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A HIERARCHICAL REPRESENTATION STUDY ON PERSONAL MOTIVES OF SUMMER HOLIDAY SEEKERS: THE CASE OF ITALY DURING THE COVID-19 PANDEMIC

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ABSTRACT
Using a method that examines goal setting, this study investigates the reasons people take a holiday during the ‘COVID summer’. Participants were 141 Italians that completed a questionnaire during summer 2020. The results revealed 13 reasons for taking a holiday: ‘Family/Friends’, ‘Attachment’, ‘Relax’, ‘Fun’, ‘New experiences’, ‘Increasing knowledge’, ‘Overcoming general stress’, ‘Overcoming lockdown stress’, ‘Present well-being’, ‘Future well-being’, ‘Enrichment’, ‘I like it’, and ‘Socialising’. Revealing connections between reasons, the hierarchical structure revealed that the principal reasons for taking a holiday during the COVID summer are tied to gaining future well-being, maintaining close relationships, and enhancing personal growth. These results are useful for defining tourism destination policies in the post-pandemic phase.

KEYWORDS
Holiday; COVID; Motivation; Laddering Technique; Goal setting.
1. INTRODUCTION

Several recent studies have demonstrated the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic around the world (e.g. Ulak, 2020; Pham et al., 2021; Keogh-Brown et al., 2020; Mackenzie & Goodnow, 2021; Ibn-Mohammed et al., 2021; Jena et al., 2021; Janus, 2021). Studies indicate that the unpredictable nature of this new virus has had a terrible impact on travel, tourism, and travel behaviours, greater than any other epidemic in history (Nair & Sinha, 2020; Pham et al., 2021; Škare et al., 2021; Sigala, 2020; Uğur & Akbıyık, 2020). The intrinsic characteristics of tourism were decisive for the spread of COVID-19 in the initial period of the pandemic, so much so that the tourism sector was the most affected. A similar crisis was the 2002–2004 SARS outbreak, which prompted the World Health Organization to discourage travel to Asia. This epidemic caused three million job losses in the tourism industry, a $20 billion drop in gross domestic product (GDP) in China, Hong Kong, Singapore, and Vietnam, and a 70% decrease in the flow of tourism across Asia (McKercher & Chon, 2004).

Unfortunately, the effects of COVID-19 have been more serious due to their global dimension. According to the latest estimates by the UNWTO (2021), Asia-Pacific is the macro-area that has experienced the heaviest percentage reduction in international arrivals (down 84% in a year) in 2020, either because it was the first to be affected by the pandemic or because it has maintained the strictest restrictions on international travel at the level of individual states. For Europe, the statistics indicate a less severe decline in percentage terms (70% on 2019) but larger in size in the same year, so much so that it is the highest in the world in absolute numbers, with a loss of 500 million arrivals. The Middle East-Africa region recorded a 75% reduction, in the Americas this figure is at least 69%.

As soon as vaccinations are available worldwide, tourism will be able to regain strength. However, tourists’ motivations behind a trip are likely to change and this could be a paradigm shift from the pre-COVID period (Mackenzie & Goodnow, 2021). According to Zheng et al. (2021), tourists’ post-disaster travel behaviours can be
influenced by their risk perceptions and motivations. In this sense, the disciplines of psychology and sociology can help tourism scholars understand tourist behaviour (Woodside & Lyonski, 1989).

This study examines the motivations to travel through a model of motivations based on the laddering technique. In the literature there are several studies on the reasons for traveling post shock pandemic. The scholars analyse the effects on industry (e.g. Dombey, 2004; Kim et al., 2005) or on the market, especially from the tourism demand side (e.g. Kuo et al., 2008; Mao et al., 2010; Wang, 2009), investigating how a pandemic shock influences travellers’ perceptions of risk and how this affects planned vacation behaviour. However, few studies have examined the post-COVID reasons for traveling in specific markets, such as farm holidays (Zawadka et al., 2022) or nature tourism (Obradović & Tešin, 2022), and to our knowledge, there are no similar studies for Italy. To contribute to this gap, our work investigates the reason of those who decided to travel in the summer of 2020, based on a sample of people from Italy. Understanding the motivations to travel in a period that tourists perceive as risky represents an important first element in defining the recovery policies of tourist destinations. Many of them were in fact affected by the pandemic shock and had difficulty recovering. The behaviour of tourists (the reasons) is in fact difficult to understand in post-pandemic scenarios such as that of 2020.

The rest of this paper is structured as follows. The next section presents a review of the literature on the motives of tourists. Section 3 describes the methodology used and the psychometric model while the results are outlined in section 4. Finally, some reflections in terms of policy are presented in section 5.

2. LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1) MOTIVATION IN TOURISM: THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

Travel motivation is an area rich in theoretical analysis and applied studies in tourism research (e.g. Harrill & Potts, 2002; Pearce & Lee, 2005; Mansfeld, 1992) also in European context (e.g. Muskat et al., 2014; Mason & Alamdari, 2007; Gursoy & Umbreit, 2004; Arasli & Baradarani, 2014). This attention is justified by the fact that
understanding these aspects means having valuable information on tourist demand and their purchasing behaviour and therefore being able to be more efficient in the market (Mansfeld, 1992). Furthermore, suppliers of tourism products and services need up-to-date information to be able to anticipate consumer choices related to changes in travel motivations (Sigala, 2020).

Behind every human action, there is a reason that induces the person to act to be able to satisfy a specific need (Herzberg et al., 1959). In studies on tourist motivation, the tourist is at the centre and there are several factors that motivate them. A very general classification proposed by Uysal and Hagan (1993) and followed in many studies (Fodness, 1994; Crompton, 1979; Dann, 1977; Baloglu & McCleary, 1999) distinguishes motivations as internal (psychological drivers) and external (related to the destination).

The starting point in every analysis on motivation is Maslow’s (1943) theory of the hierarchy of needs, which is one of the widely accepted and applied theories for understanding the needs of human behaviour. Maslow classified human needs into five aspects, namely: ‘physiological needs’, ‘security and protection’, ‘social need’, ‘self-esteem’, and ‘self-actualisation’.

To understand how this theory can be used to identify travellers’ needs, we refer to Yousaf et al. (2018). These authors highlight the importance of the physiological needs of tourists, such as cleanliness or good food. These needs are to be considered as fundamental for travellers and tourist destinations must do everything possible to guarantee this satisfaction. Safety and security refers to the safety of travellers. Social need refers to the formation of relationships with people to create a sense of social belonging. The fourth motivation is associated with self-esteem, and in the tourism sector it is linked to the desire to travel to impress friends, relatives, social groups, and to obtain a higher social status. Finally, the last necessity in the hierarchical scale is self-realisation, which in tourism corresponds to the awareness that travelling is an activity through which one can improve one’s skills.

The literature in the tourism field has deepened the applications of Maslow’s theory and in general the aspects related to motivations and tourism.

An important contribution is by Dann (1977). His push and pull theory identifies two factors that influence tourist motivations: push and pull factors. Push factors are
‘what makes tourists travel’, that is, the factors underlying the desire to travel. Pull factors are linked to the specific reasons for choosing a destination, linked to ego satisfaction. This approach has received various criticisms; for example, Prentice (2004: 261) argues that tourism is above all a mediated activity and that ‘in a mass consumption world, this distinction is essentially irrelevant’.

Cohen (1974) states that the desire of modern man is to try something different, arguing that ‘he is interested in things, sights, customs, and cultures different from his own precisely because they are different’ (1974: 165). Cohen was one of the first sociologists to propose a classification to conceptually clarify the term ‘tourist’. Based on the degree of institutionalisation of the tourist, he identified four categories: organised mass tourist, individual mass tourist, the explorer, and the drifter. ‘The first two tourist types are further named ‘institutionalised tourist roles’ and the other two are referred to as ‘non-institutionalised tourist roles” (Fan et al., 2017: 358).

Cohen asserted that the fundamental variable forming the basis for these tourist roles is strangeness versus familiarity (Mason, 2020; Harrill & Potts, 2002). The distinction of organised/individual mass in Cohen’s classification scheme helps to clarify some aspects related to the motivations of tourists. According to Wickens (2002: 835), ‘the strength of his typology is that it recognises the tourist as a polymorphous consumer and attempts to specify types in terms of clearly expressed dimensions (such as institutional/non-institutional, familiar/strange)’. Cohen’s study has been heavily cited in the literature and attempts have been made to develop and refine it (Pearce, 1982).

These four classifications are characterized by psychological elements, but this classification is largely sociological in its orientation. The main emphasis is the relationship between the tourist and the members of the host society (Harrill & Potts, 2002).

One of the best-known models for describing tourist motivation is Plog’s allocentric-psychocentric typology (1974, 1990, 1991). According to Plog’s model, allocentric people (derived from the Latin root ‘allo’, which means varied in form) tend to be outgoing and confident, expressing exploratory behaviours. Psychocentric people (derived from the Latin root ‘psyche’, meaning self) are self-inhibited and relatively non-adventurous people (Harrill & Potts, 2002).
Plog states that these people have a behaviour that avoids risk: for example, they have real mistrust of new products, they prefer familiar environments and do not like to make new friends or get to know new tourist locations. While extremely intuitive, this approach has been widely criticised. Among the various criticisms, Prentice (2004) argues Plog’s model is a multidimensional model that reduces the travel motivation to a single dimension of the personality.

In his study on motivation, Crompton (1979) also presents motivations related to psychological and sociological aspects. He defines psychodynamic motives (relaxation, exploration, social interaction, escape, regression, strengthening of kinship, and prestige) and cultural motives (education and novelty). Crompton’s contribution highlights the role of the destination in tourist behaviour. It helps to understand the factors that influence a visitor’s choice of destination. Crompton (1979) attempted to synthesise the sociological and psychological motivations for tourism within a cultural-social-psychological continuum; an individual experiences imbalance in cultural, social, or psychological needs before a holiday, after which balance is temporarily restored.

Iso-Ahola (1980, 1982) incorporates social psychology into tourism studies. According to the author, leisure activities offer satisfaction to tourists both because they offer intrinsic rewards and because they allow the tourist to leave their routine behind. The author therefore argues that the satisfaction that individuals expect from a leisure activity is linked to two motivational forces: approach (research) and avoidance (escape). Going beyond the previous typological models, the author observed that tourist behaviour is a dialectical-evolutionary process. Despite the author’s claim that the motivation is purely psychological, this model appears to show both social and psychological aspects.

The tension between sociology and psychology finds space in the debates published in the Annals of Tourism Research of 1981 and 1983. In ‘Tourism Motivation: An Appraisal’ by Dann (1981), the author develops a model of tourist motivation based on the sociological concept of symbolic interactionism. The author states that motivation is not to be confused with aspiration. Many aspirations are in fact unattainable. Second, motivation often differs from verbal justification, just as a mission statement can be distinguished from action. The stated goal can also differ
from the motivation. Thirdly, satisfaction is linked to action (completed) and does not coincide with motivation. Dann (1981) concludes with a definition of motivation as ‘A meaningful state of mind that adequately disposes an actor or group of actors to travel, and which is subsequently interpretable by others as a valid explanation for such a decision’ (p. 205).

Continuing with the main contributions on motivation, it is important to mention Pearce’s Travel Career Ladder (TCL) (1988), a five-level model of motivation based on Maslow’s theory of the hierarchy of needs (1943). TCL describes the needs of travellers in a hierarchical model in which relaxation needs are placed at the base of the scale and satisfaction needs at the highest level. TCL theory has long been criticised due to some limitations to its applicability. For this reason, Pearce and Lee (2005) revised the existing theory of motivation with the intention of providing more diverse and empirical models of motivation and proposed the Travel Career Patterns (TCP) with some modifications in the TCL theory. TCP (2005) allows for a more complete understanding of travel motivation patterns. The TCP theory suggests that travel motivations can be identified as a set of models that also include motivational factors related to past travel experiences and age groups. Pearce and Lee (2005) identified some motivational factors related to romance, the desire for novelty, relaxation or escape, self-realization and autonomy.

However, sociology remains a source of inspiration for studies on tourist motivations. Mansfeld (1992) rejects earlier psychological approaches by arguing that motivation is difficult to isolate and proposes the ‘destination choice theory of tourist motivation’. This theory is based on the investigation of the relationships between tourists’ declared preferences and their actual choices. Mansfield moves away from the traditional motivation-satisfaction model of social psychology towards a motivation-choice model based on sociology.

Also Fodness (1994) sustains the functional theory of tourist motivation. In his study, develops a scale for measuring the functions that the holiday experience performs for the tourist. The author identifies the functions of knowledge, utilitarianism, expression of the value and social adaptation.

A common problem of various studies concerning the motivation to travel regards the use of closed-ended questions, as well as items or scales, representing
constructs chosen a priori, based on existing literature, pre-test studies, or specific interests of the researcher. However, especially in new situations, such as the COVID epidemic, this type of measure may not be suitable for capturing new or particular aspects. For this reason, various scholars (see, for example, Ajzen & Fishbein, 1980) recommend an open-ended elicitation procedure, in which people freely list their motivations to do something and, only later, the answers were coded to select the most important reasons. The laddering technique follows this principle, leaving people free to indicate the reasons that push them to take a vacation during the COVID summer. Furthermore, the laddering technique allows understanding of “what” is important for people who decide to take a vacation and “why” this motivation is important, which allows arranging the reasons hierarchically, starting from concrete actions (means) up to more abstract reasons (ends).

2.2) THE LADDERING TECHNIQUE

The laddering technique is well established in various fields, such as psychology, marketing, advertising, and organisational management (Rugg et al., 2002). The laddering technique originates from the Psychology of Personal Construct proposed by Kelly (1955; for a review, see Walker & Winter, 2007). Following this theory, people create patterns of their world using hierarchically organised bipolar constructs. To explore people’s personalities, psychologists use a so-called ‘repertory grid’ namely, an interviewing technique to obtain information about a certain element (e.g. an event, a person, an object). Hinkle (1965) developed the laddering technique as a means to access systems of individuals’ personal meaning. The Laddering technique is particularly used in marketing research to explore people’s opinions, attitudes, and beliefs, according to the models of the Means-End Theory (Reynolds & Gutman, 1988; for a review, see Veludo-de-Oliveira et al., 2006). The Means-End Theory affirms that people hierarchically organise their knowledge; in this hierarchy, concrete thoughts are linked to abstract ones, making a structure that leads from means to ends. This means that it is possible to hierarchically connect product attributes (A) to consequences of product use (C) and to individuals’ values (V), creating a chain known as a ladder.
As previously mentioned, the laddering technique was born for use in consumer and organisation research; however, it is now used in various domains, such as regulation of body weight (Bagozzi & Edwards, 1998), beliefs about internet (Capozza et al., 2003), regulation of hypertension (Taylor et al., 2006), organisational behaviour (van Rekom et al., 2006), user's aims in virtual social worlds (Jung & Kang, 2010), and attitude towards immigrants (Hichy et al., 2013). With regards to application in the tourism field, Jewell and Crotts (2002) used this technique to analyse motives leading people to visit a heritage site. Results revealed that most people were seeking a satisfying leisure experience, comprising both pleasure and learning. In a recent study, Jiang et al. (2015) analysed travel motivation of Chinese outbound tourists and found that participants choose destinations that are ‘famous’ or have a ‘good environment’ because of ‘the beauty of nature’ and ‘pleasure’, while chose ‘different’ destinations to expand experiences and knowledge.

2.3) CONTEXT OF THE STUDY

In January 2020, the World Health Organization announced the discovery of a new coronavirus that caused lung infections to several residents of the city of Wuhan (Hubei, People's Republic of China).

Italy was the first Western country to be affected by the COVID-19 virus; on February 12, 2020 the first case was officially diagnosed in Italy, followed on February 21 by clusters of cases detected in some regions of Northern Italy (Lombardy and Veneto). The first deaths due to COVID-19 were on February 22. In the space of a few days, the number of infections increased, and the Italian government decreed to lockdown the country, imposing limitations on free movement of people, the shutdown of all schools and universities, and the closure of almost all production activities, from March 10 to May 18. Starting from May 18, most activities could reopen, and free movement was granted within their region; movements between regions were restored on June 3. Concerning international movements, starting from June 15, travel was permitted in countries belonging to the European Union, the Schengen agreement, and some other countries (e.g. United Kingdom,
Canada); however, other ordinances issued throughout the summer, allowed or forbade travelling to other countries based on their pandemic situation.

Italy had had a period of constant growth in terms of national and international presences and arrivals. In the last 5 years it had grown by 15% in terms of nights. This growth was mainly supported by international tourism which had grown by almost 18%. Italy is characterized by a tourist market with a marked seasonality with arrivals very concentrated in the summer months where almost 40% of total arrivals, both domestic and foreign, are normally concentrated.

In the summer period July-September 2020, compared to 2019, there was a 64% reduction in the number of tourists staying in accommodation facilities. The decrease is mainly due to international tourism (39.7% compared to the same period of 2019). Italian travellers were 86.2%. In the first three quarters of 2020, business trips by residents in Italy have drastically decreased (-59%) and, to a lesser but still significant extent, those for holidays (-23%) (Istat, 2020).

3. METHOD

3.1) PARTICIPANTS

Participants were a convenience sample of 141 Italians (61 males and 80 females) aged between 18 and 67 years (M=31.35, SD=11.90). The sample size is similar to many other studies using this method (see for example Bagozzi & Edwards, 1998). Participants were approached in a public place (parks, squares, etc…) asking to complete an online questionnaire in the Italian language and were informed that their responses would remain confidential. All participants have taken or will take at least one holiday (with at least one overnight stay) during summer 2020. All data were collected during summer 2020 (July and August).

3.2) INSTRUMENT AND PROCEDURE

The questionnaire was derived from Bagozzi & Edwards' protocol (1998; see also Bagozzi et al., 2003), which consists of a table of five rows and three columns. Participants were first asked to list up to five personal motives for taking a holiday.
Participants were then instructed to consider the first given reason and indicate why it was important to them in the first box of the second column (Why – 1). Participants were then asked to explain why the answer given in the second column was important to them in the first box of the third column (Why – 2). This process was repeated for all the reasons expressed in the first column.

4. RESULTS

Participants provided 1,129 reasons (sum of mentions per goal shown in Table 2) for taking a holiday during the COVID summer. The content of these reasons was analysed by two independent judges and classified into 13 categories of goals (Table 1).

| Goal                                      | Example of statements made by participants                                      |
|-------------------------------------------|----------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| 1  Family/Friends                         | Spend time with family (Trascorrere del tempo con la famiglia), Meet up with friends (Incontrare gli amici) |
| 2  I like it                              | I like traveling (Mi piace viaggiare), I like to go on vacation (Mi piace andare in vacanza) |
| 3  Relax                                  | Blow off some steam (Staccare la spina), Take a break (Prendersi una pausa)       |
| 4  Fun                                    | Have a good time (Divertirsi), Take your mind off (Spegnere la mente)            |
| 5  Increasing knowledge                   | Learning about new things (Imparare cose nuove), Increase their own culture (Aumentare la propria cultura) |
| 6  New experiences                        | Make new experiences (Fare nuove esperienze), Try something new (Provare qualcosa di nuovo) |
| 7  Socializing                            | Be in company (Stare in compagnia), Meet new people (Incontrare nuove persone)  |
| 8  Overcoming general stress              | Reduce stress (Ridurre lo stress), Reduce work-related stress (Ridurre lo stress lavorativo) |
| 9  Overcoming lockdown stress             | Reduce COVID related stress (Ridurre lo stress derivato COVID), Reduce lockdown stress (Ridurre lo stress derivato dal lockdown) |
| 10 Present well-being                     | It makes me feel good (Mi fa sentire bene), It makes me happy (Mi rende felice)   |
| 11 Attachment                             | Maintain close relationships (Mantenere le relazioni intime), Stay united (Rimanere uniti) |
Table 1. Goal and example from qualitative information.
Note: In brackets is the original statement in Italian language.

|   | Enrichment | Have new points of view (Avere nuovi punti di vista), Grow up (Crescere) |
|---|-------------|--------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| 12| Future well-being | Be more productive (Essere più produttivi), Increase the quality of life (Aumenta la qualità della vita) |

To analyse the structure of reasons for taking a holiday during the COVID summer, an implication matrix was constructed (Table 2). This is a matrix displaying the number of times each reason leads to another reason. For example, reason 2 (‘Family/Friends’) lead to reason 11 (‘Attachment’) 30 times. Reasons were arranged in the matrix by the degree of abstractness (Bagozzi & Edwards, 1998; Bagozzi et al., 2003; Taylor et al., 2006), which indicates the proportion of times a reason is the end in a relationship. Abstractness is computed as the ratio of in-degrees (number of times a goal is the end of a linkage) to the sum of in-degrees plus out-degrees (number of times a goal is the source of a linkage). This index is ranged from 0 to 1 with higher values indicating a goal will be used as an end to achieve. Our results indicated that the most abstract goal was ‘Future well-being’, followed by ‘Enrichment’ and ‘Attachment’, while the least abstract goal was ‘Family/Friends’.

| Goal               | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 | 8 | 9 | 10 | 11 | 12 | 13 | Out | I+O | A   | P   | C   |
|--------------------|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|----|----|----|----|-----|-----|-----|-----|-----|
| Family/Friends     | 0 | 3 | 0 | 0 | 1 | 6 | 8 | 7 | 3 | 30 | 0  | 1  | 59 | 72  | 0.18| 0.02| 0.13|
| I like it          | 0 | 6 | 0 | 3 | 5 | 0 | 2 | 0 | 11| 1  | 2  | 2  | 32 | 46  | 0.30| 0.03| 0.08|
| Relax              | 2 | 2 | 4 | 0 | 4 | 0 | 26| 16| 12| 0  | 2  | 18 | 86 | 124 | 0.31| 0.07| 0.23|
| Fun                | 2 | 0 | 5 | 0 | 1 | 1 | 8 | 3 | 3 | 1  | 2  | 28 | 41  | 0.32| 0.07| 0.07|
| Increasing         | 1 | 3 | 2 | 18| 2 | 0 | 0 | 3 | 0 | 36 | 0  | 67 | 101 | 0.34| 0.06| 0.18|
| knowledge          | 0 | 6 | 1 | 0 | 16| 3 | 3 | 0 | 3 | 1  | 25 | 1  | 59 | 99  | 0.40| 0.07| 0.18|
| New experiences    | 1 | 0 | 1 | 1 | 1 | 2 | 0 | 3 | 5 | 9  | 3  | 3  | 27 | 47  | 0.43| 0.04| 0.09|
| Socializing        | 0 | 1 | 8 | 2 | 1 | 1 | 1 | 10| 10| 4  | 11 | 53 | 113 | 0.53| 0.11| 0.21|
| Overcoming general | 0 | 0 | 4 | 0 | 1 | 0 | 2 | 4 | 9 | 3  | 3  | 11 | 38 | 80  | 0.53| 0.08| 0.15|
| stress             | 3 | 1 | 5 | 1 | 1 | 4 | 1 | 2 | 19| 40 | 105| 0.62| 0.12| 0.19|
| Present well-being | 3 | 0 | 0 | 2 | 1 | 3 | 0 | 1 | 2 | 3  | 2  | 18 | 70  | 0.74| 0.10| 0.13|
| Attachment         | 0 | 0 | 1 | 0 | 10| 5 | 1 | 2 | 1 | 2  | 4  | 29 | 113 | 0.74| 0.15| 0.21|
| Enrichment         | 12| 13| 13| 13| 13| 13| 13| 13| 13| 13 | 13 | 13 | 13 | 13  | 13  | 13  | 13  | 13  |

Table 2. Implication matrix and prominence indices for reasons to take a vacation during COVID summer.
Note. Out = out degrees, I + O = in degrees + out degrees, A = abstractness, P = prestige, C = centrality.

To determine the goal importance, prestige, and centrality indexes, measuring the relevance of a goal compared to other goals, were calculated (Bagozzi & Edwards, 1998; Bagozzi et al., 2003; Taylor et al., 2006). Prestige indicates the degree to
which a motive is the objective of other motives and is calculated as the ratio of in-degree to the total number of cell-entries in the implication matrix. ‘Enrichment’ was found to be the goal with the highest prestige, followed by ‘Future well-being’. Finally, centrality measures the degree to which a motive is involved in relationships with other motives. It is calculated as the ratio of the sum of in-degree plus out-degree to the total number of cell-entries in the implication matrix. ‘Relax’ was the most central goal, followed by ‘Overcoming general stress’ and ‘Enrichment’.

Starting from the implication matrix, a representation of the hierarchical goal structure was shaped (Figure 1). However, before proceeding with the construction of the goal structure, a cut-off level needed to be chosen to select the relationships to be inserted in the representation.

Following Taylor et al. (2006; see also Pieters et al., 1995), the proportion of active cells (non-zero cells) in the implication matrix was compared to the proportion of linkages between goals at a given cut-off. A cut-off of six (25 active cells) was
selected; in this way we could account for 63% of all relationships (number of active linkages as a proportion of all linkages) using only 16% of all possible cells (number of active cells as a proportion of all cells) and only 21% of cells containing a value different from zero (number of active cells as a proportion of all cells mentioned at least once). The hierarchical goal structure displaying goals (ordered based on abstractness index) and relationships between them is illustrated in Figure 1. The diagram shows three almost distinct clusters of goals for taking a holiday during the COVID summer, related to the most abstract goals ‘Future well-being’, ‘Enrichment’, and ‘Attachment’.

Regarding motives related to ‘Future well-being’, the most concrete goal ‘Family/Friends’ leads to ‘Overcoming lockdown stress’ and ‘Overcoming general stress’ (this last factor also leads to ‘Overcoming lockdown stress’) that directly and through ‘Present well-being’ lead to ‘Future well-being’. Moreover, ‘Relax’ leads to ‘Future well-being’ directly and through ‘Overcoming lockdown stress’, ‘Present well-being’, and ‘Overcoming general stress’ (this last goal also leads to ‘Relax’, showing a recursive relationship). Finally, ‘Fun’ leads to ‘Overcoming general stress’.

Concerning the motive related to ‘Attachment’, the most concrete goal ‘Family/Friends’ leads to it both directly and through ‘Socialising’. It should be noted that the concrete goal ‘Family/Friends’ is the starting point to reach both ‘Attachment’ and ‘Future well-being’.

Finally, regarding ‘Enrichment’ the more concrete goals ‘Increasing knowledge’ and ‘New experiences’ (these two goals show a recursive relationship between each other, and ‘Increasing knowledge’ shows a recursive relationship with ‘Enrichment’) lead to it. Moreover, ‘New experience’ leads to ‘I like it’, which leads to ‘Relax’ and ‘Present well-being’ (both tied to ‘Future well-being’), showing that a new experience could be a starting point to reach well-being in the future.
5. DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSION

The impact of the pandemic has been devastating for all economic sectors, but it has had even more profound effects on tourism. The restriction on the movement of people (more severe than the restrictions on the movement of goods) have produced economic and social effects on a global level. Despite all this, as soon as it was possible, tourism resumed, in the form of local tourism. Tourists who decided to take a holiday in the summer of 2020 had a strong motivation. In fact, they decided to go on holiday in an overall context still dominated by the fear of contagion. Understanding these aspects is crucial in helping governments and tourist destinations to define the best post-COVID recovery policies. In fact, according to various studies (e.g. Sigala, 2020; Zenker & Kock, 2020; Fotiadis et al., 2021), the future scenario will be characterised by compliance with the rules of social distancing and hygiene. The diffusion of vaccines will allow greater freedom of movement but will require compliance with these rules for the foreseeable future.

In this study, we used the laddering technique since, as a semi-structured interview, it allows us to detect the motivations for taking a vacation during the COVID summer without defining them in advance, how it happens using closed-ended instruments. This is particularly important in all those situations in which the motivations elicited by people may not be known a priori. Furthermore, the hierarchical representation of the objectives makes it possible to identify the superordinate goal, that is, the abstract reasons pushing people to take a vacation during the COVID summer, and the subordinate goal, that is, the concrete actions implemented by people. The results of the survey allow us to establish some important aspects.

First, the reason behind any holiday choice is still that of the desire for relaxation. This is the fundamental reason, the starting point for further motivations. Even in a context dominated by the pandemic, the desire for a holiday is based on the motivation of relaxation.

Second, the analysis identified three reasons that determine the final choice: the most abstract goals are ‘Future well-being’, ‘Enrichment’, and ‘Attachment’. The first
refers to the desire for well-being that arises after the restrictions of the lockdowns. The journey, the holiday thus represents an escape from reality, a projection towards a better future, and the temporal space in which to recover from the fatigue of an annus horribilis. The second goal expresses the motivation for a holiday that enriches the life of the tourist. In Italy, the lockdown caused the closure of museums, theatres, and other places dedicated to culture, impoverishing the social life of citizens. The holiday guarantees a space-time bubble in which to take care of yourself to return home changed, transformed, or rather enriched.

The third reason concerns the theme of travel as a tool for strengthening relationships. The need to relate to other people becomes important after a period in which most people have only been able to see cohabitants.

These reasons are certainly not new, but after a lockdown as severe as the one that occurred in Italy, they take on a different meaning. Enrichment, for example, has always been considered one of the most common reasons. However, in this case the enrichment must be analysed considering the psychological and physical conditions of the travellers who were ‘prisoners’ of the lockdown.

Fourth, each of these motivations can be used to create related tourism products and services. Tourist destinations must impose their communication by enhancing the aspects of the territory that can satisfy these needs of tourists.

Finally, the results obtained are consistent with other studies that have highlighted how well-being and desire for enrichment and relationships are important reasons that push tourists in the final choice to travel in the context of the COVID-19 pandemic (Wen et al., 2020; Zhu & Deng, 2020; Dedeoğlu & Boğan, 2021). However, using the hierarchical representation, it was also possible to understand what people actually do to achieve these goals. In particular, to achieve the goal of enrichment, people try to have new experiences and increase their knowledge. Moreover, it should be noted that to achieve two final goals, well-being and strengthening emotional ties, people carry out the same concrete behaviour, that is, spending time with family and friends. The use of the "hierarchical representation of reasons" in general contributes to the study of the reasons that motivate a trip, thus enriching the literature on tourist behaviour. It also offers a source of information for the Italian market.
The implications of this study are related to the policies to be implemented by the tourist destinations. They will have to shift their focus from the desire for fun (which is an image traditionally used to promote a tourist destination) to that of well-being, intended however in the light of the post-shock pandemic. Strengthening relationships (the need to relate to other people after a period in which most people could only see cohabitants) will also be the basis for the creation of communication policies. In communicating these aspects, the language that the Destinations will have to use will also be important. In fact, it will be necessary to give feelings of trust and clarity. Finally, the three reasons for the trip identified by this study can give life to new tourism products or to modify existing ones. For example, tourist packages characterized by the dimension of well-being together with that of enrichment would be useful.

6. LIMITATIONS AND FUTURE DIRECTIONS

This study has some limitations. First, due to time and social distancing constraints, the data for this research were gathered from an online survey. The questionnaire is very complex and completing it online could lead to fatigue errors. Future research should apply face-to-face investigation. Face-to-face interviews help with more accurate screening, and there is no false information when screening questions such as gender, age, or race. In addition, this method also allows you to acquire non-verbal questions, including body language, which can indicate a level of discomfort or a level of enthusiasm for the topics discussed in the interview. Finally, face-to-face interviews are real-time, free of technological distractions, and can undoubtedly capture an interviewee's emotions and behaviours. In addition, further studies should be carried out in other countries or at other stages of the COVID-19 outbreak (e.g. after the removal of domestic or international travel restrictions).

Second, the study was aimed at subjects who had taken a holiday. For this reason, theories related to the fear of travel (such as protection motivation theory, Zheng et al., 2021) have not been considered, which excludes factors related to the 'fear of travel'. However, these factors should be considered in the recovery policies of governments and tourist destinations.
Third, cultural and individual differences were not considered in defining motivations. Future research may consider attitudes towards COVID-19 (e.g. Neuburger & Egger, 2021; Matiza, 2022), aspects related to personalities (e.g. Cruz-Milan, 2018), and trust (e.g. Czernek & Czakon, 2016; Hassan & Soliman, 2021) in public authorities.

Finally, the study considers only domestic tourism. The period in which the data were gathered has been characterised by an important restriction in the international mobility. The findings with a sample of international tourists are expected to be similar to our results, because the motivations can be easily transposed in a different context of a long trip.

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