitors.

9.4. Organisation's Manifesto

Adagio's values-driven character will be explicated in the Organisation's Manifesto. The latter document aims to define the ethical direction of the business activities. In fact, it is paramount that all the team members and personnel share the organisation's values (see section 8.1.) in order to preserve the public benefit purpose that is intrinsic to *Adagio's* identity. The Organisation's Manifesto is included in the implementation section of the strategic plan because of the strict dependence of operations on ethics.

9.5. Implementation plan

The implementation plan defines the estimated time to carry out the activities necessary to develop the startup during the first 6 months stage. According to the tasks accomplished during this period, further plans will be created as an integration to the one presented here. The Gantt chart is the model adopted as a roadmap to organise the tasks (see fig. 9.4.). The advancement of each task is shown in the respective row, which represents the timeline divided in months.

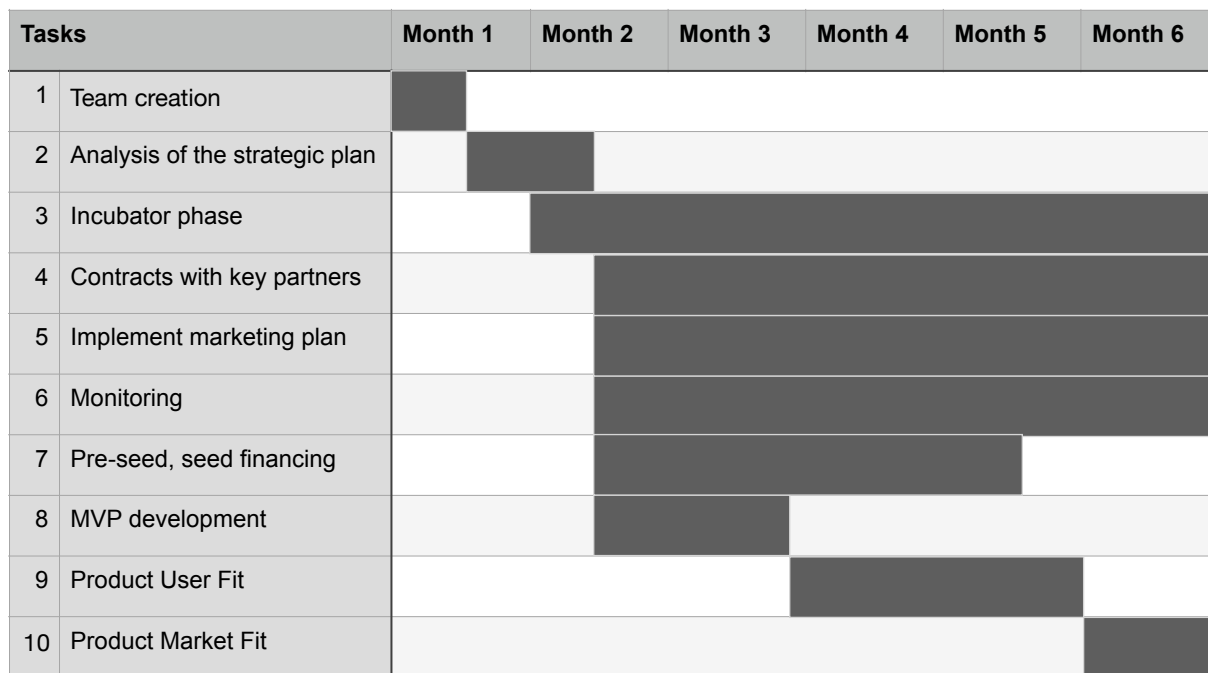


Fig. 9.4. Gantt chart for *Adagio*. (Author's elaboration)

10. Requirements for Implementation

10.1. Legal requirements for incorporation

With the purpose of incorporating *Adagio* as a business, in accordance to the characteristics described in the previous sections, three main legislative contexts defined by the Italian Law are considered: the 'innovative startup', the 'innovative startup' with a social mission, the Social Enterprise.

The Legislative Decree 179/2012 introduces 'innovative startups' as a new type of company that benefits from favourable corporate, tax and employment regulations. A business, in order to be considered as 'innovative startup' must respect the following requirements:

- to be new or have been built for less than 5 years;
- to have the head office in Italy, or in another member country of the European Union or in states adhering to the agreement on the European economic area, as long as a production site or a branch is located in Italy;
- to have an annual turnover of less than 5 million euros;
- to do not and have not distributed profits;
- to have as exclusive or prevalent social object the development, production and marketing of innovative products or services with high technological value;
- to be not created by mergers, company demergers or following the sale of a company or company branch.

The innovative content of the company is identified with the possession of at least one of the following three criteria:

- at least 15% of the higher value between turnover and annual costs is attributable to research and development activities;
- the total workforce is composed of at least 1/3 of PhD students, research doctors or researchers, or at least 2/3 of partners or collaborators in any capacity with a master's degree (highly qualified personnel);
- the company is the owner, custodian or licensee of a registered patent (industrial property) or owner of an original registered computer program.

Furthermore, with regard to the Legislative Decree 179/2012, a specific category is identified: the 'innovative startup' with a social mission. The latter refers to a company that besides respecting the requirements aforementioned, it also operates in those sectors which are considered of particular social utility. The latter sectors, listed in the Legislative Decree 155/2006, include 'enhancement of cultural heritage' and 'social tourism'. The startup and

not-for-profit identity of *Adagio* find within this category the most representative form for the incorporation of the business.

Moreover, startups with a social mission can benefit from specific regulations referring to third sector entities, which are explicated in the Legislative Decree 112/2017 (Third sector code). Within the legislative context aforementioned, the Social Enterprise is a typology of entity of a commercial nature that is considered as part of the third sector. The Social Enterprise is characterised by a legal status that allows to generate profit, with the condition that the latter must be reinvested in the organisation. Among the activities that can be carried out by a Social Enterprise, those listed hereinafter are of particular interest for *Adagio*:

- organisation and management of tourist activities of social and cultural interest;
- organisation and management of cultural, artistic and leisure activities of social interest, including activities of promotion and dissemination of culture.

The Social Enterprise must be constituted by public deed. Moreover, the deeds of incorporation must clarify the social character of the company by defining the absence of a corporate purpose and the absence of profit-making purposes. Companies constituted by a single shareholder, natural person, cannot acquire the qualification of Social Enterprise. Third sector entities that carry out their activities exclusively or mainly in the form of a commercial enterprise are subject to the obligation of registration in the register of companies — in addition to the single national register of the third sector.

10.2. Patents

In order to secure the invention and prevent its exploitation it is important to register the patent. The process to have the idea accepted may require some time, and after the approval, 18 months are required for its publication in the database. Therefore, the documents will be presented at the early stage of the startup development. *Adagio's* innovative idea will be registered in both the database of Italian patents and the database of European patents.

10.3. Incubator and Accelerator

Adagio, as most of the startups, will need external support in order to succeed in the market. Therefore, an incubator — at the stage when the business is still an idea — and an accelerator — at the moment the startup has developed the product — are the entities the business will address to.

The role of the incubator is that of following the team during the first phase of the startup to obtain the idea validation. This entity provides mentoring, consultancy, networking, administrative and organisational services, training, support in strengthening the team, support in fundraising, approach to the market thanks to the collaboration with big

companies. Within the Italian context, Digital Magics is one of the most affirmed incubators and *Adagio* will attempt to work with them after the selection process.

Accelerators, on the other side, offer support at an advanced phase of the startup, when the service is already existing. Hence, their activities consist in customers and investors seek, accounting and legal support, research, development. *Adagio* will address to H-FARM, which is the leading accelerator in Italy.

In addition, Startup Turismo is an Italian association that provides support to startups specifically operating in the tourism sector. Even if they are neither an incubator nor an accelerator, *Adagio* will have a confrontation about the idea of business with them because of their valuable expertise in the sector.

Conclusion

The Strategic Plan presented in this thesis defined the direction that *Adagio* — as an innovative proposal — will follow from the early stage of the idea of business towards the process of the digital startup development, with the long-term objective of structuring an affirmed business in the form of a not-for-profit organisation.

The key goals defined at the beginning of the present work were achieved by the results listed hereinafter.

- I. The research carried out in the literature review highlighted the positive implications of digital networking, the latter constituting a representative means in the context of digital innovations in order to reshape the tourism sector through a more sustainable and responsible approach. The idea of business is supported by the literature review and, in particular, the following key points, combined together, confirm its practicability: the structure as digital platform (i.e. mobile application), the networking functionality, the orientation towards sustainability and responsibility values and the not-for-profit identity.
- II. The Market Analysis individuated the necessary quantitative and qualitative characteristics of both the macro and micro environments for positioning *Adagio* business. The tourism sector in Italy is one of the most developed worldwide; the centrality of European markets contributes to its resilience; the PNRR favours tourism, sustainability and digitalisation; tourists seek authentic experiences and are willing to make their part in behaving responsibly while travelling; the use of mobile devices is currently central for all the stages of the trip; numerous stakeholders share values similar to *Adagio*'s and can support the innovative proposal; the business can differentiate itself from the competition; certifications are a useful tool for guaranteeing the respect of sustainability. In addition to the above mentioned favourable key findings, the innovative proposal is in line with the post-pandemic trends and, thanks to the development of the MVP and the attentive use of metrics, its concept will be refined according to the targeted segments' needs.
- III. The Business Model Canvas has been a determinant tool for analysing the characteristics of *Adagio*'s idea of business and simultaneously defining the constituent aspects of the strategy. The SWOT analysis summarised the latter aspects and compared them with the market's features with the purpose of highlighting the competitive context where *Adagio* will be positioned. Among the aspects that determine the competitive advantage of *Adagio*, resources (i.e. the team), customer relationships (i.e. co-creation and community) and partners (i.e. responsible tourism and culture related nonprofit associations) play a crucial role in the success of the startup.

- IV. The Development Strategy describes the strategic decisions and takes into consideration the digital startup identity of *Adagio*. The different phases individuated delineate the actions for achieving short-term and long-term objectives. The unique value proposition positions the business in the market for its attributes and differentiates it from the competitors, thus directing all the actions towards the niche market defined in the targeting. Furthermore, the actualisation of the focused differentiation strategy and the marketing strategy based on 'segment marking' is viable thanks to the critical success factors, which are necessary to accomplish the business' mission and deliver value to customers.
- V. The process of implementation has been presented taking into considerations all the aspects that will be necessary to develop *Adagio* as a startup, from the idea of business till the achievement of the scale up phase. The actualisation of the marketing mix, the efficient use of resources, the technological development and the Organisation's Manifesto are temporally organised; the consistent monitoring of all the operations is determinant for the success of the startup. Moreover, the 'innovative startup' with a social mission represents the appropriate legal category to develop *Adagio* business and the external support from an incubator or an accelerator can boost the startup's potential.

The viability of the Strategic Plan for the development of *Adagio* from the idea to the business is supported by the most recent advancements in the academic literature and the post-pandemic market trends. The success of *Adagio*, and the reason why investors should invest in the innovative proposal since its first stages, is defined by the unique value proposition, which clearly expresses the focus on sustainability and responsibility — central assets for reshaping the tourism sector in an historical period that requires a drastic shift. The not-for-profit organisation character is an added value for this purpose.

The direction that *Adagio* will take in the future is that of acquiring the position of central player in the tourism sector. The business has an actual potential to bring a positive impact to the modalities of travel and, more broadly, for the society and the environment. During all the phases of its life, *Adagio* will preserve the values-driven character and the purpose of contributing to sustainable and responsible tourism development in order to accomplish its mission.

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Annexes

Annex A - Arrivals and Nights spent in Italy by country of residence (Istat Statistics, 2021)

Territory	Italy	
Adjustment	raw data	
NACE rev. 2	hotels and similar accommodation, holiday and other short-stay accommodation, camping grounds, recreational vehicle parks and trailer parks	
Select time	2019	
Type of accommodation	total collective accommodation establishments	
Indicators	arrivals ▲ ▼	nights spent ▲ ▼
Country of residence of guests		
■ All countries of the world	131 381 653	436 739 271
Foreign countries	65 010 220	220 662 684
Italy	66 371 433	216 076 587
Austria	2 648 203	9 520 238
Belgium	1 258 901	4 751 383
Denmark	631 748	3 058 530
Finland	267 366	884 187
France	4 744 412	13 842 473
Germany	12 382 334	58 699 396
Greece	353 276	903 868
Ireland	459 011	1 815 223
Luxembourg	94 622	386 938
Netherlands	2 137 760	10 320 382
Portugal	410 857	1 097 176
United Kingdom	3 695 112	13 674 263
Spain	2 243 621	5 789 755
Sweden	697 407	2 372 891
Bulgaria	242 836	712 783
Czech Republic	900 502	4 127 567
Cyprus	34 296	104 004
Croatia	294 825	759 361
Estonia	78 398	220 613
Latvia	93 279	286 912
Lithuania	168 894	490 997
Malta	128 442	371 657
Norway	390 789	1 247 398
Poland	1 593 692	6 203 982
Romania	797 381	2 765 252
Russia	1 778 720	5 819 444
Slovakia	239 772	1 146 923
Slovenia	330 638	949 216
Turkey	404 344	980 220
Hungary	610 672	2 210 468
European Union	37 538 257	147 466 438
■ European non-EU countries	7 050 896	23 184 647
Egypt	83 236	305 519
African Mediterranean Countries (Libya, Tunisia, Algeria, Morocco)	209 352	669 114
South Africa	110 147	314 952
Other African countries	190 346	774 280
Israel	605 415	1 733 705
Other Western Asia Countries (United Arab Emirates, Bahrain, Iran, Iraq, Jordan, Kuwait, Oman, Qatar, Saudi Arabia, Syria, Yemen)	537 669	1 616 047
China	3 167 960	5 355 907
Japan	1 133 118	2 544 326
South Korea	1 006 673	1 925 573
India	593 319	1 392 062
Other Asian countries	1 282 925	2 894 565
Canada	948 176	2 665 209
United States	6 092 754	16 302 928
Mexico	413 514	939 300
Argentina	610 117	1 546 667
Brazil	1 116 846	2 824 686
Venezuela	48 017	142 208
Other Northern American Countries	27 918	80 835
Other Central or South American Countries	719 212	1 858 528
New Zealand	140 019	361 917
Other Oceanian Countries	24 576	89 219
Others	310 473	793 016
Switzerland and Liechtenstein	3 027 131	10 806 529
Australia	1 049 285	2 881 036

Annex B - Characteristics of holiday trips by Italian residents

(Istat Statistics, 2021)

Main purpose of trip

Data type	holiday trips for pleasure/leisure per type of destination - per 100 trips with the same characteristics		
Residence territory	Italy		
Select time	2019		
Main destination	Foreign countries	Italy	Total
	▲ ▼	▲ ▼	▲ ▼
Main purpose of trip			
■ pleasure, leisure	100	100	100
-pleasure, relax	46.6	61.1	57.8
-artistic, historical and archaeological heritage	28	11.2	15
-natural beauty	14	13.3	13.5
- sport holiday	1.8	5.1	4.3
-cultural and folkloric events, shows, exhibitio, food and wine holidays	0.7	2.3	1.9
-other type ●	9	7	7.5

Type of destination

Data type	holiday trips for pleasure/leisure per type of destination - per 100 trips with the same characteristics		
Residence territory	Italy		
Main purpose of trip	pleasure, leisure		
Type of trip	pleasure, leisure trip		
Select time	2019		
Main destination	Foreign countries	Italy	Total
	▲ ▼	▲ ▼	▲ ▼
Type of destination			
seaside, cruise	44.1	48.8	47.8
mountain, hills, highlands	9.9	26.5	22.8
city	76	36.2	45.2
country, lakes, rivers	12.9	9.9	10.5
other type	5.7	3.9	4.3

Trips by gender and age

Data type	trips - per 100 trips with the same characteristics		
Select time	2019		
Type of trip	holiday trip (1 to 3 overnight stays)	holiday trip (4 or more overnight stays)	holiday trip
	▲ ▼	▲ ▼	▲ ▼
Gender			
males	50.3	48.2	49.2
females	49.7	51.8	50.8
total			
until 14 years	12.4	15.4	14.1
15-24 years	10.4	9.3	9.8
25-34 years	13.7	9.5	11.4
35-44 years	15.4	16.4	16
45-54 years	19.4	16.9	18
55-64 years	16.6	14.6	15.5
65 years and over	12.1	17.9	15.3
total	100	100	100

Type of accommodation

Data type		holiday trips - per 100 holiday trips with the same characteristics
Select time		2019
Type of trip		holiday trip
		▲ ▼
Residence territory	Main type of accommodation	
Italy	hotel ⓘ	34.1
	other collective facility	10
	rented house/rented room ⓘ	15.1
	non-rented accommodation ⓘ	39
	other private accommodation	1.8
	total	100

Main means of transport

Data type		trips - per 100 trips with the same characteristics
Residence territory		Italy
Select time		2019
Type of trip		holiday trip
		▲ ▼
Main destination	Main means of transport	
Italy	aircraft	6.8
	train	10.8
	car ⓘ	70.8
	boat ⓘ	1.3
	bus ⓘ	5.9
	camper, caravan	3.3
	means of transport not specified ⓘ	1.1
	all items	100

Trips per type of booking

Data type		trips per type of booking - per 100 trips with the same characteristics				
Residence territory		Italy				
Select time		2018				
Reservation type		direct booking	booking through agency	without booking	does not know/does not respond	total
		▲ ▼	▲ ▼	▲ ▼	▲ ▼	▲ ▼
Main destination						
Foreign countries		62.1	22.3	14.6	1	100
🇮🇹 Italy		49.2	8.6	41.5	0.8	100
Total		51.8	11.3	36.1	0.8	100

Type of accommodation booking

Data type		trips - per 100 trips with the same characteristics		
Residence territory		Italy		
Select time		2019		
Type of trip		holiday trip (1 to 3 overnight stays)	holiday trip (4 or more overnight stays)	holiday trip
		▲ ▼	▲ ▼	▲ ▼
Type of accommodation booking				
direct booking		23.8 ⓘ (b)	22.6 ⓘ (b)	23.1 ⓘ (b)
booking through agency		29.1 ⓘ (b)	26.8 ⓘ (b)	27.8 ⓘ (b)
without booking		43.6	47.3	45.6
does not know/does not respond		3.6	3.3	3.4
total		100	100	100

Annex C - International tourists in Italy

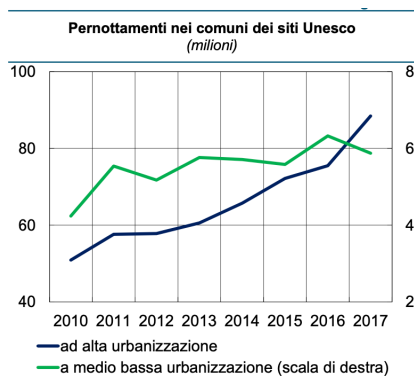
(Banca d'Italia, 2019)

Overnight stays by primary and secondary motivation (percentage values)

Presenze per tipo motivazione principale e secondaria (valori percentuali)										
MOTIVAZIONE SECONDARIA	MOTIVAZIONE PRINCIPALE									
	vacanza rurale		vacanza culturale		vacanza al mare		vacanza in montagna		totale	
	2010	2017	2010	2017	2010	2017	2010	2017	2010	2017
rurale	-	-	6,1	13,3	5,5	11,4	8,0	40,2	5,5	14,4
culturale	8,7	23,7	-	-	15,0	23,6	4,3	17,6	6,1	10,4
mare	2,9	4,6	5,3	9,9	-	-	4,7	2,7	3,3	6,0
montagna	2,9	7,8	0,7	1,2	2,1	0,9	-	-	1,5	1,9
totale con motivazione secondaria	14,5	36,2	12,1	24,4	22,6	36,0	17,0	60,5	16,4	32,7
nessuna	85,5	63,8	87,9	75,6	77,4	64,0	83,0	39,5	83,6	67,3
totale	100,0	100,0	100,0	100,0	100,0	100,0	100,0	100,0	100,0	100,0

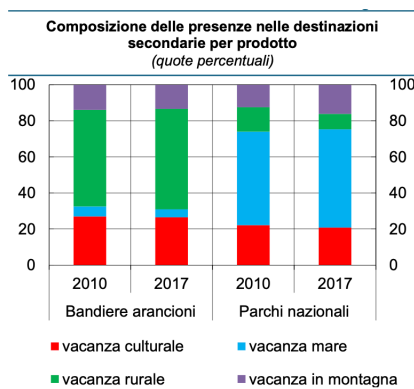
* 'Motivazione principale': primary motivation; 'motivazione secondaria': secondary motivation; 'vacanza': holiday; 'rurale': rural; 'culturale': cultural; 'mare': seaside; 'montagna': mountain; 'totale': total; 'nessuna': none.

Overnight stays at UNESCO Sites municipalities (in millions)



Blue line: municipalities with high urbanisation
Green line: municipalities with low urbanisation

Composition of overnight stays by product at secondary destinations (percentage)



Left: Bandiere Arancioni

Right: National parks

Red: cultural holiday

Green: rural holiday

Blue: seaside holiday

Purple: mountain holiday

Annex D - Online Activities

(Istat Statistics, 2021)

Internet activities by age group

Gender	total												
Select time	2019												
Age class	6-10 years	11-14 years	15-17 years	18-19 years	20-24 years	25-34 years	35-44 years	45-54 years	55-59 years	60-64 years	65-74 years	75 years and over	6 years and over
Data type													
using services related to travel or travel related accommodation	0	5.6	16.6	35.1	46.9	48.1	43.1	39.1	32.7	32.7	30.1	21.3	35.2

Type of goods and services purchased online by age group

Gender	total											
Select time	2019											
Age class	14-17 years	18-19 years	20-24 years	25-34 years	35-44 years	45-54 years	55-59 years	60-64 years	65-74 years	75 years and over	14 years and over	
Data type	▲ ▼	▲ ▼	▲ ▼	▲ ▼	▲ ▼	▲ ▼	▲ ▼	▲ ▼	▲ ▼	▲ ▼	▲ ▼	▲ ▼
holiday accommodation	6.2	16.5	28.4	34	30.7	31.4	28.6	30.9	27.2	22.4	29.4	
other travel arrangements	8.2	20.9	30.3	30.7	24.2	26.9	26.5	32.3	31.3	16.8	26.7	

Booking via internet

Data type	trips per internet booking - per 100 trips with the same characteristics		
Residence territory	Italy		
Select time	2019		
Type of trip	holiday trip (1 to 3 overnight stays)	holiday trip (4 or more overnight stays)	holiday trip
	▲ ▼	▲ ▼	▲ ▼
Booking via internet			
accommodation only	55.8	42.1	48
transport only	20.3	33.3	27.7
accommodation and transport	23.9	24.6	24.3
total	100	100	100