

# Market-Driven Management in Community Events

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## Abstract

*The potential of tourism-based activities to help achieve environmental preservation and conservation has been recognised.*

*Events are frequently identified in plans for destination development and promoted as an attractor for leisure activity visitors.*

*Festivals and events might be considered a means to achieve sustainable development aims, whenever social, economic and environmental objectives are included in the policy makers' agenda and translated into factual measures.*

**Keywords:** Market-Driven Management; Global Markets; Tourism; Network; Community Events; Event Management; Destination Development

## 1. Managerial Community Events

In last years leisure activities have been widely promoted as a means of counteracting social and economic problems in rural areas. In particular, rural communities are frequently identified as an appropriate location, given their strong natural and cultural heritage. However, they are normally characterised by a weak economy and significant depopulation. The potential of tourism-based activities to help achieve environmental preservation and conservation has been recognised (Bramwell and Lane, 1993; Mathieson and Wall, 1982; Stewart, 1998). Ensuring a critical mass of attractions is also important in a rural context, in order to encourage tourist demand (Sharpley, 2002) and obtain positive externalities (Fleischer & Tchetchik, 2005). Moreover, there is a growing demand for recreational activities that help establish a spiritual relationship with landscape and nature.

Events are frequently identified in plans for destination development and promoted as an attractor for leisure activity visitors. Benefits from hosting events include fostering the place image, invigorating remote areas, reducing

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environmental pressure on honey-pot attractions, increasing and improving local infrastructure, and attracting off-peak tourists (Getz, 2005, 2007).

Festivals and events might be considered a means to achieve sustainable development aims, whenever social, economic and environmental objectives are included in the policy makers' agenda and translated into factual measures. In the described context the objectives should be oriented to foster participation and community ownership of initiatives through an equitable distribution of benefits and costs of growth (Richards & Hall, 2000; Warburton, 1998). In coherence with a sustainable development model, local governments have frequently expressed their interest in improving the quality of life for residents. Their objective is also attained through the active participation of local people and actions directed at repopulating the towns' squares of their communities. A cross-comparison of event calendars in Italy reveals that some local initiatives are directed at promoting both traditional activities, through agricultural and craft work, and the regional folk culture expressed. Other activities are addressed at engaging people with their historical and natural assets.

Festival and event tourism potentially contribute positively to a locality, but not automatically secure local economic development (O'Sullivan & Jackson, 2002). The triangular equilibrium balancing the interests of local people, the visitors, and festival activities and celebrations is difficult to achieve (Quinn, 2006). Additionally, tourism professionals and event organizers are also sometimes unaware of benefits associated with events (Tomljenovic & Weber, 2004). In case of community events they may have low demand and low value, and from a tourism perspective are depicted as problematic. Getz (2008, 407) indicates that communities do require investment and also that others are disinterested in tourism as they are primarily community or culturally oriented.

However, it is worth noting that whilst smaller events perhaps relating to literature, flowers, music or other forms of leisure consumption, might be considered to be less ambitious as policy actions, they may have locally significant socio-economic impacts (Hughes, 1999). Thomas & Wood (2003) consider that enhancing the experience of the host community is important and may help strengthen community involvement and residents' pride in the area. In fact, in identifying the concept of local or community event, Bowdin *et al.* (2006, 16) emphasize: 'most communities produce a host of festivals and events that are targeted mainly at local audiences and staged primarily for social, fun and entertainment value. These events often produce a range of benefits including engendering pride in the community, strengthening a feeling of belonging and creating a sense of place. They can also expose people to new ideas and experience, encourage participation in sports and arts activities and encourage tolerance and diversity. For these reasons, local governments often support such events as a part of their community and cultural development strategies.'

In order to identify the described phenomena, the term normally adopted in the event literature is 'community ownership of event'. In fact, community events 'use volunteer services from the host community, employ public venues such as streets, parks and schools and are produced at the direction of local government agencies or non governmental organizations such as service clubs, public safety organizations or business associations' (Janiskee, 1996, 404). Additionally, in the current climate

of risky and expensive tourism development projects, most rural festivals need little assistance from state or federal governments (Janiskee & Drews, 1998). Yet, the attainment of these aims depends on multiple stakeholders actively involved in policy development (Bramwell, 1998).

In the light of the described framework, this study aims at proposing a preliminary conceptual model for marketing and organizing successful community events. This model is formulated in accordance with the principles of market – driven management. In fact, stakeholders’ power relations and networking processes are considered key variables in understanding and explaining community involvement and event ownership. As the working paper explores the potential of market-driven management in the event industry, it makes a significant contribution to the current discussion inside the Italian Academy of Management’s Research Group coordinated by prof. Brondoni. Additionally, the research contributes to debates on destination development in a rural context, offering a preliminary model directed to identify marketing strategies for event organizers. The paradigm proposed could help formulate tourism development policies, since policy decision-makers are generally unaware of the complex web of informal relationships involving local stakeholders.

The paper structures as follows: Section 2 reports the principle of Market-Driven Management and the potential application in the event industry; Section 3 concerns a relevant literature review related to stakeholders’ power relationships, networking processes and critical issues related to event management. Section 4 presents the conceptual model and Section 5 is focused on the conclusions.

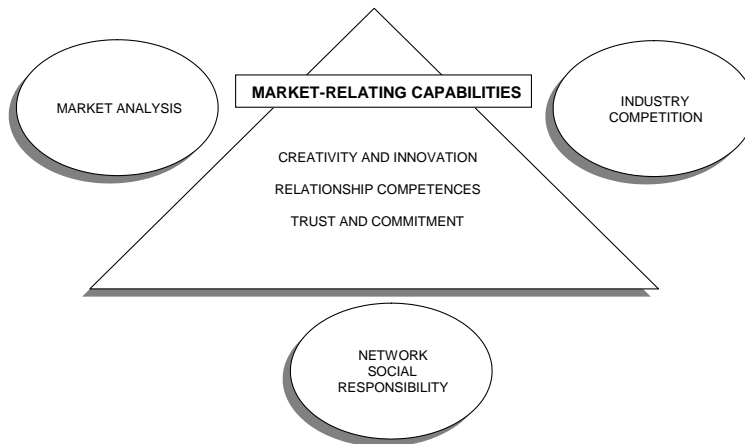
## **2. The Potential of Market-Driven Management in the Event Industry**

According to Brondoni (2007) the Market-Driven Management (MDM) is a managerial philosophy, as it implies an outside-in vision. This strategic vision is focused on overcoming rivals with innovative products in a time-based competition. The event industry is also characterized by the presence of public actors or non profit oriented organizations such as event organizers. In particular, Ring & Perry (1985) stress that in presence of a public institution the separation of functional responsibility is directed to reduce power abuse, but frequently causes vagueness and / or ambiguity in policy and objectives. The lack of coordination among subsystems and formal procedures are identified as a time constraint. They exacerbate the issues of decision-making process and policy implementation, especially when political culture and ideology tend to dominate over technical flexibility.

Although the implications of divergent strategic management objectives and processes in public and private organizations might be a constraint to an extensive application of the MDM principles, strategic event marketing entails the analysis of the business environment (Bowdin *et al.* 2006). Thus, the MDM drivers can be also adopted for a strategic vision of the event industry.

In Figure 1 the MDM in the Event Industry is interrelated to three main components: market analysis, industry competition, and corporate social responsibility.

**Figure 1 : Market-Driven Management in the Event Industry**



In particular, market analysis should be related to the concept of product formulated by Lambin (2004). This definition highlights the role of product attributes, as the overall solution of clients' problems. Additionally, overcoming a customer-centricity based perspective, Lambin (2007) proposes the expression of 'customer ecosystem'. The term represents a dynamic framework that includes clients, suppliers, retailers, and other stakeholders. In case of event marketing and management, one can identify a 'community ecosystem', which is based on a complex web of relationships addressed to managing the event value chain. In fact, the value creation entails the presence of multiple stakeholders (Gummesson, 2007).

The second driver, the industry competition, is linked to the mature stage of several destinations in western countries, and the current oversupply of leisure, educational, and entertainment products. The fierce struggle makes it difficult to identify the boundaries in the marketplace. This is due to the advent of an edutainment meta-market and the constant threats of substitute services.

The MDM approach is based on Corporate Social Responsibility (Brondoni, 2006; Lambin, 2004). This means that a company accepts its responsibility to society as whole, rather than just on the narrow short-term interests of its organization. The concept of CRS is bound up with the idea of sustainable development, as it includes ethical issues related to environmental and cultural impacts on fragile destinations (Swarbrooke, 2003). Therefore, it requires the enhancement of the quality of life in the local community. In the case of local events, the presence of different actors involved in marketing and producing initiatives needs the adoption of the term "Network Social Responsibility" (NSR). The idea is connected with an assessment of socio-economic impact in the host community, given the financial inputs received from public bodies. Thus, NSR is based on the achievement of the following aims:

- the maximization of the economic benefits through the involvement of local actors in the event value chain;
- the maximization of the social benefits through the attainment of social integration objectives;

- the minimization of the environmental impact in coherence with a sustainable development model.

In the described perspective Day (1994) introduces the term of “capabilities” for a market driven organization in relation with a complex bundle of skills and knowledge exercised through organizational processes. Capabilities enable firms to coordinate their activity, to make use of their assets, and to continuously learn and improve. In particular, market-relating capabilities play a central role in the development of relationship-based competitive strategies (Day, 2000, 2007). Consequently, in order to involve key players inside a community, event organizers should possess market-relating capabilities based on relationship competences. In addition, creativity and innovation are relevant to attract a stable audience and rejuvenate a leisure product. In managing the event value chain, collaborative exchanges are based on social networks, joint problem-solving, mutual commitment, and trust.

### **3. The Community Ecosystem: Stakeholders and Networking Processes**

Marketing and management of successful community events is focused on a former screen of stakeholders’ power relations and networking processes inside a community ecosystem. In fact, event organizer should understand the role played by local key players and the structure of the pertinent ecosystem. Thus, given the aims of the current study, a relevant review of the studies concerning stakeholders and networking processes developed in the management, tourism, and event literature has been carried out.

#### **3.1 Stakeholders and Social Networks in the Management Literature**

Over the 1980s, the idea that corporations have stakeholders has been developed to clarify decision-making processes and related management approaches. Instrumental models have been proposed in order to explain the existence or absence of connections between stakeholders’ influence and the achievement of traditional corporate objectives (Donaldson & Preston, 1995). However, the theoretical discourse converges on the potential of a stakeholder approach to integrate traditional economic measures with those directed to estimate social performance (Harrison & Freeman, 1999). In particular, the development of management literature has been based on the concept of ‘stakeholders’, even if the term remains vague (Jones & Wicks, 1999). A frequently cited definition was proposed by Freeman (1984). It identifies a stakeholder as ‘any group or individual who can affect or is affected by the achievement of the organizations’ objectives’ (*ibidem*, 46). Clarkson (1994) associates the concept to a condition of bearing a risky position, representing a narrower definition of the concept (Mitchell *et al.*, 1997). He suggests that stakeholders ‘bear some form of risk as a result of having invested some form of capital, human or financial...’ or ‘are placed at risk as a risk as a result of a firm’s activities’ (*ibidem*, 5). A broader nature of the ‘stake’ is proposed by Donaldson & Preston (1995), through their normative model. Instead

of considering only a formal or legal right, the stake is, for them, connected with various groups' moral interests. As evidence of this aspect, they note: 'the stake of people living in the surrounding community may be based on their need, for example for clean air or the maintenance of civic infrastructure' (*ibidem*, 85). Mitchell *et al.* (1997) describe the condition of stakeholders in relation to the salience in the manager-stakeholders relationships. This might be identified in accordance with a more complex set of variables represented by power, legitimacy, and urgency of an instance. Their focus is on defining who or what are the stakeholders of the firm, although they note the dynamism in the stakeholder-manager relations (Friedman & Miles, 2002).

Nohria (1992) indicates that network analysis provides a framework for understanding how the pattern of relationships in a stakeholder environment can influence an organization's behaviour. Thus, employing social network theory, Rowley (1997) proposes a stakeholder theory based on the presence of multiple and interdependent interactions in the stakeholder environment. He emphasises that stakeholder influences are based on the structural characteristics of an organization's network of relationships. These characteristics are connected with the density of the stakeholder network surrounding an organization, as 'network density increases the ability of a focal organization's stakeholders to constrain the organisation's actions' (*ibidem*, 898). On the other hand, 'the organization's centrality in the network influences its degree of resistant to stakeholder demands, because the focal organization centrality increases its ability to resist stakeholders' (*ibidem*, 900). The conjoint employment of these two dimensions allows the creation of a structural classification of stakeholders' influences. In particular, in presence of a high density of stakeholders and high centrality of a focal firm organisation, he identifies a 'compromiser', whenever the focal firm attempts 'to achieve a predictable environment in which the firm's stakeholders are unlikely to oppose its actions collectively' (*ibidem*, 902). Thus, a central actor in a dense network can coordinate fund-raising campaigns and charity fund allocations (*ibidem*). Controversy, a 'solitarian' is a weak position, since it suffers from constraints in terms of obtaining essential resources given the isolation from other key players. Friedman & Miles (2002) suggest four structural configurations for organization-stakeholder relations and provide an explanation of certain stakeholder behaviours. Yet, in analysing the event sector in rural areas, one can consider mainly two contractual forms are relevant in explaining event organizer's orientation. A 'contingent – incompatible' relationship subsists whenever the organization-stakeholder relations are fragile and their interests are incompatible. Thus, as there is no social contract with local stakeholders, the event organizers may be able to choose to ignore them. Controversy, 'contingent – compatible' relationships in which parties consider themselves to be bound to others by common ideas as they are 'neighbours, countrymen, or those carrying out similar political activities' (*ibidem*, 10).

Stakeholder interdependency and resource dependency generate different forms of collaboration. In particular, resource dependency is related to the condition and the nature of the provision, as the resources are described as concentrated, controlled and non-substitutive (Barney, 1991; Dierickx & Cool, 1989). In this context, dyadic and network relationships are triggered to obtain primary resources

for inter-firm knowledge sharing routines, effective governance, and complementary resource endowments (Dyer & Singh, 1998). Therefore, stakeholder–firm relationships based on resource dependency determine the nature of strategies adopted by stakeholders in presence of a power of external control over the organisation. For example, withholding strategies are an effective tool to influence the relationships with the focal firm (Frooman, 1999).

### **3.2 Stakeholders, Network and Event Management**

Encouraging collaboration between stakeholders is relevant to promotion and management of leisure products (Gunn, 1995; Kotler, 1993). Cooperation among local actors is also a key aspect to facilitating new ventures and enabling specific long-term initiatives (Novelli *et al.*, 2006). This is also because although each stakeholder controls resources and capital, it does not possess all the resources to achieve the target objectives (Bramwell & Lane, 2000).

Festival and event management activities are based on resource interdependencies between partners in terms of finance, staffing, and expertise (Long 2000, 58). This interaction is related to the need to ensure economic efficiencies in multilateral relationships. Thus, private and public sector partnerships are vital to the provision of quality events and help them develop a more focused customer orientation. They are also considered to be a new source of finance in a context of limited and uncertain budgets. This orientation generates a change of the private sector's position from event provider to event facilitator (Pugh & Wood, 2004).

The event organizers must interact with local businesses and the general public to plan the event. This interaction over the period of the event's organization may raise awareness of community resources and also of deficiencies. It produces social links between previously unrelated groups and individuals, and identifies possibilities for the development of the community's resources; generally encouraging a stronger interaction between existing community organizations. The social networks that can develop through the organization of festivals have potential to be maintained beyond the short life of the event (Arcadia & Whitford, 2005). They can also reduce the uncertain environment related to financial support and sponsorship, thus contributing to community development in a long term perspective (Frisby & Getz, 1989). Festivals and events which involve volunteers may provide opportunities for training and development in a variety of skills, and encourage more effective use of local educational, business, and community spaces. Thus, to maximise success event managers may engage in network building to obtain resources and grow the activities. Some festival organizations work with stakeholders through personal informal relationships or natural allies in the professional community (Getz *et al.*, 2007). Networks may encourage diversification of existing weak ties with people not yet involved, and they may generate novel connections to local industry, and this may create innovative festival programmes (McCathy *et al.*, 2007).

Relationships between stakeholders help explain the role of event programmes in regional development. Thus, weak ties reveal their importance for accessing to a greater variety of information and support innovation processes (Granovetter, 1973). Networks in regional communities are fundamental not only to leverage

opportunities for promoting and marketing of local industry, but also in creating the prerequisites for regional product innovation. The case study of Lismore in Australia demonstrates that festival activities such as recipe competitions and celebrity chef demonstrations allowed local growers and interstate visitors to discover new interconnections between gastronomy and other economic industries (Mackellar, 2006).

Although festival managers are reluctant to reveal key information such as funding sources and potential sponsorship (Getz, 1998), the importance of knowledge sharing is also considered an incentive for participation in event networks (Stoke, 2004a). Network membership allows access to complementary expertise and increase professional skills from shared knowledge and experience of others. In this way regional development is supported by the events innovation process and enhancement of stakeholders' strategies. In particular, strategies for events tourism are mostly influenced by "soft" networks or sets of informal relationships that help shape the directions of events tourism (Stoke, 2004b).

However, developing new events and stimulating tourism demand for existing events require to enhance collaboration. In a study of six Australian states, Stokes (2008) reveals the importance of collaborative strategy making in rural or small communities as distinct from larger towns and cities. Collaborative processes can be created through round tables and other participatory mechanisms. Additionally, decision-making criteria are normally coherent with those of sustainable tourism development models, as they include economic, social, cultural, and environmental impacts.

### **3.2.1 Conflicts, Power Relations and Destination Development**

Interactions between actors are collaborative, though often characterised by conflicts resolved by power games. Difficulties in achieving collaborative solutions are connected with different values (Gray, 1989) and cooperation might be inhibited by institutional forces such as legal or social norms. Thus, there is a need to reconcile partners' strategic objectives with the nature and influence of political relationships (Long, 2000). An assessment of stakeholders' positions and relationships also identifies limitations to tourism development planning. In particular, the potential of community participation is threatened by lack of both financial resources and of experience in tourism. There may also be issues of the cultural remoteness of host communities (Fletcher & Cooper, 1996; Tosun, 2000). De Medeiros de Araujo & Bramwell (2002) identify limited involvement of the private sector, since active stakeholders are often public actors. Bramwell & Sherman (1999) stress the unbalanced relationship among key actors, whenever stakeholders with resources have power to influence destination planning processes. Moreover, business considerations and technical rationality may dominate over environmental concerns (Bramwell, 2006). It also seems that conventional stakeholders, with the slow processes of community involvement, can view tourism as an unproductive activity for destination development (Reed, 1997).

In case of the event industry, Larson (2002) introduces a metaphor of a project network, the political square market (PSQ), to analyse the networking processes among actors which are involved in marketing Storsjöyran Festival in Sweden.



Those actors remain in a wider network, as they have a potential interest to enter the PSQ and wait for the right opportunity. The open access to the PSQ “led to flexibility relating participants and the opportunistic interaction resulted in turbulence within the PSQ” (Larson 2002, 138). Turbulence caused by interactions between actors might produce such benefits as product development and innovation.

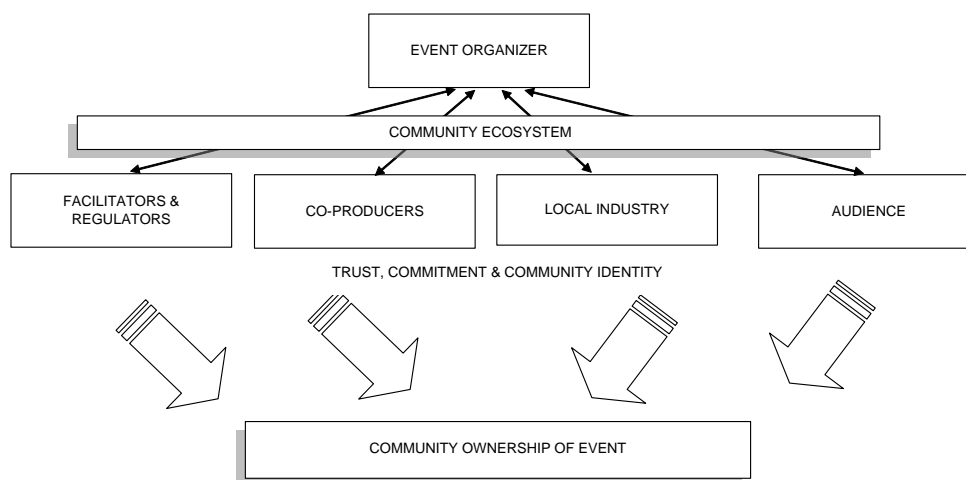
Person to person communication emerges as important in maintaining strong stakeholder relationships and keep subdued latent conflicts (Merrilees *et al.*, 2005). Andersson & Getz (2007) identify that the magnitude of divergent strategies in dealing with powerful and weak stakeholders. For instance, strategies for media and public relations should be coherent with the local authorities’ orientation in terms of image/brand management (Mossberg & Getz, 2006). In particular, Getz & Fairley (2004) demonstrate the critical stakeholder interrelationship for media management of events. This is because on one hand media want to maintain a neutral and independent position, on the other they also have interest in securing sponsorship contracts.

#### 4. A Conceptual Model for Community Events

The previous literature review indicates that community events are often characterized by a low demand, but they have a potential to achieve social aims through an active collaboration of local stakeholders. This assumption is coherent with the MDM approach. Additionally, the latest contribution from the Nordic School to the marketing discipline stresses the importance of a network-based stakeholder approach to uncover networking processes and their influence (Gummesson, 2008).

In Figure 2 the importance of local events is associated with building a community ownership of event in accordance with sustainable development aims.

**Figure 2:** A Conceptual Model for Community Events



In accordance with the analysed managerial literature and Getz *et al.* (2007), the community ecosystem is based on the following stakeholders:

- the facilitators active in providing cash grants, sponsorship and in-kind support, and regulators identified by local authorities and agencies, as approval is frequently required to host an event;
- the co-producers represented by performers, associations, and interested organizations. They are frequently volunteers and local residents; considering themselves to be bound up to others by common ideas. They might contribute to programme innovation by means of their personal networks and co-operate to the promotional activities through word-of-mouth advertising;
- the local industry tangibly involved in creating and promoting the event experience. They benefit from visitor spending in the area, and market their production during the event programme;
- the audience which is particularly important to assess in terms of the potential popularity of the local event.

In particular, inside the community ecosystem, event organizers are normally oriented at promoting an area through different expressions of arts and regional folk culture. Therefore, as indicated in the analysed literature, they tap into a complex web of relationships. In accordance with the model proposed, partnerships, networks, and informal relationships represent key variables in explaining event managers' problem solving activities. In fact, Capriello & Rotherham (2008) indicate that problem solving processes are mainly associated with financing, marketing, and managing events, as well as generating a socio-economic impact through the initiatives. Therefore, in accordance with Rowley (1997) a central position of event planners inside the local network is related to the aim of value creation. In addition, the level of network density reveals the intensity of stakeholders' interests in supporting event activities. Yet, networking processes can be hampered by the absence of common goals shared among stakeholders. Divergent interests and tensions over resource allocation represent a limitation to developing win-win situations, since stakeholders' withholding strategies might be an effective tool to influence the event organizers' orientations.

The community ownership of event depends on a high intensity of networking processes developed inside the community ecosystem. In accord with Day (2000, 2007), event organizers' market-relating capabilities are fundamental in involving the described stakeholders. The event manager should act to establish power relationships that are favourable for the development and sustainability of an event. Determinants of community ownership are commitment - trust in relationships (Morgan & Hunt, 1994) and the structure of commitment in exchanges (Gundlach *et al.*, 1994). In addition, the linkages should be oriented at fostering regional and cultural identity (Larson, 2002). In particular, re-discovering the rural community's ancient traditions is also associated with social integration objectives that could be achieved through building connections between the local older people and the younger generations.

## 5. Conclusions

In the event industry the MDM approach is a relevant theoretical model for a strategic vision of the analysed sector, since it identifies the importance of event planners' competition-relating capabilities. Moreover, inside the community ecosystem stakeholders' power relations and networking processes are important in building community ownership of event. Thus, a network-based stakeholder approach can help explain many-to-many relationships developed for marketing and managing local initiatives. Moreover, variables such as trust, commitment, and local identity are significant in clarifying the determinants of event ownership.

The conceptual model proposed highlights the role played by social variables in investigating the popularity of community event, as it identifies potential applications in analysing local events in western countries. It is a complementary tool to formulate destination management and development policies, since it is directed to understand networking processes and stakeholders' power relationships, in coherence with critical issues developed by the contemporary literature. This contribution is significant because the current tourism policies tend to prescribe a collaborative approach without considering in-depth analysis of informal relationships among local stakeholders. These findings also highlight the importance of understanding the event organizers' orientation towards networking activities as a prerequisite for formulating local policies.

However, further investigation is necessary to test the model in different geographical contexts, in order to make it more robust. In particular, a stream of future researches should be oriented to assess event planners' market-relating capabilities and the nature of relationships developed inside the pertinent community ecosystem. These studies should be carried out in presence of a divergent nature of events. Furthermore, empirical studies could be extended to urban contexts. For instance, a qualitative case study should be carried out to assess the event policies in Asti in Piedmont (Italy). In fact, the Palio in Asti is focused on medieval traditions (the blessing ceremony, the historical procession, and the horse race), but the event organizer, the Commune of Asti, seems to be a 'solitarian' given a low engagement of local actors. Controversy, the Sagre Festival in Asti aimed at celebrating local farm productions is characterized by the presence of 40 volunteer groups and the patronage of key local players. The success of the networking processes is highlighted by an attendance of 300,000 people, in comparison with only 30,000 visitors in case of the Palio. A further in-depth investigation should be oriented at examining the factors explaining the community ownership of event. In particular, a cross-comparison between the case-study of the Siena Palio in Tuscany and that of the Asti Palio may be interesting. This study should be addressed at explaining how community ownership of event may be influenced by commitment, trust, and regional identity of local residents.

Finally, as the current priority of destination plans is to foster regional image, it might be interesting to assess the importance of community ownership of event in preserving traditional values of rural communities.

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