



**Proceedings of the  
2nd International Conference on  
Tourism Research  
University Portucalense  
Porto, Portugal  
14-15 March 2019**



**Edited by  
Cristina Sousa, Isabel Vaz de Freitas  
and Jorge Marques**

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**Hosted By**

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# Business Model of the Hiking Route via Transalpina

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**Abstract:** Route as a tourism product can be perceived as a network of businesses where the existence of social networks is one of the determinants of the product competitiveness. Routes are made up of large numbers of micro-destinations, each of which is potentially willing to integrate its hotspots into the main trail's attraction. Collaboration among all the institutions, touristic organizations, private stakeholders and public bodies is crucial to keep the route alive. The use of business models in tourism is explored here through the case of the Via Transalpina, a transnational hiking route ranging from Trieste (IT) to Oberstdorf (DE) and covering a length of about 720 km (260 hours of hiking time). The business model of the Via Transalpina is the final result of the analytical process of studying the product, the target group, and the characteristics of local tourism supply and the creative process of defining a vision, mission and strategic objectives for the Via Transalpina. Along this process, the auto ethnographic work of experiencing the route, as well as the workshops held with the key stakeholders provided opportunities to understand the needs and arise the interests of all sides. The analytical and product development methods developed for the Via Transalpina along the creation of the business model for digital product are innovative and specific for route destinations.

**Keywords:** business model, hiking route, transnational cooperation, Via Transalpina

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## 1. Understanding the theoretical framework of the business model

The concept of business models has been widely discussed in the literature; however it is still relatively poorly understood. This might also be the reason why no clear definition of the phenomenon exists yet. Nevertheless, there have been numerous attempts to capture the true meaning of a business model. As Chesbrough and Rosenbloom (2002) posit, an Internet search on the term 'business model' resulted in 107 000 references and the number is still rising nowadays. In 1957 the idea appeared in an academic article for the first time (Bellman, Clark, Malcom, Craft & Ricciardi, 1957), however the actual hype around this buzzword is still a relatively young phenomenon and can be traced back to the dot.com boom at the end of the 1990s.

However to attain a thorough understanding of its true meaning, it is advisable to start at the beginning by evaluating the two components of the concept, namely 'business' on the one hand and 'model' on the other hand. The latter is defined as "Graphical, mathematical (symbolic), physical, or verbal representation or simplified version of a concept, phenomenon, relationship, structure, system, or an aspect of the real world." (Business Dictionary, 2014). The former describing "the activity of buying and selling goods and services, or a particular company that does this, or work you do to earn money" (Cambridge Dictionary, 2014). In the literature this led to a distinction into two differing views on the business model ontology. The first idea was to focus on the way companies do business (e.g. Galper, 2001), while in contrast, scientist such as Osterwalder (2004) put an emphasis on the model aspect providing a *conceptualization of the way firms create value in form of understandable frameworks consisting of varying elements and relationships that describe the organization*. In regard to the first view, Timmers (1998) defines a business model as the architecture for the product or service which involves the different business actors, their roles and potential benefits as well as a description of the resources needed for revenues. Another approach is trying to see the business model as writing a story about the company (Magretta, 2002), which answers the most important questions already stated by Drucker (1995): who is the customer? And what does the customer value? Furthermore, a good business model also needs to take into account the financial aspect indicating how the firm makes money and how to offer an attractive cost structure to customers. Concerning the second view, putting an emphasis on the model aspect, literature offers a variety of so called meta-models including different elements and relationships which describe how a company does business. One example can be found in the studies of Chesbrough and Rosenbloom (2002) who indicate that a successful business model depends on the valuable commercialization of technical potential and therefore describes a business model as a "mediating construct between technology and economic value" (p.532). Furthermore, *in their perspective a business model should include all of the following elements: value proposition, market segment, value chain as well as cost structure*



*and profit potential*. Another example is given by Al-Debei & Avison (2010) who describe a business model in terms of *a unified framework including the 4V* (value proposition, value architecture, value network, value finance).

Throughout the years there have been several attempts to create meta-models describing all important components that are valuable for the success of an organization (e.g. Gordijn & Akkermans, 2003; Amit & Zott, 2001; Dubosson-Torbay, Osterwalder & Pigneur, 2002). Most of these authors put an emphasis on the 4V expanding their scope by adding additional aspects, but in general they all come back to the basic four.

According to Morris et al. (2005, p. 727) business model has six fundamental components: Value proposition, customer, internal processes/competences, external positioning, and economic model and personal/investor factors. Osterwalder & Pigneur (2010) describe the business model as set of nine elements. The analysis of the business model as a framework helps understanding its component and their interrelatedness, and in turn makes the business model itself a useful tool for the management and optimisation of business decisions (Hacklin and Wallnöfer, 2012). Although business model definitions vary considerable, it is possible according to Stampfl (2016) catalyse five different roles attributed to business models by academics. Business models as a real-life phenomenon, as model, as a tool to structure organizations, as a mediator between technology and markets and as a strategic variable. Business model as a strategic tool is implemented also by Mohammadi et. al. (2018, p. 21) and their creative tourism business model suggests four components, which must be prepared – org ware, human ware, software and hardware.

The specific role of a business model is highly context specific and thus depends on the particular focus of inquiry. The route can be considered as important transnational tourist product, which should provide value for customers and stakeholders. The business model in this case should articulate the logic, the data and other evidence, which support the value for customers and stakeholders. The objective of this paper is therefore to assess the following research question: How to develop a business model for a transnational route? As a consequence, the main aim is to investigate the process of business model creation and the feature of a business model especially designed for a transnational route as digital product.

## **2. Case study description: the Via Transalpina and the original Via Alpina Yellow Trail™**

The Via Transalpina is geographically corresponding and historically developing from an existing and already branded hiking route, namely the Via Alpina Yellow Trail™. The brand name Via Alpina™ refers to a network of five walking trails across the eight countries of the European Alps, covering more than 5000 km and divided into 342 day stages ([www.viaalpina.org](http://www.viaalpina.org)). The Via Alpina Yellow Trail™ is one of these five routes, crossing the three countries of Germany, Austria and Italy. The route was conceived in 1999, officially launched in 2002 thanks to an Interreg project and then recognised by the Environment Ministries of eight Alpine countries of the Alpine Convention. In 2007, a second Interreg project helped to further develop the trail and its promotion, including a first mapping tool. Since 2014 the Via Alpina Yellow Trail™ has been managed by the International Commission for the Protection of the Alps, CIPRA International. The existing route included 40 stages of different length and difficulty, ranging from south to north. It covered a length of about 720 km, corresponding to a total hiking time of 260 hours. Variety and richness in natural and cultural beauty were recognised as the strengths of the trail, both along the route and in the connected destinations. The trail crosses several epochs of human life in the Alps, from the prehistorical mummies of Ötzi and Mondeval, to the more recent medieval monasteries in Schnalstal/Val Senales or in the Province of Udine; from the histories of soldiers during World War I in the Dolomites, to the different UNESCO World Heritage Sites, among which the Dolomites are the most well-known. To enhance this value, some promotional material was already available: a travel guide with descriptions of the stages previously developed and a book entitled “Via Alpina – Gelber Weg: Von den Julischen bis in die Allgäuer Alpen”. However, the existing digital map available on the official website needed an update, both in terms of content and GPS data. Additionally, the trail was lacking a business model that could encourage territorial cooperation and businesses and it was having a low frequency of visits and a scarce promotion by local destination management organisations. This was the reason why the SilViAlp project consortium, funded through the European Union’s COSME Programme for Small and Medium Enterprises, decided to further develop The Via Alpina Yellow Trail™ within the time frame of the years 2014 to 2016. The further development was targeted mainly to senior travellers, because of their increasing number.



### 3. Research Methodology

The presented business model of the Via Transalpina has been developed in the framework of the SilViAlp project as the final result of a long series of analyses of the product, the target group, the characteristics of local tourism supply and the vision for the Via Transalpina, its mission and strategic objectives. A mixed method approach was implemented to analyse and develop the trail (Johnson, Onwuegbuzie, & Turner, 2007).

The selection of a mixed method research design is motivated both by the research problem and the research question. Concerning the research problem, the business model literature makes reference both to qualitative and quantitative data source to create organisational and financial ‘architecture’ of a business. Both the assessment of the process and the output of the business model require a mix of subjective and objective knowledge generation, with measurements of technical route features and interpretation of unique selling propositions of the route. Finally, a concurrent mixed method research design was chosen, i.e. the quantitative (QUAN) approach and the qualitative (QUAL) approach occurred at the same time and the complementary QUAL + QUAN perspectives were explored together to answer the question on business model development for routes. The table 1 illustrates the mix of quantitative and qualitative research methods, as well as the amount of involved persons. Overall, quantitative methods were used to understand the tangible features of the route (the ‘hardware’), i.e. the location of the trail, the length and steepness of the stages, the attraction points available along or close to the route. Conversely, the qualitative methods were aimed at understanding and socialising the qualitative features of the route (i.e. the ‘software’), i.e. the perceptions, sensations, challenges and encounters possible along the trail. Workshops were also moments of self-reflection, where stakeholder could evaluate the past activities on the Via Alpina Yellow Trail and commit for new developments thanks to the Via Transalpina project. These data collection methods were all sources for the development of a SWOT analysis of the trail.

**Table 1:** Research methods, subjects involved and description of activities

Research method	QUAN vs. QUAL	N. of subjects involved	Description of the activities
GIS Mapping and calculation of technical route features	QUAN	1	Technical calculation of distances, precise routes, steepnesses and points to access the route by public transport.
Telephone survey to local stakeholders	QUAN	82 valid questionnaires (out of 125 invited institutions)	The survey addressed the following topics: general information on tourism flows in the area; main tourist motivation; available tourist services, with specific reference to those applying to hikers, and existing knowledge about, and marketing of the original Via Alpina Yellow Trail™.
Auto-ethnography	QUAL	1	Hike of one person along the whole route, with collection of visual material and development of subjective measures related to: the perception of comfort; the perception of the attractiveness/beauty of the landscape; the perceived cultural value of the route; the perceived inspiring power of the route
Workshops	QUAL	100 stakeholders during 5 workshops hold in San Vito di Cadore (IT), Moggio Udinese (IT), Bovec (SLO), Trieste (IT), Karthaus (IT).	The workshops encouraged interested stakeholders to actively participate in the implementation process of the project, and to validate previous results.

Source: Own elaboration.

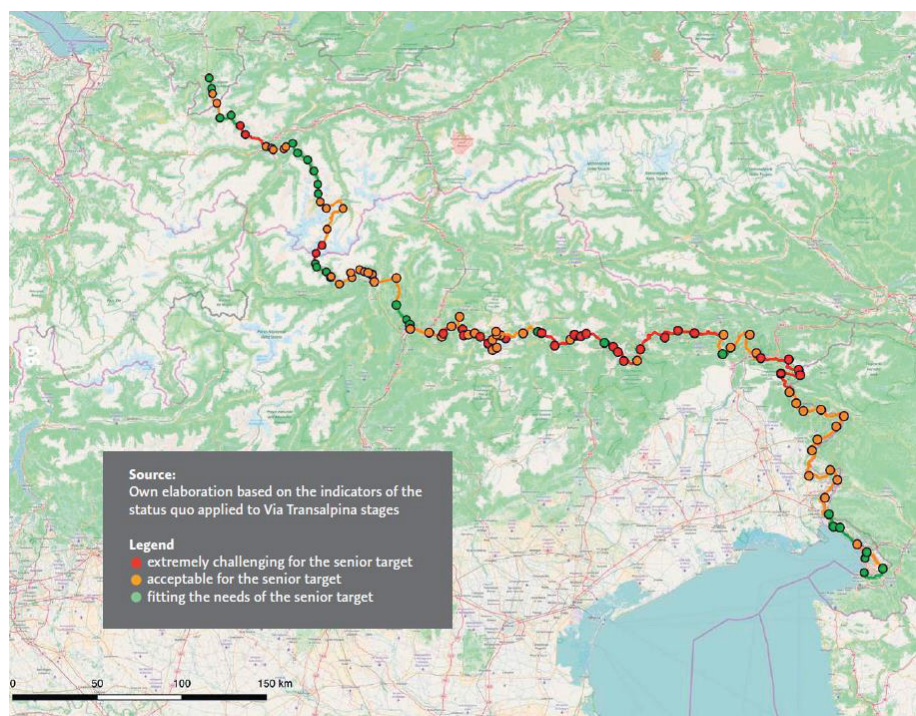
### 4. Research findings and Business Model

The adoption of the different research methods enabled to shape a new product resulting from the SilViAlp project on the original Via Alpina Yellow Trail™: the Via Transalpina. An all-in-one product for individual travellers, with special attention for the needs of 55+ hikers in terms of effort, comfort, safety and learning opportunities. The all-in-one product is not sold as a package, but is offered on a website or a mobile App (for iOS and Android) and is personalized through these tools, while all booking references to complete the booking are provided on external websites. Each detail of the product is personalized by the end user, according to the interest in the geographical area, specific topics or based on the degree of fitness. The high personalization allows one to adapt the existing route to fit individual needs, both in a technical and thematic

sense. The configurability of the route according to the target's degree of fitness, as well as the possibility to personalize their own Via Transalpina depending on their own cultural or natural interests are therefore a very powerful tool to increase the accessibility and affordability of the route. The high personalization is achieved by splitting the trail into minimum geographical units (from one overnight opportunity to the next closest one), classifying each unit according to its degree of difficulty based on objective parameters, evaluating thematic highlights and developing a digital tool that enables customization of their "own" Via Transalpina according to the consumer's own needs. This idea, as a secondary result, maximises the occupancy of bed spaces, since minimum units correspond to the distance between two overnight possibilities and specific stages might be formed by grouping several units, depending also on room availability on site. Based on the product developed, it was possible to shape the business model features. The map below (Figure 1) shows the update of GPS data and visualizes the encoding process of minimum length units across the route.

A delicate aspect to consider when presenting the business model is the organisational structure that is and will be in charge of implementing the strategic plan as well as the time frame of the SilViAlp project. In fact, the consortium of the project was working until the end of November 2016 and will also be in charge of implementing part of the strategic actions in the 3 years after the project ends, mainly with reference to digital tool optimization, marketing and updating. After this date, the effectiveness of the model, and eventually the evolution into a business plan, will depend on the internal provision or external recruitment of grants. Therefore, the business model presented in this paper will focus mainly on the digital tools offered within the SilViAlp project designed to help visitors experience the Via Transalpina (i.e. on the App and website), and only when strictly necessary does it make reference to potential strategic objectives of the route as a whole.

Nevertheless, it should be clear that the strategic objectives and the derived business model presented below are coherent with the overall aims of sustainable valorisation of the trail shared by the Via Alpina International Steering Committee.



**Figure 1:** Digital Map of the Via Transalpina

Source: Own elaboration.

#### *4.1.1 Mission and vision of the Via Transalpina*

The business model is based on the mission and vision of the Via Transalpina. The vision that local stakeholders, as well as project partners and experts have shared is the following:

*The Via Transalpina is a well-known, customizable, designed-for-all trail, which connects four Alpine countries, many cultures and a variety of Alpine lifestyles and landscapes.*

The main barriers to overcome in order to make this vision real are knowledge and supply quality barriers. Knowledge barriers refer to the notoriety of the trail for local stakeholders and tourists, as well as precise information about the route and on other available facilities and tourist attractions; supply quality refers to signposting, and also the quality, capacity and comfort of hospitality services and the presence of additional services, such as luggage transportation. According to these two main types of barriers, the mission of the SilViAlp partners is the following:

*Increasing the accessibility, the comfort and awareness of the Via Transalpina, as well as inspiring potential hikers to do the Transalpina Experience, crossing the Alps and their natural and cultural beauties.*

The mission is transformed into some main strategic objectives. Strategic objectives are expressed in a Balanced Scorecard. The Balanced Scorecard represents a background study for the business model.

#### ***4.1.2 A value proposition of the Via Transalpina***

The value proposition of the Via Transalpina, derived from vision and mission, can be expressed as follows: Experience the variety of Alpine environments. Cross the Alps on your personalized Via Transalpina The via Transalpina allows a unique hiking experience on the trail, based on a detailed database of digital and GPS information, a high degree of personalization and a reliable App-based system to cover the distance between Oberstdorf and Trieste. Compared to other long routes, the Via Transalpina:

- Is a tailor-made route, which individual hikers can organise at their will;
- Can be experienced as a long distance hiking trail, but can also be understood as a collection of shorter stages of hiking experiences, to be undertaken as weekly breaks;
- Crosses a variety of landscapes, cultures and languages, which share the Alpine denomination, but are very different in their expressions;
- Accesses two outstanding World Heritage Sites ( Dolomites UNESCO WHS and Cividale UNESCO WHS)
- Connects the highest Alpine peaks with the Mediterranean atmosphere of the Adriatic Sea.

#### ***4.1.3 The target of the Via Transalpina***

The target customer of the Via Transalpina is a hiker aged 55+, with a good or medium level of training. Using the traditional segmentation of the senior target group, this hiker is a baby boomer or young senior, who tends to be active in their lifestyle, familiar with digital technologies and interested in hiking. He/she is used to planning hiking holidays autonomously and uses a Smartphone in his/her daily life for communication and searching for information. He/she is fascinated by natural beauty and by rural culture and this is the reason why he/she likes undertaking multiple hiking tours during the year. He/she often travels off peak season, since a quiet environment and wild nature are a benefit to his/ her hiking holiday. He/she normally hikes in a small group of friends, sometimes as a couple. When he/she considers taking a hiking tour, he/she collects all the relevant information on the Internet, and only rarely buys books or travel guides.

#### ***4.1.4 The key resources and partners of the Via Transalpina***

The *key resources* for the Via Transalpina are all assets (natural, cultural, human) required to offer and deliver the value proposition to the customer segments. The presence of natural environments with a particular status (protected areas, World Heritage Sites) enhances the significance of the key resources for the customer.

Human resources, in terms of inhabitants of the territories crossed by the trail, represent the highest potential for this customer segment, both because the Alpine environment is a populated mountain area with a long tradition, and because traditions, expressions of local culture and manufacture are at the heart of the interests of the target group. Moreover, digital technologies (APIs in particular) need to be considered as key resources for the success of the project, since they allow the personalization of the product itself. A last key resource for the success of the digital product is high-quality descriptive and illustrative material, which enables digitally visualizing what in reality is on site.

The key partners to transform the outcome of the SilViAlp project into a successful product are not only locally based stakeholders involved in the product development and marketing of the trail, but also international stakeholders, such as the exiting International Secretariat of the Via Alpina managed by CIPRA International. The technology partner that develops and maintains the website and App is also crucial.

#### *4.1.5 The key activities for the Via Transalpina*

The key activities that should be undertaken for the success of the Via Transalpina product, its sustainable development and marketing include awareness rising, both in hikers' communities and in local stakeholders, as well as management of the digital tools (website and App), identity management, marketing and communication. The popularity of the trail among local tourism operators and Destination Management Organizations is quite low. Therefore, in order to transform the digital map and the mobile App into a success, the involvement of local stakeholders who are willing to promote the trail by embedding a personalized map in their own website will be crucial. The same strategic importance applies to international key partners, such as the Via Alpina International Secretariat, which should be involved in sharing the digital map on the official Via Alpina website, in order to avoid double (and not precise enough) information sources. Cooperation with the Via Alpina International Secretariat is also pursued in the identity management. There should be coherence between the original Via Alpina Yellow Trail<sup>TM</sup> in its original branding and the new product developed within the project, the Via Transalpina. Marketing and communication should take place with the support of digital platforms, such as Facebook or Instagram, with the aim of increasing knowledge about the trail, and the tool to personalize it. Personalizations, together with Alpine beauty, are the two main aspects to focus on in marketing.

#### *4.1.6 Customer relationships and communication channels for the Via Transalpina*

Customer relationships are established between the technology partner of SilViAlp and hikers, with the aim of collecting their travel experiences, as well as obtaining feedback on the maintenance of the route, possible additional points of interest, and new functionalities of the App. The website, the App and the dedicated Facebook page are all instruments to create a community of interested hikers, which allows not only bidirectional relationships with the information provider, but also consumer to consumer exchanges of feedback, inputs and suggestions.

The value proposition is delivered to customers through digital communication and the distributions of the Via Transalpina App. Consumers (hikers) create the Via Transalpina product mainly through digital media platforms, particularly through the App and the website. The direct involvement of users is possible through comments, which, according to the principles of web 2.0, allow continuous development and updates of the information as well as community building among hikers. Moreover, the digital map is expected to be embedded into tourism boards' and accommodation providers' websites, so that the product is widespread among different highly visited websites. The Facebook page works as additional digital source to promote the website and the App, and should be a source for inspiration for potential hikers.

#### *4.1.7 Governance system behind the Via Transalpina*

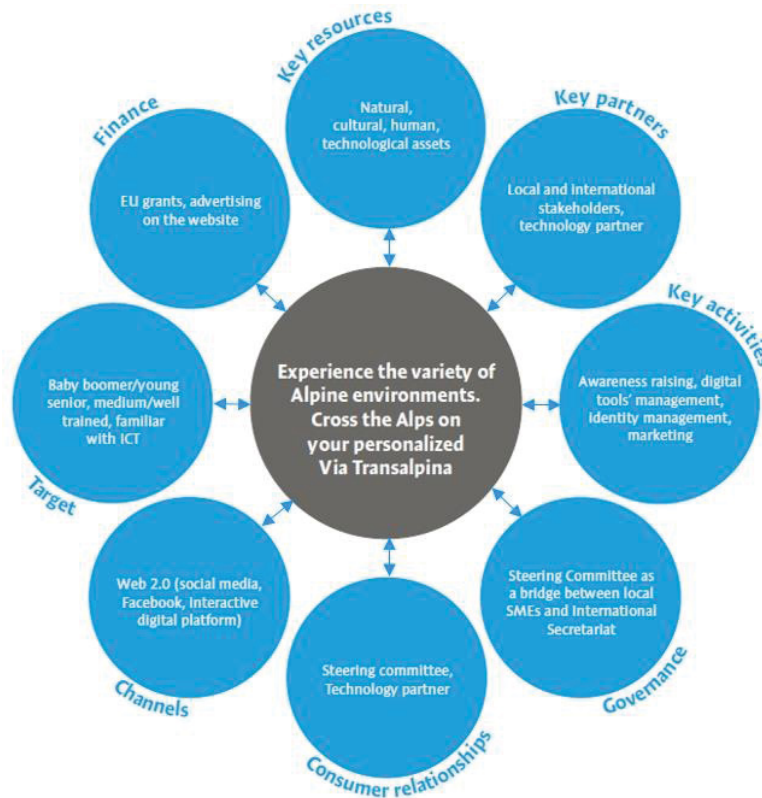
The governance of project partners and local/international stakeholders of the Via Alpina<sup>TM</sup> is quite complex.

As far as project activities are concerned, the technology partner has committed to managing the digital platforms (App, website) free during the three years after project closure. Moreover, the Lead Partner will continue to coordinate the Steering Committee of the project for three years, with the voluntary participation of the remaining project partners. This pool of experts should form a team to support the Via Alpina International Secretariat, bridging the gap between international institutions and local tourism stakeholders and enhancing business opportunities along the trail. Once the project is finished, it is important to define a framework for continuing the project work and integrating results into the International Secretariat network.

#### *4.1.8 Financial issues on the economic sustainability of the Via Transalpina*

The creation, testing and launching phase of the Via Transalpina map and App were financed by the project grants, amounting in total to about € 250,000. After project closure, maintaining the digital tools as well as promoting and updating the App (corresponding to a staff cost of approximately € 5,000 per year) will partly be covered through internal funding by the technology partner of SilViAlp and partly through the introduction of advertising banners into the website. The Steering committee will continue working on a voluntary basis.





**Figure 2:** Business model

Source: Own elaboration.

## 5. Conclusions

SilViAlp's high quality lessons are principles extrapolated from multiple sources, during hiking, the participatory processes, the research on existing initiatives for senior tourism, and finally the preparation of the business model. The knowledge acquired on route management and the working schemes adopted for SilViAlp can be adapted and replicated in new scenarios along the Via Alpina Trails and in other hiking trails. Below are listed the main lessons learned during the project.

1. *A hiking route can only be studied after hiking on it.* The most powerful analytical tool during the project SilViAlp was hiking itself. This helped with understanding the technical challenges of the trail, but also revealed the most attractive landscapes and the most interesting attraction points, the most suitable accommodation places and the variety of culinary offers. Without the hiking experience and the evaluation of the trail through adequate indicators, there would have been no feeling for the possible organizational, management and technical challenges that may need to be faced.
2. *There is no route without hikers.* To achieve success and to ensure a good maintenance status, a route needs to be hiked. Information and adequate technical devices are basic elements for hikers to start a long hike. In this sense, SilViAlp has clearly made a huge contribution to increasing the accessibility of the original Via Alpina Yellow Trail<sup>TM</sup>. Workshops during the SilViAlp project have also helped us to better understand who is the real average hiker along the Via Alpina Yellow Trail<sup>TM</sup>. Digital technologies allow continuous planning of the journey (e.g. room availability check, weather forecast, etc.) and reduce the necessity of advanced planning. Nevertheless, the SilViAlp workshops also revealed that some seniors are not familiar with digital technologies or are not willing to use them. A last aspect concerning hikers' needs relates to off-season offers. An increasing effort needs to be made in terms of guaranteeing minimum services even in shoulder seasons, especially in the most remote areas.
3. *Senior hikers are not all the same.* Literature and previous studies or projects confirm that SilViAlp might be the right project for some of the emerging targets within the senior age group: retiring baby boomers, young seniors and new-age seniors. These targets may be interested in technology and innovation and at the same time they may have the right physical conditions to hike along a long hiking

trail. Indeed, baby boomers do not consider themselves as seniors in the true sense. They feel younger than their real chronological age, and do not want to identify or mix with other older people. Moreover, although this generation is greying, they are increasingly enjoying active lifestyles, and travel remains a significant component of their lives. Young seniors seek new creative personal challenges and experiences that enhance their self-actualization, rather than bargain price packages. The new-age elderly are more independent and they would be less receptive to trips where everything is “done for them” than other groups of older consumers.

4. *Tourism facilities are necessary, but not enough.* Good tourism facilities (comfortable accommodation, well-maintained routes) are basic requirements for hikers, especially for senior hikers. Without them, it is very difficult to attract the target. Nevertheless, the competition among routes is increasing and a good basic infrastructure is not enough to achieve success. There are plenty of “must hike” routes, e.g. E5, Alte Vie, etc., and hikers will choose which trail to hike based on several factors, which go far beyond the simple existence of basic infrastructure. A Unique Selling Proposition (USP) needs to be identified for the route, to achieve better positioning of the trail among the hikers’ community. Basic infrastructure (trail difficulty, access by public means of transport, accommodation facilities) is helping to shape the product, but the interactions with local farmers or shepherds add additional value to the hikers’ experience. Moreover, reliable and comprehensive information is crucial to increase the perception of safety along the route, to minimise unpleasant surprises while hiking. Storytelling and integrated information on the route can therefore make a difference, especially for non-package travellers.
5. *Routes are not patchworks.* Routes are made up of large numbers of micro-destinations, each of which is potentially willing to integrate its hotspots into the main trail’s attraction. Nevertheless, the idea to squeeze each hotspot on the route into the final tourism product would not lead to success. Analysing a route implies understanding its USP not as the arithmetic sum of local attractions, but rather as a general, all-embracing topic to describe the experience of hiking. Therefore, the creativity lies in the ability to create a new, macro-identity, which somehow comprises the local micro-identities, but nevertheless has an outstanding value per se.
6. *Transnational networks require local work.* Collaboration among all the institutions, touristic organizations, private stakeholders and public bodies is crucial to keep the route alive. Only if a good territorial network is ensured, can a transnational cooperation process grow. Workshops can provide excellent opportunities to stimulate the needs and interests of all sides.
7. *Marketing is crucial to achieve success.* According to some experts’ opinions, the main challenge, after creating a well-structured tourism product on the Via Transalpina, is the ability to attract new hikers. A marketing plan tailored to the needs of the target group is therefore crucial to raise interest and spread information about the Via Transalpina and the newly available digital tools. If the launch of the mobile App and website are not accompanied by a good marketing strategy, the risk of ending up with an unknown Via Transalpina in a few months is very high. To avoid this outcome, a series of actions should be targeted to specialized magazines and a digital marketing budget invested in order to address tailored user groups.
8. *Routes are cooperation chances at the EU level.* A route that crosses different EU nations is a chance to create bridges and cooperation opportunities among different cultures. Product development activity, more than on other levels of cooperation, enhances the creation of a network of stakeholders, including SMEs. Senior tourism addresses a target that still needs to overcome linguistic and organisational barriers to travel across Europe at ease. The screening of the infrastructural stock, as well as the offer of high-quality and tailor-made digital services along the whole trail may help to overcome these barriers and encourage both transnational cooperation among tourism stakeholders and visits abroad for senior tourists. Both levels of interchange create interesting dynamics to increase territorial cohesion at the EU level.
9. *Success in route management requires continuity.* Route management is a complex task. Not only because long routes cover a variety of territories with different cultures, languages and organizational settings, but also because the challenge of keeping these complex networks alive is based on collective will, on effective governance systems, and on transnational funding capacity. Continuity in financial and operational activities is required to ensure success of the digital products and an increase in the number of visits, especially in the most remote areas.
10. *The Via Transalpina is a model for other trails.* The analytical and product development methods encountered in SilViAlp are both worth implementing in other trails. The analytical part, based on hiking, assessing the trail through standard indicators and stakeholder involvement, and ending with



the SWOT analysis of the route, provided a first draft of the development opportunities for the route and the challenges to be faced. The product development part, based on smaller trail units, thematic offers and longer sections, produced a business model, which has been created based on the vision and mission and value proposition and strategic objectives formulated in BSC for the route as a whole. Having a clear picture of the starting point and the point of arrival is definitely the most important issue in route development.

The proposed business model takes into account all necessary elements, which allow replicability of the Via Transalpina experience in other territorial contexts, given the necessary adjustments to local specificities and clearly identified target groups. Each route should have its unique selling proposition, it must have clearly identified tourist products and should ideally be very good signposted. Digital products such as Apps with detailed GPS data may help in compensating some infrastructural gaps, in case users are relying on smartphone technologies to plan and undertake their trips.

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