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Pilgrimage experiences in electronic Word-of-Mouth: an analysis of the shrines visited and the comments made by independent pilgrims to Rome

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Marta Pucciarelli

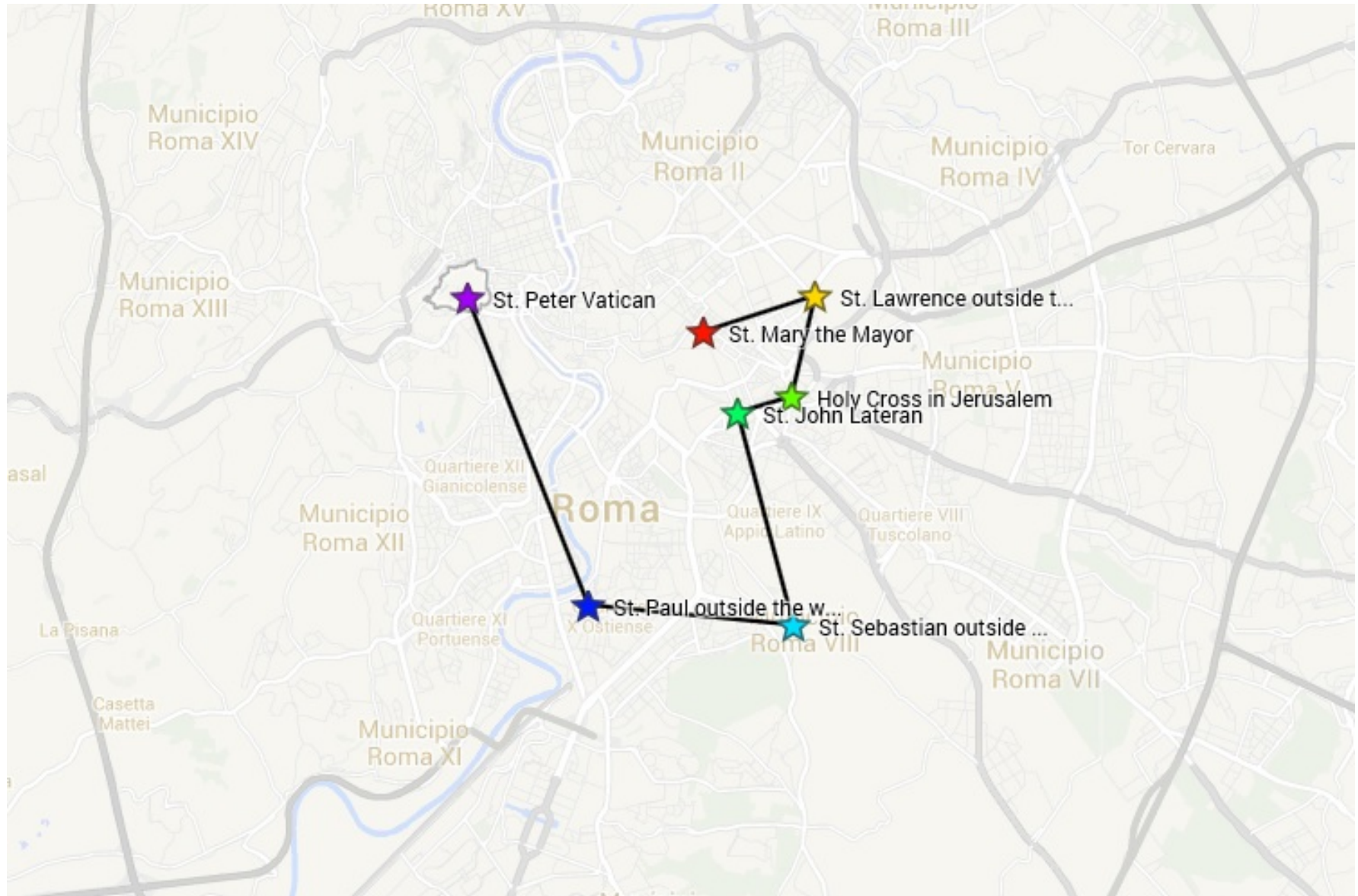Lorenzo Cantoni

The 3 main Medieval pilgrimages

Jerusalem/Holy Land

Rome

Santiago de Compostela

Rome and the "7 churches walk"

The testimony of others in travel decisions

Word-of-mouth

Electronic Word-of-mouth

THE STUDY:
OTR about pilgrimage experiences in Rome

RQ1: Which venues/attractions did independent pilgrims visited in Rome?

⟶ map of **toponymies**

RQ2: Which aspect of the pilgrimage experience did drive them?

⟶ identification of pilgrimage **drivers**

RQ3: Which types of comments and advices did they give about the venues they visited?

⟶ argumentative analysis of reviewers' **comments**

DATA COLLECTION

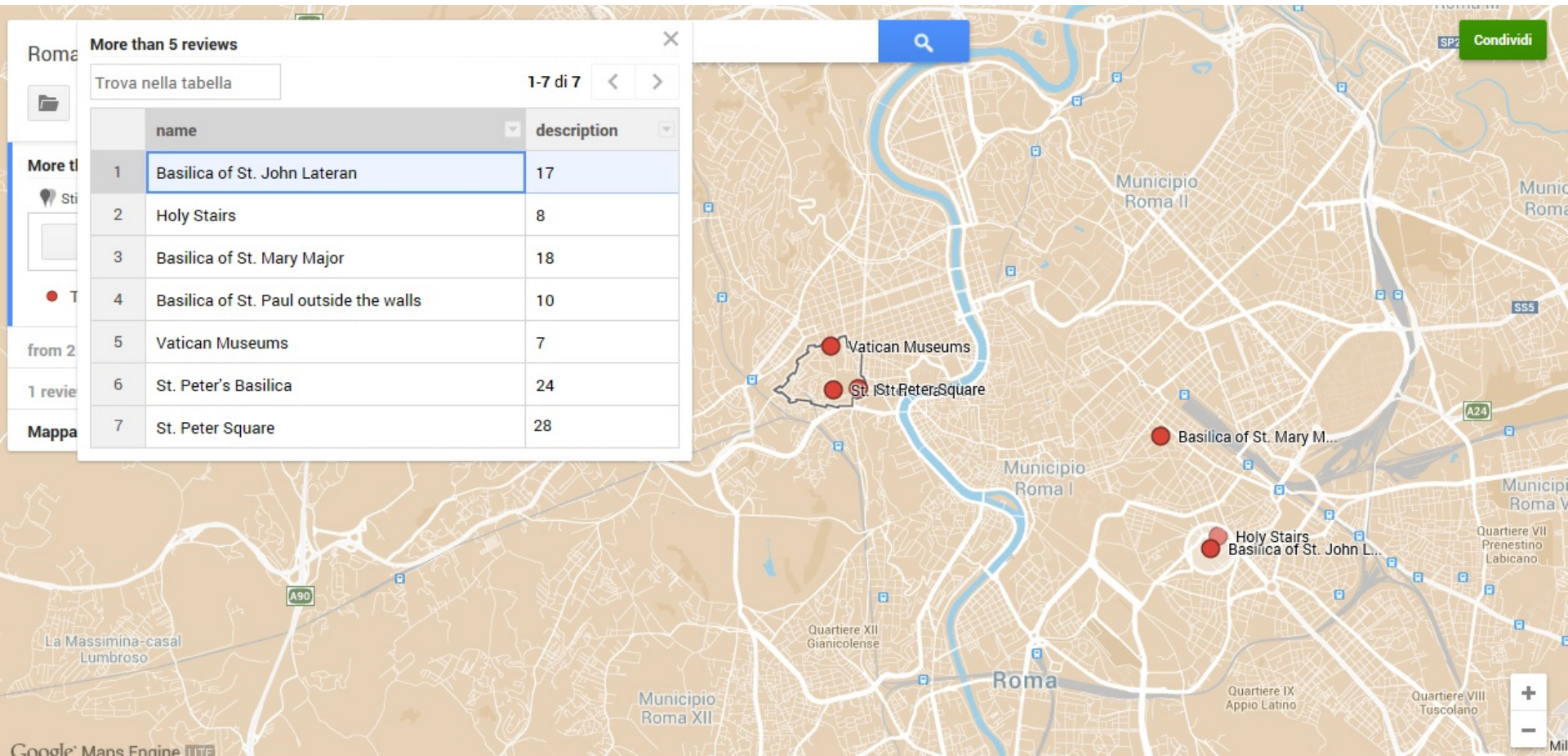| Keyword (Rome +)	Relevant results	Notes
Pilgrimage, pilgrim/s	18	
religion	no relevant OTR	Up to the first 50 results
faith	1	
Christian, Christianity	no relevant OTR	Up to the first 50 results
Pope, canonization	12	
Mass, holy service	4	
World Youth Day	No results	Up to the first 100 results
Pray, prayer	48	Up to the first 100 results
Adoration, confession, Eucharist	19	
Year of Faith	**no results**	
Total	102	

! Only relevant results!

! Different UGC types!
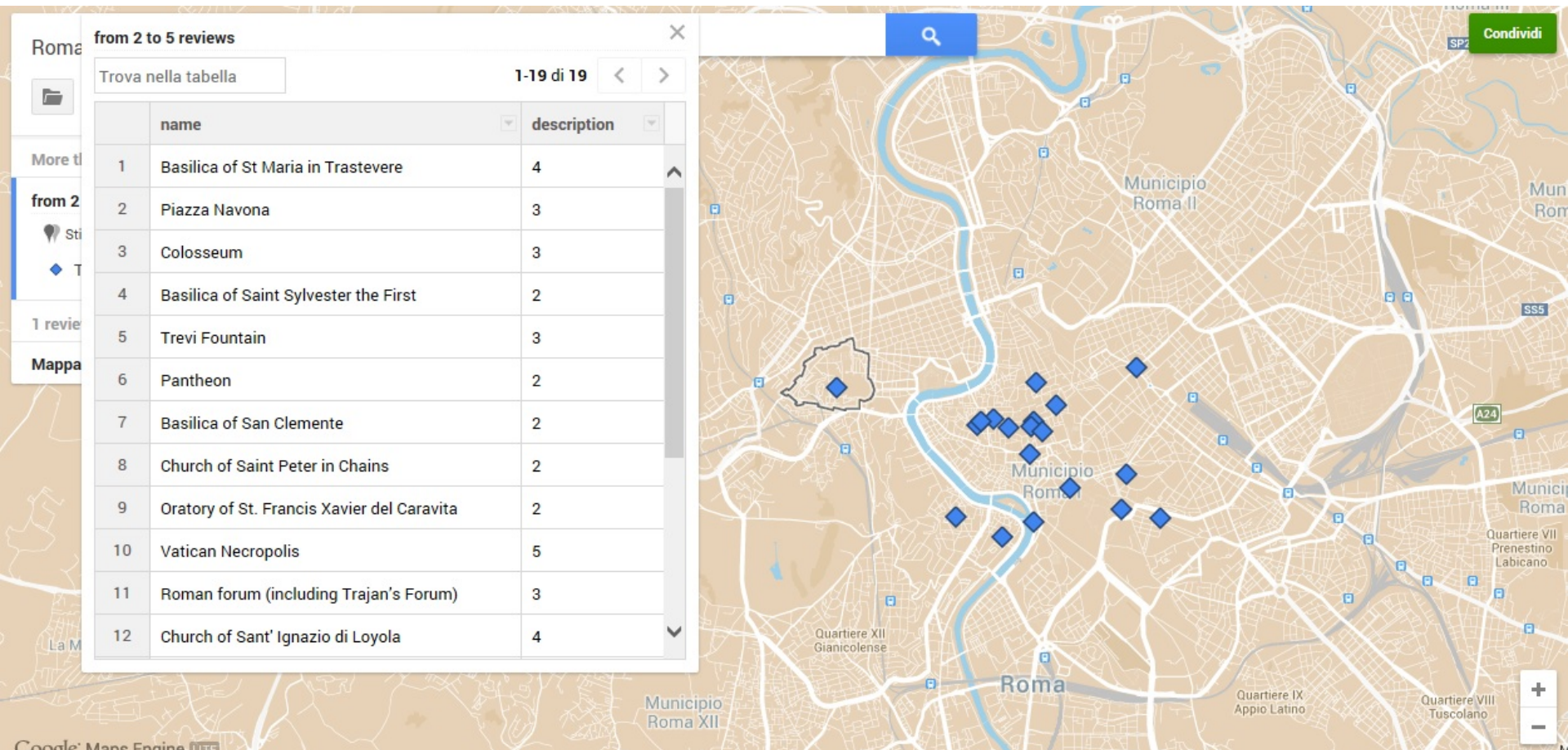(i.e. attraction reviews, forum posts, hotel reviews)

RESULTS – RQ1
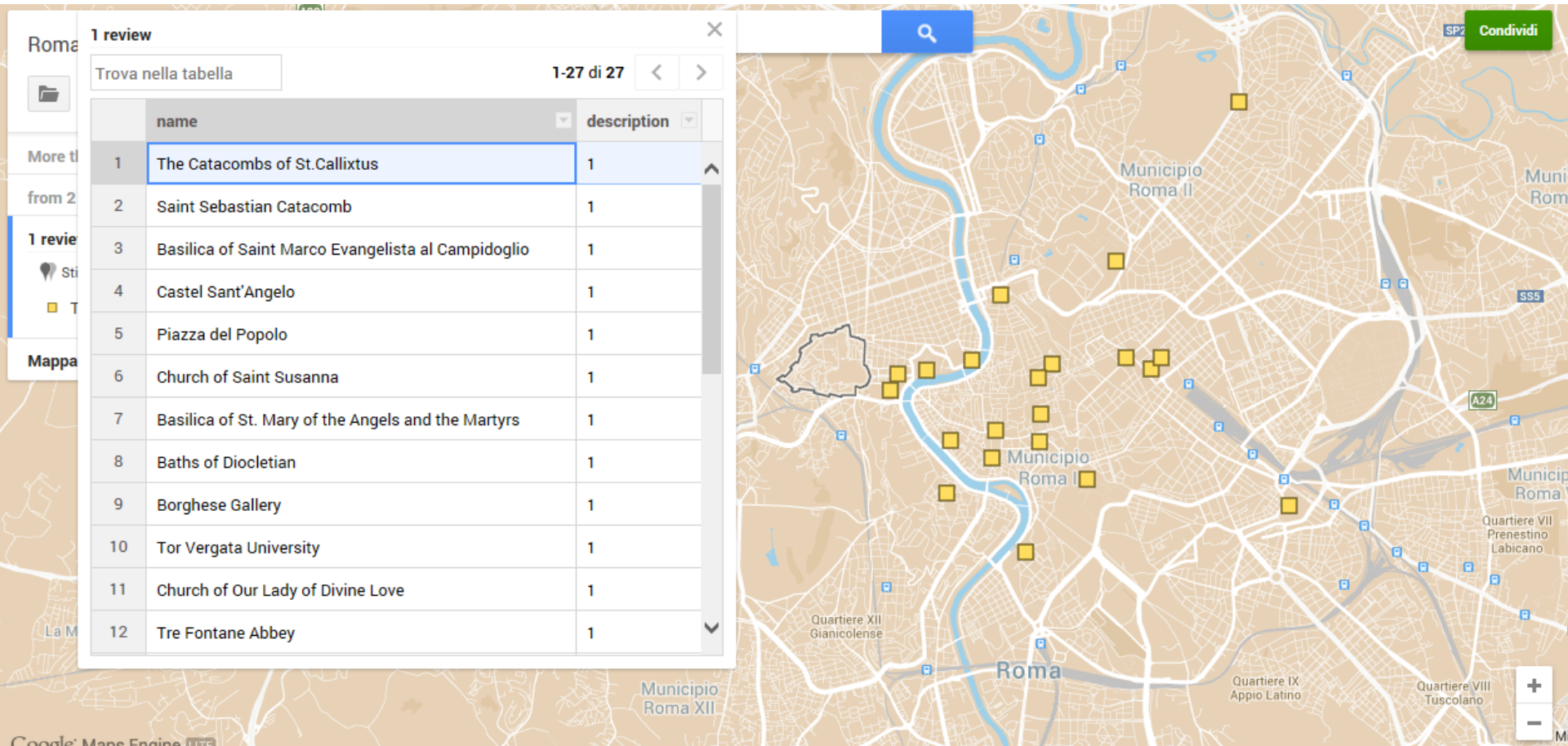# Pilgrimage attractions in Rome mentioned more than 5 times

RESULTS – RQ1
Pilgrimage attractions in Rome mentioned from 2 to 4 times

RESULTS – RQ1
Pilgrimage attractions in Rome mentioned only once

(Declared) Drivers of pilgrimage

To visit a sacred place

"Saint Agnes is a small catacomb, but it has great interest for the Christian pilgrim."
"Wish to visit the 7 Catholic pilgrim churches."

To see tangible signs of faith

[Holy stairs] "These steps (…) are the steps that Jesus walked up when he went before Pilate in Jerusalem prior to His crucifixion."
[St. Peter] "(there are) many incorrupt bodies of popes."

To perform a religious activity

"Prayed briefly at Blessed John Paul II's resting place."
"There was time for prayer, and relishing their Faith heritage."

To attend a religious event

"Being in Rome for the inauguration of Pope Francis."
"Thanksgiving Mass for the Canonization of Kateri Tekakwitha."

RESULTS – RQ3
Pilgrims' arguments – an example

"If you are a Christian, you don't want to miss this. These are the stairs that Jesus walked up and down during his last days in Jerusalem."

Major premise: If an object belonged or was used by a person who is venerated in a religious community, that object deserves special devotion by that community.

Endoxon: Jesus is venerated by Christians as the true God.

Minor premise: The Holy Stairs were used by Jesus.

Conclusion: Christians should visit the Holy Stairs.

CONCLUSIONS I

UGC REPORTING PILGRIMAGE EXPERIENCES TO ROME
➢ the 4 patriarchal basilicas are top pilgrimage venues
➢ St. Sebastian and St. Lawrence outside the walls were never mentioned as pilgrimage shrines, the Holy Cross in Jerusalem just once
➢ a number of other different religious attractions were mentioned; they mostly host tangible signs of faith

CONCLUSIONS II

PILGRIMAGE EXPERIENCES IN PLATFORMS FOR TRAVEL REVIEW

A small number of relevant results were retrieved, presumably because platforms:

→ impose a 'product-oriented' publish method

→ are mostly used to give logistic advice and descriptions than to share personal experiences

Analysis of travel blogs and travel diaries

FUTURE WORK

➢ Analysis of different types of UGC: travel blogs and travel diaries + OTR of guided tours

➢ Analysis of arguments given for the 4 pilgrimage drivers ➔ focus on *endoxa*

Thank you!

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