

EXCOVER – LOCAL SWOT REPORT

PREDAPPIO MUNICIPALITY

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1. RESIDENTS' WILLINGNESS TO PARTICIPATE

Predappio joined the EXCOVER Project aiming at improving its residents' life and economic conditions, while preserving the local cultural identity and environmental resources, through the development of sustainable tourism. To reach this goal, the participation of the local community in the tourism development planning and implementation phases is fundamental, in fact it is one of the main characteristics of tourism development processes to be sustainable. Thus, before going into the residents' survey-based SWOT Analysis, main topic of this report, the willingness to participate in the local tourism development of the interviewees is investigated by means of a participation index, developed to meet the informative needs of EXCOVER.

The resident's participation index is built with information of different kind, both direct (retrieved from the answers to specific questions) and indirect (making use of response rates), collected during the SWOT survey. The index is a weighted average of 5 components:

- "1_COMMUNITY PARTICIPATION": the evaluation of the extent to which the respondent's local community is willing to participate in the local tourist development (directly asked in the questionnaire and measured with the reported level of agreement, in the range [1, 7]);
- "2_MAIL LEFT": the actual willingness to be more involved and active in the tourism development planning (estimated indirectly with the rate of respondents who left their personal e-mail address to be contacted in the near future to provide further information about their town);
- "3_PERSONAL SHARING ATTITUDE": the self-reported willingness of the respondent to make use of sharing economy platforms to share something of his own with visitors (directly asked in the questionnaire).
- "4_WELCOMING COMMUNITY": the assessment of the extent to which tourists and people with different cultures are welcomed by the respondent's local community (directly asked in the questionnaire and measured with the reported level of agreement, in the range [1, 7]);
- "5_RESPONDENT ENGAGEMENT": the manifested intention to participate in the local tourism development by providing information (indirectly retrieved from the average response rate to the SWOT open-ended questions, that require a considerable involvement and effort, compared to closed-ended ones);

As the first 2 components of the index are expressed on a scale ranging between 1 and 7 (while the other components are rates), they are normalized by dividing the average level of agreement by the maximum value possible (that is 7), to facilitate comparisons. The 5 components are weighted based on their relative

importance in the context of EXCOVER, especially in view of the forthcoming activities of the next working packages:

- weight of 1_COMMUNITY PARTICIPATION = 0.4
- weight of 2_MAIL LEFT = 0.2
- weight of 3_PERSONAL SHARING ATTITUDE = 0.2
- weight of 4_WELCOMING COMMUNITY = 0.1
- weight of 5_RESPONDENT ENGAGEMENT = 0.1

By construction, the minimum value of the participation index is 0, the maximum is 1.

1.1 ANALYSIS OF THE PARTICIPATION INDEX

In Predappio, the participation index and its 5 components, described above, take the following values: the component that take the highest value for Predappio is “RESPONDENT ENGAGEMENT” as shown in Fig. 1, which reveals a manifested intention to participate in the local tourism development by providing information and by showing a proactive and enthusiastic attitude towards the EXCOVER project.

COMMUNITY PARTICIPATION, which refers to the evaluation of the extent to which the respondent’s local community is willing to participate in the local tourist development and WELCOMING COMMUNITY, referred to the extent to which tourists and people with different cultures are welcomed by the respondent’s local community, show particularly high values in Predappio . WELCOMING COMMUNITY is an extremely positive element as it can impact upon the way tourists perceive a destination. It can be assumed that tourists visiting destinations where residents are more positive to tourism receptiveness are possibly going to be more satisfied with the tourist experience.

COMMUNITY PARTICIPATION is high, probably because, as Predappio is already a highly visited place, residents are used to get in touch and work with visitors. Moreover, community participation creates a relationship, established by the members of the community, through their collaboration in achieving common goals and making the community a better place in which to live. As sharing economy could be explained as a wide collaborative consumption practice, the high level of community participation in Predappio, with an average rate of 0.77, is a positive signal that could led to not only to social, but also to economic benefits in certain sharing situations, such as accommodation sharing or knowledge sharing. Unfortunately the COMMUNITY PARTICIPATION values does not match or, more appropriately, does not have the same values of the component PERSONAL SHARING ATTITUDE, that corresponds to the “the self-reported willingness to make use of sharing economy platforms to share something of his own with visitors”. It might be supposed that the lower value of PERSONAL SHARING ATTITUDE, if compared with COMMUNITY PARTICIPATION and RESPONDENT ENGAGEMENT, could be attributed to the influence of

the COVID 19 emergency, that is causing widespread concern, fear and stress, all of which are natural and normal reactions to the changing and uncertain situation that everyone finds themselves in. The word “social distancing has entered our lives, teaching that, to be safe, we have to be apart and not to share any space with people who are not from the family. The results and values of PERSONAL SHARING ATTITUDE in Predappio might have some limitations as the interviews were empirically assessed in July and August 2020, when communities and citizens were (and still are, in the moment of writing) afraid to become infected with the virus.

The component “MAIL LEFT”, namely the actual willingness to be more involved and active in the tourism development planning, is the only negative component for both destinations, with an average rate of 0.14.

The respondents did not leave their personal e-mail address to be contacted in the near future to provide further information about their town probably because it is commonly known that email remains a primary target for those who wish to acquire confidential data.

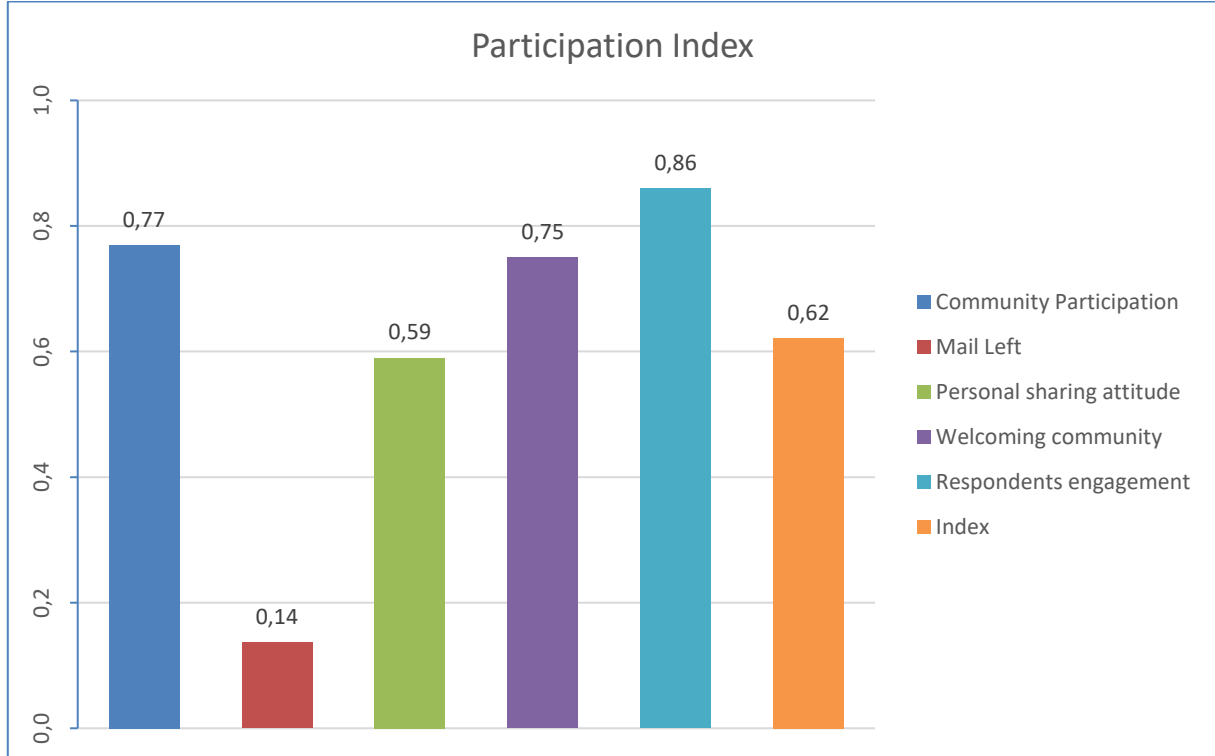
It can be affirmed, to the greatest extend, that respondents’ manifested intention to participate in the local tourism development and depicted their fellow villagers with a positive attitude towards participation to tourism development.

In general, the future development of sharing economy in selected destination could respond, on the one hand, to the needs of travelers looking for personalized approach, authenticity and contacts with local citizens and, on the other, it may represent a supplemental income opportunity for residents.

To participate in the sharing economy, citizens need to have access to and be able to use the respective digital platforms. In some instances, these uses can be quite complex, requiring significant skill sets. Sharing economy in selected destinations must face the challenges related to access to reliable and affordable Internet service and the use of a computer or smartphone, basic communication and digital literacy skills, as well as more specific skills, i.e. knowing how to successfully present and manage their listing on the platforms.

It is nevertheless important to underline that **the effect of COVID-19 shutdowns on the sharing economy were negative for the tourism industry**, but, while Uber and Airbnb suffered dramatic losses of revenue, other sharing economy businesses have thrived, and some start-ups are chasing opportunities created by the pandemic. Also, most of the transaction- and community-economy has evolved amidst the coronavirus pandemic as the pandemic brought with its generosity for sharing and volunteering. Community driven sharing-economy has meant, so far, the establishment of local co-working spaces, local share services, local time banks, and local tools, local knowledge sources, cooperative ownership aid networks.

Figure 1 - Participation Index for Predappio

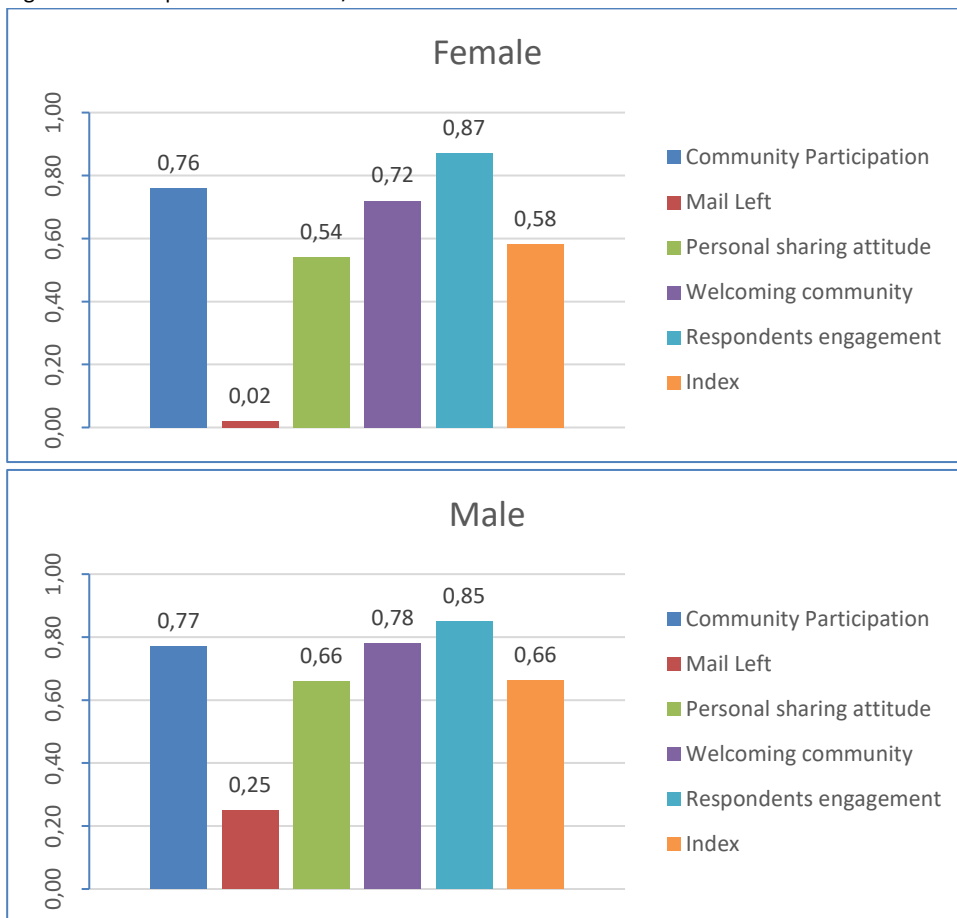


The graphs in Fig. 2 illustrate the differences in the respondents’ availability to participate between males and females.

Although there seems to be no profound gap between males and females, men have shown to be willing to participate more actively probably because, even if narratives in the sharing economy are based on values of equality, mutuality, openness, or care, which are more feminine, women are more affected by the Covid Emergency . It has by now become clear that the COVID-19 pandemic is not only a global health emergency but is also leading to a major global economic and social downturn. Different studies provide some first results on how this economic and social downturn is going to affect women and men differently, and what the main long-run repercussions for gender equality may be. In brief, the current crisis has a big impact on service occupations with high female employment shares, such as restaurants and hospitality. An even more important channel for differential impacts on women and men is that during the pandemic, most countries have decided to close schools and day-care facilities, and this has dramatically increased the need for childcare. In addition, grandparent-provided childcare is now discouraged due to the higher mortality rate for the elderly, and given social distancing measures, sharing childcare with neighbours and friends is very limited also. Thus, most families have no choice but to watch their kids themselves. In light

of these considerations, the sharing economy could be the output to change the attitude in many ways of working, especially for women. Much of the language used to describe the possibilities of the sharing economy is that of flexibility and liberty from the restrictions of the traditional workaday and freedom to create one’s own productive experience, which might be particularly important to women workers. The idea that work can be done mostly outside of a standard workplace, and often at home, might be seen to be a particularly good opportunity for workers with significant family care responsibilities, who are overwhelmingly women, especially in these days.

Figure 2 - Participation Index Male/Female



The graphs in Fig. 3 illustrate the differences in the respondents' availability to participate between Juniors (from 15 to 34 years old) and Seniors (from 46 to +65).

It goes without saying that there are evident differences between the two segments. The rate of Juniors who left their personal e-mail address to be contacted in the near future to provide further information about their town is higher, with a rate of 0.35, and could suggest a deeper motivation in the involvement of tourism development planning, but also an overall higher usage of digital technology.

The failure to provide the email address by older residents, with a rate of 0.04, should not necessarily be associated to a feeble motivation in the involvement of tourism development planning, but could be attributed to the digital divide between younger and older, especially referred to residents over 65. Many interviewed seniors do not possess an email address and don't use online applications and mobile technologies that allow participants to interact with each other and facilitate exchanges of goods and services connected with sharing economy. It has to be stressed that, in selected destinations, elderly people, who could contribute to tourism development with knowledge about traditions and heritage or with lodging facilities, have limited digital access and skills; it follows that Seniors with no digital literacy should be trained and supported in order to give them access to digital technologies and create awareness for social and economic benefits linked to sharing economy. Moreover, older people are less confident than younger ones and maybe suspicious as they probably know that Emails are one of the most common sources of viruses that try and get access to sensitive information.

The WELCOMING COMMUNITY value is very positive for both components, but Seniors expressed a higher sense of hospitality, which means they think the community is very open to tourists and deeply welcoming.

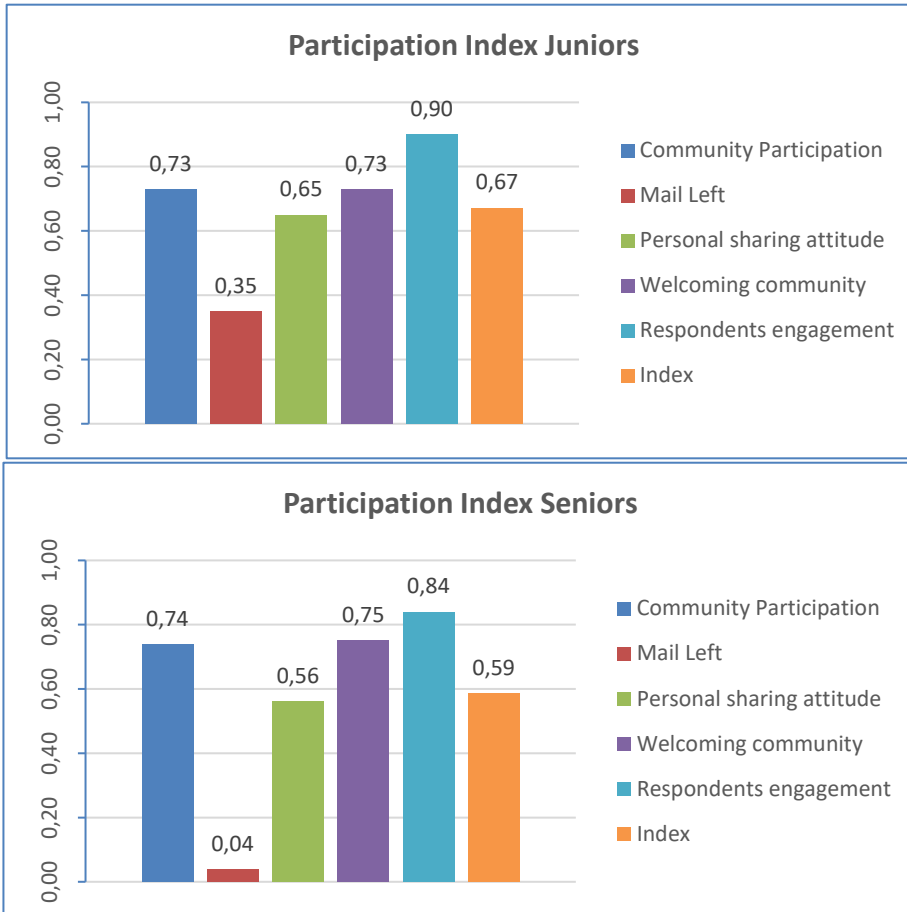
Local hospitality is an essential and necessary element of tourism development even if it is not a satisfactory condition for influencing a destination competitiveness that requires complementary elements as attraction, transportation, promotion, services and information.

COMMUNITY PARTECIPATION, the evaluation of the extent to which the respondent's local community is willing to participate in the local tourist development, has a positive value both for Juniors and Seniors, while the RESPONDENT ENGAGEMENT, the manifested intention to participate with involvement and effort in the local tourism development by providing information, shows a slightly lower value, but without a relevant discrepancy.

The results indicate that residents will be more likely to support tourism development if they are involved in planning and development decisions and if they understand the benefits that tourism can bring.

Community participation in local tourism development processes related to Predappio must be considered an important support and uphold to local culture, tradition, knowledge and skill, and can create pride in community heritage. Community involvement leads to partnership working, decision making and representation in community structures.

Figure 3 - Participation Index Junior/Senior



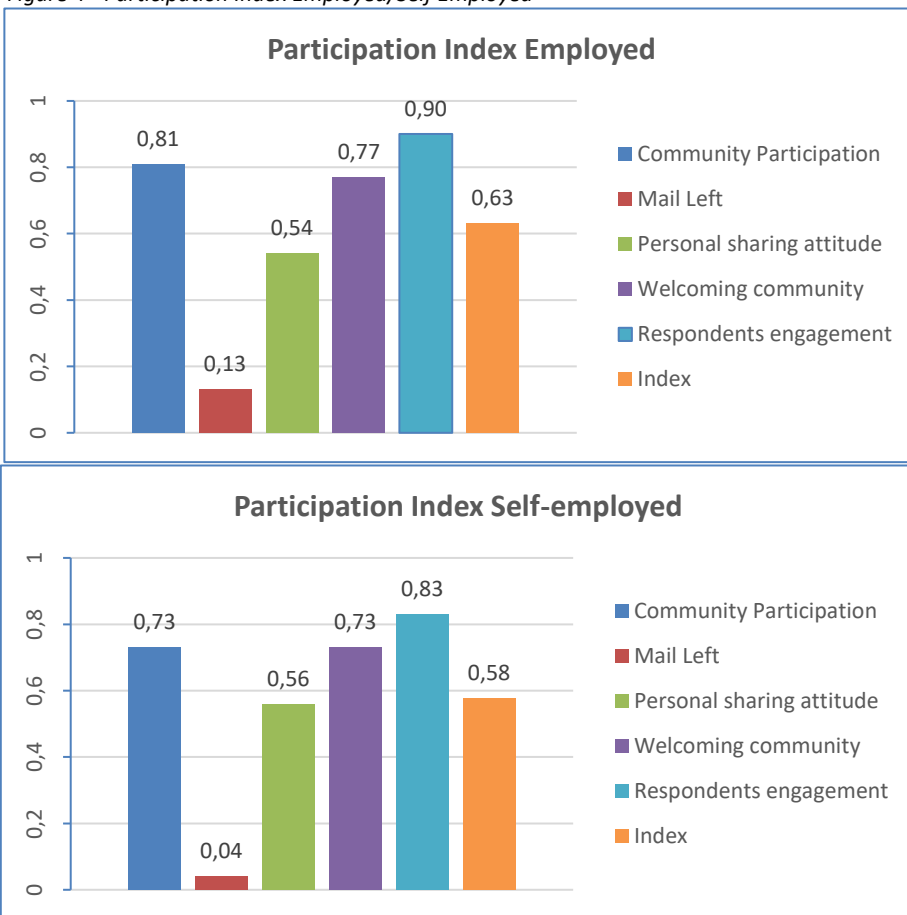
The participation index of employees and of self-employed is shown in fig. 4. Employees are more enthusiastic about participation with an overall value of 0,63, with a manifested intention to participate in the local tourism development by providing information. The positive and pro-active attitude towards sharing economy and participation expressed by employees might be related to the economic uncertainty in the COVID-19 pandemic context. According to a survey conducted in Italy, a large part of respondents fear that they could lose their jobs due to the impact of coronavirus (COVID-19). In June 2020, most Italian respondents declared that the coronavirus pandemic had impacted or would impact in the future their personal incomes. In addition, the fear of losing the job due to the pandemic has been increasing in the country, with more than half of respondents worrying about this between March and May 2020.

Traditional work, that generally provides employee status, work relationships typically tightly regulated by legislation, social rights and protections, including pensions, have been put under unprecedented strain.

As the picture is changing fast, due to economic uncertainty and job losses increase, sharing economy could represent a solution or an extra income for people who are currently employed.

On the contrary, it can be assumed that self-employed do not consider the touristic development of Predappio or the sharing economy strategy as a chance to develop their existent businesses and an opportunity to create new businesses through diversification. Probably entrepreneurs are averse to sharing economy, because they see it as a dangerous source of competition.

Figure 4 - Participation Index Employed/Self Employed



2. RESIDENTS' ATTITUDE TOWARDS THE SHARING ECONOMY

Since EXCOVER aims at developing sustainable tourism in *Predappio*, where the local natural and cultural heritage constitute potential tourism attractions, but many tourist services and facilities are missing, a crucial phase of the project is dedicated to the construction or strengthening of the local supply chain. But the EXCOVER budget does allow to make big investments for building accommodation structures, restaurants, transportation services and the like. Therefore, a pivotal idea of the project is to invite the local community to put into play their unused assets to deliver tourist services, by exploiting the new opportunities offered by the sharing economy. 'Sharing economy' means sharing something of a private's own with another person temporarily, in exchange for some money, through the web. Then, for the prosecution of the project, it is essential to understand on which private unused assets the construction of the supply chain can rely. To this aim, the SWOT questionnaire included 2 specific questions:

- In your opinion, what may your fellow villagers be willing to share?
- What would you share?

From the analysis of the correspondent answers, it emerges that **while respondents' rate of the local community willingness to share is very height, the individual willingness to share is much lower.**

Even if there is a discrepancy between the individual and the community willingness to share, the overall data are positive and suggest that sharing and participation are considered a main driver and sources for future touristic development.

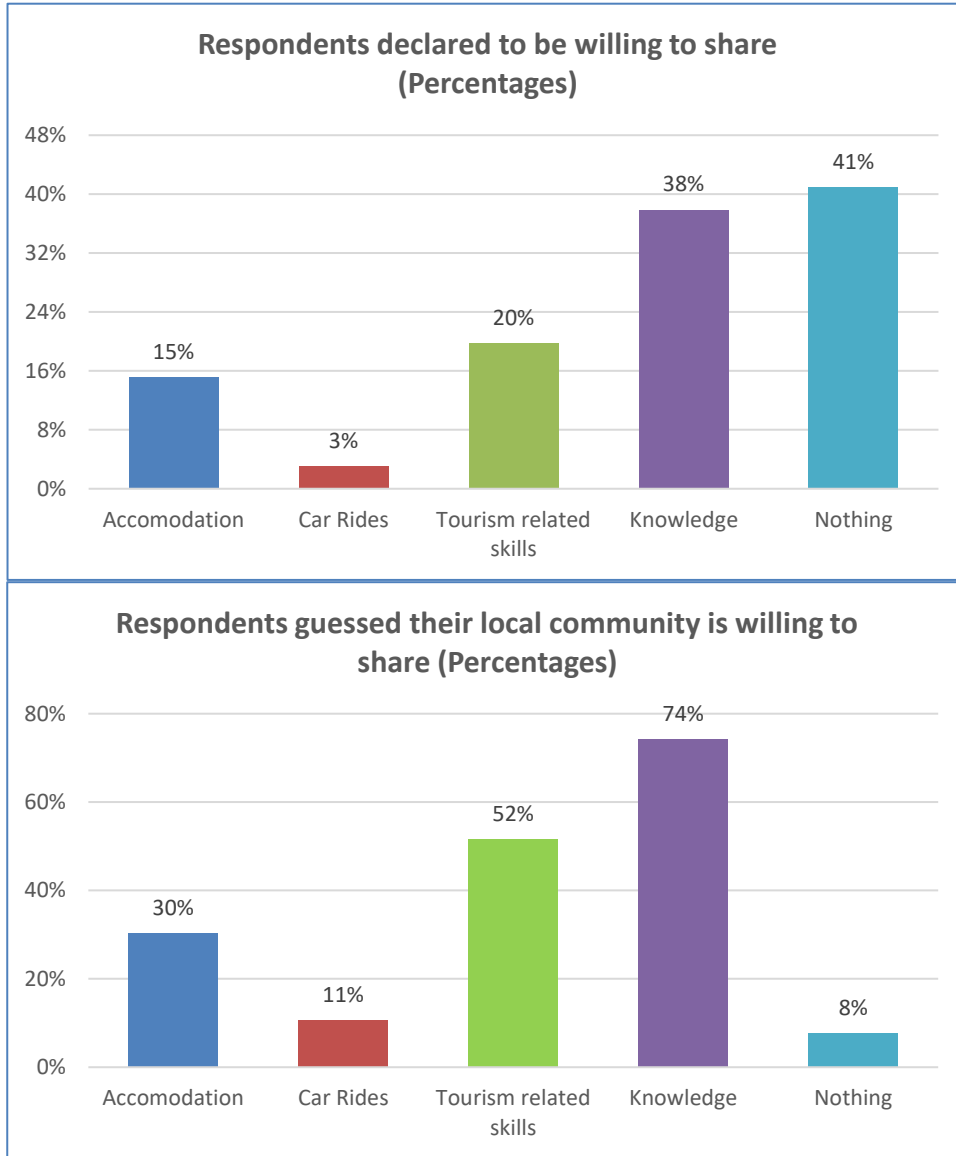
Respondents think their local community is mainly willing to share knowledge about territory and traditions, with a rate of 74%, versus an individual willingness of 38%. The personal willingness to share accommodation shows a 15% rate while tourism skill knowledge shows a rate of 20% as shown in Fig. 5. Indisputably, **accommodation sharing and knowledge sharing related to skills and territory are the assets that individuals are more available to share**; the preference accorded to **accommodation sharing** is probably related to the fact that this form of collaborative consumption has rapidly gain popularity thanks to online platforms as Airbnb, which represents a transformative innovation within the tourism accommodation industry and a growing number of travelers have changed the way they purchase and consume accommodation, with consequences on both the demand side and the supply side. It is important to underline that sharing accommodation choice has extrinsic motivations and intrinsic motivations. The first group of motivations might be related to **economic benefits for the local community**, while the second group is related to intrinsic aspects such as enjoyment, **unique and local authenticity, social interaction and sharing experiences, which are central and key elements for tourism development.**

The incentive measures and the support provided by EXCOVER to the development of a group of local citizens willing to share their accommodation with tourists would probably have positive effects on Predappio for different reasons. Firstly, tourists looking for unique character and homely feel of the accommodations, personalized service and personal interaction with the hosts, the opportunity to receive useful local information and suggestions, would have more options in Predappio. Secondly, **sharing accommodation on popular platform could attract new targets and segments of travelers** looking for the opportunity to interact with locals and to have an authentic local experience or whose travel motivations are linked to sharing economy ethos, as spend money that go to locals and be environmentally friendly. Finally, last but not least, **the presence of sharing houses and rooms would represent an important increase in local accommodation and lodging offer.**

The willingness to **share knowledge linked to traditions and territory and tourism related skills** should be developed with sharing economy platforms and **could be an opportunity to widen the local tourist offer since Predappio present a lack of official local guides.** Sharing knowledge represents a reliable way to bring local people with their knowledge and expertise together with travelers who are looking for an authentic cultural experience and do not overlap with any local businesses. Travel consumers are increasingly experimental and willing to try the type of new and unique tourism experiences which the sharing economy can offer. This growing desire for authentic and engaging experiences is resulting in the fragmentation of tourism markets and the emergence of new niche markets, facilitated by technology platforms.

Besides historical heritage, Predappio offers natural and environmental heritage, mining heritage, intangible cultural heritage related to traditions, arts, food and wine, that should be preserved and transmitted by local inhabitants, who are very proud of its value.

Figure 5 - Willingness to share by individual/whole community



3. SWOT ANALYSIS OF THE LOCAL TOURISM SYSTEM

Although Predappio can lever on some tangible and intangible assets that are potentially attractive for tourists, to boost a sustainable tourism development, the tourism sector and its economic potential is still scarcely unfolded (as described in the Preparatory Local Report attached). Whence the need to deeply investigate how the local resources can be effectively employed to attract and create value for visitors, why they are not currently source of economic growth, which opportunities should be caught, also in terms of valorizing underutilized or neglected assets, and which risks may arise. To this aim, the SWOT Analysis shown in the present Report was conducted.

The SWOT factors were identified through a semi-structured survey on the opinions of 66 residents in Predappio, as the involvement of the locals is crucial to co-construct a tourism development consistent with their vision of the future of their own territory. The face to face survey interviews were carried out from July until September 2020, with a special focus on the city center and sites of tourist attractions. The resulting weighted SWOT matrix is reported below.

SWOT ANALYSIS OF PREDAPPIO	
<p style="text-align: center;">STRENGTHS</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • History and cultural heritage of Predappio • Mussolini's birthplace • Rational Architecture • Nature and Landscape • Food and Sangiovese Wine • Safety and Quietness • Strategic Position 	<p style="text-align: center;">WEAKNESSES</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Monuments and tourists attraction are closed or not properly maintained • Lack of accommodation and infrastructures for tourists (e.g. camping area, parkings, info points) • Political and cultural strategies for tourism development are related to Mussolini's figure • Tourist office out of town and closed on Sundays • Few official touristic guides • Few events for tourists and young people
<p style="text-align: center;">OPPORTUNITIES</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Historical and Cultural Tourism (Mussolini's crypt and birthplace, Casa del Fascio and Rational Architecture Monuments, local artists, Romanic Architecture, Predappio Alta) • Nature based Tourism (enhancement of walking and biking paths and trails) • Wine Tourism (Sangiovese vineyards tours and tasting) • Proximity Tourism (quite, safe, strategically located). 	<p style="text-align: center;">THREATS</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Hideology (Predappio best known for being the birthplace of Mussolini) • Perception of the place in relation to its historical facts • Lack of funding and economic resources to invest in touristic infrastructures • Youth unemployment, depopulation and aging (especially in Predappio Alta)

3.1 STRENGTH OF THE LOCAL TOURISM SYSTEM

Predappio's main strength from residents' point of view, is undoubtedly connected with its **historical heritage**. A former rural town of modest size called Dovia, during Italy's Fascist period (1922-1943), it underwent a total transformation, with the construction of Predappio Nuova, on the site of Mussolini's birthplace. Along the county road, the new town developed between two symbolic focal points, the house where Mussolini was born and Palazzo Varano, connected by a whole spectrum of rational styles buildings designed by some of the most important Italian architects of that time. The regime created a pilgrimage site as a tribute to the Mussolini myth, boasting all the symbols that characterised the celebration of power. Predappio is an open-air museum, offering unique eclectic and **rational architecture** which have come to us almost unchanged.

During Fascism Predappio embodied a symbolic place, where people went on pilgrimage to honor the Duce and today it is still visited by nostalgic in particular on «three black days»: on the anniversary of the birth and the death of the former dictator (July 29 and April 28) and on the recurrence of the march on Rome (October 28). Today Predappio is still at the centre of debates on the complex legacies of Italy's Fascist past and the administration is struggling to come to terms with the past. It is a difficult space with a difficult heritage (Macdonald 2008), where the «space of nostalgia», where a yearning for the past is actively set, should be replaced with the “space of critical reflection” and deep understanding of Italian history.

It is very interesting to note that, when asked why they would choose Predappio for a trip, residents reported that they would visit **Mussolini's birthplace** and not Mussolini's Crypt, which might suggest that they feel that there is a dissonance between sustainable touristic development and nostalgic tourism. By contrast, when asked about the “infrastructural aspects that could HELP the tourism development of your town”, many of them expressed the need to reopen Mussolini's tomb.

Being Predappio a dissonant cultural heritage site, the strategic promotion of what it is considered a strength (Mussolini's birthplace, Predappio history and rational architecture) has to be planned not to enhance “dark and nostalgic tourism”, but to promote and encourage a wider view of uncomfortable and contradictory aspects of the twentieth century history. Local **cultural heritage** is the legacy of physical artefacts and intangible attributes that includes tangible culture (Borgo di Predappio Alta, Church of San Cassiano, Church of Sant'Agostino, Ex fabbrica Caproni, Sulphur Mine, just to cite a few) and intangible culture (such as folklore and oral histories).

Predappio area is rich in ecological and natural diversity and local community is aware of the potential opportunities offered by **natural environment and landscape**. Nature tourism is a growing key segment and travellers are interested in new and authentic experiences in natural landscapes, active and direct experiences as cycling and walking, trekking and fishing. The distinctive rocky ridge that forms the

Romagna hills passing by the municipalities of Meldola and Predappio, 3 million years ago was a superb coral reef. Today it is part of Predappio natural heritage, with fascinating views which preserve an important biological variety and numerous thermal springs, an excellent territory for **Sangiovese wine production**.

Food and wine tourism are increasingly important for travellers around the world, and Italy is at the top in Europe in many ways related to a type of experiential tourism that young people love. 14 million accesses, including excursions and overnight stays, and a turnover of 2.5 billion euros. These are the numbers of Wine tourism in Italy in the pre-covid-19 era. These are the highlights of the 2020 edition of the “Report on Italian Food and Wine Tourism” where it is highlighted the increasingly central role of food and wine in tourism.

Safety and quietness and **strategic position** are key words in the light of the Covid 19 pandemic that with greater social and environmental awareness, post-crisis tourists will probably choose to travel to destinations closer to their place of residence. In the context of growing insecurity and uncertainty, nearby destinations located in **safe and quiet areas**, could be considered ‘less risky’ by many potential tourists, also in the future. Staying closer to home could be a catalyst, awakening us to the value of eating locally, travelling less and just slowing down and connecting to local communities. After this crisis passes, we might learn that not travelling long distances didn’t stop us travelling; it just enlivened us to the richness of local travel.

3.2 WEAKNESSES OF THE LOCAL TOURISM SYSTEM

Residents of Predappio affirm that the main weakness of the local tourism system is represented by **monuments and tourists’ attractions that are closed or not properly maintained**. Even if the local offer of tangible cultural and historical heritage is wide and diversified, many attractions are not valorized or are inaccessible. Excluding Mussolini’s crypt, which has been closed two years ago due to a controversy between the former mayor and Mussolini’s family, there are many other monuments, churches and buildings, that could enhance the tourists' overall travel experiences if they were open or restored.

Rocca delle Caminate is closed on weed days and opens only on Saturdays and Sundays during the summer months, while Rocca di Predappio Alta is always closed. Sant’Agostino’ Church, located in Fiumana and one of the rare examples of Romanic architecture in Forlì valley, which hosts a XVII century fresco portraying a death dance and a XVII fresco portraying "Immacolata Concezione" (in the apsis), is not accessible, Casa del Fascio is under restoration and the Aeronautical Establishment Caproni is in ruins.

The lack of accommodation and infrastructures for tourists (e.g. camping areas, parking, info point) of lodging facilities are also considered weaknesses by locals. Tourism infrastructure includes many services, necessary to meet the needs of tourists and increase satisfaction during their stay at the destination and are the basis of tourism development, indispensable for long-term tourism growth and the general progress of tourist destinations.

Social infrastructure as **accommodation facilities** in the form of rooms to accommodate tourists, hotels, restaurants, shops, information points and other necessary facilities and environmental infrastructure in natural reserves in the form of benches, water fountains, refreshment areas, indication signs etc are very limited in Predappio . As already mentioned, Predappio offers an inadequate choice of accommodation and lodging facilities and the “accommodation sharing economy”, that refers to local property owners who are making their homes available for short-term rentals, could supply the limited options of accommodation.

Camping and caravan tourism are another market that should be further investigated, as the camping market is expected to grow of close to 8% during the period 2019–2025. Caravan holidays are proving to be particularly safe as a caravan allows people to travel safely and maintain social distancing, plus it can be much more affordable than an international holiday which is important in a time where people are watching their money and worried about the recession. Moreover, caravan holidays also give people great freedom and the chance to explore outdoors and unlimited spaces in social distancing.

Tourist information office out of town and closed on Sundays afternoon and lack of official touristic guides are also considered weaknesses for the future development of tourism.

Predappio tourist information point is located in Palazzo Varano, the local town hall, that is not in the centre of town, the most visited place by tourists (close to B. Mussolini’s birthplace, shops and bars). Furthermore, the local tourist info point is open only in the morning and residents suggest that, especially during weekends and in the summer season, it should be opened also in the afternoon. Visitor Information Centres play an important role in destination tourism marketing, mainly with brochures supply and staff consults service for the visitors. Residents think that tourist information office should be located in central Predappio and opened for longer hours (manly on Saturdays and Sundays) in order to suggest visitors places to be visited and experience to be done. Information is the lifeblood of tourism industry and tourist info points are primarily responsible for promoting local tourism products and services, affects the progression and outcome of the trip and consequently, have direct impacts upon the economic, social, and recreational well-being of the region in which they are located. An essential element for **tourism development** in any **tourist** destination is the participation of active stakeholders and their collaborations. Among them **tourist guides provide an important part of the interface between the host destination and visitors** and the quality of services they provide correlates strongly with levels of overall tourist satisfaction. The lack of tourist guide in Predappio could be explained by the fact that tour guide

in Italy is a very qualified position that is licensed and requires an expensive course and, at the end of the course, a tough exam given only once a year, and by the low remuneration and uncertainty of this profession.

Political and cultural strategies for tourism development related to Mussolini's figure might be related to the lack of **diversification of tourist products, as food and wine, nature-based tourism, active tourism**. The diversification of the primary tourism product means offering more diverse products, which potentially adds value by broadening the experiences of existing tourists at the destination or attracting different types of tourists who might not otherwise have visited.

3.3 OPPORTUNITIES FOR TOURISM DEVELOPMENT

Historical and cultural tourism (Mussolini's crypt and birthplace, Casa del Fascio and rational architecture buildings, local artists, Romanic Architecture, Predappio Alta) are considered the principal drivers for tourism development. As already stated in this paper, a distinction between dark historic tourist and conscious and educational tourism is mandatory in order to define the touristic image of the destination and to attract more visitors. Being Predappio a dissonant cultural heritage site, the strategic promotion of what it is considered a strength (Mussolini's birthplace, Predappio history and rational architecture) has to be planned not to enhance "dark and nostalgic tourism", but to promote and encourage a wider view of uncomfortable and contradictory aspects of the twentieth century history.

Rational architecture, even if it might sound as a dissonant or uncomfortable term, as it refers to the urban landscape of totalitarian regimes (either Fascist or Soviet inspired), represents a pivotal asset to promote the architecture and urban design left by these regimes for their quality possibly with a multi perspective approach, allowing for diverse interpretations of its dissonant heritage. In this direction, the ongoing collaboration with the project ATRIUM, a cultural itinerary, recognized by the Council of Europe in 2014 and recertified in 2018, dedicated to the theme of the Architecture of Totalitarian Regimes in Europe's Urban Memory, must be renewed and strengthened.

Romanic Religious Architecture, Predappio Alta and the patrimony and tradition of **local artists** such as Mastrolupo could reinforce the cultural image of Predappio, attract new visitors and enhance both the overall tourist experience and the total length of stay.

Nature-based tourism, considered one of the most rapidly developing form of tourism, represents a viable tool in the process of destination development and it can generate motivating economic, social and environmental benefits. Nature based and green tourism are often in relation with sustainable tourism and eco-tourism and represents a segment of tourists in pursuit of leisure activities in the countryside. Nature-based activities are likely to be small scale, locally owned with consequentially low impact, leakages and an elevated percentage of profits preserved locally. Furthermore, it pays considerable

attention to negative environmental and social impacts and choose destinations that maximised linkages to other sectors of the local economy, such as agriculture and involvement of local community. The EXCOVER Project, aiming at improving its residents' life and economic conditions, while preserving the local cultural identity and environmental resources, represents a pivotal occasion to increase the participation of local community and preserve and protect local heritage and natural environment. In this perspective the creation and enhancement of walking and biking itineraries can be considered as an opportunity to renovate visitors' attractions and services and to develop a special sense of place sensitive to this unique natural environment both for visitors and residents.

Neighbouring Foreste Casentinesi National Park, Predappio excels for its landscape and untouched nature that could be visited by foot or with the mountain bike. The routes, paths and hiking trails should however be created, promoted and identified with special signs and complemented by a range of facilities to serve the visitors. Maps and guides should be published with detailed description of the routes, all the characteristics of the itineraries, such as length, height, difficulty, necessary time and recommended period, as well as any support structures and things to see. Additional online maps, apps and gpx track would represent an added value to nature-based tourism products.

Wine tourism (Sangiovese vineyards tours and wine tasting) and **proximity tourism** are also considered opportunities for further tourism development by Predappio residents. Today, wine and food are relevant component in travel choices and tourists take into consideration the presence of food and wine experiences when choosing the destination.

Predappio, land of Sangiovese, has plenty of wine excellences, with both small and big local companies producing the famous local wine. The different vineyards, all different in size, concept and management, offer myriad wines of fantastic value and quality produced, with a policy of control over the environmental impact and through the recovery of autochthonous vine variety and of long-standing cultivation.

Food and wine can play a key role in influencing the overall branding and positioning of a destination and should be considered part of the destination marketing mix, because they contribute to give a sense of place and allow tourists to literally taste the destination, coming directly into contact with local culture. Niche scale food and wine products can represent a route to the future, but cannot be taken for granted and need experience economy strategies and policies to be adopted, as: collaboration across different stages of wine-food value chains, exploration of niches in the wine-food sector that have potential to generate new innovative products and services and last, but not least, a strong and long lasting collaboration and cooperation finally collaboration among local stakeholders.

Proximity tourism, understood it as doing tourism and travelling near home and in less crowded destinations, is the new entry trend in Covid 19 era. This prediction is based on the fact that with greater social and environmental awareness, post-crisis tourists will probably choose to travel to destinations closer to their place of residence and away from crowded locations. In the context of growing insecurity

and uncertainty, nearby destinations could be considered 'less risky' by many potential tourists who, having been noticeably affected by the economic crisis arising from the health crisis, have seen their purchasing power reduced. Added to this, there may in fact be restrictions on international (long-distance) travel, at least for a while. Faced with an uncertain future, destinations that appear to be in a less disadvantaged, more resilient, position are those that have a more diversified offer, are less dependent on a particular market and have opted for qualitative rather than quantitative criteria.

3.4 THREATS TO TOURIST DEVELOPMENT

Ideology and perception of the place in relation to its historical facts are considered the main threads that can damage Predappio as a touristic destination. As the birthland of Mussolini, Predappio's image and perception are inevitably connected with Fascism and the town is considered a sanctuary for the cult of the Duce. As a matter of fact, Benito Mussolini transformed his place of birth, the village of Predappio, into a site for the celebration of his own political cult. It is impossible to escape the subject of fascism in contemporary Predappio. On the main street, there are shops which sell what are indirectly referred to as "souvenirs" or "gadgets": t-shirts with fascist slogans, marble and bronze busts of Mussolini, war memorabilia. Architecturally, Predappio is entirely characterized by rationalism since most of it was built in that period by architects such as Florestano di Fausto. Every year different pilgrimages bring around thousands of nostalgic visitors wearing uniforms, or fez hats and bearing Tricolore flags.

Lack of funding and economic resources to invest in touristic infrastructures is another thread that. In an effort to point to the importance of growth and competitiveness in the tourism sector, it should be primarily recognized the fact that tourism, as a phenomenon, as already stated, depends on a very wide range of factors, and that it greatly affects the direction of the overall development of the area, and society in general. Tourism infrastructure is the basis of tourism development, as well as a base for utilization of destination resources. The importance of tourism infrastructure is reflected in the fact that it can contribute to increasing the efficiency of production and distribution of tourism services, and, in some cases, such as remote destinations, even increase the supply of tourism services. Tourism infrastructure includes ancillary and complementary facilities, equipment, systems, processes, and resources necessary for the functioning of every tourist destination as accommodation facilities, hotels, campsites, restaurants, sports facilities, parking, museums which strengthen the attractiveness of a tourist destination, and, in the long term, tourism competitiveness. Due to the unpredictable impact that Covid 19 will have on national and international economy, it's very difficult to forecast future investment in tourism infrastructures. Once again, due to the future possible lack of economic resources

to invest in tourism, sharing economy, an economic system that involves individuals renting out or sharing their personal property including their homes and cars,) represent an agile alternative to be ready to welcome tourists both during the pandemic and mostly when it will be over.

4. CONCLUDING REMARKS

The face-to-face interviews conducted in Predappio and addressed to residents have revealed important insights for the prosecution and development of the EXCOVER Project.

Predappio presents itself as a WELCOMING COMMUNITY, an extremely positive element as it can impact upon the way tourists perceive a destination. It can be assumed that tourists visiting destinations where residents are more positive to tourism receptiveness are possibly going to be more satisfied with the tourist experience.

COMMUNITY PARTICIPATION is high, probably because, as Predappio is already a highly visited place, residents are used to get in touch and work with visitors.

Unfortunately the COMMUNITY PARTICIPATION values does not match or, more appropriately, does not have the same values of the component PERSONAL SHARING ATTITUDE, that corresponds to the "the self-reported willingness to make use of sharing economy platforms to share something of his own with visitors". It might be supposed that the lower value of PERSONAL SHARING ATTITUDE, if compared with COMMUNITY PARTICIPATION and RESPONDENT ENGAGEMENT, could be attributed to the influence of the COVID 19 emergency, that is causing widespread concern, fear and stress, all of which are natural and normal reactions to the changing and uncertain situation that everyone finds themselves in

In conclusion, assess the availability of the local community to participate in the local tourism development and to share own underutilized assets, as emerged from the SWOT survey, making explicit reference to the effects on the prosecution of the project.

Indisputably, accommodation sharing and knowledge sharing related to skills and territory are the assets that local communities, both in Predappio and , are more available to share; the preference accorded to accommodation sharing is probably related to the fact that this form of collaborative consumption has rapidly gain popularity thanks to online platforms as Airbnb, which represents a transformative innovation within the tourism accommodation industry. Lodging facilities shortage is one of the main weaknesses reported in the SWOT analysis that could be balanced out by shared rooms and houses provided by locals. Residents also declared to be willing to share knowledge of territorial history, traditions, environment. The willingness to share knowledge linked to traditions and territory is a very interesting asset which

should be developed with sharing economy platforms as Predappio can offer visitors only 2 official local touristic guides. Sharing knowledge represents a reliable way to bring local people with their knowledge and expertise together with travelers who are looking for an authentic cultural experience and do not overlap with any local businesses.

Based on the external opportunities and threats, highlighted in the SWOT matrix, some possible tourism products could be created and leveraged to increase the tourist inflows.

Predappio area is rich in ecological and natural diversity and local community is aware of the potential opportunities offered by **natural environment and landscape**. Nature tourism is a growing key segment and travellers are interested in new and authentic experiences natural landscapes, active and direct experiences as cycling and walking, trekking and fishing.

Food and wine tourism are increasingly important for travellers around the world, and Italy is at the top in Europe in many ways related to a type of experiential tourism that young people love. 14 million accesses, including excursions and overnight stays, and a turnover of 2.5 billion euros. These are the numbers of Wine tourism in Italy in the pre-covid-19 era. These are the highlights of the 2020 edition of the “Report on Italian Food and Wine Tourism” where it is highlighted the increasingly central role of food and wine in tourism.

Safety and quietness and **strategic position** are key words in the light of the Covid 19 pandemic that with greater social and environmental awareness, post-crisis tourists will probably choose to travel to destinations closer to their place of residence. In the context of growing insecurity and uncertainty, nearby destinations located in **safe and quiet areas**, could be considered ‘less risky’ by many potential tourists, also in the future.