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*“Co-creating a niche mountain destination through the Web.
The case of Val Tartano.”*



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Davide Spini

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Piergiorgio Spini

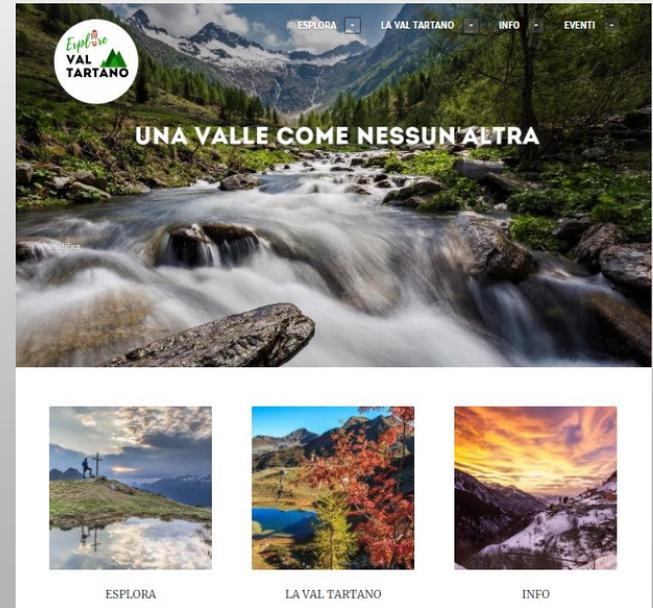
Giovanni Tacchini

1. OUR WORKSHOP (PMTS03)

One of the workshops that the Planning and Management of Tourism Systems Master's Degree Course at the University of Bergamo organizes each year for the second-year students.

Design and supervision by Professor Roberto Peretta.

Focus: optimization of the website “Explore Val Tartano” created for Val Tartano (Province of Sondrio, Lombardy) during last year's workshop, and its potential publication.



1. OUR WORKSHOP – WHEN AND HOW

End of February to May 2020.

The workshop had to be moved online because of the spread of the Coronavirus after only one face-to-face meeting.

A variety of online platforms and means to carry out meetings and decision-making processes, and to connect with stakeholders: Skype, Zoom and Microsoft Teams calls/interviews, Google Form surveys, email exchanges...



1. OUR WORKSHOP – MAIN TOPICS

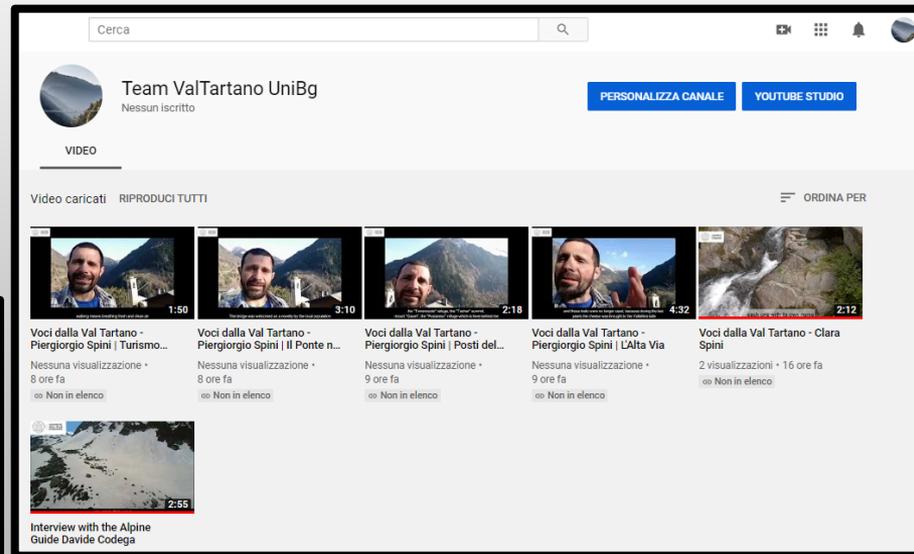
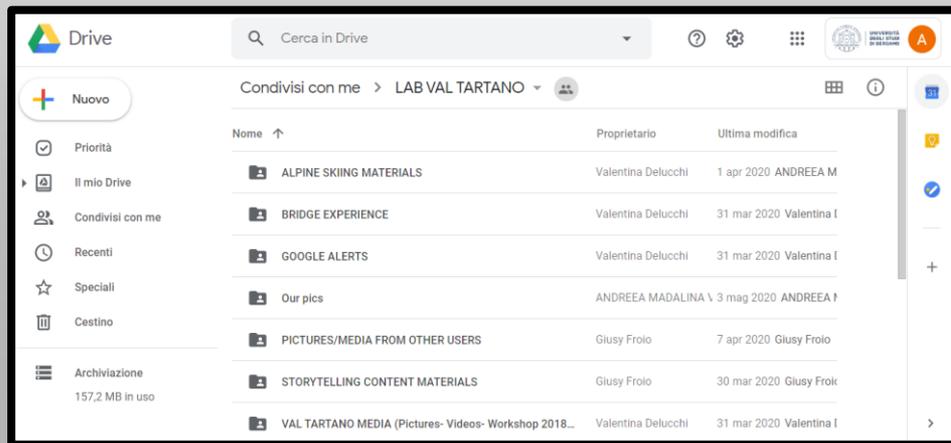


Image courtesy of Davide Pola

- Interviews with some of the valley inhabitants who play an official role in it (Alpine Guides, hoteliers, local experts...)
- Google Alerts analysis
- Technical enhancements of the website
- Ski mountaineering
- Experience of the crossing of “Ponte nel Cielo” (“Bridge in the sky”).

1. OUR WORKSHOP – WHERE TO FIND US

The materials produced are in a Google Drive folder and on the YouTube channel “Team Val Tartano UniBg”.



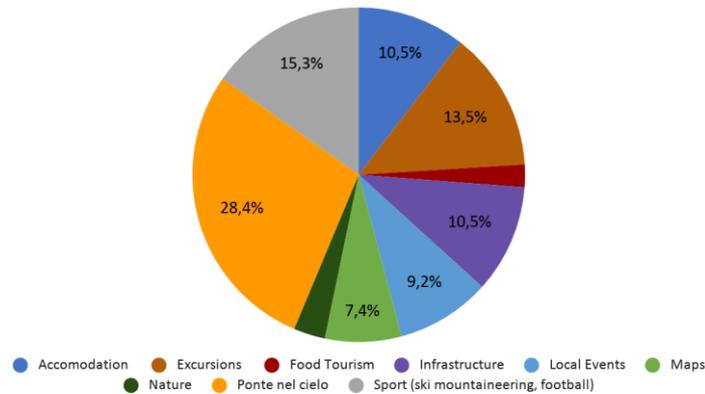
<https://www.youtube.com/channel/UCmCWMoRitlhTkejxh8zax1A/>

2. THE VALLEY AND GOOGLE ALERTS ANALYSIS

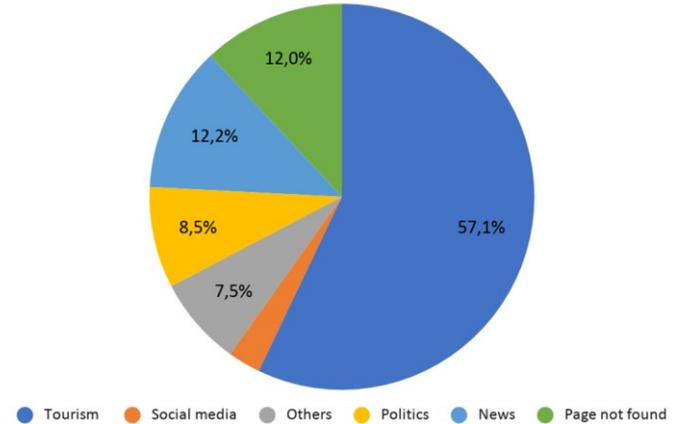
Most relevant topics:

- Ponte nel Cielo
- Sports (Ski Mountaineering and football)
- Excursions
- Accommodation
- Infrastructure
- Local Events
- Maps
- Nature
- Food Tourism

Graph 2: "Tourism composition of Graph 1"



Graph 1 "Key topics from Google alerts: a summary"



PONTE NEL CIELO



- ❖ It's the highest simple-suspension bridge in Europe and it was inaugurated in 2018.
- ❖ It's the main motivation people visit Val Tartano, the valley.
- ❖ The bridge gives beautiful views of the mountains.
- ❖ It opens everyday from 9am to 4:30pm and on Saturdays from 9:30am until sunset.
- ❖ Tickets for the weekend can be purchased only online.
- ❖ Tickets are free for children below 6 years.



SPORTS

Sports activities are held throughout the year. We have winter and summer games which brings lots of people to the valley.

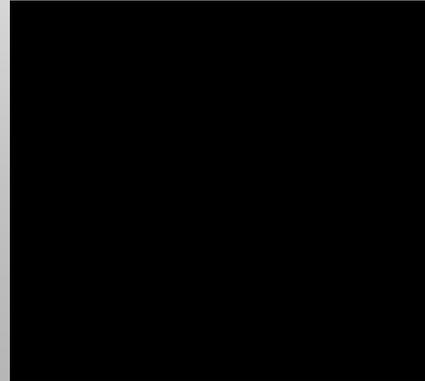
Winter sports activities include:



Skinning
marathon



Running marathon



Running Marathon on the
street



Trekking

EXCURSIONS

They are organised to visit natural places. They are organised in summer and winter. Languages used are English and Italian. Some of the places tourists visit for excursions are;



Laghi di Porcile:
are a group of 3 Alpine
lakes in Alpi Orobie.



Ethnographic museum of
wood: They host exhibition
of things which have
disappeared.



Orobie Botanical
gardens:
Surrounded by natural
setting and forest.

Cima delle Cadelle:
On the top is a statue of the
Archangel Gabriel erected in
memory of the victims of the
1987 Valtellina flood.



ACCOMMODATION



Albergo La Gran Baita



Albergo Ristorante VALLUNGA

Free WIFI
Free Parking
Free Breakfast



Albergo Ristorante Pizzeria Miralago

MAPS



UNIVERSITÀ
DEGLI STUDI
DI BERGAMO



INFO POINT IN:

CHIAVENNA
MORBEGNO
SONDRIO
TIRANO
BORMIO



SKI MAP AND OTHER SKI ACTIVITIES



PATHS



FOOD TOURISM AND LOCAL EVENTS



UNIVERSITÀ
DEGLI STUDI
DI BERGAMO

Offers the chance to meet local producers, discover traditions and taste local food products. They are held during the autumnal weekends.

Bitto Exhibitions
From October 12 and 13
It involves tasting sessions, street food, starred show cooking, live preparation, market stalls, shows and concerts

Morbegno In Cantina
One of the most important gastronomic events in Valtellina, held in weekends of September and October. It offers visitors a chance to taste traditional food and wine.

Delights of Polenta
Organised every weekend at Val Tartano from October 26 to December 1.
Possibility to taste a variety of food with polenta as the main ingredients

GUSTOSANDO IN VALTELLINA
Held every weekend from September to October in Morbegno and the surroundings, it showcases food and wine tours in some of the important traditional towns and villages.



3. The (one-and-only) digital side!

A **workshop** during a pandemic and a **lockdown**: Skype, Drive, Facebook, Teams, Zoom...



Giorgio Spini pictured by Piergiorgio Spini along the Alta Via

Social groups, a paper daily and the (unpublished) website

We worked social. An authoritative paper wrote about us. The original website is still private.



4. Storytelling products

The aim of this section was to provide interviews from a group of people that live in Val Tartano or have a special connection to the valley in order to give a personal and intimate image of the area.

All the interviewees were asked about their relationship with Val Tartano, if they live there or not and what is their favourite spot in the valley.

The other questions were specifically adapted to each person, since they all have different backgrounds, ages and jobs.



Picture by Piergiorgio Spini

4. Storytelling products



The interview with **Monica Barlascini**, owner of the **Hotel Miralago** in Campo was focused on:

- The history of the hotel
- The types of tourists that stay overnight
- The services of the hotel
- The current situation related to Covid-19



Picture from TripAdvisor

Results:

Even after the construction of the Ponte nel Cielo, the guests of Hotel Miralago were impressed by the beauty of the valley, which is, from Monica's point of view, its real strength.

4. Storytelling products

The interview with **Davide Spini** focused on:

- his relationship with the valley
- his job as an alpine guide
- the best ski mountaineering paths

Results:

His interview strengthens the idea, already discussed by the other participants, that Val Tartano can be thought as a natural paradise, where nature is untamed and the landscape is breathtaking.



4. Storytelling products

The interview with **Clara Spini** focused on:

- Her relationship with Val Tartano and childhood memories;
- Her opinions about the construction of the “Ponte nel Cielo” and the other points of strength of the valley;
- The natural itinerary of “The path of the bridges”.

Results:

- The importance of preserving and valorising the untouched natural beauty of the valley.



4. Storytelling products



The interview with **Giorgio Spini** focused on:

- His relationship with Val Tartano and his memories;
- The change of the valley over time;
- Historical events and traditions;
- His research on the “Blockbau” technique;
- The “Alta Via” project.



Picture by Piergiorgio Spini

Results:

- Strong attachment to the place;
- Increase the awareness of the territorial, environmental and historical heritage of the valley.

4. Storytelling products

The interview with **Piergiorgio Spini** focused on:

- The creation process of the “Alta Via” pathway;
- Some “hidden gems” in Val Tartano;
- The evolution of tourism in the valley after the construction of the “Ponte nel Cielo”;
- The future of tourism in Val Tartano after the Covid-19 pandemic.

The interview resulted into four short videos, to which English subtitles were added.



5. The website: optimization suggestions 1/3



Website Identification

Logo: suggestive, easy to find and remember.

Interface: well designed, eye-catching and easy to navigate.

However, there is no a destination's geographical position in the homepage.

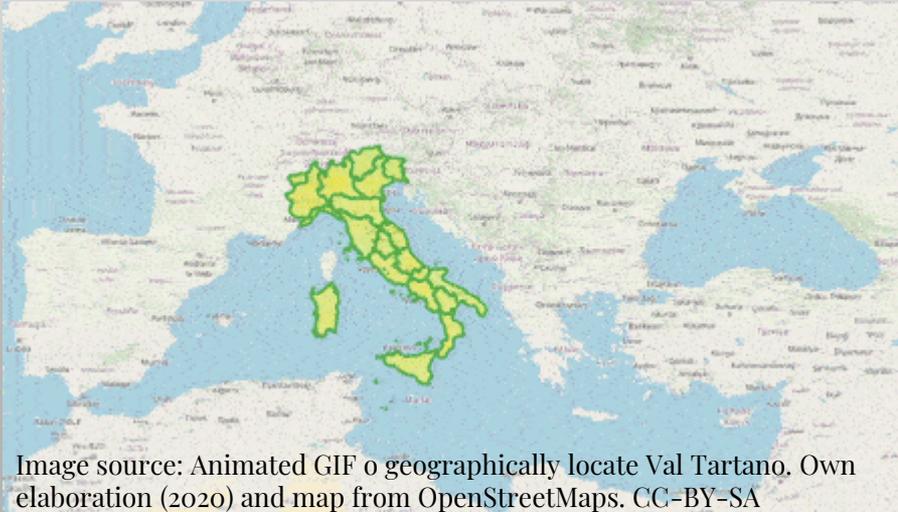


Image source: Animated GIF o geographically locate Val Tartano. Own elaboration (2020) and map from OpenStreetMaps. CC-BY-SA



ESPLORA

Curiosi di scoprire le meraviglie che la Val Tartano ha in serbo per voi? Allettate gli scarponcini e preparatevi ad esplorare una delle valli più "selvagge" della Valtellina! Anche a misura di famiglia.



LA VAL TARTANO

La Val Tartano, Val Tärten in dialetto, è una valle orobica laterale alla Bassa Valtellina. Una valle alpina che ha saputo conservare le radici di un passato umile ed operoso. Scopri di più!



INFO

Cerchi informazioni su come arrivare, dove pernottare o su quali siano i migliori ristoranti della zona? Trovi tutto in questa sezione!

[CONTINUA A LEGGERE](#)

Image source: screenshot of the homepage of Explore Val Tartano (2019).

5. The website: optimization suggestions 2/3



- Enhance the visibility of activities related to **ski mountaineering**.
- Describe the **network of valleys** and embed it with cultural and natural information.
- Provide a section related to **flora and fauna**, **panoramic hotspots** and “**Voci dalla Val Tartano**”.
- **Reference** the sources.
- Choose the **license**.
- Provide **weather and climate information**.
- **Booking service** or **links** (to websites, emails, phone number, etc.)
- **Social media** networks.
- English version.
- Keep the website **updated**.

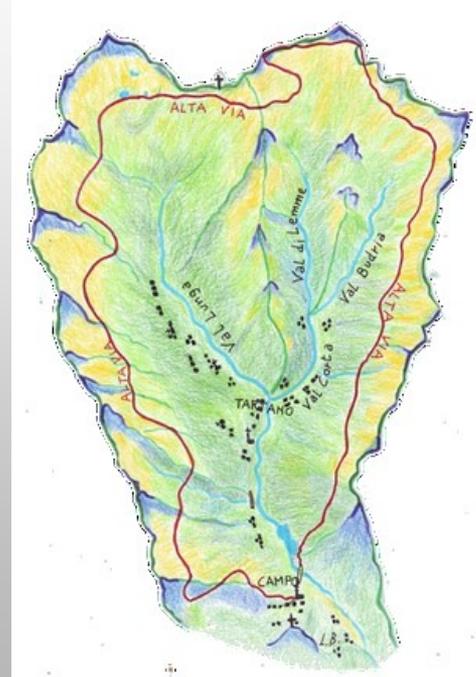


Image source: Graphic map of the valley within Val Tartano. Image from the website Explore Val Tartano (2019).

5. The website: optimization suggestions 3/3



Image: **Example** of network of social media web.

6. The Tibetan bridge: how important...



- Main **motivation** to visit Val Tartano
- The **presence** of the Bridge on Instagram, Facebook and TripAdvisor
- **Qualitative interviews**
- Creation of the **questionnaire**
- **40 answers** collected by 27 March 2020

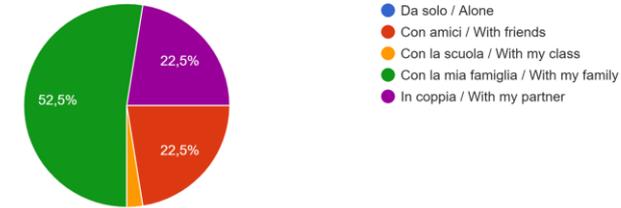


... how perceived (part 1)...

- 72% **main motivation**: Ponte nel Cielo
- **Family** destination (52,5%), mainly known through **word of mouth**(65%) and reached by **car** (95%) with no difficulties in finding a car park.
- How the **experience** was perceived (peace, anxiety, euphoria, fear, happiness)
- **Price** and **payment** methods to access the bridge
- Evaluation of the **activities** and **services** related with the Bridge: bar by the bridge (40%), Restaurants (22%) and accommodation services (12,5%)

3. Con chi hai viaggiato?/With whom did you travel?

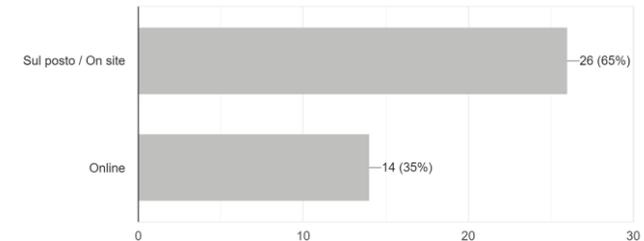
40 risposte



Graph 3

13. Dove hai comprato il biglietto per attraversare il "Ponte nel Cielo"? / Where did you buy the ticket to cross the "Ponte nel Cielo"?

40 risposte



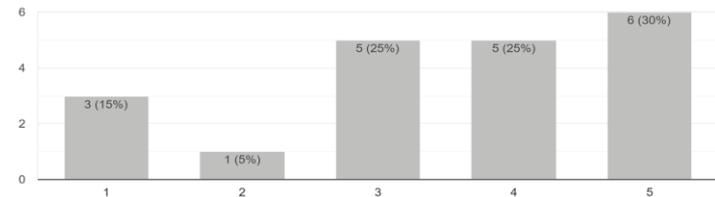
Graph 13

... how perceived (part 2)...



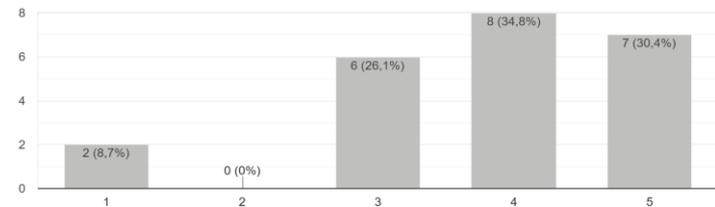
- How it was to find **information** related to the place and services (all interviewees considered it **easy**)
- The staff is considered **helpful**
- The **safety** of the Bridge is deemed by 67.5% **very good**, 25% **good** and 7.5% **quite good**
- 67.5% of the interviewees visited the **official website** of the Bridge that is considered mainly **good**
- **Instagram** and **Facebook** pages are visited only by the 37.5% and 42.5% respectively. They are considered overall **good** but they should be **improved**

24. Come valuteresti da 1-5 la pagina Instagram del "Ponte nel Cielo"? (Dove 1= molto negativo, 5= ottimo)/ How would you evaluate the "Ponte nel Cie...tagram page, from 1 to 5? (1= very bad, 5= great)
20 risposte



Graph 24

22. Come valuteresti da 1-5 la pagina Facebook del "Ponte nel Cielo"? (Dove 1= molto negativo, 5= ottimo)/ How would you evaluate the "Ponte nel Cie...cebook page, from 1 to 5? (1= very bad, 5= great)
23 risposte



Graph 22

...how in the future



Some considerations of interviewees about Post Coronavirus situation:

- The experience will not change a lot, since it is not a crowded area
- Even few tourists
- Measures to keep social distancing
- More enthusiasm when it will be possible again to cross the bridge

7. Ski Mountaineering 1/3

- One of the most popular sports of the valley
- Combination of alpinism and downhill ski
- Popularity boosted by the local Ski Club SC Valtartano
- During good season, it is possible to practice this sport from December to Spring
- Most famous spots: Cima di Lemma, Cima della Val Lunga, Passo dei Lupi, Passo Tartano
- The highest peak in Val Tartano is the Monte Seleron summit, called Piz Linéra (2519 meters)
- Lot of skiers coming from Milan and Lecco



Ski Mountaineering 2/3



SC Valtartano

- Ski club founded officially in 1984
- Competitions organised every year
- More than 100 people affiliated with the club
- Target: 85% male 15% female in the professional world; 40% female and 60% in the amateur world
- Participants coming from the valley, Morbegno and Colico



© Jorge Millaruelo

Ski Mountaineering 3/3



Questionnaire's result

- Love for nature and sport are the main reason why people decide to take on this sport
- Freedom, fun and wellness are the sensations that most skiers feel while they are on the slopes
- People, generally, like to practise Ski Mountaineering with people they know (relative, friends)
- Val Tartano is highly rated in terms of quality



8. Covid-19 pandemic in Lombardy and the valley 1/3

Undoubtedly, the **Covid-19 pandemic** had to be taken into consideration during the research, since it had an impact not only on the way in which the workshop was carried out, but also on the present and future of tourism in Val Tartano.

Lombardy was the most dramatically affected region of Italy, which led the government to decide on the closing of schools and universities from 24th February 2020, and on a total lockdown from 8th March until 4th May, 2020.



<http://www.protezionecivile.gov.it/>

8. Covid-19 pandemic in Lombardy and the valley 2/3

Some interviewees - **Piergiorgio Spini** and his wife **Monica Barlascini**, owner of the hotel Miralago - were asked for an opinion on how the valley was affected by the Covid-19 emergency and how tourism will recover.

No cases of Covid-19 have been recorded in **Val Tartano** (up to 13th May, 2020), but the tourism sector was inevitably affected. Although the forced closure and inactivity of the hotel has caused concern among the staff, they are trying to be optimistic about a restart for the summer season. Hopefully, once the emergency is over, tourists will go back to Val Tartano to enjoy the breathtaking views, take long walks and breathe fresh air.



Picture by Piergiorgio Spini

8. Covid-19 pandemic in Lombardy and the valley 3/3

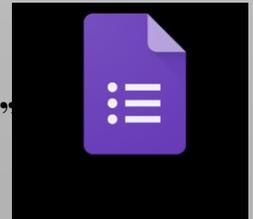
A survey was created using **Google Forms** about the experience of *Ponte nel Cielo*. Two out of thirty questions were about the post-Coronavirus situation.

- **“Post Coronavirus: how do you imagine the experience about the *Ponte nel Cielo*?”**

Most answers agreed that the experience will not change drastically, since social distancing is rather easy to put into effect within such an attraction (with health checks and distributed entrances to the bridge). On the other hand, some answers claimed that tourist flows will probably decrease, partly because of the initial reluctance to travel, and a niche destination like Val Tartano will take even longer to regain momentum.

- **“Would you visit again the *Ponte nel Cielo* after the Coronavirus emergency?”**

75% voted “yes” (30 votes), 25% voted “no” (10 votes).



9. Conclusions and Future Research

What we learned..

- Site inspection
 - Locals participation
- Technology partially filled this gap → **CO-CREATION**

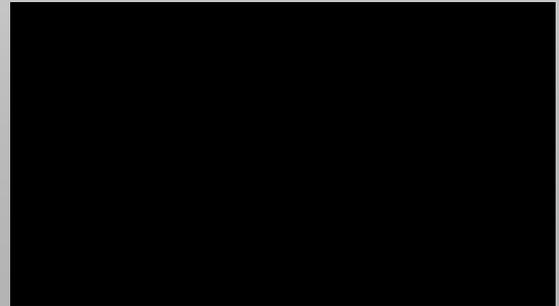


9. Conclusions and Future Research



Future research should include..

- The individuation and valorisation of **other points of interest** beyond the bridge;
- The promotion of a **specific target of tourists**;
- The promotion of **sustainable and conscious tourism**;
- The strict **cooperation of local stakeholders and residents** – participative approach;
- The promotion of the **intangible heritage**.



*Picture by Dario Gusmeroli



Thank you for your attention!

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