

LITERARY GEOGRAPHIES

On Italo Calvino's Footsteps Along the Literary Itinerary at Sanremo (Ligurian Riviera, NW Italy)

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Abstract:

This work seeks to contribute to the debate on the potential of literary resources as elements of territorial and tourist enhancement by analysing the geographical-landscape dimension and highlighting the process and purposes that led to the creation of the literary itinerary 'Italo Calvino, Sanremo and its surroundings'. It focuses particularly on its reception and acknowledgment at the local level, looking at its potential implications in terms of tourism and enhancement of the historical-cultural heritage of the area. The analysis is also supported by data from a questionnaire designed specifically for the users of the territory of Sanremo in order to understand the level of knowledge of the itinerary and the cultural-historical legacy of the figure of Calvino.

Keywords: Italo Calvino: Sanremo: Liguria: literary itinerary: tourism

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Introduction

The relation between geography and literature constitutes a fruitful field of investigation, given the diverse thematic trajectories it can take both in terms of perception and construction of sense of place (Barrell 1972) and for the information that these sources may provide for example on the structure of the landscape (Gabellieri 2019), on the evolution of transport (Piana et al. 2018) and in the history of tourism practices (Piana et al. 2021). The spatial dimension of travel literature offers opportunities to the precise topographical rendering of a vast corpus of written sources through the use of GIS in the field of the digital humanities studies (Cooper and Gregory 2011; Dai Prà and Gabellieri 2021). There is also great potential of the analysis of travel literature in cultural tourism, for the way in which literary works have an extra-textual projection, shaping spatial experience and producing geographical knowledge (Hones 2008; Thurgill and Lovell 2019). In this sense the experience of literary parks and literary itineraries is of particular relevance (Dai Prà 2003), as they constitute new forms of eco-sustainable governance, combining the protection of rural landscapes and local economic development. Drawing upon the debate on the potential of literary resources as elements of territorial and tourist enhancement (Capecchi 2021), this contribution analyses the Calvino itinerary in Sanremo (Liguria, NW Italy) and surroundings (Pesce 2022). Italo Calvino (1923-1985) is considered as one of the most important figures of post-war Italian literature and on the occasion of the centennial of his birth, in 2023 several initiatives took place to celebrate the author and his works. By means of a questionnaire dedicated to the users of the area, aimed at highlighting the level of knowledge of the itinerary and its reception at a local level, it was possible to assess its implications in terms of slow tourism and historical, cultural and environmental enhancement.

Following an overview of the relations between geography, tourism and literature, this analysis focuses on the cultural-geographical setting and the history of tourism of Sanremo, from elite to recent mass tourism phenomena. It then analyses the process that led to the establishment of the itinerary with particular reference to the implications for territorial enhancement and tourism, but also for its didactic and educational dimension in relation to themes such as building speculation, mass tourism and the coast-inland dichotomy that emerge from Calvino's texts. The results of the questionnaire provide a set of data that highlights the level of understanding and appreciation of the itinerary amongst the inhabitants and those who habitually visit Liguria, and enables an assessment of its implications in terms of slow tourism promotion and historical, cultural and environmental enhancement.

The literary itinerary

Literary depictions have been increasingly acknowledged as useful sources for the analysis of landscape features and historical dynamic of specific regions. Various intertwined themes can be explored, using texts as sources to understand past landscapes, constructing territorial images and stereotypes as literary *topoi*, analysing literary representations as reflections of authors' geographical perceptions and exploring the significance of landscape, territory and

place in literary works (Sereni 1961; Brosseau 1994; 2017; Black 1996; Thacker 2005; Hones 2008; Gabellieri 2019; Gavinelli 2006; Marengo 2016; Çevik 2021; Capecchi 2021; Besana Gabellieri 2023). Work at the intersection of geographical and literary disciplines has extensively examined literature's capacity to depict and communicate the essence of specific localities and foster a sense of attachment to them (Barrell 1972; Lando 1993; Pearce 2002; Papotti 2011; Tomaney 2015; Gavinelli 2016; Marengo 2016; Vandervlist 2018; Gabellieri 2019; Amey 2021; Ridanpää 2022; Turco 2022). In general, it is possible to distinguish between two main categories of literary locations: those grounded in reality and linked to the lives of writers (such as birthplaces, chosen residences, and gravesites), and those which are essentially imaginary (Herbert 2001; Squire 1996; Watson 2006).

According to Butler 'literary tourism is a form of tourism in which the primary motivation for visiting specific locations is related to interesting literature' (Butler 2000: 360). It is a phenomenon which, due to its aesthetic and distinctive sense, is closely related to cultural tourism (Anjo et al. 2021). Literary tourism can be described as the set of practices involving 'visits to places celebrated for associations with books & authors' (Hoppen et al. 2014: 40). In Butler's (1986) classification, four types of literary tourism are delineated: the first type involves a visit to an actual location associated with a literary work; the second category pertains to fiction-related literary tourism with less emphasis on the author; the third type of literary tourism focuses on the allure of areas that were attractive to literary (and other) figures; the last category is when a particular area becomes a tourist destination in its own right due to the popularity of an author. This categorisation helps to better understand both the very nature of the literary tourism phenomenon and the implications it represents in spatial, cultural and economic terms.

As several authors have pointed out, there is a differentiation among literary tourism users: general heritage or leisure visitors and those with a much higher level of dedication to the literary theme portrayed (Herbert 2001; Watson 2009; Busby and Shetliffe 2013; Brown 2015). Literary tourists demonstrate a profound fascination with every facet of writers' lives and creations, carrying out journeys to sacred sites, residences, and museums, while also immersing themselves in the imaginative landscapes depicted in the authors' works (MacLeod et al. 2018). However, despite their extensive interest in both real and fictional sites associated with their beloved authors, research suggests that it is within the writers' homes and physical resting places that they often discover the deepest significance (Brown 2015; Buell 1989; Busby and Shetliffe 2013; Ousby 1990; Pocock 1992). Watson's (2006) reflection, however, differs in that he argues that the experience of literary tourists is likely to be most profound when the place of composition and the fictional setting coincide.

In the past three decades there has been a growth of literary parks, cultural itineraries, and landscape observatories promoting awareness and appreciation of territories and landscapes rooted in literary narratives to deepen local residents' understanding of their environments, encourage exploration of less-known areas, and increase the appeal of established tourist destinations (Persi and Dai Prà 2001; Dai Prà 2003; Hoppen et al. 2014; Marengo 2016; MacLeod et al. 2018; Dai Prà et al. 2021; Pisano 2023). The first cases of literary tourism can be traced back to the Grand Tour (Buzard 1993; Hendrix 2009; Ousby

1990; Towner 2002; Watson 2009), but it is in the following centuries that the practice increased significantly and today it involves a consistent number of tourists worldwide, particularly in Western countries (Anjo et al. 2021). According to Mendes (2007), literary itineraries combine attention to the geographical profile of the region with the biographies of authors. Likewise, the recent development of these routes highlights the growing interest in authors' birthplaces as well as other biographical sites as a specific form of literary tourism (Watson 2006). According to Carvalho (2009), literary itineraries do not currently play a significant role in economic, social, or local/regional development. However, if the cultural agents responsible for developing these itineraries collaborate with tourism entities, there is potential for greater promotion of local culture and literature to emerge. Conversely, as suggested by Gabellieri and Besana (2023) for the Italian context, it may be relevant to re-discover literary places in marginal and central areas in order to revitalise tourism and redistribute fluxes across territories.

In general, academic literature agrees on the opportunity represented by the enhancement of territorial heritage through tourism dynamics that exploit the links between the settings of fictional and non-fictional works and real places, but also between the latter and the authors' lives. In this perspective, it is necessary to focus on the specific geographical context as a potential source of meaning for the understanding of aspects related to the work and life of the author under consideration. This is the interpretative lens we propose to adopt here, investigating at first the geographical and touristic context of reference, then moving on to reflect on Calvino's work and his relationship with the places of his youth, and ending with a reflection on the literary itinerary and its territorial implications through fieldwork and the analysis of the results of a questionnaire.

Geographical setting of the study area

Sanremo and the Ligurian Alps

Sanremo is a mid-size town of 54,824 inhabitants located along the coast of Liguria, a narrow and relatively long north-western Italian region which arches around the Ligurian Sea between Tuscany (E) and France (W). The region's capital, Genoa, separates the Eastern Riviera from the Western Riviera where Sanremo is placed, some 25 km from the national border of Ponte San Ludovico between Mortola and Menton in the Province of Imperia. The town stretches along the coast between Capo Verde and Capo Nero and it develops discontinuously to the immediate inland hillside where the area of La Pigna, Sanremo's medieval historical centre, is located (Fig. 1). This area is characterised by a complicated pattern of steep ridges and valley floors which culminates with Monte Bignone (1,299 metres above sea level - m asl), one of the first peaks of the Ligurian Alps. The physical geography of the area is characterised by the presence of relatively high mountains very near the coastline. The Ligurian Alps, the southernmost section of Europe's greatest mountain chain, rise from the Mediterranean and culminate with several peaks of over 2,000 m asl including Monte Saccarello (2,200 m asl), the region's highest mountain, located less than 30km from the coast. The coexistence of sea and

mountains makes for a unique variety of environments and microclimates which is reflected in the landscape and biodiversity of the area. Liguria, and the Imperia province in particular, is the only region of continental Italy where three European biogeographical regions meet, the Mediterranean, Continental and Alpine regions (EEA, 2002). The Ligurian Alps area today is protected by the Parco Naturale Regionale delle Alpi Liguri, instituted in 2007, which comprises the upper catchments and ridges of several alpine valleys including the Argentina, Nervia and Roja Valleys.

The climatic conditions are particularly noticeable: in terms of temperature and average rainfall the Western Riviera (and the area of Sanremo in particular) is comparable to the Mediterranean destinations of Southern Italy. According to ARPAL (2013) Sanremo has an average yearly rainfall of 6,907 mm (1961-2010) with peaks in the autumn and lows in the summer. For the same time period, the city of Genoa has an average yearly rainfall of 12,903 mm. In Sanremo the average temperature in 1981-2010 was 16.8 °C, well above that of Genoa (15.9 °C), while the minimum ever recorded temperature was -1.8 °C and the maximum 36.2°C. These climatic conditions, almost unique at the European level, enabled the acclimatisation of exotic plant species, particularly palm trees, for which this area has been internationally known (Piana et al. 2019). The particular coexistence of tropical and alpine elements within a few kilometres alongside mild climatic conditions all year round made of Sanremo and the Western Riviera one of the first tourist destinations in Italy and still today constitutes an element of interest which places this area amongst the most popular for Italian and international tourists. In addition to contributing to the place's popularity both historically and in the present day, such almost unique geographical and landscape features have been a source of inspiration for the work of artists, authors and thinkers.

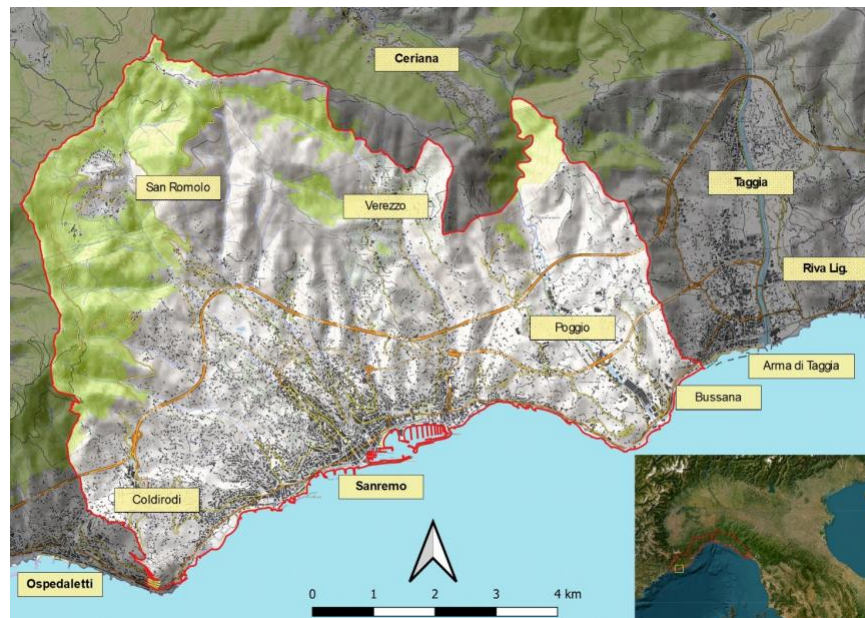


Fig. 1 - Geographical setting of the study area

Source: own elaboration on QGIS based on data from Regione Liguria, Google Satellite and OpenTopoMap.

From elite to mass tourism

While the development of tourism in Sanremo and the Western Riviera dates to the mid-nineteenth century, the area had been crossed by travellers at an earlier stage, as Liguria and Genoa had already been included in some of the classic Grand Tour itineraries of the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries (Black 2003). As the Napoleonic wars came to an end the number of travellers to the Riviera, particularly British, increased, as tourists could make use of an improved road network which included the so-called Corniche Road along the coast (Brockedon 1835). This road, which was built at various stages in the first half of the century, had a post-house system and offered beautiful views of Riviera landscapes which had been extensively depicted by amateur travel artists (Piana et al. 2012).

In the second half of the nineteenth century the Western Riviera saw an increase in the presence of elite European tourists and attracted many wealthy new residents, particularly to Bordighera, Alassio and Sanremo, which were likened to British 'colonies' (Bartoli 2008). Several large and luxurious hotels were built, villas established for temporary and permanent foreign residents, and coastal villages transformed into retreats for the wealthy, with gardens and parks adorned with exotic plants and attractive buildings (Piana et al. 2021). In addition to the fine climate and beautiful landscapes, the popularity of Sanremo and the Riviera increased thanks to several literary and cultural associations. This is particularly true of Giovanni Ruffini's novel *Doctor Antonio* (1855), the platonic love story of a revolutionary doctor and the rich daughter of an English baronet in Sanremo (dell'Agnese and Bagnoli 2004). In *Doctor Antonio* Ruffini vividly describes the vibrant atmosphere of Sanremo, the rapid establishment of exclusive resorts, hotels and the many infrastructure and urban changes of those years. His later memoir *San Remo Revisited*, published in *Macmillan's Magazine* in 1865, is a very useful account of tourism development in those years. Here Ruffini lists four large hotels, the Hotel Victoria, the Hotel de Londres, the Hotel de la Grande Bretagne and the Hotel d'Angleterre, noting that the names were 'tantamount to a formal declaration. . . . Yes, Sanremo is in love with the English, Sanremo has been in love with the English for many years past' (Ruffini 1865/1998: 15).

Many wealthy and famous foreign residents and visitors contributed to Sanremo's popularity in the following decades, a list which includes the artist and writer Edward Lear (1812-1888) (who built Villa Tennyson in 1880), the Empress of Russia Maria Alexandrovna (1824-1880) the German Emperor Frederick III (1831-1888) and the Empress Elisabeth of Austria (Sissi, 1837-1898). The prominence of Sanremo as the leading tourist destination in nineteenth-century Liguria is confirmed by the number of its hotels in 1874, eleven in total, by far the highest in the whole region (Zanini 2012). Foreign visitors prevailed, particularly British, German and American, respectively 41.2 per cent, 14.8 per cent and 10.3 per cent of a total of 9,330 tourists for 1881-1882, a situation which would not have changed in the first decades of the twentieth century when the ratio of Italian tourists remained constant at around 10 per cent (Zanini 2012).

But tourism in Liguria would soon go through significant changes, both in terms of numbers and type of tourism, due to the socio-economic evolution of Italian society

particularly after the post-war period. Already in the 1950s internal tourism exceeded foreign tourism: for the Imperia province in 1954 national arrivals were 16,0502 and foreign arrivals were 89,606, a gap which would have increased further in the following years (Rocca 2013). The mass tourism phenomenon that accompanied Italians' increased wealth in the years of the economic boom meant that many coastal resorts, including Sanremo, experienced unregulated urbanisation due to the need for second homes and accommodation facilities, a phenomenon that Calvino defined as 'febbre del cemento' (cement fever) (Calvino 1963). The effects of this long phase of tourism development are clearly visible in present-day Sanremo, where the former characteristics of traditional rural and leisure landscapes have been obliterated by the urban fabric (Fig. 2).

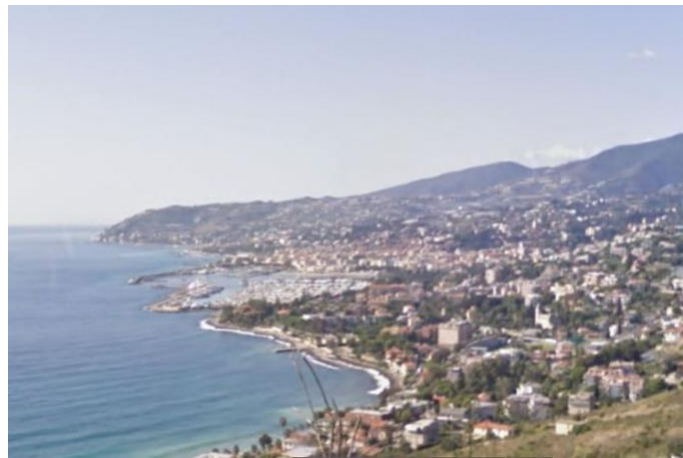


Fig. 2 - Sanremo from Poggio in the early twentieth century (photo Carlo Brogi, Wikimedia Commons) and today.

In addition to being a popular seaside destination, today Sanremo is famous for the Italian musical festival, its Casino and the Milano-Sanremo cycling race. Due to increased awareness of the detrimental effects of mass tourism on the landscape and the environment, in recent years local institutions such as the Alpi Liguri Natural Park have promoted tourism diversification initiatives which include outdoor and cultural tourism. In this sense, the

Calvino itinerary discussed in this paper contributes to the strengthening of the connection between Sanremo and one of the most important Italian authors of the 20th century and informs the planning and promotion of cultural tourism in the area.

The Calvino itinerary ***Calvino and Sanremo***

Italo Calvino is widely acknowledged as one of the most important Italian authors of the twentieth century and many of his texts have a profound geographical dimension that engages readers in a constant tension between existing spatial and imaginary representations. There is a profound, almost osmotic correspondence between Italo Calvino and his hometown Sanremo, something which recurs, whether directly and indirectly, in many of his writings. He was born in a village near Avana, Cuba in 1923 where his father, the agronomist Mario Calvino, was conducting an experimental agronomical station. The family moved to Sanremo in 1925 where Italo resided almost exclusively until the Second World War:

I grew up from childhood to youth in a city on the Riviera, embedded in its own microclimate. Both the sea contained in a gulf and the dense mountains appeared reassuring and protective to me; the thin ribbon of a coastal road separated me from Italy, from the world of a nearby frontier. (Calvino 1980: 133¹)

In this passage, Calvino underlines — with a profound territorial sensibility — the tension between the places of his past and the search for new places in his present; this dynamic has stimulated a wide debate in both literary and geographical studies. His non-fiction and literary productions include explicit and non-explicit references to specific places, giving shape to both real and imaginary settings (Antonello 1998; Chiappori 2015; Montella 2020; Dematteis 2021; Salvatori 2023). The former is found in works such as *Palomar*, *Gli Dei della Città*, *La Speculazione Edilizia*, *La Strada di San Giovanni*, *Il Sentiero dei Nidi di Ragno*; the latter characterises the settings of *Le Città Invisibili*, *Favole Italiane* and *Il Barone Rampante*, just to name a few.

The role of Sanremo's milieu in Calvino's production is vividly described by the author himself: 'San Remo keeps appearing in my books, in the most varied views and perspectives, especially seen from above, and is especially present in many of the Invisible Cities' (Italo Calvino, Interview of Maria Corti for 'Autografo,' 1985). This statement is even more relevant if we consider that just a few months later, in September 1985, Calvino would suffer a fatal stroke. In the same interview, Calvino underlines the crucial role played by his childhood and juvenile memories in his literary production; furthermore, he recognises a sort of paradox: 'this persistence is as strong in me as the centripetal push had been in my youth, which proved to be without return, because places quickly ceased to exist' (Corti 1985). These brief comments already reveal two of the themes that define Calvino's geographical sensibility (Bilardi 2023), which was deeply entwined with the public and personal experience of San Remo: the urbanization process and its consequences (Palmieri 1988; Laroche 1998; Quaini

1998; 2009; Spera 2013; Petronella 2021, Salvatori 2023) and the transformation of places over time (Di Carlo 2013; Migliaccio 2015; Pesce 2022).

One of the most interesting texts linking Calvino to the territory of Sanremo and its surroundings is undoubtedly the essay *Dall'opaco* (Calvino 1990), a detailed description based on the identification of a clear geometric structure of the landscape founded on the fundamental dialectical opposition between the aprico – a dialect word to indicate a sunny, south-facing area - and the opaco - the area facing north, in shadow (Palmieri 1988; Quaini 1998; 2009; Migliaccio 2015; Chiappori 2015; Pesce 2022). Here Calvino attributes symbolic values to the landscape, described developing a dynamic narrative that alternates verticality and horizontality, mountain and sea, east and west, city and countryside. The author thus identifies a sort of form to be given to the world, a mapping within which to consider reality (Chiappori 2015; Dematteis 2021; Pesce 2022). It is precisely this process of engaging with and internalizing the landscape that is unequivocally expressed in Calvino's first novel, *Il Sentiero dei Nidi di Ragno*, whose introduction is undoubtedly one of the most vivid and successful literary descriptions of the very essence of the Ligurian landscape:

My landscape was something jealously mine . . . a landscape that no one had ever really written. . . . I was from the Riviera di Ponente; from the landscape of my city — San Remo — I polemically erased the whole tourist coastline — seafront with palm trees, casinos, hotels, villas — almost ashamed of it; I started from the alleys of the old town, climbed up the streams, avoided geometric fields of carnations, preferred the 'strips' of vines and olive groves with their old disconnected dry-stone walls, went along the mule tracks over the gerbid hummocks, up to where the pine woods began, then the chestnut trees, and so I passed from the sea — always seen from above, a strip between two green wings - to the winding valleys of the Ligurian foothills. (Calvino 1993: IX)

A process that helps us to understand Calvino's entire production is the one that runs through the landscape of Sanremo. At the end of the 19th century, this area was considered among the most significant in terms of landscape in the north Mediterranean; since the 1950s, however, the territory has been deformed by urban speculation. Thus, a new spatial structure took shape that diverged from the rural one of the writer's youth: 'a geometric superimposition of parallelepipeds and polyhedrons, edges and sides of houses, roofs, windows, for neighbouring blind walls with only the frosted windows of the toilets one above the other' (Calvino 1963). Once again, through this lucid ascertainment of reality, Calvino explicates his vision regarding one of the most important tasks of writing, which is to observe, probe and map the form and memory of a territory, bringing to light a world that no longer exists in reality (Pesce 2022: 9).

These are probably the most appropriate lines to clarify the indissoluble relationship between Calvino and his hometown, a relationship that runs through almost all of Calvino's literary and non-fiction work. After all, Calvino — perhaps unconsciously — has always indicated itineraries through Sanremo and its surroundings. He has done so by emphasising, on the one hand, the personal need to exploit his hometown as a narrative expedient that brings us back to reality and to the transformations linked to the processes of urbanisation

and mass tourism, and on the other, by resorting to the memory of the Sanremo of his youth as the starting point for an imaginative activity that goes beyond the perceptible reality to construct a literary one. Likewise, it is precisely this relationship that prompted the authors to conceive, curate and organise a literary itinerary dedicated to the Calvino in Sanremo and its surrounding area.

Design and implementation of the itinerary: a participatory process

As discussed above, Sanremo contributed to the shaping of Calvino's literary production, but in return his writings still have profound implications for the way in which residents and tourists perceive their city and its landscapes. The year 2023 was the hundredth anniversary of Calvino's birth, and many different events took place to celebrate the author, including the establishment of a thematic itinerary across the city. The project was designed and coordinated by Laura Guglielmi (freelance journalist) and Veronica Pesce (professor of Italian Literature, University of Genoa) in a participatory and bottom-up approach aimed at involving various representatives of the local society.

The initiative was promoted and strongly supported by the Municipality of Sanremo and saw the direct involvement of high-school students of the three Lyceums of the Province of Imperia (Viesseux of Imperia, Cassini of Sanremo and Aprosio of Ventimiglia) and university students from the courses of Tourism Sciences, Humanities and Conservation of Cultural Heritage (University of Genoa) and the Academy of Arts of Sanremo. High-school students and their teachers looked at specific themes concerning Calvino's biography and relation with the city, while university students worked on the written texts and the mapping of specific sites where the itinerary panels would be placed (thirty seven in total). Such an enthusiastic reception provides evidence of the deep connection between Calvino and Sanremo and the Ligurian Riviera. The topographical restitution of Calvino's places in Sanremo involved a deep analysis of the landscape history of the city with a focus on urban processes and modifications. The itinerary project entailed three different products: the panels, placed in spots associated with Calvino; the QR codes in the panels focusing on some aspects of Calvino's biography, and on the history and geography of Sanremo, also in relation to landscape changes, through the presentation of historical images of the city before urbanisation (in particular, historical photographs and postcards); a guidebook on the itinerary curated by Prof. Pesce and titled 'Italo Calvino, Sanremo e dintorni: un itinerario letterario (1923-2023)' (Pesce 2022).

The guidebook summarises forty-three places linked with Calvino's biography, of which thirty-seven are in the city and six in the Ligurian Alps, where he joined the Resistance movement during the Second World War. The thirty-seven urban spots are also indicated in a map attached to the guidebook which allows visitors to do the itinerary independently, selecting the most interesting places to visit. In this regard, a particularly popular stretch is the so-called 'Strada di San Giovanni' (panels from twenty-seven to thirty-two) along a route that Italo, his brother and father used to take to reach their agricultural fields in the countryside. Other significant stages of the itinerary are Villa Meridiana (the Calvino's family home), the

Pigna (Sanremo historical centre), Cinema Centrale and the former monastery of Monache Turchine where Italo attended Liceo Gian Domenico Cassini.

The development of the itinerary and associated products is probably the most relevant experience of this kind in Liguria and a successful example of 'Placetelling', intended as a particular form of narration of places aimed at sustainable development through the strengthening of sense of identity and belonging (Pollice 2022). Alongside its cultural and historical relevance, the itinerary offers innovative insights into the development of cultural tourism. In this sense, the survey presented in the next section, circulated as the itinerary was launched in early 2023, was aimed at assessing its reception and perception amongst users and its potential for tourism development in Sanremo.

The survey

Research design and results

To assess the level of awareness about Calvino and his connection with Sanremo, as well as of the itinerary (inaugurated in April 2023), a survey was carried out in Spring 2023 using the snowball sampling method. The use of surveys in cultural and literary tourism research is increasingly acknowledged for the potential of quantitative data to integrate qualitative information (Busby and Shetliffe 2013; De Santi et al. 2022; Fornasari and Gabellieri 2023). This survey targeted Liguria residents and landscape users, meaning those who frequent the area for work/study purposes or as regular tourists (second homeowners). It also aimed at highlighting some tourist behaviors of the respondents to determine their inclination towards specific cultural activities or a particular interest in tourist practices closely related to the figures of writers/poets.

Overall, there were 409 respondents, with 89 per cent being Ligurians and the remaining 11 per cent being territory users. Given that the itinerary was still in its launch phase when the questionnaire was distributed, it is not surprising that only 15.6 per cent had already done it. However, the majority (65.3 per cent) expressed an intention to visit the itinerary, while 19.1 per cent stated they were not interested. This initial distinction allowed the identification of three clusters of respondents (Table 1), which will be referred to in the presentation of the results if the data significantly deviate from the average trend.

Table 1 - The three respondents' clusters

Respondents categories	Cluster	a.v.	per cent
<i>Respondents who have done the itinerary</i>	Cluster 1	64	15.6
<i>Respondents who want to do the itinerary</i>	Cluster 2	267	65.3
<i>Respondents who do not want to do the itinerary</i>	Cluster 3	78	19.1
Total		409	100.0

Source: own elaboration

For the three analysed clusters, the female component is predominant (overall 66.5 per cent) compared to the male component (32.5 per cent), while 1.0 per cent did not declare their gender. The gender component in Cluster 3 is more balanced (49.4 per cent female; 48.1 per cent male; and 2.6 per cent other). Looking at the overall trend (Fig.3), the most prevalent age group is between nineteen and twenty four years old (36.4 per cent), followed by those over fifty (31.3 per cent). Cluster 1 deviates the most from the average trend, showing a very high incidence of respondents in the 19-24 age group.

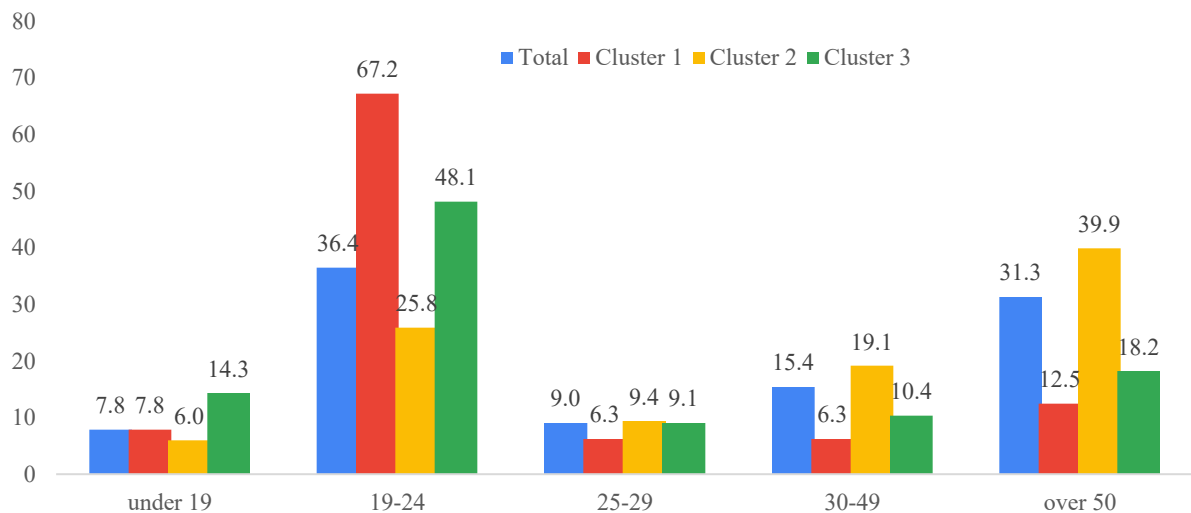


Fig. 3: Respondents by cluster and age

Source: own elaboration

The data regarding socio-occupational status reflect the age group composition: out of the total respondents, 37.7 per cent identified themselves as students. Public sector employees registered the highest incidence, amounting to 40.6 per cent. In over half of the cases, the total respondents have completed high school, while 37.7 per cent have obtained a university degree (26.9 per cent) or a postgraduate specialization or doctorate (10.8 per cent) (Fig. 4). In both cases Cluster 1 significantly deviates from the average trend.

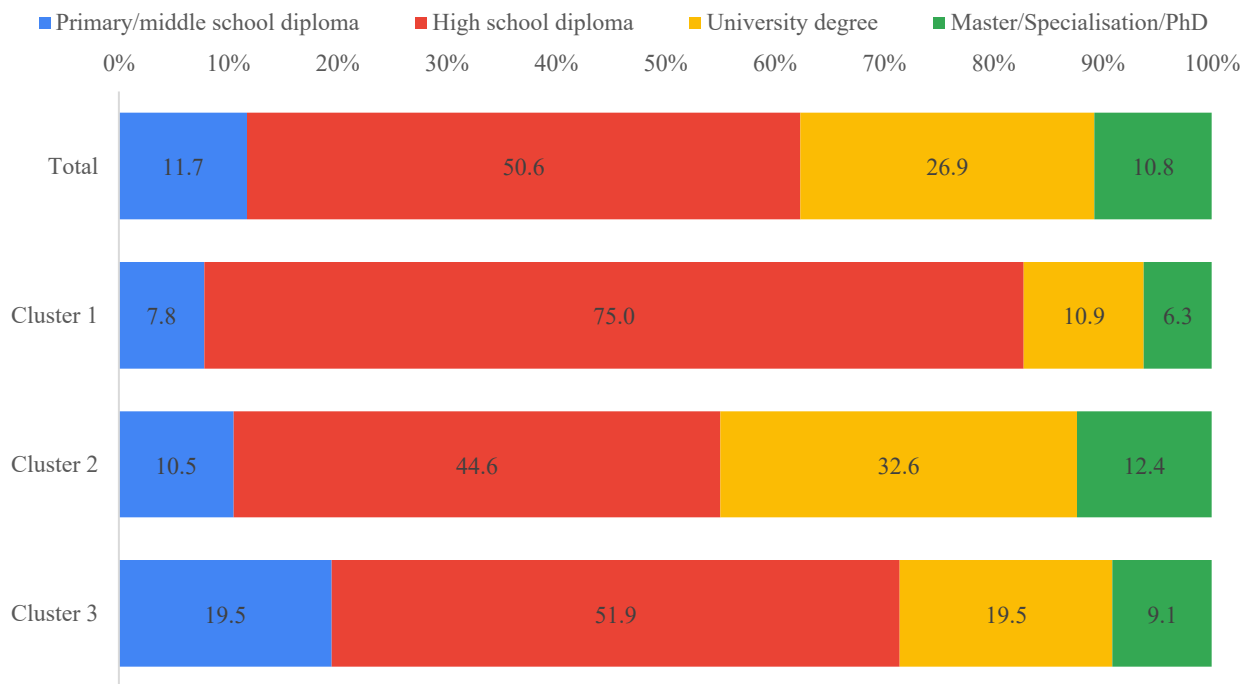


Fig. 4 - Level of education

Source: own elaboration

Regarding the types of tourism practiced, where it was possible to provide more than one answer, the most indicated options were cultural tourism and visits to villages, both mentioned by 84.4 per cent of respondents. This was followed by sea tourism, chosen by 74.3 per cent. In third-to-last position was slow tourism, selected by 37.2 per cent of respondents (Fig. 5).

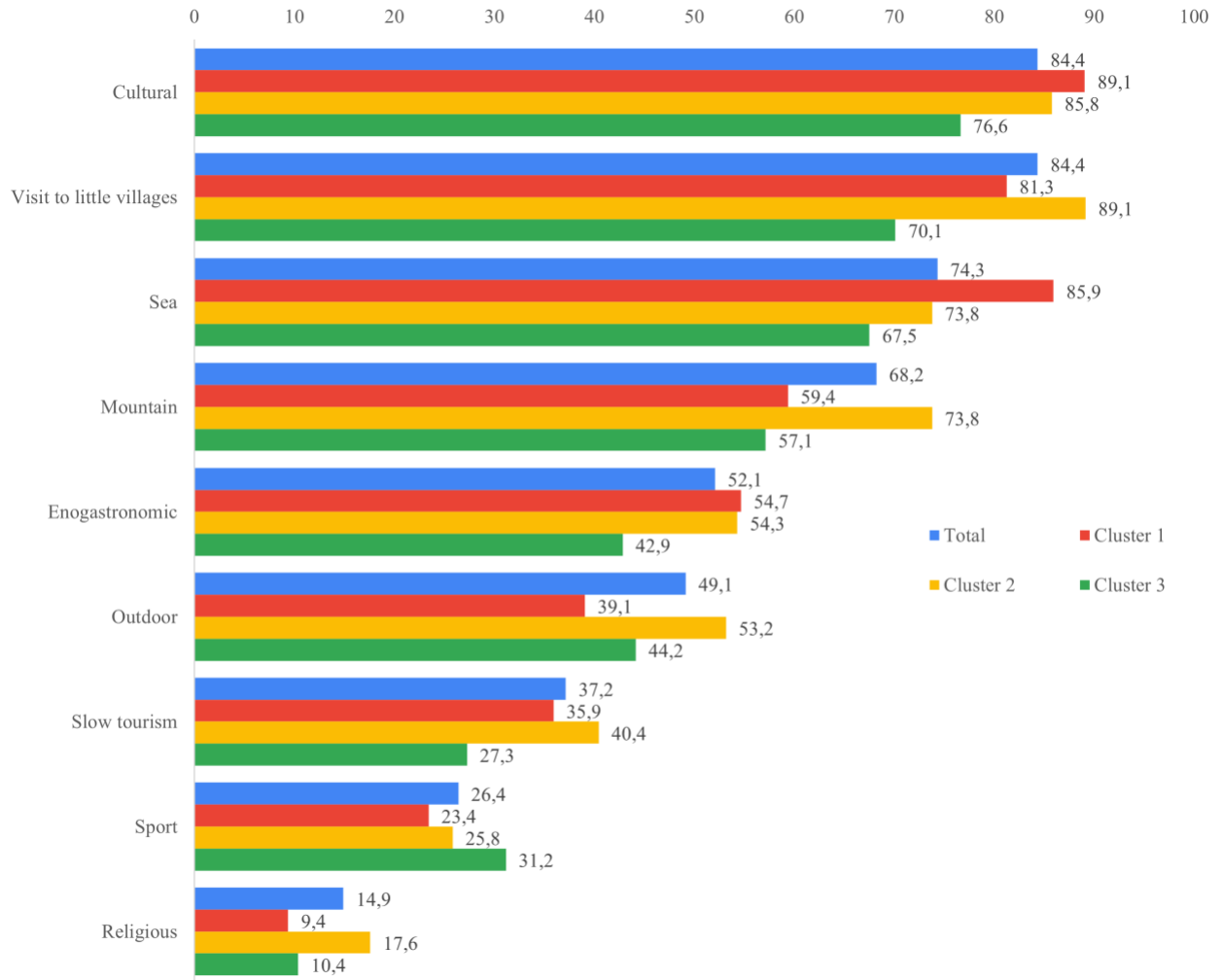


Fig. 5 - Types of tourism by respondents and related clusters

Source: own elaboration.

One question related to means of transport used by respondents while on holiday, with the possibility of indicating more than one choice. The majority of respondents reported walking on foot (94.6 per cent), while 66.0 per cent used public transport (bus, tram, metro, etc.) in addition to walking. Those who indicated the use of scooters or similar vehicles are the minority (5.6 per cent). Regarding sources of information used to plan vacations or excursions (again where respondents could choose multiple responses), the web is generally the most popular option (97.1 per cent), followed by official websites of the visited location (80.4 per cent), and social media (60.6 per cent), while word of mouth remains a very important way of acquiring information (69.7 per cent) (Fig. 6).

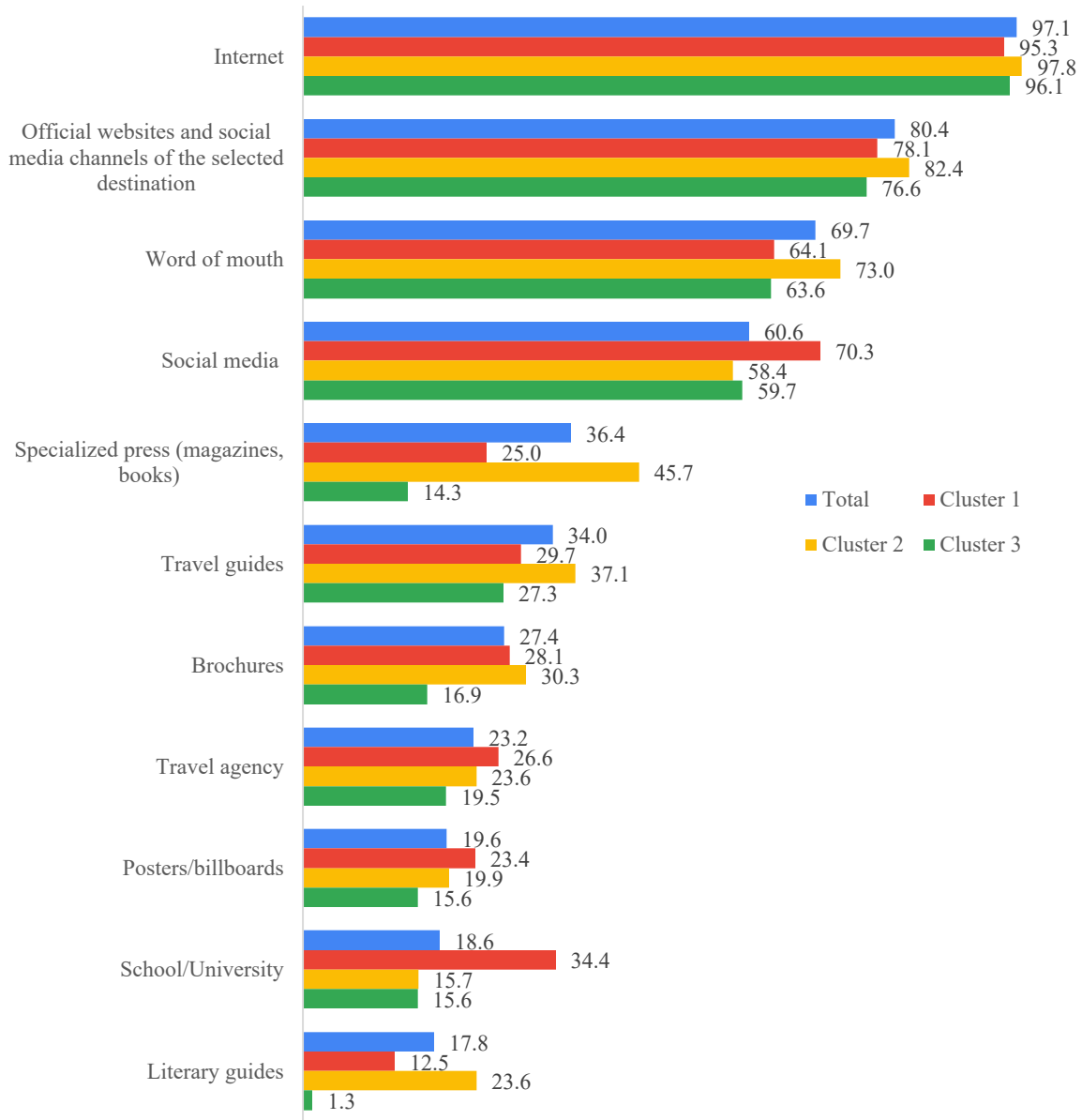


Fig. 6 - Sources of information to plan a vacation or excursion

Source: own elaboration.

Literary guides rank last, and in this case the three clusters significantly deviate from the average level (17.8 per cent): respondents from Cluster 2 use them 23.6 per cent of the time, Cluster 1 respondents 12.5 per cent, and finally, only 1.3 per cent of respondents from Cluster 3 use literary guides.

One aspect we investigated was whether respondents typically acquire information on literary associations in places they visit, for example on the presence of writers/poets born or associated with the location: in both cases, 58.1 per cent (Cluster 1) and 57.7 per cent (Cluster 2) of respondents intending to follow the itinerary, 50.0 per cent and 39.1 per cent of those who have completed the itinerary, and 28.6 per cent and 26.0 per cent of those who will not

follow it, answered positively. This last cluster tends to deviate from the average trend both in terms of interest in literary legacies and regarding the practice of specific activities: 59.7 per cent state that they always visit (both on vacation and excursion) historic centre, 37.7 per cent visit museums and exhibitions, and 33.8 per cent frequent parks and literary routes, compared to 71.6 per cent, 55.5 per cent, and 45.2 per cent respectively for the total in the first, second, and third case.

Focusing on the level of knowledge about Calvino (Fig. 7) those who studied his life and works at school have the highest percentage in Cluster 1 (70.3 per cent), while Clusters 2 (54.3 per cent) and 3 (55.1 per cent) are more similar to the average (57.0 per cent). For those who have read his books the trend is less regular: Cluster 1 (26.6 per cent) is below the average level alongside Cluster 3 (28.2 per cent), while Cluster 2 (39.0 per cent) is above. Respondents who have heard of Calvino but never read his books are much higher than the average value (8.1 per cent) in cluster 3 (16.7 per cent) while Cluster 1 (3.1 per cent) and Cluster 2 (6.7 per cent) are lower.

Almost three-quarters of the respondents know that Calvino lived in Sanremo; however, slightly less than 55 per cent are aware of the existence of an itinerary in Sanremo and its surroundings that retraces some moments of Calvino's life and work. Respondents from Clusters 1 and 2 (total 331) know about a literary guide about Calvino in 23 per cent of cases, 2 per cent have bought it, but 75 per cent were unaware of it.

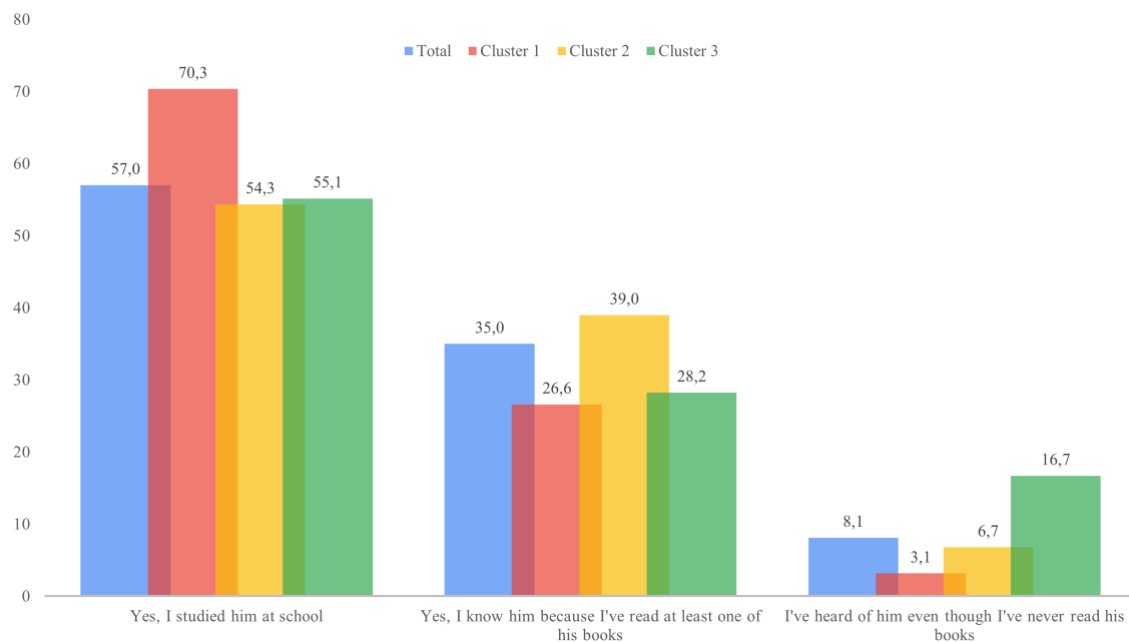


Fig. 7 - Knowledge of Calvino

Source: own elaboration.

Respondents from Clusters 1 and 2 who were aware of the itinerary (total 194) mostly learned about it at school/university (43.8 per cent) and, to a lesser extent, through word of mouth

from relatives and friends (21.6 per cent); in this case, the internet and social media played a more marginal role, accounting for 9.8 per cent and 6.2 per cent respectively (Fig. 8).

In 61 per cent of cases, respondents from Clusters 1 and 2 think that the itinerary was not adequately promoted, and 17 per cent thinks that it was very ineffectively advertised. However, the same respondents believe that the Calvino itinerary in Sanremo and surroundings could significantly contribute to enhancing the local territory; 59.2 per cent think it would significantly contribute to a deeper understanding of Calvino while 55.9 per cent believe it can further enhance Sanremo and surroundings, and 52.3 per cent see it as a good contribution to the development of cultural tourism/hiking. The itinerary is also considered highly useful for improving the overall knowledge of the territory by 48.9 per cent of respondents and for documenting changes in the territory before the major transformations that triggered processes of urbanization described by Calvino (40.8 per cent) (Fig. 9).

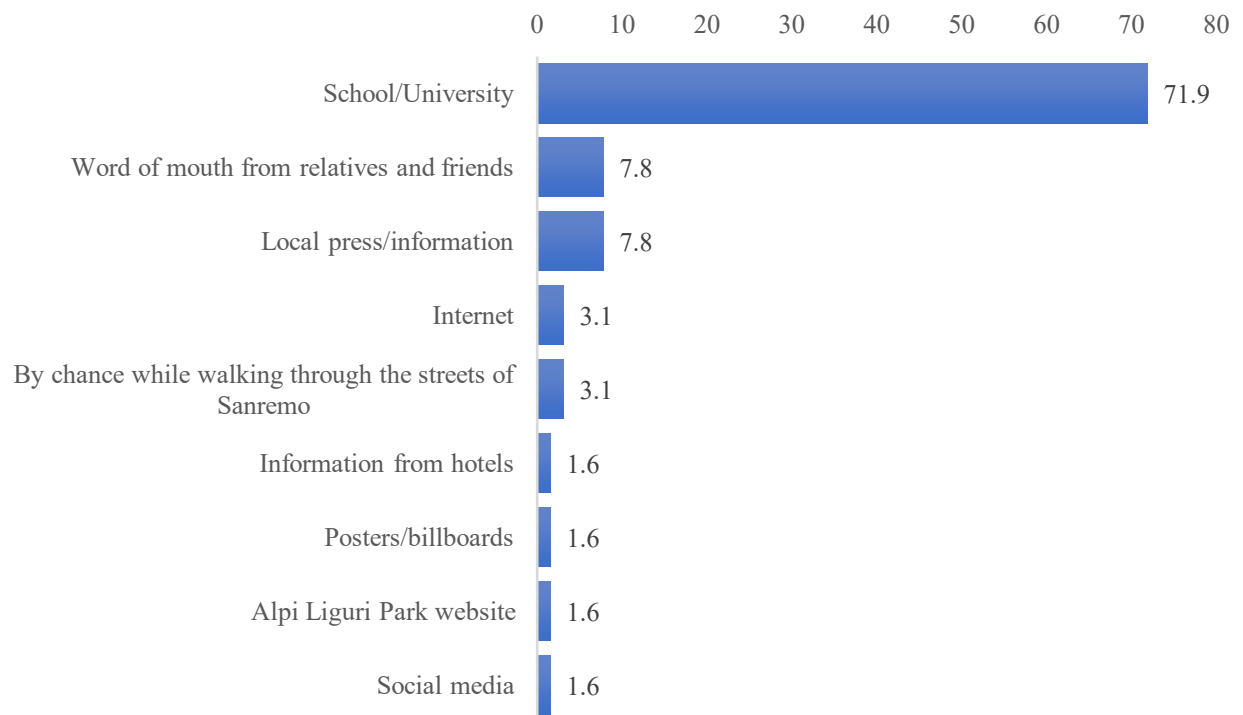


Fig. 8 - How respondents knew about the itinerary

Source: own elaboration.

Only respondents who completed the itinerary were asked specific questions about the panels and QRcodes; in particular, over 90 per cent of these respondents think that the content of the panels is useful (50.0 per cent) or very useful (40.6 per cent), while nearly 95 per cent think that the QRcodes are useful, although less than half have utilised them.

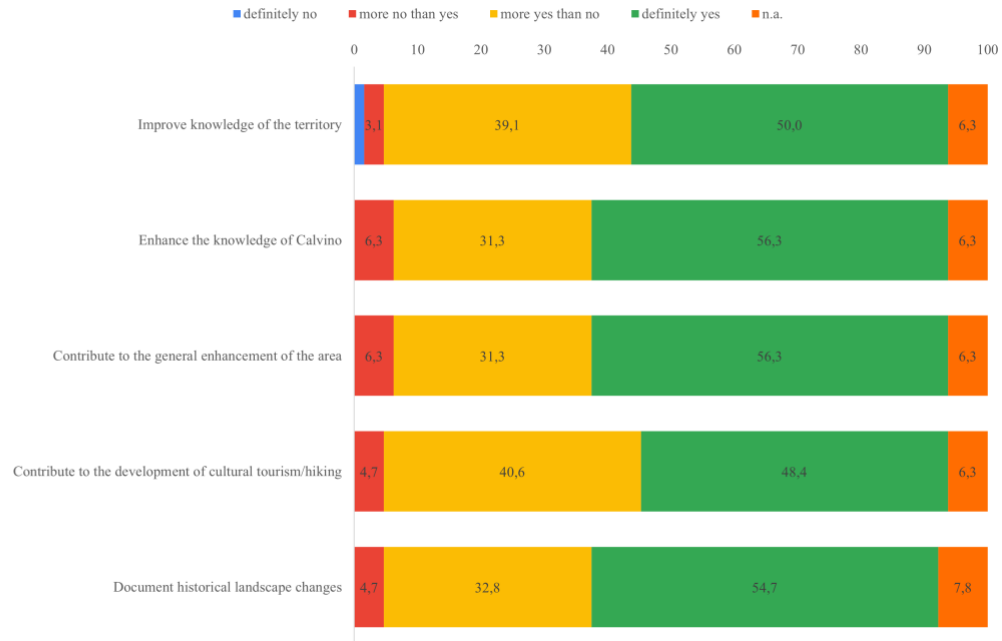


Fig. 9 - What aspects of Sanremo and surroundings can be improved or enhanced thanks to the Calvino itinerary?

Source: own elaboration

Discussion and conclusion

The literary itinerary for Sanremo and its surroundings is certainly an important and comprehensive effort of territorial enhancement that proposes a very different image of Sanremo, far from the rather stereotypical one, connected to mass sea tourism or specific events and places such as the Italian Song Festival or the Casino.

Such a form of Placetelling (Pollice 2022) broadens the view of Sanremo through a more complex awareness of both the changes that have taken place through time and the distinctive elements of this area, also through the perspective of one of the most illustrious personalities to have lived and observed the city. An important aspect, that has been greatly appreciated by those who have been able to walk the itinerary, is the possibility of reading landscape changes in this way. Precisely by grasping those same signs that permeated Calvino's political and environmental reflections, the itinerary offers an alternative and possibly more 'authentic' vision of Sanremo. Above all, the itinerary has a significant role in enhancing Calvino as an eclectic author and in promoting the city and its surroundings beyond its image as a seaside and entertainment tourist destination. As also emerges from the survey, the itinerary and associated products are very valuable as they allow users to discover landscape changes of Sanremo and reflect upon urban planning errors of the post-Second World War period. Considering the results of the questionnaire, it is clear that the literary itinerary is an added value to residents and visitors.

However, this being very much a preliminary analysis aimed at an initial monitoring of the itinerary, the set of data collected needs to be recalibrated and improved, also in relation to promotional activities that, in light of the results of the survey, will have to be strengthened. Alternative and diversified forms of promotion should include social media and the web, including websites devoted to cultural routes. It is also advisable that local institutions promote the itinerary through the organisation of thematic guided tours similar to those Alpi Liguri Natural Park is already carrying out.² Finally, a crucial point concerns the practicability of the itinerary, which has been tested through a series of field surveys we have carried out since its inauguration. In its current state the itinerary is not always easily enjoyable due to its length and the presence of heavy traffic on roads that were once footpaths that Calvino and his family took to reach their family fields and home. In this sense, it would be necessary to develop alternative routes according to the different time-restraints and movement needs of tourists and hikers. The route should be revised based on the actual possibility of following it in each of its stages without excessive risks for users; it would also be important to strengthen the connection between the coast and the inland using pedestrian paths and cycling routes in order to allow sustainable transport, also based on people's habits while on holiday as it emerged in the survey. Such efforts would be particularly useful to allow access to some of the most distant parts of the itinerary from the town centre such as Strada di San Giovanni (Fig. 10).



Fig. 10 - The landscape of Sanremo inland from the church of San Giovanni (photo by the authors, April 2023)

In light of these considerations, we can state that Calvino's literary work is not only functional to the definition of a tourist itinerary and the enhancement of the environmental and cultural resources of the Sanremo area, but also a true example of 'literature of tourism' understood as literary texts that can add tourist value to a destination, by promoting the practice of tourism (Quinteiro and Baleiro 2017). As pointed out by Daly et al. (2021), this type of literature manifests itself when an intersection is observed between the imagination of the reader (based on the personal connection established between the narrative elements and the place/author) and the geographical context. As recently introduced by Hones (2022), the concept of interspatiality goes beyond binary oppositions of 'lived and imagined places' or 'literary and non-literary space' as literary-social-geographical combinations are 'inextricably mixed' (Hones 2022: 15). In this sense, tourists and local people who will experience the Calvino itinerary in the future will not be only passive subjects, but also active in the production of space and in the enhancement of local attractiveness.

Notes

¹ Translations of quotations from Italian to English are by the authors.

² For example, the guided tours organised by Parco Alpi Liguri in Passo della Mezzaluna (where Calvino fought during the Italian Resistance) or in Val Nervia on Claude Monet's footsteps. Recently Liguria da Scoprire, a local cooperative involved in tourism promotion, organised a guided tour along Strada di San Giovanni (<https://liguriadascoprire.it/calendario/la-strada-di-san-giovanni-sulle-tracce-di-italo-calvino/>)

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