sustainability

MDPI

Article

Exploring Transformative Ecotourism Experiences on Italian Pathways Through Online Reviews

Alessandra Marasco [1] and Valentina Marchi [2,*]

[1] Institute of Heritage Science, National Research Council of Italy (ISPC-CNR), Via Cardinale Guglielmo Sanfelice, 80134 Napoli, Italy; alessandra.marasco@cnr.it
[2] Institute of BioEconomy, National Research Council (IBE-CNR), Via Madonna del Piano, 50019 Sesto Fiorentino, Italy
* Correspondence: valentina.marchi@ibe.cnr.it

Abstract: Transformative tourism experiences have attracted considerable scholarly interest in the recent past and deserve further attention to advance knowledge on the role of tourism in human transformation. This study aims to advance the understanding of the triggers and dimensions of transformative ecotourism experiences through the analysis of travelers' online reviews relating to 10 Italian Pathways (Cammini d'Italia). A total of 742 reviews from 2010 to 2022 were collected from TripAdvisor using a web scraping procedure and analyzed by applying text mining techniques. This analysis explored the cognitive, affective, sensory, social and other experiential factors that can trigger tourists' transformative experiences and their relationship with behavioral, psychological, spiritual and physical dimensions of transformation. The findings provide evidence of the association of cognitive and sensory triggers and the search for unusual, special tourism experiences to transformative experiences, with specific regard to the psychological, spiritual and physical dimensions. Based on the findings, theoretical and managerial implications are provided to improve the understanding and promotion of transformative tourism experiences in this context.

Keywords: ecotourism experience; transformative tourism experience; text mining; user-generated content; TripAdvisor; Italian pathways (Cammini d'Italia)

check for updates

Academic Editor: Tsung Hung Lee

Received: 18 December 2024
Revised: 28 December 2024
Accepted: 3 January 2025
Published: 9 January 2025

Citation: Marasco, A.; Marchi, V. Exploring Transformative Ecotourism Experiences on Italian Pathways Through Online Reviews. *Sustainability* **2025**, *17*, 452. https://doi.org/10.3390/su17020452

Copyright: © 2025 by the authors. Licensee MDPI, Basel, Switzerland. This article is an open access article distributed under the terms and conditions of the Creative Commons Attribution (CC BY) license (https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by/4.0/).

1. Introduction

Contemporary tourism research increasingly focuses on the role of tourism experiences in promoting healthy lives and well-being for all at all ages, in line with Sustainable Development Goal number 3, "Good Health and Well-being" [1,2]. The concept of "positive tourism experience" has been introduced to indicate transformative experiences that can be designed as interventions to make a positive impact on human transformation and well-being [2].

Recent years witnessed an increasing interest in the components of the ecotourism experiences [3,4] and their transformative benefits for tourists [5–7]. According to the first definition acknowledged by literature [8], ecotourism involves "traveling to relatively undisturbed or uncontaminated natural areas with the specific objective of studying, admiring, and enjoying the scenery and its wild plants and animals, as well as any existing cultural manifestations (both past and present) found in these areas" [9]. Previous research addressing nature-based and ecotourism experiences from a transformative tourism perspective showed their potential to promote attitude and behavior change for sustainability [7,10,11] and generate positive emotions, a connection to the self and nature, inner peace,

a sense of attachment and well-being [6,12]. In their review, Zhao and Agyeiwaah [13] found that ecotourism is indeed among the tourism contexts that are more likely to trigger transformative experiences (TEs). They highlight that research on tourists' TEs is in an exploratory stage and indicate the use of big data as an innovative approach for future research to validate and expand existing evidence on the potential triggers and dimensions of TEs. However, previous research investigating transformative experiences in this context through the analysis of textual content shared online by travelers is still limited. This study aims to advance knowledge on Transformative Ecotourism Experiences (TEEs) through a text mining approach that uses data from TripAdvisor reviews to explore the factors that trigger transformation and the types of transformations in this context. User-generated content (UGC) on TripAdvisor has been used for analyzing visitors' experiences in natural sites [14,15] and can provide useful insights for advancing knowledge on the nature of ecotourism experiences. Specifically, this study builds on the framework of Transformative Experiences (TEs) in tourism proposed by Zhao and Agyeiwaah [13] to explore TEEs on Italian Pathways, also known as Cammini d'Italia.

The Italian Ministry of Culture defined Italian Pathways as cultural itineraries of European and/or national relevance that can be traveled on foot or by other slow mobility means to enjoy natural and cultural heritage and that provide an opportunity for enhancing the natural and cultural attractions of the local territories [16]. These pathways connect more than 100 small municipalities, over 2000 cultural heritage resources and about 180 certificated PDO/PGI products throughout the country and, with a total of 15400 km, have a high tourism potential when compared to the most famous route of the Camino de Santiago [17]. The available data showed a constantly growing trend of travelers on these pathways, exceeding 100,000 credentials (pilgrims' passports) for the first time in 2023 [18].

Italian Pathways are ideal ecotourism settings for travelers to transform both purposefully and incidentally. They offer visitors a variety of experiential opportunities that are potentially conducive to transformation [19,20], including immersion in nature, outdoor physical activities (e.g., hiking, biking, and walking), religious/spiritual travel, cultural travel and slow tourism. As highlighted for the Camino de Santiago [21–23] and long-distance hiking trails [24], experiences on pathways are often chosen by tourists for transformative journeys. In a recent interview, the Director of the European Association of the Via Francigena Ways highlighted that Italian Pathways are "not simple journeys but long processes of inner transformation" (Luca Bruschi in [25]).

To advance previous research, this study applies text mining techniques to automatically extract insights to understand users' perceptions of Cammini d'Italia from more than 700 reviews that have been collected using a web scraping procedure [26] and manually coded for content. Based on this approach, this analysis allowed us to grasp the antecedents and nature of the TEEs of travelers. The analysis of comments on TripAdvisor provided evidence of the range of cognitive, affective and sensory antecedents of their experiences and the specific typology of transformation reported by travelers. A correlation analysis examined the relationships between different variables to better understand the transformative experience on the 10 Italian Pathways.

The paper is structured as follows. The next section reviews previous research on TEs in tourism and the transformative potential of ecotourism experiences. Then, the study setting and methodology are described, followed by the presentation of findings. The last section discusses the findings and outlines theoretical and managerial implications along with limitations and future perspectives of the research.

2. Literature Review

2.1. Transformative Experiences in Tourism

Growing attention within tourism research has been devoted to the role of positive tourism experiences in human transformation [2]. In recent decades, research increasingly explored the potential of tourism experiences for the self-transformation of tourists and delved into the conceptualization and investigation of transformative experiences [2,12,15,27]. According to Neuhofer [2], tourism experiences for personal transformation and well-being are powerful inner journeys to self-actualization that may occur voluntarily, involuntarily, naturally or occasioned and guided externally. In their systematic review, Zhao and Agyeiwaah [13] (p. 188) define Transformative Experience (TE) of tourists as "the moment when tourists experience deep changes during travel and also after they return home" that can profoundly transform tourists' values, attitudes, behaviors and lifestyles. TEs are occurrences that alter tourists' mindsets [28] and allow for personal growth, fulfillment and self-actualization [27]. Chen [29] notes that authenticity, personal growth and self-discovery are embodied in the tourist experience, which is regarded as transformative. According to Amaro et al. [30], transformative travel allows contact with new perspectives and deepens the awareness of other people and the natural environment. Fu et al. [31] highlighted the multidimensionality of transformation, which can occur through experiences challenging the body, allowing creativity and altruism, and feeling more closely connected to the cultural or natural environment. Describing the attributes of the transformative experience, Sheldon [12] refers to a process of consciousness awakening, which creates more self-awareness and inner peace, living with a higher set of values and making greater contributions to the well-being of others and the environment. Pung et al. [32] conceptualized tourist transformation through three processes of change: (1) transformative learning, referring to the integration of others' perspectives, new knowledge and a broader sense of the world into one's perspective; (2) existential transformation, involving reflection and re-evaluation of one's existence and value systems, which is triggered during a meaningful experience or emotionally intense experience (e.g., by experiencing majestic nature and different cultural contexts); and (3) behavioral transformation, conceived as the consequences of the transformation process in terms of the adoption of new pro-social and/or pro-environmental practices.

Research has explored the triggers of transformative tourism experiences, including intense emotions and heightened cognition, generating a sense of connection to something grand [28]. In their comprehensive framework of TEs, Zhao and Agyeiwaah [13] divide factors that potentially trigger transformation into tourists' personal factors, including cognitive and emotional factors, facing challenges and unknowns (e.g., existential dilemmas; culture shock; unusual situations), special experiences (e.g., peak experience; immersiveness; connection to something grand; intense sensory experiences; slow, authentic experience), certain behaviors, personal situations and destination factors, including general settings, culture conditions, natural surroundings, activities, interaction with people; and authenticity. In their framework, these triggers are potentially related to four dimensions of transformation:

- Physical/behavioral (e.g., engagement, bodily change, new habits/lifestyle);
- Psychological (e.g., awareness, perspective/inner change, inner peace, escape and relaxation, self-efficacy, positive emotion, identity);
- Social (e.g., creating/enhancing relationships; citizenship; tolerance; sense of belonging);
- Spiritual (e.g., self-discovery, self-fulfillment, self-actualization, self-transcendence, meaning of life, freedom, faith, spiritual change).

2.2. The Transformative Potential of Ecotourism Experiences

Previous research highlighted the potential of ecotourism experiences to enable individual transformational change [5–7], including long-lasting changes in visitors' skills, attitudes, beliefs, and behaviors, and investigated the process of transformation, triggers and benefits.

Wolf et al. [6] focused on series-based national park tours in Australia to investigate the outcomes of visitors' experiences in relation to self-transformation, which resulted in significant improvements in health, well-being, self-competence, sense of achievement, environmental awareness and increased visitors' attachment to parks. In a subsequent systematic review, Wolf et al. [33] provided insights into the traits and motivations of transformative travelers in protected areas, the experience characteristics linked to transformation and the benefits of transformative travel. They proposed a transformative travel framework that interrelates travelers' characteristics and motivations, experience characteristics triggering a transformation process and the consequent benefits in terms of health and well-being (physical, psychological, emotional, spiritual), personal competence, sociocultural relationships, environmental appreciation, awareness/sensitivity, support for conservation, economic conditions and behavioral change, also in terms of a sustainable lifestyle. In their study, transformation is driven by immersion, reconnection, opportunity to escape and challenge and is related to five main travel typologies: health and wellness, nature-based physical activity, spiritual, cultural and volunteering. They highlighted that the current understanding of experiential qualities driving transformation is still insufficient, along with the assessment of the type of benefits to be addressed by future research.

Walter [34] reported how informal experiential learning in community-based ecotourism through wilderness experiences in nature, outdoor "adventure" activities and immersion in local culture promotes stimuli for transformative learning, which involves the development of critical consciousness and personal empowerment and encourages visitors to become more environmentally, culturally and socially aware and take action. Addressing the role of architecture for transformative experiences in nature-based tourism, Wielenga [35] highlighted the contributions of TEs in this context in terms of visitors' satisfaction and loyalty to the destination, increased cohesion and social capital, attitude and behavior change towards the conservation of culture, natural qualities, landscape and biodiversity, and stewardship. Lengieza et al. [11] showed the role of eudaimonia, which is characterized by self-discovery and self-reflection, a sense of purpose and meaning in life and feelings of authenticity, as a driver for behavior change towards sustainability. Their study found that both the natural and the cultural elements of the ecotourism experience promote sustainability insights ex situ by fostering eudaimonia, highlighting its role as a driver of pro-environmental behaviors. Richardson and Insch [36] explored how nature-based tourism experiences can lead to transformative outcomes for visitors along the journey, focusing on pre-trip and en-route characteristics of transformative experiences. Their study identified four relevant themes, including the untouched world, referring to the individual appreciation of the aesthetic beauty of the setting of their experience; close encounters and interaction with wildlife; the authentic vs. staged nature of the experience; and the personal state of being or mindset, including the ability and willingness to be open to the experience.

Hitchner et al. [24] analyzed travel blogs through a grounded theory approach and highlighted that long-distance hiking journeys in wilderness areas can be interpreted as a form of modern pilgrimage for the transformative experiences undertaken by travelers through a liminal period spent away from daily life in immersion in natural places that are considered "sacred", resulting in spiritual and personal growth. Also, studies of pilgrims'

experiences on the cultural route of Camino de Santiago based on a thematic analysis of online travel blogs and personal stories from social media report that a relationship with nature is a critical dimension of individual transformation, since closeness to nature generates a sense of restoration, peace, happiness and healing [22] and is conducive to travelers' feeling of their authentic self [23]. The study by Lavric et al. [21] was based on an inductively derived typology of exceptional experiences and transformative aftereffects from the travelogs of pilgrims on the Camino de Santiago and found, among others, that the experience of deep calm and reconciliation was strongly associated with an increased emphasis on love, unity with nature and following one's heart when back home.

3. Research Design and Methodology

This research was designed to explore ecotourism TEs from travelers' perspectives through the analysis of UGCs, namely posts published on TripAdvisor on Italian Pathways to improve the understanding of the triggers and nature of visitors' transformation. To this end, this study builds on the TEs dimensions identified by Zhao and Agyeiwaah [13], which integrates personal factors and destination factors that can trigger tourists' TEs with the types and outcomes of transformation in relation to the physical/behavioral, psychological, social and spiritual spheres. This study explores the complex issue of TE on the pathway by leveraging large volumes of unstructured data, primarily textual, shared online by travelers who have undertaken the Italian Paths. This approach provides an innovative contribution to understanding the complex issue of TEs on the pathway through the use of alternative data. The following research questions were addressed by the analysis:

- What are the triggers and the dimensions of TEEs in the context of Cammini d'Italia?
- What are the relationships between the various triggers and dimensions of TEEs in this context?

3.1. Study Setting

In recent years, Italian Pathways have been receiving increasing attention with tourism national tourism policies. The former and current Italian Strategic Tourism Plans pointed to Cammini as an important resource to promote sustainable tourism across the country, rebalancing tourism flows from sites with over-tourism to less visited rural areas. The Ministry of Culture proclaimed 2016 as the "Year of the Paths" and created the Atlas of Paths, a dedicated online portal (https://camminiditalia.cultura.gov.it/home-cammini-ditalia/atlante-dei-cammini/ (accessed on 15 October 2024)). More than 40 pathways have been mapped and included by MIBACT based on a set of criteria (including safety, maintenance, governance, information, available facilities and services) to promote their knowledge and their valorization. According to the main source of data on Cammini (i.e., the dossier "Italia, Paese di Cammini" by Terre di Mezzo Editore), there is a growing trend of visitors on these pathways [18]. Specifically, in 2023, 101,419 credentials were delivered to walkers, registering an increase of 25% compared to 2022. Also, the number of Testimoniums (i.e., the document that is delivered to those who have completed the Camino) increased by over 40%, with 57,600 delivered in 2023. The study also provided evidence of the varied motivations of walkers: 32% choose a Camino for religious or spiritual reasons, the other reasons include psychological and physical well-being, discovery of the territories, immersion in nature, trying a new experience and cultural reasons [18]. Also, in light of this trend, there is a growing interest in tourism research in this context, including the multidimensional nature of the experience of walkers in this context and its transformative potential [20].

3.2. Data Collection

In order to explore the TEEs of travelers on Italian Paths, this study analyzes UGCs published by users on TripAdvisor, which is one of the world's largest travel websites [37,38]. TripAdvisor provides first-person reviews written by tourists, allowing travelers to rely on these reviews for trip planning. UGCs play a crucial role in influencing destination selection and related services for potential travelers due to their explicit [39], credible and relevant nature [40], which are considered during decision-making processes.

TripAdvisor is an American internet-based travel company founded in 2000, with the aim of allowing users to interact and provide reviews on accommodation facilities, restaurants, vacation rentals and attractions. It has grown in popularity since 2014 and now operates in 40 countries and 20 languages, with approximately 1 billion reviews and opinions on about 8 million properties [38]. Given the variety of services offered by TripAdvisor, it is challenging to classify it as a specific activity; rather, it can be considered a travel intermediary between demand, allowing travelers to obtain information about businesses and destinations, and supply, helping providers to understand their travelers, services and competitors [37].

Recent research in the area of nature-based tourism highlights the need for enhanced methodologies and tools for understanding and monitoring travelers' experiences [41], highlighting the potential of new approaches, including online UGC [13,14]. Also, Zhang et al. [42] demonstrated the advantages of using tourist-generated content, particularly the rich information contained in online reviews and social media posts, to elicit well-being in tourism experiences. Due to UGCs' impact on potential travelers' behaviors and intentions [43–45], and TripAdvisor's role as the primary platform for collecting user-generated content about travel experiences, this study focuses on analyzing reviews submitted by those who have traveled on the Cammini d'Italia. The research initially focused on identifying the paths reviewed on TripAdvisor. This process highlighted challenges in recognizing specific paths due to varying user terminology and complexities in understanding the reviewed trails, which often span multiple municipalities and regions with differing maintenance, conservation status, promotion and policies. For instance, the Via Francigena crosses seven regions in Italy and it is not always easy to determine which part of the pathway the review refers to.

Ten Italian Pathways were identified that cross various regions from north to south, including some European itineraries that extend beyond Italian territories (i.e., Via Francigena, Via Romea Germanica, Via Spluga). These 10 pathways (Table 1) differ not only in their landscapes and historical-cultural heritage but also in terms of length (ranging from the Via Francigena with over 1000 km to the Cammino di Oropa with about 62 km) with various numbers of credentials released (the pilgrims' passport).

The contents of TripAdvisor reviews were collected using a web scraping method, which allowed us to convert HTML data into structured and unstructured data from TripAdvisor. This procedure was performed using R software (version 4.3.2) and its packages, such as RSelenium, which focuses on automating web browsers and provides R bindings for the Selenium Webdriver API. A total of 742 reviews, written in different languages (mainly in Italian) from 2010 to 2022, were extracted, relating to these 10 Cammini d'Italia. For each posted review, the following data were collected: the Italian path, the year and month of the experience, with whom the journey was undertaken (as a couple, with friends, with family or alone) and the rating given to the path (ranging from one to five stars—from poor to excellent).

Table 1. The 10 Cammini d'Italia analyzed, arranged by the number of kilometers.

Cammini d'Italia	Km	Credentials Released	N. of Regions	Peculiar Theme
Via Francigena	1044	17,500	7	Historical-cultural
Via Romea Germanica	987	-	6	Historical-religious
Via degli Dei	121	14,688	2	Historical-archeological
Sentiero della Pace	520	-	3	Historical-cultural
Cammino di Francesco	500	8250	3	Historical-religious
Cammino Minerario di Santa Barbara	388	803	1	Historical-cultural
Cammino di San Giacomo	130	-	1	Historical-religious
Cammino dei Briganti	108	2572	2	Naturalistic-cultural
Via Spluga	65	-	1	Naturalistic-cultural
Cammino di Oropa	62	2965	1	Historical-cultural

Data from Atlante dei Cammini d'Italia (MiBACT); Atlante della mobilità dolce (Amodo-Alleanza Mobilità Dolce); Terre di Mezzo Editore [46].

3.3. Data Analysis

Initially, the collected data were analyzed to identify the profile of travelers and the level of satisfaction with the experience. In order to explore in-depth perceptions, triggering factors and types of transformation through the ecotourism experience, the text analysis of the reviews was performed based on the TE dimensions identified by Zhao and Agyeiwaah [13].

In order to better understand the TEEs, we manually selected 160 reviews (21.6% of the total) considered useful for analyzing travelers' behaviors. The remaining 78.4% of reviews were not included as they mainly contained general information and practical advice related to walking without providing details on personal experience. Each review was coded to identify the following factors: (1) the triggers that motivated the tourists to undertake the path, classified into factors relating to the personal sphere and the destination (Cammini), such as cognitive stimuli (e.g., reflecting, remembering, or learning), social stimuli (sharing, interacting, or meeting new people) and sensory stimuli (e.g., scents or sounds); (2) the dimensions of personal transformation of the tourist, including behavioral aspects (e.g., engagement in responsible behaviors, lifestyle changes), spiritual aspects (e.g., faith, self-discovery, self-actualization) and psychological aspects (e.g., inner peace, positive emotion, awareness). Each review can be coded into one or more trigger and transformation categories with the possibility of overlaps. The two researchers conducted the classification process, initially classifying the reviews together to reach an agreement on the categories. Discrepancies in coding were resolved through discussions between the researchers and coders until a consensus was reached for each specific case.

Following the classification process and textual analysis of reviews, the study carried out a correlation analysis to verify the presence of a relationship between triggers and transformation to assess the ecotourism experiences on the 10 Italian Pathways. Correlation analysis, as a statistical method used to assess the strength and direction of a relationship between two variables, allowed us to determine whether the observed correlation is statistically significant through t-test analysis [47].

4. Findings

The analysis of the reviews posted on TripAdvisor provides insights into travelers' behavior, satisfaction and experience on the pathways. Travelers on the 10 Cammini d'Italia predominantly undertook their journeys during the summer months, specifically in August (28%), July (13.8%) and September (13.8%). Users completed their experience as a couple (39.1%), with their family (26.7%) and with friends (24.9%). Therefore, there is a prevalence

of those who travel with company (90.7%) compared to those who travel alone (9.3%). These findings are in line with the data provided by Terre di Mezzo Editore [46], which highlight a higher presence of travelers during the summer along the paths and the increasing number of groups of people who travel together. With almost 90% of positive reviews (54.4% "excellent", 33.6% "very good"), travelers were satisfied with their experience on the 10 Italian Pathways. The reviews include both loyal travelers, who have been walking on the same pathways for many years, and occasional tourists, who have traveled along the pathway without planning and found themselves walking because it was recommended by locals or discovered "by chance". The comments highlight that also in the latter case, the experience is rewarding and generates the intention to revisit.

With regard to the transformative nature of the experience, the reviews provide relevant indications of self-transformation during their journey, referring to the meaning of life ("Abandon yourself to reflect on the meaning of life"), inner peace ("wonderful landscapes, marvelous paths and finding of inner peace"), self-esteem ("the arrival [...] enable a great self-esteem"), self-discovery ("one can really understand our true inner wealth") and a connection with nature as something grand ("The stages [of the journey along the pathway] are worth and allow a "new" rapprochement with nature"; "feeling reverence for Nature"). As expected, the references to natural features and the connection with nature are prominent in the majority (almost 70%) of the reviews, with mentions of the scenery, lakes and rivers that can be observed during the journey. In addition to the different landscapes, users emphasized the different peculiarities that characterize the pathway according to the season: spring blooms, colors and bare trees in autumn and winter snow. A prominent element that emerged from the content analysis of the reviews underlines the diversity of the landscapes that can be admired along the pathway, covering different territories of the country and offering travelers various unique views, as shown by this comment: "It is beautiful and almost overwhelming to cross different regions, see changing landscapes, hear different dialects, cross the Passo della Cisa, and traverse the Apennine ridge before descending towards Massa, Camaiore, and finally Lucca". This aligns with the study conducted by Terre di Mezzo [46], where the motivations for embarking on the journey primarily include health and well-being, immersion in nature and discovering the local territories and culture. For instance, in the reviews, immersion in nature is associated with "a therapy for mind and body", "an adventure of the body and the spirit", intense and diverse emotions, peace and well-being, and "an extraordinary interior experience".

The transformative experience on the pathways is associated with different triggers at personal levels and is characterized by specific dimensions. Table 2 provides details on the different triggers and transformation dimensions that emerged from the content analysis of travelers who have enjoyed the 10 Italian Pathways, showing their relevance based on the relative percentage of occurrences in the reviews.

Table 2. Triggers and dimensions of transformation associated with the experience on the pathways (%).

Triggers	%	Transformation	%
Cognition	48.8	Behavioral dimension	78.8
Unusual and unknown	45.0	Psychological dimension	35.0
Sensory	36.9	Spiritual dimension	29.4
Special tourism experience	36.9	Physical dimension	27.5
Affective	32.5		
Social	16.9		

The main stimuli triggered in travelers on the pathways are linked to cognition (48.8%), which appears to be mostly related to reflective processes, such as the importance of undertaking the journey as a personal moment to reflect and meditate ("To be done in meditative silence broken only by the sound of the water"). Furthermore, it also appeals to those who undertake the journey as an experience tied to remembrance, for example, of important historical moments, such as in memory of the War ("It revived the passage of soldiers during the First World War []"; "[] places to visit in memory of the war"). A small number of reviews underline the cognitive dimension linked to learning the history and traditions of a territory, with a specific focus on the cammino and its origins. These insights and the awareness of the pathways' historical importance are detailed and narrated by the travelers, such as in this review: "Of the Via Francigena, an itinerary towards Rome from north-western and western Europe through France, we know that its name appears for the first time in the Actum Clusio, a parchment document from the year 876, preserved in the historical archive of the Abbey of S. Salvatore del Monte Amiata, while its existence is attested, starting from the 9th century []".

A further stimulus that emerged is related to the desire for unusual and novelty (45%), taking the journey to make new experiences ("not a conventional journey but... something more") and wanting to get out of the routine ("I highly recommend if you want to allow yourself to get out of the grayness of the city while remaining in our beautiful Italy").

The sounds, colors and smells have been highlighted by travelers as sensory stimuli of the pathways experience (36.9%) closely connected to the contact with nature, thus facilitating the benefits of the journey and transformation: "Colours, scents, sounds, everything contributes to reconciliation with the world around you". In addition to the positive meaning of sounds, negative noises have also emerged, which are produced by tourists and overcrowding on the paths to underline a greater environmental and cultural awareness of the journey: "The only drawback is when there are so many people, you lose the purpose of this path that should promote meditation"; "It could be surrounded by peace if it weren't for the many noisy tourists who treat the place like any other, forgetting the spirituality that surrounds it".

Spiritual exploration emerges as the main stimulus for special tourism experiences (36.9%), which are oriented to spirituality and pilgrimage ("[] a path of religious and secular spirituality"; "[] under the banner of spirituality and harmony with nature"; "A place of prayer and immense charm"). Affective stimuli (32.5%) emerge in relation to the willingness of travelers to experience wonder and positive emotions. Finally, users in their reviews report social stimuli (16.9%) with a particular reference to the importance of meeting, interacting and spending time with people: "[] and you have the opportunity to get to know other pilgrims who meet along the way and share steps and emotions"; "I like it for the atmosphere that is established between us, albeit from different cultural and non-cultural backgrounds but united by walking together for a personal and spiritual goal which is to reach the moral and/or religious goal that is Rome"; "The opportunity to share the experience and effort with the travel companions met along the way is unparalleled".

Regarding the dimensions of transformative ecotourism experience, a behavioral dimension emerged in 78.8% of reviews, indicating a greater awareness among users of nature conservation towards responsible, pro-environmental behaviors: "Regardless of the faith that everyone may have, one cannot fail to appreciate the call to respect nature and Creation"; "Beautiful route, but lately too overcrowded by incompetent visitors who do not respect the mountains".

Travelers underlined in their reviews that the journey also had an impact on the psychological dimension (35%), with particular reference to one's inner peace and well-being: "[] It is a beautiful therapy for the mind and for the body"; "Beautiful walk that puts

your heart at peace"; "[] Through the path you can give free space to your thoughts and when you go down you will feel better".

The experience on the path also triggered transformations in the spiritual dimension (29.4%), increasing the connection with faith and mysticism: "Thanks to those who designed this "path" to make us experience even more Saint Francis, God and its creatures. []"; "[] For believers like me it becomes even more mystical".

Given that experiences on pathways are lived through both the mind and the body, the physical dimension is also emphasized. There are significant mentions of the effort expended along the path, which leads to a sense of weariness that affects not only the body but also the mind: "[] The final 40 km of this stage were accomplished with sheer determination, as my legs had long abandoned running".

To explore the connections between the triggers and the transformation elicited by the experience of the Cammini, a correlation analysis was conducted (Table 3).

Table 3. Correlation analysis between triggers and transformations.

Triggers/Transformation	Psychological Dimension	Spiritual Dimension	Physical Dimension	Behavioral Dimension
Cognition	0.185 *	0.171 *	−0.067	−0.055
Affective	−0.026	0.018	0.108	0.127
Sensory	0.175 *	0.078	−0.032	-0.029
Unusual and unknown	−0.177 *	−0.239 **	0.144 *	0.091
Social	−0.129	−0.219 **	−0.019	0.095
Special tourism experience	−0.054	0.371 **	−0.029	−0.015

Notes: ** $p < 0.01$, * $p < 0.05$.

This analysis delves into the connections between different factors that characterize the triggers and the transformation dimensions, providing insights into the complex interplay of variables shaping the experience. The results show that travelers who chose to embark on the Cammini as a cognitive stimulus, such as for reflection or meditation, experienced a transformative journey that positively ($p < 0.05$) relates to psychological (inner peace and personal growth) and spiritual dimensions (self-discovery and self-fulfillment). Sensory stimuli encountered during travel, including scents, colors and sounds, such as silence or the noise of waterfalls, positively correlate to individuals' psychological well-being ($p < 0.05$). Furthermore, people who expressed the primary desire to undertake the journey to break away from routine underwent a transformative experience intertwined with physical activity and enhanced physical well-being ($p < 0.01$). Finally, those who discover on the journey motivated by a desire to undertake a special tourism experience report transformations that enriched the spiritual sphere, with greater self-discovery and self-transcendence ($p < 0.01$).

5. Discussion and Conclusions

The Italian network of Cammini intertwines historical, naturalistic, cultural and religious itineraries, crossing the country from north to south through national and regional parks and offering diverse and varied natural sceneries that include cultural heritage sites (monuments, churches, monasteries, castles), typical agricultural landscapes and products, small villages and local traditions. For the richness and variety of their natural and cultural resources and environments, these itineraries offer a wide range of nature-based experiences that involve aspects of ecotourism, cultural tourism and religious tourism and represent the ideal setting for transformative experiences. As reported by the reviews of "loyal" travelers, the experience of these pathways often generates a sense of attachment in line with Wolf et al. [6], characterized by strong emotional and functional bonds with

the pathway: travelers report positive, intense emotions towards the visited pathway that becomes an important, preferred place to return to.

The analysis of UGC on TripAdvisor provides insights into transformative experiences on the Cammini, exploring the triggers and the specific dimensions of transformations. From the analysis, TEEs appear to be mainly characterized by a process of existential transformation [32], whereby factors relating to cognitive stimulation (reflection, meditation, the discovery of the territories/landscapes, new knowledge on the historical characteristics), sensorial stimulation (immersion and contact with pristine nature and enjoyment of its sounds, smells and colors) and the search for unusual and special experiences (e.g., escape from routine, intense experiences), trigger a psychological, spiritual and physical transformation. This is in line with previous research on ecotourism experiences [11,36] and pilgrimages [23,24,48]. This study also confirms previous findings by Zhang [22] in relation to the experience of pilgrims on the Camino de Santiago, which indicated personal growth and interest in experiencing something new as the main motivation for embarking on this journey. Indeed, the experience on the Cammini is perceived as a non-conventional journey to escape from routine. The cognitive triggers also include the stimuli connected to the discovery of historical and cultural assets along the paths (e.g., small villages, monuments and traces of ancient history). As expected, the immersion in and the discovery of the beauty of the natural environment are considered the most relevant destination factors as experiential triggers, and this is also associated with the relevance of sensory stimuli of the experience for participants. The transformative experience is also strongly characterized by psychological and spiritual aspects, which are manifested in feelings of inner peace and well-being. In this regard, the findings support the relevance of meditative walks for delivering transformative benefits of psychological and spiritual well-being highlighted by Wolf et al. [33]. They further align with previous research on the pilgrimage experience, which highlights the psychological and spiritual transformative effects of the journey along the Camino de Santiago [21,23,48]. These feelings are closely connected with a harmonious relationship with nature, which is reflected in the awareness of the natural environment and cultural heritage and the responsible behaviors needed to protect them. The social dimension of the journey is found to be less relevant in triggering travelers' transformation, although it is mentioned as a feature of the experience, notably sharing the effort of the journey and meeting new people. Further, the correlation analysis did not find any significant association of triggers with the behavioral dimension of transformation, which thus deserves further investigation to better understand the triggers of travelers' awareness and behavioral change towards sustainability.

Although many reviews express overall satisfaction with the experience, some also highlight frustration with the overcrowding on the trails, revealing a contradiction with the general perception of the Cammini as paths designed for well-being and tranquility. These comments suggest that the growing popularity of the Cammini d'Italia may be leading to a form of "saturation" that could undermine some of the transformative aspects of the journey, such as the pursuit of inner peace. The negative effects of trail overcrowding on the experience have been reported by Hitchner et al. [24] and represent a relevant management issue to be considered also in the context under investigation of this study.

5.1. Theoretical and Managerial Implications

From a theoretical perspective, this study contributes to advancing previous research on TEs in ecotourism contexts by providing insights into how these experiences occur from travelers' points of view through UGC. Although the benefits of ecotourism experiences have been highlighted in previous research, the analysis of the specific characteristics of experiences on pathways associated with their transformative potential remains fragmented

within previous studies. Given their relevance for the development of sustainable tourism, it is worth exploring Italian Pathways more in-depth from travelers' perspective, investigating the different experiential aspects that are more likely to facilitate transformation. The present study advances previous research on ecotourism experiences by integrating the different triggers and dimensions that can characterize transformative tourism experiences in this specific context.

Secondly, this study contributes to the analysis of UGCs as increasingly utilized and recognized data sources in the literature [44,49]. The UGCs published on TripAdvisor were explored to identify the triggers and transformations that guided travelers in their experience. This contributes to the analysis of UGCs from a different perspective from recent studies, which have focused on predictors influencing online users' acceptance of UGC (e.g., [50,51]), analyzing destination image and satisfaction (e.g., [52]); the users' intentions to engage in online travel communities (e.g., [53,54]); and the impacts of UGC on travel organizations and destination marketing (e.g., [55,56]). While previous studies have used UGC (social media, online travel blogs and diaries) for the analysis of transformative experiences of pathways travelers/pilgrims [21–24], the proposed approach can facilitate systematic, large-scale and comparable analyses across pathways, in line with Zhang et al. [42].

Thirdly, this research highlights the connections between the use of the UGC online platform, the triggers that led travelers to embark on their journeys and the transformative ecotourism experience. To the best of our knowledge, there is still limited literature that has integrated and analyzed constructs related to travel motivations and the transformative experience of ecotourism through UGCs. In this way, the present study provides a deeper understanding of the connections between the motivations that prompted travelers to undertake their trips and the impact experienced during the journey through the online platform, creating a link between two different time horizons: the pre-trip and the post-trip.

With regard to managerial implications, the findings are useful for the various operators (tourism, hospitality, natural and cultural heritage institutions and policymakers) to understand how the great, untapped potential of these paths can be enhanced to promote regeneration and transformation through ecotourism experiences on Cammini d'Italia. In particular, the experiential aspects related to inner personal benefits (e.g., psychological well-being) could be enhanced more in the promotion of these types of experiences in close connection to the benefits related to the discovery of nature and culture in a sustainable way. For instance, the Italian Pathways represent a relevant context to promote new tourism models oriented to promoting health and well-being. This is also relevant when considering the importance attached to the role of culture and heritage for health, well-being and social cohesion in the New European Agenda for Culture (2018) and the Workplan for Culture 2023–2026 of the Council of Europe (2022) [57].

Further, this study suggests that tourism operators focus a part of their efforts on analyzing and monitoring the UGCs published by travelers. This proactive approach would enable tourism managers to understand the triggers that influenced travelers in choosing their journeys while also gaining insights into aspects of the transformative experience. This information assists operators in the monitoring of travelers' behaviors and word-of-mouth on the Cammini and in developing valorization and communication actions that align with the image promoted and the real experiences along the journey. This alignment contributes to the cultivation of a robust and positive reputation in the minds of travelers, enhancing the overall appeal of the Cammini d'Italia. This is also in line with the need for data from different sources on tourism demand, including the quality of the experience, for monitoring tourists' behaviors and supporting decisions for the responsible development of tourism in this context as indicated by the Dossier on Outdoor Tourism in Italy [58].

5.2. Limitations and Future Research Directions

This study is not without limitations. Firstly, this study focused on Italian Pathways and data collected on reviews in Italian from the TripAdvisor platform, thereby limiting its generalizability. Given the proliferation of UGCs across digital platforms, future research could replicate the proposed model on pathways in different countries and incorporate UGCs from additional platforms such as Google Reviews or Booking. Furthermore, despite UCGs being recognized as increasingly important for tourism research on well-being [42], future research may be extended by incorporating additional data sources such as semi-structured interviews or questionnaires and employing advanced analysis methods like Structural Equation Modeling. These integrations would enable a more nuanced examination of the complex relationship between travelers' motivations and the actual transformations experienced on the pathways.

Further, in this study, the Italian Pathways are analyzed as a whole without taking into account differences potentially related to their specific characteristics and management. This is partly due to the limitations connected to the methodology adopted in the study relating to the possibility of addressing specific stages of the itineraries through the reviews posted by travelers. Future research could explore and compare the nature of triggers and experiential transformation with regard to single pathways to provide more context-specific information to support their promotion and valorization.

Also, future research could be oriented to extend the analysis in relation to long-term post-experience behavior changes that arise from the journey to provide more insights into the effects of these transformative experiences on pro-environmental behaviors supporting sustainable tourism. This research can contribute to the development of sustainable models of tourism on pathways that consider not only the immediate effects of the journey but also its long-term impacts on travelers and the environment. By incorporating this perspective, future research can also provide valuable insights into the sustainability of travelers on the pathway and inform strategies for enhancing its positive outcomes while minimizing its negative effects on the environment.

Author Contributions: Conceptualization, A.M. and V.M.; methodology, A.M. and V.M.; validation, A.M. and V.M.; formal analysis, A.M. and V.M.; data curation A.M. and V.M.; writing—original draft preparation, A.M. and V.M.; writing—review and editing, A.M. and V.M. All authors have read and agreed to the published version of the manuscript.

Funding: This research received no external funding.

Institutional Review Board Statement: Not applicable.

Informed Consent Statement: Not applicable.

Data Availability Statement: The raw data supporting the conclusions of this article will be made available by the authors on request.

Conflicts of Interest: The authors declare no conflicts of interest.

References

1. Buhalis, D.; Leung, X.Y.; Fan, D.; Darcy, S.; Chen, G.; Xu, F.; Wei-Han Tan, G.; Nunkoo, R.; Farmaki, A. Tourism 2030 and the contribution to the sustainable development goals: The Tourism Review viewpoint, Editorial. *Tour. Rev.* **2023**, *78*, 293–313. [CrossRef]
2. Neuhofer, B. Positive tourism experiences for human transformation: A Horizon 2050 paper. *Tour. Rev.* 2024; *ahead-of-print*.
3. Chan, J.K.L.; Saikim, F.H. Exploring the ecotourism service experience framework using the dimensions of motivation, expectation and ecotourism experience. *Tour. Hosp. Res.* **2021**, *22*, 425–443. [CrossRef]
4. Sana, A.; Chakraborty, S.; Adil, M.; Sadiq, M. Ecotourism experience: A systematic review and future research agenda. *Int. J. Consum. Stud.* **2023**, *47*, 2131–2156. [CrossRef]

5. Ballantyne, R.; Packer, J. Ecotourism: Themes and issues. In *International Handbook on Ecotourism*; Ballantyne, R., Packer, J., Eds.; Edward Elgar Publishing: Cheltenham, UK, 2013; pp. 1–8.
6. Wolf, I.D.; Stricker, H.K.; Hagenloh, G. Outcome-focused national park experience management: Transforming participants, promoting social well-being, and fostering place attachment. *J. Sustain. Tour.* **2015**, *23*, 358–381. [CrossRef]
7. Weaver, D.B. Comprehensive and minimalist dimensions of ecotourism. *Ann. Tour. Res.* **2005**, *32*, 439–455. [CrossRef]
8. Fennell, D.A. *Ecotourism*, 3rd ed.; Routledge: London, UK, 2008.
9. Ceballos-Lascurain, H. *Estudio de Prefactibilidad Socioeconomica del Tourismo Ecologico y Anteproyecto Arquitectonico y Urbanistico del Centro de Tourismo Ecologico de Sian Ka'an Roo*; SEDUE: Mexico City, Mexico, 1987.
10. Lean, G. Transformative travel: Inspiring sustainability. In *Wellness and Tourism: Mind, Body, Spirit*; Bushell, R., Sheldon, P., Eds.; Cognizant: New York, NY, USA, 2009.
11. Lengieza, M.L.; Hunt, C.A.; Swim, J.K. Ecotourism, eudaimonia, and sustainability insights. *J. Ecotourism* **2023**, *22*, 43–58. [CrossRef]
12. Sheldon, P.J. Designing tourism experiences for inner transformation. *Ann. Tour. Res.* **2020**, *83*, 1029. [CrossRef]
13. Zhao, Y.; Agyeiwaah, E. Understanding tourists' transformative experience: A systematic literature review. *J. Hosp. Tour. Manag.* **2023**, *54*, 188–199. [CrossRef]
14. Stoleriu, O.M.; Brochado, A.; Rusu, A.; Lupu, C. Analyses of visitors' experiences in a natural world heritage site based on TripAdvisor reviews. *Visit. Stud.* **2019**, *22*, 192–212. [CrossRef]
15. Nowacki, M.; Kowalczyk-Anioł, J. Experiencing islands: Is sustainability reported in tourists' online reviews? *J. Ecotourism* **2022**, *22*, 59–79. [CrossRef]
16. MIBACT. Atlante dei Cammini d'Italia. Available online: https://camminiditalia.cultura.gov.it/home-cammini-ditalia/atlante-dei-cammini/ (accessed on 15 October 2024).
17. Symbola. *Piccoli Comuni e Cammini d'Italia*; Fondazione Symbola: Roma, Italy, 2020.
18. Terre di Mezzo Editore. Italia, Paese di Cammini. Tutti i Numeri del 2023. Available online: https://www.terre.it/cammini-percorsi/i-dati-dei-cammini/italia-paese-di-cammini-il-dossier-di-terre-di-mezzo-tutti-i-numeri-del-2023/?srsltid=AfmBOoquBSDIzdDZZVE-DfYC6JfyNaX2-q2tgx-ydojkOXOA5-uGwSkj (accessed on 27 December 2024).
19. Marasco, A.; Marchi, V. I Cammini Italiani: La qualità dell'esperienza dei viaggiatori. In *XXVI Rapporto sul Turismo Italiano*; Marasco, A., Morvillo, A., Maggiore, G., Becheri, E., Eds.; CNR Edizioni: Rome, Italy, 2023; pp. 339–345.
20. Splendiani, S.; Forlani, F. *Il Turismo dei Cammini per la Valorizzazione Delle Destinazioni Italiane. Modelli, Strumenti Manageriali e casi di Studio*; Franco Angeli: Milano, Italy, 2023.
21. Lavrič, M.; Brumec, S.; Naterer, A. Exceptional human experiences among pilgrims on the Camino de Santiago: A study of self-reported experiences and transformative aftereffects. *Int. J. Transpers. Stud.* **2021**, *40*, 2. [CrossRef]
22. Zhang, K.; Labajo, V.; Ramos, I.; González del Valle-Brena, A. A Guest at Home: The Experience of Chinese Pilgrims on the Camino de Santiago. *Sustainability* **2021**, *13*, 10658. [CrossRef]
23. Zhang, K.; Ramos-Riera, I.; Labajo, V. Feet in hell, spirit in heaven: Spiritual transformation of Chinese travelers on the Camino de Santiago. *J. Relig. Health* **2024**, *63*, 89–108. [CrossRef] [PubMed]
24. Hitchner, S.; Schelhas, J.; Brosius, J.P.; Nibbelink, N. Thru-hiking the John Muir Trail as a modern pilgrimage: Implications for natural resource management. *J. Ecotourism* **2019**, *18*, 82–99. [CrossRef]
25. Ce.R.T.A., Cattolica per il Turismo. STRADE ITINARRANTI. Mappe, Pratiche e Percorsi di Comunicazione del Turismo Esperienziale, Quarta Annualità Della Ricerca "Comunicazione, Media e Turismo", by Ce.R.T.A. and Cattolica per il Turismo in Collaboration with Publitalia '80: Milano, Italy. 2024. Available online: https://centridiricerca.unicatt.it/certa-2024-strade-itinarranti-mappe-pratiche-e-percorsi-di-comunicazione-del-turismo-esperienziale (accessed on 15 October 2024).
26. Khder, M.A. Web Scraping or Web Crawling: State of Art, Techniques, Approaches and Application. *Int. J. Adv. Soft Comput. Its Appl.* **2021**, *13*, 145–168. [CrossRef]
27. Neuhofer, B.; Egger, R.; Yu, J.; Celuch, K. Designing experiences in the age of human transformation: An analysis of Burning Man. *Ann. Tour. Res.* **2021**, *91*, 103310. [CrossRef]
28. Kirillova, K.; Lehto, X.; Cai, L. What triggers transformative tourism experiences? *Tour. Recreat. Res.* **2017**, *42*, 498–511. [CrossRef]
29. Chen, Z. Theoretical development of the tourist experience: A future perspective. *Tour. Recreat. Res.* **2023**, *2023*, 1–15. [CrossRef]
30. Amaro, D.; Caldeira, A.M.; Seabra, C. Transformative experiences in tourism: A conceptual and critical analysis integrating consumer and managerial perspectives. *Tour. Hosp. Res.* **2023**, *25*, 135–146. [CrossRef]
31. Fu, X.; Tanyatanaboon, M.; Lehto, X.Y. Conceptualizing transformative guest experience at retreat centers. *Int. J. Hosp. Manag.* **2015**, *49*, 83–92. [CrossRef]
32. Pung, J.M.; Yung, R.; Khoo-Lattimore, C.; Del Chiappa, G. Transformative travel experiences and gender: A double duoethnography approach. *Curr. Issues Tour.* **2020**, *23*, 538–558. [CrossRef]
33. Wolf, I.D.; Ainsworth, G.B.; Crowley, J. Transformative travel as a sustainable market niche for protected areas: A new development, marketing and conservation model. *J. Sustain. Tour.* **2017**, *25*, 1650–1673. [CrossRef]

34. Walter, P.G. Catalysts for transformative learning in community-based ecotourism. *Curr. Issues Tour.* **2016**, *19*, 1356–1371. [CrossRef]
35. Wielenga, B. New experiences in nature areas: Architecture as a tool to stimulate transformative experiences among visitors in nature areas? *J. Tour. Futures* **2023**, *9*, 304–310. [CrossRef]
36. Richardson, N.; Insch, A. Enabling transformative experiences through nature-based tourism. *Tour. Recreat. Res.* **2021**, *48*, 311–318. [CrossRef]
37. Yoo, K.H.; Sigala, M.; Gretzel, U. Exploring Tripadvisor. In *Open Tourism: Open Innovation, Crowdsourcing and Co-Creation Challenging the Tourism Industry*; Springer: Berlin/Heidelberg, Germany, 2016; pp. 239–255.
38. TripAdvisor, Inc. 2022 Form 10-K Annual Report. U.S. Securities and Exchange Commission. Available online: https://www.annualreports.com/HostedData/AnnualReportArchive/t/NASDAQ_TRIP_2022.pdf (accessed on 17 December 2024).
39. Rahmadian, E.; Feitosa, D.; Zwitter, A. A systematic literature review on the use of big data for sustainable tourism. *Curr. Issues Tour.* **2022**, *25*, 1711–1730. [CrossRef]
40. O'Connor, P. Managing a hotel's image on TripAdvisor. *J. Hosp. Mark. Manag.* **2010**, *19*, 754–772. [CrossRef]
41. Mandić, A.; McCool, S.F. Sustainable visitor experience design in nature-based tourism: An introduction to the Special Issue. *J. Ecotourism* **2023**, *22*, 1–3. [CrossRef]
42. Zhang, X.; Cheng, L.; Ma, G. Eliciting eudaimonic well-being in the tourism experiential space: Evidence from online reviews. *Tour. Manag.* **2024**, *105*, 104955. [CrossRef]
43. Lu, W.; Stepchenkova, S. User-generated content as a research mode in tourism and hospitality applications: Topics, methods, and software. *J. Hosp. Mark. Manag.* **2015**, *24*, 119–154. [CrossRef]
44. Narangajavana Kaosiri, Y.; Callarisa Fiol, L.J.; Moliner Tena, M.Á.; Rodríguez Artola, R.M.; Sánchez García, J. User-generated content sources in social media: A new approach to explore tourist satisfaction. *J. Travel Res.* **2019**, *58*, 253–265. [CrossRef]
45. Mariani, M.; Borghi, M. Exploring environmental concerns on digital platforms through big data: The effect of online consumers' environmental discourse on online review ratings. *J. Sustain. Tour.* **2022**, *31*, 2592–2611. [CrossRef]
46. Terre di Mezzo Editore. Italia, Paese di Cammini. Tutti i numeri del 2022. Available online: https://www.terre.it/cammini-percorsi/i-dati-dei-cammini/italia-paese-di-cammini-tutti-i-numeri-del-2022/ (accessed on 27 December 2024).
47. Gogtay, N.J.; Thatte, U.M. Principles of correlation analysis. *J. Assoc. Physicians India* **2017**, *65*, 78–81. [PubMed]
48. Brumec, S. Life changes after the Camino de Santiago pilgrimage, including a deeper sense of spirituality. *J. Study Spiritual.* **2022**, *12*, 20–35. [CrossRef]
49. Zhang, Y.; Gao, J.; Cole, S.M.; Ricci, P. How the spread of user-generated contents (UGC) shapes international tourism distribution: Using agent-based modeling to inform strategic UGC marketing. *J. Travel Res.* **2021**, *60*, 1469–1491. [CrossRef]
50. Mendes-Filho, L.; Mills, A.M.; Tan, F.B.; Milne, S. Empowering the traveler: An examination of the impact of user-generated content on travel planning. *J. Travel Tour. Mark.* **2018**, *35*, 425–436. [CrossRef]
51. Assaker, G.; Hallak, R.; El-Haddad, R. Consumer usage of online travel reviews: Expanding the unified theory of acceptance and use of technology model. *J. Vacat. Mark.* **2020**, *26*, 149–165. [CrossRef]
52. Lam, J.M.; Ismail, H.; Lee, S. From desktop to destination: User-generated content platforms, co-created online experiences, destination image and satisfaction. *J. Destin. Mark. Manag.* **2020**, *18*, 100490. [CrossRef]
53. Filieri, R.; Alguezaui, S.; McLeay, F. Why do travelers trust TripAdvisor? Antecedents of trust towards consumer-generated media and its influence on recommendation adoption and word of mouth. *Tour. Manag.* **2015**, *51*, 174–185. [CrossRef]
54. Bilro, R.G.; Loureiro, S.M.C.; Guerreiro, J. Exploring online customer engagement with hospitality products and its relationship with involvement, emotional states, experience and brand advocacy. *J. Hosp. Mark. Manag.* **2019**, *28*, 147–171. [CrossRef]
55. Mariné-Roig, E. Measuring destination image through travel reviews in search engines. *Sustainability* **2017**, *9*, 1425. [CrossRef]
56. Taecharungroj, V.; Mathayomchan, B. Analysing TripAdvisor reviews of tourist attractions in Phuket, Thailand. *Tour. Manag.* **2019**, *75*, 550–568. [CrossRef]
57. Council of the European Union. Council Resolution on the EU Work Plan for Culture 2023–2026. Off. J. Eur. Union 2022/C 466/01. Available online: https://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/PDF/?uri=CELEX:32022G1207(01) (accessed on 28 September 2023).
58. Club Alpino Italiano. Dossier Stati Generali del Turismo Outdoor—Camminare l'Italia: Verso Una Visione Comune—Venezia. Novembre 2024. Available online: https://www.cai.it/statigeneralidelturismo/ (accessed on 27 December 2024).

Disclaimer/Publisher's Note: The statements, opinions and data contained in all publications are solely those of the individual author(s) and contributor(s) and not of MDPI and/or the editor(s). MDPI and/or the editor(s) disclaim responsibility for any injury to people or property resulting from any ideas, methods, instructions or products referred to in the content.