

The Economic and Touristic Regeneration of Local Communities through the Long Tail of Events

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Abstract

The aim of this study is to demonstrate, in the light of new technologies, the importance of the “long tail” of events for the development of local communities from the economic and tourism standpoint. From the management perspective, an event represents a relevant touristic driver, especially when oriented to small communities. The methodology used, albeit referring to the positive method, incorporates the concept of Chris Anderson’s “long tail” and recent conceptualizations of the Viable Systems Approach. Thus, it refers to literature review method and theory development. Findings of this study emphasize a new perspective of creating value for the development of local communities, based on the evolution of the concept of event (from the mass event to the mass of events). The existing literature on the subject has generally deepened the organizational implications arising from the standardization of events rather than those of customization. Therefore, referring to the originality and value of the present research, it considers the pure customization, which provides even a custom design of the event, a decisive factor for the economic and touristic development of local communities. The study presents also practical implications related with the possibility, thanks to new technologies, to convey to the user/citizen an event that is differentiated and personalized.

Keywords: local communities, “long tail”, mass events, niche events, mass of events.

Introduction

The paper aims to examine the issues concerning the recovery of local communities through the mass of events. From the point of view of management, an event is an important driver for tourism, taking a place of undisputed importance in marketing plans and development of tourist destinations (Getz, 2008). This paper aims to analyze a particular sense of this concept, the events in the long tail, and track, as far as possible, a simple theoretical framework using conceptualizations of Anderson (2010). In particular, the objective is to identify which events (large, mass, small, etc.) can be used successfully to vitalize the small community. In the discussion that will follow, it will be introduced and often used the concept of “long tail”; in general you can use the “long

tail” to describe the phenomenon that provides for the possibility of the niche products to grow into a significant share of total sales (Brynjolfsson et al., 2011).

In the light of these considerations, we will try to understand the structure of the current change, which is affecting local communities primarily as a result of technological innovation. The rediscovery of the “local community” as a starting point for overcoming the crisis of these years does not mean a general return to the past; no nostalgia, no regret. New technologies make a push that is practical innovation and experimentation; help transform local communities in areas of socialization (Gauntlett, 2013). It is particularly important to reflect on this issue, because within the evolution of economic theory, the quest of territorial management has taken different forms and importance. Only recently, the issue has moved on cultural issues in the concrete supporting of the innovative processes. Various factors indicate the need for a more holistic approach and articulate the issues concerning the regeneration of local communities and the need to overcome the atomistic perspective of reality (Mill and Morrison, 1985). Today, despite talk of widespread systemic approach, fragmentation is widespread, not only in society, but also in individuals, and this creates a kind of general confusion in the mind, that led to an endless series of problems and that interferes much seriously with our clarity of perception as to prevent us to solve most of them. The society as a whole has developed so as to be divided into separate nations and various religious groups, political, economic, and so on. Correspondingly, the communities in which we live have been conceived as an aggregate of existing parties separately (Getz, 1991), exploited by different groups of people. The proposal is to look at the community as an undivided whole in fluid motion. So, we can consider all aspects of a specific context as separate and stop the fragmentation implicit attitude atomistic, which leads to systematically divide everything. Therefore, the main purpose of this article is to examine how the scheme of the “long tail”, conjugated through the systems approach, is able to enhance the variety of the many local communities through the concept of mass events. In this regard it should be emphasized that the benefits resulting from these “long tails” can be higher than those arising from mega events (Lew, 2008); it follows that the traditional mass events (AIEST, 1987; Andersson, 1999), which marked the local tourist offer, are likely to be considered obsolete. The enhancement of the areas and, above all, of small local communities can find significant opportunities through the long tail events (Anderson, 2010); a new framework for the creation of value through the connected mode to a significant technological development, enables virtualization of the events and the realization, with costs far more content, integrated solutions (Golinelli, 2012; Barile et al., 2012).

Today’s knowledge economy, devoted to a more appropriate reading of the complexities arising from the required adoption of technological and organizational innovations, one with an exponential growth differentials demand, means that even in the dynamics of competition between territories worth, increasingly, the ability to customize the offer and, therefore, are to be emphasized the processes of co-creation of events (Hede et al 2004). The derive result is the multiplication of the value generated, unique to each individual, and with compression of the total construction costs (Calabrese, 2014). In what follows it is meant to reveal the possibility of extension of the boundaries within which to realize value creation, with the definition of new

opportunities, in which the role of the user appears to be substantially changed, from becoming isolated to connected, from unaware to informed, from passive to active (Barile and Saviano, 2012). The territories, local communities, therefore, no longer act independently of platforms to use, and the design of the event is to be made, right from the initial planning stages, with the involvement of the individual user. Local communities have the opportunity to adopt new strategies that incorporate methods, tools and techniques to satisfy the specific needs of the various individual stakeholders; the result is a new organizational architecture that combining resources, skills and expertise, enables the realization of high level performances, with leading quality standards and brand identity able to enhance the values and tradition of the reference context (Golinelli, 2008).

In summary local communities taking advantage of opportunities arising in the “long tail” approach have the opportunity to plan, in accordance with its specific nature of supply and demand, based on a shared logic of co-creation (Polese, 2009), events that qualify for a highly appropriate for the needs of the user, and at the same time, achievable with modular resources are characterized by economies of scale, scope and variety (Di Bernardo and Rullani, 1990). The progressive adherence to such a mode of construction and proposal of the service should, relatively quickly, to allow even those communities traditionally rendered silent by the unavailability of adequate funds, to be able to make available its wealth of natural, cultural and economic broad sense (Di Nauta et al, 2012).

2. Traditional mass events

There is no single definition and shared event. Among the different meanings present in the literature, the events are considered as “events, planned or not, which have a limited life and are born with a specific purpose” (Ferrari, 2002). The event is, therefore, a public event designed to arouse interest in the company or entity that organizes, with the participation of an audience interested in the content, or exposed to the traditions of the territory in which it takes place.

The concept of space, in its most immediate, has always been, and in the promotion of cultural and tourist offer of the territories, a fundamental limit (Kotler, 1993). Though the proposal of an event, in the broader consideration of market participants and experts, should refer to the possibility of attracting users from locations with significant distances, in reality the action is reduced especially in small communities by an attraction with a very limited range (Pencarelli, 2011).

The historical evolution of the characterization of events flows from the succession of extraordinary evolutionary processes of the socio-economic development. The growing integration of the world economy, the approach of the geographic areas and the reduction of the gap, has changed the competitive scenarios that have as new market actors the territories: from the country system, to regions, and up to local communities. The development of the means of communication and transportation has facilitated trade flows and the transfer of people; indeed, the spread of technology, information and knowledge has expanded and modified the competitiveness rationale (Cercola, 2010).

Tab. 1 – From niche events to the mass of events

	Period	Dimension	Resources
Niche events	Agricultural Society	Local	Low
Mass events	Industrial Society	Global	High
Mass of events	Knowledge Era	Glo-cal	Mid-High

In the past, people had fun with niche events such as ritual ceremonies, theater performances and sporting events in the open air in a local dimension, aimed almost exclusively at simply being together, fostering a sense of belonging to the limited community where the event it is realized. The investments are minimal, mostly related to individual spontaneous offerings of all components of the community, and the social and economic impact throughout are almost non-existent (Goff, 2010). Subsequently, the gradual improvement of living conditions, to a large extent dependent industrialization, allows an increase in the standard of living of the population begins to have more resources than those strictly necessary for survival, to be dedicated to mass consumption (Rifkin, 2000). In this new scenario leisure it becomes a fundamental element of the new system of consumption and quickly impose themselves new consumption patterns of leisure that lead to the spread of so-called mass events globally.

This complicates processing and simplifies at the same time the traditional lifestyles. If on one hand the society becomes more complex, due to an increasingly broad and undifferentiated which the mass culture must contact the other, the nascent capitalism of consumption leads to an ever greater homologation of tastes, as well as ways of living and thinking (Rispoli, 2002). The events become a real business, an economic activity in which they are applied the rules of modern business: affordable, sales of the “product” through advertising, overcoming competition with numbers increasingly important. The business is primarily concerned with the ability to take a whole new dimension of people’s lives, namely leisure, defined as “the time of life to complement the one dedicated to the work, of which the individual may have with the discretion of choice in a more or less active for creative purposes or recreation” (Rescigniti, 2002). Organizing free time becomes a new field of business initiatives, as well as for all other consumer goods, giving rise to a veritable industry of entertainment with high structural investments. Quickly they impose themselves homogeneous models of consumption of leisure by mass sports such as football, cycling and rugby, to the cinema, theater and tourism. Mass events arise, therefore, from a gradual change in the economic and social reality, where there are new conditions in which the culture is affirmed, that start, however, an intense process of submission to the royal capital of the cultural sphere (Heath, 1992).

This new scenario, generating a “massification” in offering cultural events impoverishes local vocation precluding the development of small communities. Arise, therefore, new opportunities, in which the role of the user appears to be substantially changed, becoming from isolated to connected (Sanguigni and Bilotta, 2011). Local communities do not act more independently than the use of the services and the planning of events, but this is done through the involvement of the individual user. The new strategies of territorial development are aimed at satisfying the specific needs of individual stakeholders, with performance and quality standards of the highest

level, with the consequent exaltation of the values and traditions of the reference context (Peck, 1999).

In summary, the local communities, in accordance with its specific nature, can make available its wealth of natural and cultural resources through events that reflect the needs of the specific user, resource-modular characterized by economies of scale, scope and variety that make up for the usual unavailability of adequate funds (Gummensson, 1992).

3. The event as a “functional” process

Resource optimization and value creation, as well as ensure the development and survival of the territorial context, make it possible to satisfy, in different ways, the needs of different suprasystems who in various capacities participate in the government and management of community (Barile and Golinelli, 2008). The event may be, to that effect, defined as a “functional” process to the achievement of advantageous purposes, through which it strengthens the identity of a given context, consequently enhancing the growth opportunities (Barile and Calabrese, 2009).

Recent developments, referring to the possibility of considering isomorphic viable systems and information variety, allow, through the analysis of a variety endowment (e.g. categorical values, interpretation schemes and information units), to plan adequately the events, in order to overcome a problem of subjective perception of the same (Barile, 2009); two people, for the same event, will have different representations, because they carry a smart destructive function of noise that favors some information rather than others. The latter conceptualization allows to examine what are the possible prospects of recovery of consonance (Golinelli, 2000) and, therefore, shared and accepted solutions, trying to find a harmony between three different elements: beliefs (what you think of the event), emotions (what you feel about the event) and actions (how you see the event).

In other words, we can say that the model is based on the idea that people process the information in light of the information variety they possess. The users of the event, in addition to the information units, have impressions, based on past experience and subjective interpretation of events. After all, our conception of reality is constructed through experiences in first person, then, by definition, each user of the event adopts a subjective perspective of investigation and observation.

If it is true that today's culture no longer recognizes in following the crowd (mass event), but to find their own style while also exploring unknown territories and far (mass events), then it is necessary to facilitate the design and the government of events trying to respond adequately to the expectations of the individual and thus favoring a fruitful interaction individual-event (Montella, 2010). In other words, today it looks inevitable to design new events that take into account emotions and cognitive schemes of users for satisfying their expectations.

4. Mass of events: when the territory is thinking for itself

The discovery of new interests, by the users, implies the ability to grasp the change and evolution of the supply's scenario, taking as a new paradigm the interaction citizen-event for a full development of the territory (Montella, 2010).

Tourism changes its purpose, as economic resource becomes a privileged mode to sensitize more and more people to the environment and the historical and cultural heritage, promoting the interpersonal contact and supporting traditional economic activities to improve the quality of life of local communities (Biolghini, 2007).

The emergence of new patterns of sustainable and responsible tourism, as environmentally friendly forms of physical and social fabric of the host community (Swarbrooke, 1999), stems from the need to renew the cultural pride of the host communities (Epler Wood, 2002), empower native (Scheyvens, 1999) and protecting biodiversity (Christ, Hillel, Matus and Sweting, 2003).

Today, users are eager to experience the culture, lifestyle and traditions of the host places as personalized value propositions (Borghesi, 1994); therefore, it is essential to offer events in close connection and consonance with the territory and its community. For instance, the events of the villages and small communities generate value through the uniqueness of the individual event and the maintenance of the identity of the territory, while preserving the quality and quantity of natural resources, as well as creating conditions for economic, social, and environmental sustainability (Urry, 1990; Feifer, 1985). Sustainable and Responsible tourism is not a product to be placed on the market, but the expression of a specific approach to the relationship and interaction with people and the environment: "all tourists, sooner or later, will have to become responsible and all tourism it must be sustainable" (Canestrini, 2004). The events in the long tail (mass *of* events) are certainly the symbol of a sophisticated approach towards sustainable development. However, their spread is slow in coming as it does not allow the proper promotion and protection of political and corporate interests.

5. The technology as an indispensable factor for a paradigm shift: from mass events to the mass *of* events

Having regard to the progress of modern society, technologies are of fundamental importance. The information units available emphasize that it depends not only on the development of entrepreneurial organization, but also the development of the territories and, therefore, of the local communities: from work to social prosperity, the possibility of preserving the environmental resources. The technology is therefore undeniably relevant factor of focal economic and civil improvement of our times. Brian Arthur defines the technology as "every mean for achieving a purpose" or purposeful means, (Arthur, 2011); the goal is to field all those proposals and those instances that are able to achieve meaningful results and truly innovative, useful and necessary to the prosperity of all humanity. And, then, it is essential to minimize and eliminate all those watertight compartments that are hitch and impediment to the global understanding of the phenomena that nature generously bestows on us because humans and all the other living systems can spend the existence in very positive sign of alliance.

If it is true, as it is, it is natural to live well and in harmony, because everything has its proper place and competes in the extraordinary mosaic of life, it follows that we must strengthen the culture of technology in order to feed a new and wider and coherent idea of world experience. The technology, in fact, is a project between

projects, one possibility among possibilities, an act of the act, a force between forces, energy including energy, a future for the future whose values depend on a complex dialectic of infinite variety prospects linear and nonlinear, however intrinsically and intimately relate to each other. Also the regeneration of local communities is not a nuisance to be eliminated, and indeed must be investigated and analyzed.

Many events, considered strange, cannot per se be underestimated or ignored altogether. We should not forget the emblematic rejection of slavish followers of Aristotle to look through the telescope of Galileo for fear that the geocentric theory was clearly refuted and were all distorted scientific beliefs of the time that had the support of a Church unable to be open to the future of intellectual slaves of an obsessive power. It is true that we are in the seventeenth century, and yet still we bogged down in the swamps of "knowledge" closed, isolated, outlined that has no horizon because no longer grounded in reality, but become metaphysical, abstract, obsolete. No need to be revolutionary, to think in a revolutionary way and to get, then, in the game if you do not want to remain permanently anchored to a way of thinking retrograde, weighed down by the past. The past must become necessarily the future, a future that must surely make use of the past and present.

The reluctance to use the telescope was part of a system of interpretation that then the time has refuted. Therefore, the finding that local communities cannot remain in a state of absolute isolation must lead us to the realization that mass events can and should be changed when their function is no longer satisfactory because it does not conform to the needs of today's society.

Today, thanks to the industrialization of the Internet and, therefore, to witness the mind-machine combination of rises of 80-20, also known as the Pareto Law (Reed, 2001). For many businesses the 20% of products (head) generate 80% of sales (long tail); for example, phenomena that underlie this principle are: the distribution of income within a society, the geographical distribution of sales of newspapers or the distribution of political power within a specific context (McKercher and Lew, 2004). From the viewpoint of touristic events, in 20% (head) are mass events, tailored to known destinations that attract a large number of visitors, while 80% (long tail) small niche events which capture the specialties of small communities.

New information technologies, the advent of the internet, the ability to create virtual realities drives up the number of niche events (*mass of events*), thus creating a longer tail in the distribution of events. Increasing the supply of the *mass of events*, which are not readily visible in the old days, you might increase the number of users through the development of events placed in the queue. Taking the approach called "long tail" is that the opportunity to visit local communities (niche destinations), previously uneconomic, should increase the total benefits, through greater use of events and, consequently, greater exploitation of local varieties. The concept of "long tail", thanks to the emergence of the *mass of events*, is helping to bring about a paradigm shift in the way users can interact with particular contexts.

6. Conclusions

“Natura non facit saltus”.

With this famous assertion has emerged, and even more alleged that all the processes, all the events that happen are bound to each other by a deep progressive or regressive continuity, a concatenation that winds in space and time and involve everything.

The principle is that every field of human knowledge must be committed to discovering all the elements that can bring out the transition from basic knowledge to wider knowledge and complex to build ever more advanced knowledge and “factually” inherent in reality, no alibi without subterfuge, without those artifices that in the long run turn out to be as useless and harmful to not only lead to failure and loss of resources, but also to the loss of credibility, to disappointment and decay. The patterns and schematizations no longer serve multidimensional events for leading to the satisfaction of personal needs, many of which have not yet been discovered and to which many researchers are interested to be able to make further progress in order to add new cards to the complex mosaic of human evolution.

The difficulties are many because the studies often made in areas well defined on specific issues that are in danger of diverting from the large and global overview.

It is obvious that the more the goal is to satisfy the needs of man in all its dimensions (it certainly discover other) the more improve the way we design custom events. The revitalization of local communities means expanding cognitive and conceptual skills, experiential and experimental techniques and technology, dealing critically and constructively with any problematic situation.

Having regard to the progress of modern society, technologies are of fundamental importance. The economy of the new tourism is very different from the old profitability, no longer rests on the classical concepts of economies of scale and indiscriminate exploitation of the mass markets; economies of scope, new systems revenue, market segmentation, the ability to design and customize the holidays, are increasingly important elements for the competitiveness and profitability of tourism initiatives (Poon, 1989). Obviously, the concept of “long tail” also has weaknesses; the main problems can be summarized as follows: a) niche events (mass of events), as well as niche destinations, have less information available and are treated with greater caution from the consumers’ part. The events in the “long tail” need to build the confidence of the new user, especially through transparency; b) the multiplicity of options and the possibility of having a growing number of events could generate an increase in entropy, helping to generate confusion and progressive loss of professional credibility towards tour operators (Keen, 2007; Gillin, 2007); c) the existing algorithms used by major search engines do not allow you to easily identify niche events; in the future this weakness could be overcome through the development of the semantic web.

Technological development requires the development of skills, but also skills that are able to guide them and dominate them, shape them and enlighten them eschewing the traditional schemes and promoting adaptation to situations and different solutions.

It is certainly true, in fact that the endorsements are important, but if they are not supported by a global vision remain empty as when Kantian categories are private experience.

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