

Blossom Landscapes, Flower Tourism and Multi-Area Business Models between Opportunities and Risks

Katia Giusepponi

University of Macerata, Department of Education, Cultural Heritage and Tourism, Italy

katia.giusepponi@unimc.it

Abstract. The work offers a conceptual framework for interpreting the relationships between the natural environment, communities and businesses in flower landscape tourism. The perspective of analysis is that of integrated sustainability which is necessarily together environmental, social and economic. The study aims to contribute to the promotion of business approaches that can foster fruitful connections among all stakeholders in a dimension of value co-creation. The importance of multi-area business models emerges, with a view to offering not only the seeing of the blossom landscape, but full and holistic experiences of relating to nature in a broad sense. At the same time, the existence of risk factors is observed that call for deep reflection on the need for greater awareness of the essential conditions of equilibrium in environmental, social and economic dimensions.

Keywords: nature-based tourism, value proposition, risk management

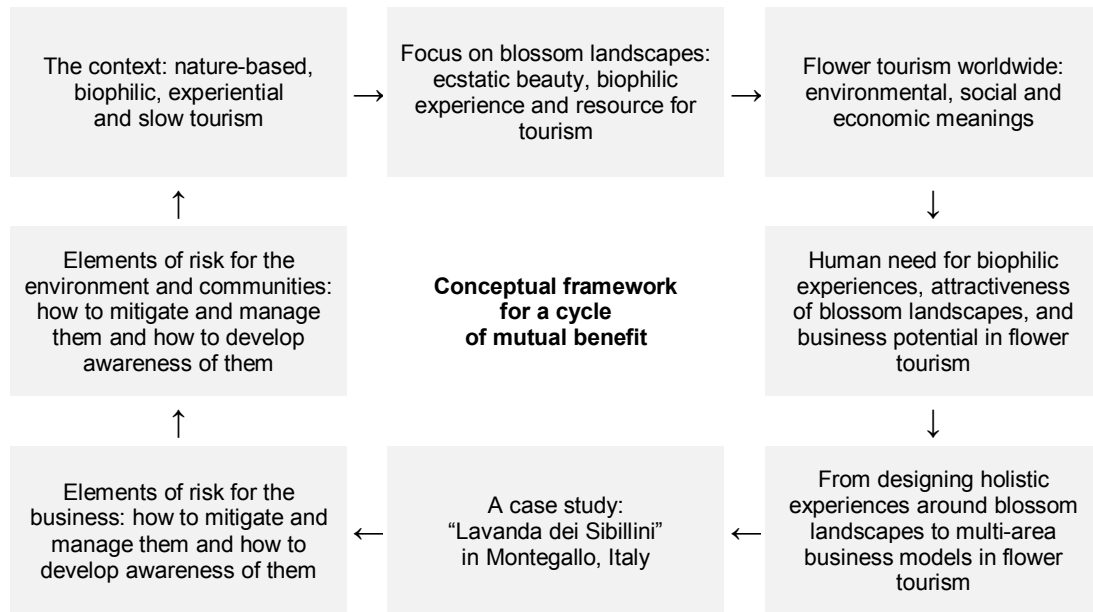
1 Introduction

The study concerns opportunities and conditions for creating virtuous links, of mutual benefit, between the natural environment, the community and business. These are connections developed around the person and their innate need for nature and beauty; and the work proposes a conceptual framework interpreting them in their synergies. The ample reference scenario is that of nature-based, biophilic, slow and experiential tourism, a scenario which is increasingly gaining traction in the perceptions and orientations of the traveler. In particular, this study has a specific focus on blossom landscapes which at the same time express a natural heritage of incredible beauty, allow for biophilic experiences and represent an undisputed resource for tourism. Flower tourism expresses important meanings and impacts in the interconnected environmental, social and economic dimensions. The scientific literature contains some very interesting contributions in this regard but further references are needed to broaden the perspectives; there is also a lack of studies on business models consistent with the context under consideration. This work aims at responding to this gap by offering an interpretative framework in the perspective of integrated sustainability (environmental, social, economic-financial) and in particular by focusing on the study of business models in flower tourism.

The methodological system is founded on the rational connection of theoretical references, evidence emerged by analyzing the case of “Lavanda dei Sibillini”, an Italian business in the field under discussion, and interpretative elements elaborated on the basis of the testimonies of its founders. Within the study, the potential of nature-based and experiential tourism is specifically contextualized in flower tourism, i.e. in the dimension of the holistic, multisensory and memorable experience around blossom landscapes. Consistent with this approach, the need for a business multi-area approach emerges, that is the need to offer experiences not limited to the view of the blossom landscape, but extended to a profound immersion that allows the person to reunite with their own nature, in the dimension of biophilic tourism. At the same time, important risk factors for businesses, environment and communities emerge. The work proposes reflections on how to mitigate and manage them, and on how to develop widespread awareness of them, safeguarding the environmental, social and economic context. The virtuous circle therefore returns to the context to be protected and which, only where protected, can continue to represent an environmental, social and economic resource, a resource also for companies that have to relate to it by guiding the traveler on tiptoe (fig. 1).

The work aims at contributing to the promotion of businesses that can foster synergies between the environment, society and human activities, and to the debate on the risks that arise when the need for equilibrium is not understood. This study represents only one piece; the convergence of further research activities, extended in terms of cases and testimonies, will allow important advances on the topic.

Figure 1: Conceptual framework



Source: Author's own elaboration

2 The context: nature-based, biophilic, experiential, slow tourism

Definitions and declinations of tourism are increasing in number. There is a tendency to classify, however one should never forget the limits that any classification brings with it, and in particular that the boundaries are generally not clear-cut but blurred. It is usual to contrast fast tourism made up of running, seeing and consuming in a hit-and-run style, with slow, tiptoe tourism made up of mindfulness immersion in an experiential and biophilic perspective of being connected with nature and benefiting from this in physical and psychic terms (Giusepponi & Johnson, 2020:76). Nature-based tourism is not just seeing, it is related to experiencing activities within natural areas (Fossgard & Fredman, 2019:2). Nonetheless, it should be noted that it is not possible to strictly separate slow and fast forms of tourism; different rhythms can coexist within the same trips, which always represent articulated experiences and certainly can include experiential paths closer to nature along with faster situations (Oh, Assaf & Baloglu, 2016:216).

Certainly, an approach to tourism dimensions linked to activities and experiences in nature is spreading more and more. To appreciate this trend, consider that in the specific cross-section of ecotourism – intended as a responsible and proactive dimension of nature-based tourism, a dimension based on learning from nature, minimizing impacts, and contributing to environmental protection and local people's well-being (Global Ecotourism Network, 2016) – there is an expected growth rate through 2027 at a CAGR, compound annual growth rate, of 13.4 percent, from \$189.88 billion in 2022 to \$331.62 billion in 2027 (The Business Research Company, 2023). Consider also that as a result of the

Covid-19 pandemic there has been a strong acceleration of the trend toward nature (Derks, Giessen & Winkel, 2020; Haukeland et al., 2023:1). This has important significance not only for travelers but also for environments and communities. In fact, while nature, wild and biophilic settings are an important resource for tourism, it is also true that environmentally friendly and non-invasive ecotourism initiatives are a way to develop local economies and communities and thus conditions to protect and improve the environmental contexts themselves (Newsome, 2021:297). In this perspective, it is also interesting to note that although high-value, low-volume tourism is often favored within conservation interventions, it may not be more effective than other dimensions of tourism in terms of local economic benefits (Sandbrook, 2010:26). In Sandbrook's study, referring to Bwindi Impenetrable National Park in Uganda, it emerges how these benefits could instead be increased based on other factors, such as longer visitor stays incentivized through the development of points of interest in destinations (Ibidem).

Elmahdy, Haukeland & Fredman, (2017) effectively highlight – based on a STEEP analysis and with reference to the framework proposed by Dwyer et al. (2009) – the social, technological, economic, environmental and political factors that converge in favoring nature-based tourism. In this regard, without claiming to be exhaustive, consider the following. In a *social* dimension, think of the population ageing, the increasing attention to health and well-being, growing urbanization, the widespread sedentary lifestyle, the desire for useful experiences to reconnect with nature, and the wish – increased considerably with the Covid-19 pandemic – for open and uncontaminated spaces. As for the *technological* evolution, consider that it impacts on information, communications, knowledge, and transportation, helping to raise awareness of the opportunities that nature offers globally, thus making destinations more accessible and increasing people's ability to approach such destinations. From an *economic* perspective, take into consideration the growth of already developed and emerging economies (that will favor tourist spending and searching for exclusive experiences); the spreading of new travel and consumption models, linked to the sharing economy (that will favor the presence of new players and changes in spending destination); cost increases, e.g. for fuel, linked to the urgency of solving environmental issues. From an *environmental* point of view, a different use of the land has to be observed: urbanization and intensive overbuilding of some areas, on the one hand, and abandonment of the internal areas, on the other, make destinations in nature rarer and more attractive. At the same time, however, climate change is producing impacts in terms of landscapes transformation and tourist attractiveness of places (think of the effect of rising temperatures on snow and sea levels), posing epochal challenges. In a *political* dimension, consider that phenomena such as conflicts, risks of terrorism and health emergencies affect people's freedom and certainly intensify the desire for contact with nature (Elmahdy, Haukeland & Fredman, 2017:21-52).

These are trends that necessarily have an impact, on the one hand, on the values, expectations, desires and needs of tourists, on the other, on how value propositions should be approached both in terms of tourist destinations and in a strictly entrepreneurial dimension.

3 Blossom landscapes, flower tourism and business potential

Blossom landscapes offer unique opportunities for immersion in nature, gratifying a deep desire for beauty and harmony. Just to call to mind a few images, think of the flowering of cherry trees and baby blue eyes in Japan; tulips in the Netherlands and in Washington's Skagit Valley; lavender in Provence, France; poppies in California and in the province of Zamora, Spain; sunflowers in Tuscany, Italy; azaleas in South Korea, bluebells in Scotland; and rapeseed in Luoping County, East China. Think of flowering in the Anza-Borrego Desert, California; in Castelluccio di Norcia; in Namaqua Park, South Africa; in the Atacama Desert, Chile. The value of the experience is related to the beauty in which one is immersed, that has the power to engage almost all the senses and satisfy the human need for biophilic dimension, for regeneration through nature. As Kruger, Viljoen & Saayma (2013:159) pointed out, this

value is related to the ability of capturing the wonder of the moment. In their study concerning two national parks in South Africa, the authors observed that the experience, with the opportunity to appreciate nature, was the main motivating factor for visitors to a wildflower event (ivi:158). They therefore highlighted the consistency of these results with what stated by Ballantyne et al. (2011) regarding memorable experiences and how these are linked to a sense of wonder. In particular, such experiences can be observed as “meaningful experiences” which include, according to Boswijk et al., “an important learning component – an aspect of awareness” (Boswijk et al., 2007:24).

Blossom landscapes represent a huge attraction factor for a territory, however flower tourism does not always generate a direct spillover into the territory itself. The level of spillover, indeed, depends on how well the territory is organized for tourism, how integrated it is in terms of a tourist destination, thinking of services and hospitality even beyond the flowering period. The potential in these perspectives is high: atmospheres centered on the person, on well-being and on beauty can be created around blossom landscapes and in general territories that host them; meaningful experiences can be developed that are useful in promoting visitors' propensity for sustainable behavior, as highlighted by Ballantyne et al. (2011); and economic fabrics can be created that innervate the territory with value, also increasing the resources available for environmental protection. The economic value of initiatives and activities related to flowering landscapes should not be ignored, especially when evaluating entities managed by public actors, as for example highlighted by James et al. (2007) with reference to Namaqua National Park in South Africa. However, the ability for vision, planning, and collaboration that such territorial designs require is very high, given the reference to events that are limited in time and always subject to the uncertainties of the climate. Furthermore, the impact of climate change must also be considered. In this direction, for example, Zang et al. (2020), based on a contextualization on the case of Beijing, observe how climate change can determine a contraction of some days in the flowering period with effects on tourism, for which mitigation strategies and alternatives should be prepared.

In order to increase the economic potential of flower tourism in the territory and business opportunities, it is needed the ability to tell a story, to keep alive the memory of the flowering when the flowering is no longer there, and high the call of the same when it is expected. The blooms directly or indirectly linked to the products to be used (lentils and lavender, for example), certainly help elements of continuity. Even in other situations, however, continuity can be aided in various ways, for example through events and initiatives, artistic and cultural expressions, coherent infrastructures and services, narration and sharing of experiences. To create such dynamic contexts, the action of public actors is important but cannot be enough. The convergent and integrated intervention of private actors, oriented to convey a message with continuity, is also necessary. Floral tourism is therefore not a separate category but a transversal category because it is at the same time slow, naturalistic, cultural, experiential tourism, expression of lifestyles, learning context. And it is coherent to imagine in blue oceans – in the sense of the seminal work of Chan Kim & Mauborgne (2005) – the flower tourism business that fits into such synergistic and transversal contexts, relying not only on flowering but, *in primis*, on the meaning of a landscape which in flowering finds its acme and its symbol but which does not end in it, that is the business that knows how to invent itself around the flowering, however diversifying and seeking uniqueness in search of continuity. In absence of synergistic contexts and strategic visions, one can observe only impromptu activities or, in the case of very well-known and attractive flowerings, activities submerged by the overtourism of a few weeks or days.

In this context, the conceptualization and representation through the category of *business model* are of great use in expressing and highlighting the fundamental logic of activities organized within flower tourism, at both the enterprise and – in a broader and appropriately contextualized approach – the territory level. However, there are extensive studies on the business model but not on the contextualization of the tool itself in the field of flower tourism. The identification, explanation and continuous verification of the logical relationships underlying the business processes of value creation

and capture are essential for both theoretical and operational purposes, purposes that are not to be considered opposites, but rather correspond to explanations of general or specific contexts (Giusepponi, 2000).

The business model is approached here as depicting the rationale for the creation and acquisition of value (Shafer, Smith, & Linder, 2005:204); as a dynamic and innovation-focused instrument (Teece, 2010; Veit, et al. 2014). In defining a business model, intuition is undoubtedly important, but it must be accompanied by the ability to effectively identify and organize the most distinctive and characterizing elements of the reality to be modelled (Teece, 2010:187). Addresses provided by conceptual frameworks can certainly be useful – even if they cannot be exhaustive in themselves – to rationalize the complex elements of a business model in terms of value proposition, customer target, market approaches, resources and processes, economic-financial and environmental and social dimensions. In particular, in order to provide a contribution in filling the gaps indicated above in terms of attention to business models in flower tourism, the work proceeds below by analyzing a multi-area business logic in this field, with a focus on a case of study, and through the lens of the Business Model Canvas devised by Alexander Osterwalder and Yves Pigneur (Osterwalder, 2004; Osterwalder & Pigneur, 2010; Osterwalder, Pigneur & Tucci, 2005). It emerges the meaning of guaranteeing complete and holistic customer experiences by taking care of empathy toward visitors, listening without judgement, experimenting and improving, from a perspective of value co-creation and design thinking (Brown, 2008; Kimbell, 2011).

4 From designing holistic experiences around blossom landscapes to developing multi-area business models in flower tourism. The case of “Lavanda dei Sibillini”

Designing services around blossoms – telling a story and allowing the sharing of values that go beyond the moment – is the foundation for creating learning, meanings, and places of the heart to which one returns, which become part of one's life and are shared with others in a positive narrative, as experiences that have allowed an evolution of awareness. The logic of the approach to the design of complex services centered, symbolically and not, on flowering is treated here with reference to the case of “Lavanda dei Sibillini”, an Italian business, and the testimonies of the founders Federico Rossi and Nicoletta Scopa.

As regards the methodological framework supporting the case study in the dimension of critical thinking and evolution of knowledge, the reference is particularly to Yin, 1993; Tellis, 1997; and Eisenhardt & Graebner, 2007. The framework also includes a qualitative content analysis, concerning the testimonies and other materials related to the case examined here and based on the reference to Maykut & Morehouse, 1994; and Schreier, 2012, among others. The testimonies were collected directly by the author during the interview with the founders of April 15, 2023 (Giusepponi, Rossi & Scopa, 2023). The collected contents were verified by the founders in May, then analyzed by the author and referred to here only in some focal points, based on the author's translation. Other materials include publications by the founders on their experience and extensive online resources on the business profiles and activities.

“Lavanda dei Sibillini” is a small business in Montegalloy, a town of 422 inhabitants on the Sibillini Mountains, in the Apennines of Central Italy, in the Marche Region. They cultivate, transform, sell lavender and products derived from it, and offer experiences of connection with nature in the places of lavender. The enterprise was born out of Federico and Nicoletta's love for the uncontaminated places of Montegalloy, where the founders arrived in January 2013, from Bologna (in the Emilia-Romagna Region, Italy); they intended to stay there for only a few weeks and then remained, changing their lives.

«The beauty of these places is that there is nothing. When there is nothing you can do everything, you have very large spaces. [...] Even today the spaces in which to move, workwise, are immense and empty. Here you can reinvent yourself as often as you like. We need initiative. [...] Here you have a slower pace of life

but certainly more on a human scale. Here, life costs much, much less» (Federico Rossi, interviewed by Katia Giusepponi, on April 15, 2023; translation by Katia Giusepponi).

Initially, their activity concerned the development of the SibilliniWeb portal for tourism and tourist facilities (<https://www.sibilliniweb.it/>). This initiative, which filled a gap in local services, required the couple to develop many skills: writing, photography, video shooting. Near Montegallo, there is Castelluccio di Norcia, an Umbrian town famous for its prized lentils and for its flowering (of lentils and spontaneous plants such as, for example, poppy, gentianella, narcissus, violet, asphodel, clover) which every year, between mid-May and early July, excites tens of thousands of visitors. In 2016, reading a newspaper article relating to a lavender plantation in the Bologna area, Federico and Nicoletta reflected on this power of attraction and – as Federico pointed out – they thought: «Here, in front of us, many (tens of thousands) of the visitors of Castelluccio pass; they go to see a bloom, we offer them another bloom to be fully relevant».

Two months after reading the article, Central Italy was struck by the well-known and traumatic seismic events with serious repercussions on the economic and social fabric and consequently on tourism too. This also had an impact on the immediate prospects of the SibilliniWeb portal. Diversification through the lavender business, with its articulated potential and versatility, has become even more a strategy to focus on in order to develop new paths, new opportunities. Theirs was, therefore, a strategy linked to the impacting events of earthquakes as well. With the lavender plantation, the activity has developed in the perspective of floral tourism, more specifically of: “A flower for Montegallo” / “Un fiore per Montegallo” (Lavanda dei Sibillini, n.d.-b). Today, after the earthquakes and the Covid-19 pandemic, “Lavanda dei Sibillini” works widely not only with customers who specifically go to Montegallo but also with passing visitors, in particular visitors to and from the plains of Castelluccio (as the founders had initially imagined). In fact, Nicoletta highlights that, during the Castelluccio flowering, they saw a significant increase in the influx of people on the various trekking paths (of different difficulty and duration) that they have been offering for three years.

From the beginning, they thought about lavender from the perspective of the landscape and with the idea of a store, a point of sale, related to lavender products. They were therefore thinking of a lavender landscape and people who would come because they were interested in lavender. From a business perspective, the focus was precisely on the flower. It was later that the project was expanded to include trekking and other activities. The idea to integrate other services/products was inspired by the continuous drive to challenge and improve themselves, and by observing the customers. For example, just by observing customers, a significant critical area was captured and an important opportunity for improvement and service in the trekking sector emerged, as indicated below.

«Initially, we accompanied customers to our nearby lavender field, but this was very challenging to manage, because while some customers were there in the field, others were in the store, and it was difficult for us to follow everyone. Then Covid arrived and, with the need to avoid crowds, we decided to direct customers directly up the mountain to see the flowering. They went and, since there were many families, many told us that it was difficult with the children because they got bored. [...] There we started thinking about a Play Trail [Sentiero Gioco] where the child was the protagonist, with a map to follow, riddles to solve, things to do. When we started with the Play Trail, I remember, about 200 children came in one day. [...] From there we threw ourselves headfirst into studying all the trails well, all the maps» (Federico Rossi, interviewed by Katia Giusepponi, on April 15, 2023; translation by Katia Giusepponi).

The games included in the Play Trail, i.e. the Little Explorer's trek, changed and increased in number over time. In 2023, for example, the trail also includes the village of lavender gnomes (Lavanda dei Sibillini, n.d.-c). In addition to the Play Trail, the offer includes three other trekking trails of different difficulty: Lavender White Ring Trekking – easy, length 1.5 km, elevation gain 50 m, duration 45-55 minutes; Lavender Red Ring Trekking – easy, 4.4 km, 270 m, 1h 45mins. - 2h; Montegallo Fuchsia Ring Trekking – medium difficulty, 8.6 km, 463 m, 3h 15mins - 3h 30mins (Lavanda dei Sibillini, n.d.-a). The trails allow people to enjoy blooms that are about not only lavender (fig. 2I), but also: crocuses,

snowdrops, anemone epatica, scilla bifolia, primroses (in February-April); poppies (fig. 2II), wild orchids and St. John's lilies (in May-June); Sibillini lavender and daisies (in July-August); autumn colchytes (in September-October). Later, it is possible to appreciate other dimensions of nature, with the foliage of the woods and the snow (Ibidem).

Figure 2: Lavender (I) and poppy (II) flowering along the paths



Source: Lavanda dei Sibillini, (n.d.-a)

However, in this concept, which is complex, the role of the lavender landscape is central. «It is the centerpiece. Everything revolves around the lavender», Federico observes. «In our opinion the field – anyway, the lavender itself – is the symbol», Nicoletta considers. People can see in the field that same lavender, which is then processed in order to obtain scent sachets, essential oil, and cosmetic and household products that can be purchased in store or online. In this way, one can have a little bit of Montegallo at home. During the pandemic, when people could not travel to Montegallo, “Lavanda dei Sibillini” expanded the range of products, always safeguarding the orientation to naturalness and the consistency with the small size of the company, and looking for suitable suppliers under such profiles. They focused on exclusivity, on the passionate pursuit of quality, on being unique. As regards the lavender sachets, for example, they decided to distinguish themselves not only for the quality of the dried lavender but also by directly designing little fabric bags to be printed by a supplier. They looked for a suitable supplier for two years. «The problem was the distortion of the design on the cotton fabric, because when you go to digitally print the color, the machine drags the fabric, which, being very light, does not stay perfectly straight» – Federico explains, specifying that then the technique has been refined «with a company that has always done textile printing for the fashion world» and who has seen that «need as a challenge to improve themselves». Exclusivity and uniqueness are expressed not only through the object but also, and above all, through the human approach:

«When there is harvesting, we advertise it quietly and, if you come, you will find us there in the field collecting the lavender, and then transporting it by tractor here, where we have the dryer. Here you can see that we unload it, put it to dry, you can see the lavender in the dryer. We have focused on our peculiarity. In the end, the lavender in the bag that you buy is the lavender that, as you have been able to see, we have collected, dried, sieved. We show what is behind the bag of lavender, the work that is there. We invite you to come and see all this» (Nicoletta Scopa interviewed by Katia Giusepponi, on April 15, 2023; translation by Katia Giusepponi).

Figure 3: “Lavanda dei Sibillini”: business model on a Canvas

KEY PARTNERS	KEY ACTIVITIES	VALUE PROPOSITIONS	CUSTOMER RELATIONSHIPS	CUSTOMER SEGMENTS
Actors who share with the enterprise the orientation to accept the continuous challenge of improving quality (for example: the lavender processing laboratory for cosmetics; and the digital textile printing supplier for the fabric sachets)	Processes to ensure the highest quality of the intrinsic characteristics of the flowers and the fullness of the experiences associated with them	<p>“A Flower for Montegallo” / “Un Fiore per Montegallo”</p> <p>EXCLUSIVE, NATURE-BASED AND HIGH-QUALITY EXPERIENCES THROUGH SERVICES AND PRODUCTS CENTERED ON FLOWERS AND THEIR BLOSSOM AS A SYMBOL OF REBIRTH</p>	Meaningful relationships, in terms of approach to life, one's identity, connection with nature, harmony with the environment in a broad sense	People who love slow and nature-based life styles, experiences, and products (from young families with children to retirees)
	KEY RESOURCES		CHANNELS	
Main resources needed for the activities are:			Onsite channels are represented by the natural contexts of the blossoms and paths; and by the shop, as the physical point of sale of products related to lavender.	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - uncontaminated places at high altitude - land and lavender plantation - lavender dryer (by air circulation only) - online platform - onsite shop 			Through the platform, it is possible to access information about the enterprise, its environment, trekking paths and lavender-related products, and shop online.	
COST STRUCTURE			REVENUE STREAMS	
<p>The underlying orientation includes:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - foundation on essentiality - low capital investments (e.g., through rented land) - predominantly labor-intensive activities <p>Main factors of costs are for:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - organization of trekking paths - plantation management, with cultivation, harvesting and internal processing of lavender (through labor and use of equipment such as the dryer) - external lavender processing - shop management - platform management 			<p>The underlying orientation includes:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - being unique and recognizable, standing out - diversification and customization of the offer, leaving the customer the maximum freedom of choice without ever forcing him/her <p>Main sources of revenues are from:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - trekking paths around flowers - lavender sachets - dried lavender flowers - oils, soaps and candles based on lavender - natural cosmetics based on lavender 	

Source: Author's own elaboration based on her interpretation of the evidence emerging from the case study and founded on the conceptual framework of the Business Model Canvas (Osterwader, 2004; Osterwalder & Pigneur, 2010; Osterwalder, Pigneur & Tucci, 2005)

People who appreciate “Lavanda dei Sibillini” are very diverse (from young people and children to retirees), but generally sensitive to nature. Many of them reach the “Lavanda dei Sibillini” because they are interested in the life experience of the founders, in their having left the city of Bologna to live in the

mountains, in the Sibillini Mountains. People know them even before they get to Montegallo, through their book (Rossi & Scopa, 2021). Nicoletta points out, «One family came back twice because the child wanted to see the lavender again, to play the game. The children are the first ones to tell you, “I came back because I wanted to come back”. This is very beautiful». Emphasis is placed on a sense of freedom, respect for freedom. Consider that the Play Trail is free. «We thought “What parent, after spending a day like this with their child, doesn't buy some of our products?” We have thus left complete freedom. The more people are left free to choose, the more they tend to bond», Federico says. Overall, a tangible and widespread social orientation emerges. «In our opinion it is absolutely logical», Nicoletta explains. At the same time all this generates very significant flows of visitors for Montegallo, a small town of 422 inhabitants, as of January 1, 2023, based on estimated data (ISTAT, 2023). «Consider that just with the activities for children we bring in 2,000 children a year. Adding parents and relatives, we get to about 5,000-6,000 people. Including also people who come for trekking and people who come to see the lavender bloom, we reach 6,000-7,000 people», Federico finally specifies.

The development of a multi-area business model within flower tourism can be exemplified in the case of “Lavanda dei Sibillini” as depicted in figure 3, based on the reference to the Business Model Canvas (Osterwader, 2004; Osterwalder & Pigneur, 2010; Osterwalder, Pigneur & Tucci, 2005). The narration of a story emerges, creating a common thread between flower, landscape, environment, and people who are enabled to access biophilic and holistic experiences, with positive spillover effects on the territory. Such experiences find a center in the lavender landscape and extend far beyond, transforming the blossom landscape itself into a symbol.

5 Elements of risks for the business, the environment, communities

Elements of risk for businesses in flower tourism are due to the difficulty of designing a sustainable destination based on a structured network of actors and services capable of producing benefits in terms of landscape attractiveness for an extended period over the course of the year. Flower tourism does not a priori mean tiptoe tourism. In fact, the concentration of visitors in a few days of the year can materialize mass tourism phenomena, making it impossible to carry out the meaningful experiences mentioned above, with damage to the environment, the community and businesses. An integrated design – inclusive of public and private actors and with the conscious participation of citizens – is essential to maintaining a continuity of attention around landscapes that only for a few weeks can shine in their flowering; and is essential to avoiding harmful overtourism phenomena which are dramatic for the environment, the communities, and the economic prospects of the businesses.

Damages may concern pollution and issues of traffic and public safety, as well as real havoc of the blooms in the presence of unsustainable crowds and disregard for rules. It should be observed that the same risks to the environment and communities are also risks to businesses. Without adequate culture and awareness, the blossom landscape could seem an “everyone's” and “no one's” place, for own use and consumption, with negative impacts for all the actors of the territory. It is not conceivable to tear flowers during visits, trample the fields compromising the harvest, and so on, but unfortunately it is not always a given that visitors respect natural resources.

To have an idea of the possible extent of mass tourism risks, consider that in 2019 an announced super bloom created such a crowd as to push the city of Lake Elsinore (California) to close access to the poppy fields in Walker Canyon, in order to deal with an overtourism situation creating problems of traffic and of some visitors being heedless of the instructions to respect the paths among the flowers (Cosgrovestaff, 2019; Reyes-Velarde, 2019a). During one weekend in mid-March 2019, between 50,000 and 100,000 people a day had visited the canyon causing traffic jams that engulfed Lake Elsinore, which had about 63,000 residents at the time (Reyes-Velarde, 2019b).

With reference to the flowering of Castelluccio mentioned already, on the dedicated website, one can read the invitation to “be careful not to tread on the cultivated fields” (Castelluccio di Norcia, n.d.). Considering that these are private fields, with farmers' lentil crops that could be damaged by unsuitable behavior by visitors, one immediately understands the seriousness of the risks both from an environmental and a socio-economic point of view. As evidenced by D'Ignoti (2021), the attractiveness of the Castelluccio flowering has seen further and important impulses following the earthquakes of 2016 and the pandemic of 2020; and, alongside the desire to share wonderful natural environments with visitors, local citizens feel the need for actions to counter the effects of the overtourism and to promote education for a responsible use of the landscape.

Cultural promotion and awareness-raising are always essential starting points to innervate the territory of integrated value, activating a cycle of common good from an ecological perspective and thus making nature-based tourism really sustainable eco-tourism (Orams, 1996:92; Valentine, 1992:120-121) – also in terms of enhancement of biodiversity and respect for the rarity of certain species (Turpie, & Joubert, 2004). Emphasizing the cultural and educational dimension as fundamental to the spread and entrenchment of spontaneous ecological attitudes does not mean neglecting the importance of monitoring visitor compliance and sanctioning behaviors that create problems and disequilibrium. As Kuenzi & McNeely (2008:16) point out, effective risk management requires a broad understanding of risks in their relationship to the environment in which they originate; and this understanding is essential to a rigorous and systemic approach to nature-based tourism, which can express a model of sustainability.

6 Conclusion

Blossom landscapes, as highly evocative and symbolic contexts of nature-based tourism, offer stimuli, resources and opportunities for creating real models of environmental-social-economic sustainability. However, to positively project this value – appropriately managing the intrinsic risks discussed above – it is essential to guarantee delicate systemic equilibria, through integrated projects focused on the enriching experience of well-being, learning and awareness that people can live around a blossom landscape.

The fulcrum of the system is certainly in the environment of which the blossom landscape is an expression, and can only be activated by approaching the landscape itself as a resource to be protected with ecological attitude and awareness of the complex risks caused by invasive human activities. Only by being rooted in a genuine environmental commitment is it possible to develop a sense of community, connection and sharing around the blossom landscape as a distinctive element of a territory – an element that unites people both in the beauty and responsibility of conservation, and therefore in projection toward the future. The activation of environmental and social levers, together, is then condition for developing a terrain favorable to the generation of economic value and the flourishing of territories and businesses consistent with the proactive approach that fuels respect for the environment. These territories and businesses enable people to experience the landscape during its flowering and beyond, by designing attractive tourist destinations (at territory level) and multi-area business models (at enterprise level, as evidenced in the case study).

The consequent environmental and social spillovers further nourish the economic terrain. In evaluating the prospects for expansion of the system, however, it is necessary to always consider the environmental and social equilibrium as the essential foundations of the pyramid of sustainability, both from a territory and business perspective. As already indicated, this contribution represents but one piece in a field still largely to be explored, and with high potential in terms of integrated sustainability.

References

- Ballantyne, R., Packer, J., & Sutherland, L. A. (2011). Visitors' memories of wildlife tourism: Implications for the design of powerful interpretive experiences. *Tourism management*, 32(4), 770-779.
- Boswijk, A., Thijssen, T., & Peelen, E. (2007). *The experience economy: A new perspective*. Amsterdam: Pearson Education Benelux.
- Brown, T. 2008. Design thinking. *Harvard business review*, 86(6), 84.
- Castelluccio di Norcia (n.d.). *Come visitare la Fioritura di Castelluccio*. <<https://www.castellucciadinorcia.it/visitare-la-fioritura-castelluccio/>> accessed on June 20, 2023.
- Chan Kim, W., & Mauborgne, R. 2005. Value innovation: a leap into the blue ocean. *Journal of business strategy*, 26(4), 22-28.
- Cosgrovestaff, J. (2019). 'Super bloom' shutdown: Lake Elsinore shuts access after crowds descend on poppy fields. *Los Angeles Times*, March 17, 2019, <<https://www.latimes.com/local/lanow/la-me-super-bloom-poppy-fields-lake-elsinore-20190317-story.html>> accessed on August 25, 2023.
- D'Ignoti, S. (2021). Here's how locals are preserving Italy's famed wildflower bloom from overtourism. 'La fiorita,' one of Europe's most spectacular nature shows, is becoming too popular with petal-plucking tourists. *National Geographic*, April 23, 2021 at <<https://www.nationalgeographic.com/travel/article/will-crowds-ruin-italys-famed-la-fiorita-europes-most-spectacular-wildflower-bloom>>
- Derks, J., Giessen, L., & Winkel, G. 2020. COVID-19-induced visitor boom reveals the importance of forests as critical infrastructure. *Forest Policy and Economics*, 118, 1-2. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.forpol.2020.102253>.
- Dwyer, L., Edwards, D., Mistilis, N., Roman, C., & Scott, N. (2009). Destination and enterprise management for a tourism future. *Tourism management*, 30(1), 63-74.
- Eisenhardt, K. M., & Graebner, M. E. (2007). Theory building from cases: Opportunities and challenges. *Academy of management journal*, 50(1), 25-32.
- Elmahdy, Y. M., Haukeland, J. V., & Fredman, P. 2017. *Tourism megatrends: A literature review focused on nature-based tourism*. Norwegian University of Life Sciences (NMBU)
- Fossgard, K., & Fredman, P. 2019. Dimensions in the nature-based tourism experiencescape: An explorative analysis. *Journal of outdoor Recreation and Tourism*, 28, 100219.
- Giusepponi, K. (2000). *I modelli statistici nell'analisi per le decisioni aziendali*. Milano: Giuffrè.
- Giusepponi, K., & Johnson, C. 2020. Entrepreneurship in Biophilic Tourism: The Case of "Botel diffuso dei laghi". In MIC 2020: The 20th Management International Conference (pp. 73-84). University of Primorska Press.
- Giusepponi, K., Rossi, F., Scopa, N. (2023), *Intervista sulla "Lavanda dei Sibillini", azienda in Montegallo*. Katia Giusepponi intervista Federico Rossi e Nicoletta Scopa [transl. *Interview on "Lavanda dei Sibillini", enterprise in Montegallo. Katia Giusepponi interviews Federico Rossi and Nicoletta Scopa*], Montegallo, April 15, 2023.
- Global Ecotourism Network 2016, *Definition and key concepts*. <<https://www.globalecotourismnetwork.org/definition-and-key-concepts/>> accessed on May 27, 2023.
- Gobster, P. H., Nassauer, J. I., Daniel, T. C., & Fry, G. 2007. The shared landscape: what does aesthetics have to do with ecology? *Landscape ecology*, 22, 959-972.
- Haukeland, J. V., Fredman, P., Tyrväinen, L., Siegrist, D., & Lindberg, K. 2023. Prospects for nature-based tourism: identifying trends with commercial potential. *Journal of Ecotourism*, 1-18.
- ISTAT (2023). *IstatData*. <<https://esploradati.istat.it/databrowser/#/>> accessed on August 25, 2023.

- James, I., Hoffman, T., Munro, A., O'Farrell, P., Smart, R. 2007. The economic value of flower tourism at the Namaqua National Park, *South Africa. South African Journal of Economic and Management Sciences*, 10(4), 442- 456.
- Kimbell, L. 2011. Rethinking design thinking: Part I. *Design and culture*, 3(3), 285-306.
- Kruger, M., Viljoen, A., & Saayman, M. 2013. Who pays to view wildflowers in South Africa? *Journal of Ecotourism*, 12(3), 146-164.
- Kuenzi, C., & McNeely, J. 2008. Nature-based tourism. *Global risk governance: Concept and practice using the IRGC framework*, 155-178.
- <https://www.lavandadeisibillini.it/chi-siamo/#:~:text=Il%20nostro%20progetto%20%E2%80%9CUn%20Fiore,sviluppo%20turistico%20sui%20Monti%20Sibillini.>
- Lavanda dei Sibillini (n.d.-a). *I Trekking della Lavanda dei Sibillini. A spasso tra le fioriture ed i sentieri di Montegallo*. <<https://www.lavandadeisibillini.it/trekking-della-lavanda-dei-sibillini/>> accessed on April 5, 2023.
- Lavanda dei Sibillini (n.d.-b). *Montegallo e il Terremoto del Centro Italia del 2016*. <<https://www.lavandadeisibillini.it/montegallo-e-il-terremoto-del-centro-italia/>> accessed on April 5, 2023.
- Lavanda dei Sibillini (n.d.-c). *Trekking del Piccolo Esploratore*. <<https://www.lavandadeisibillini.it/trekking-bimbi-piccolo-esploratore/>> accessed on April 5, 2023.
- Maykut, P. S., & Morehouse, R. E. (1994). *Beginning qualitative research: A philosophic and practical guide* (Vol. 6). Psychology Press.
- Newsome, D. 2021. The collapse of tourism and its impact on wildlife tourism destinations. *Journal of Tourism Futures*, 7(3), 295-302.
- Oh, H., Assaf, A. G., & Baloglu, S. 2016. Motivations and goals of slow tourism. *Journal of Travel Research*, 55(2), 205-219.
- Orams, M. B. (1996). Using interpretation to manage nature-based tourism. *Journal of sustainable tourism*, 4(2), 81-94.
- Osterwalder, A. 2004. *The business model ontology a proposition in a design science approach* (Doctoral dissertation, Université de Lausanne, Faculté des hautes études commerciales).
- Osterwalder, A., & Pigneur, Y. 2010. *Business model generation: a handbook for visionaries, game changers, and challengers* (Vol. 1). John Wiley & Sons.
- Osterwalder, A., Pigneur, Y., & Tucci, C. L. 2005. Clarifying business models: Origins, present, and future of the concept. *Communications of the association for Information Systems*, 16(1), 1.
- Reyes-Velarde, A. (2019a). Instagram-hungry crowds are destroying the super bloom. *Los Angeles Times*, March 14, 2019, <<https://www.latimes.com/local/lanow/la-me-ln-superbloom-lake-elsinore-20190314-story.html>> accessed on August 25, 2023.
- Reyes-Velarde, A. (2019b). Are crowds ruining California's super bloom? A debate over 'poppy mania, *Los Angeles Times*, March 18, 2019, <<https://www.latimes.com/local/lanow/la-me-ln-lake-elsinore-super-bloom-reopen-20190318-story.html>> accessed on August 25, 2023.
- Rossi, F., & Scopa, N. 2021. *Scappo dalla città e vado a vivere in montagna ...noi l'abbiamo fatto!* <https://www.lavandadeisibillini.it/libro-scappo-dalla-citta/>
- Sandbrook, C. G. 2010. Local economic impact of different forms of nature-based tourism. *Conservation letters*, 3(1), 21-28.
- Schreier, M. (2012). *Qualitative content analysis in practice*. Sage publications.
- Shafer, S. M., Smith, H. J., & Linder, J. C. 2005. The power of business models. *Business horizons*, 48(3), 199-207.
- Teece, D. J. 2010. Business models, business strategy and innovation. *Long range planning*, 43(2-3), 172-194.
- Tellis, W. M. (1997). Introduction to case study. *The qualitative report*, 3(2), 1-14.

- The Business Research Company 2023. *Ecotourism Global Market Report*.
<<https://www.thebusinessresearchcompany.com/report/ecotourism-global-market-report>>
accessed on May 27, 2023.
- Turpie, J., & Joubert, A. 2004. The value of flower tourism on the Bokkeveld Plateau—a botanical hotspot. *Development Southern Africa*, 21(4), 645-662.
- Valentine, P. (1992). Nature-based tourism. Belhaven Press.
- Veit, D., Clemons, E., Benlian, A., Buxmann, P., Hess, T., Kundisch, D., Leimeister J. M. & Spann, M. 2014. Business models. *Business & Information Systems Engineering*, 6(1), 45-53.
- Yin, R. (1993). *Applications of case study research*. Beverly Hills, CA: Sage Publishing.
- Zang, Y., Dai, J., Tao, Z., Wang, H., & Ge, Q. 2020. Effects of Climate Change on the Season of Botanical Tourism: A Case Study in Beijing. *Advances in Meteorology*, 2020, 1-11.