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Tourism experience, events and public policies



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Introduction

Studies of tourism experience have been on the increase but a great number are applied to companies and organizations, not to regions and destinations. While the focus of these studies remains the same regarding psychological, geographic, social and economic impacts, their application to destinations implies an extra dimension. It is necessary to consider the special characteristics of each destination since these are a merger of services and products.

This study discusses the influence of events in the construction of public policies in destinations from the tourism experience perspective. The research theoretically explores the connections between the importance of joining the desires of the tourist while experiencing destinations (tourism experience) and the ability to organize and maintain the implementation of the tourist potential (public policies). The “intertwining model”, a theoretical policy model for destinations based on event segment development (Dalonso, Lourenço, Remoaldo, & Panosso Netto, 2013) was applied in two Christmas destinations (Gramado, Brazil and Rovaniemi, Lapland, Finland).

This model presents a strategic tool for measuring the influence of events and their interface with the different actors involved, while providing governments with milestone theoretical practices for tourism policies applied in destinations.

Tourism experience, events and public policies

The desire to build unforgettable memories from the experiences lived during trips follows the current trend for unique consumer experiences of goods and products. Formerly identified as one of the biggest challenges for a destination (Cohen, 1979), the creation of events and shows that enable the tourist to feel and live the emotion of a place in a constant creative process of innovation has grown into a consistent topic of research designated as tourism experience (Andersson, 2007; Morgan, Lugosi, & Ritchie, 2010; Panosso Netto & Gaeta, 2010; Quan & Wang, 2004; Richards & Wilson,

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2006; Ryan, 2010; Uriely, 2005). For this reason, experience became a relevant concept and practice in the area of tourism.

The economy of tourism experience comes with the idea that the tourist cannot be seen as a passive consumer. The consumer shall be seen as a co-creator, not just of their own experiences, but also of the places visited through the stories told and the photographs shown to several audiences. The tourism sector is not independent of this discussion, not least because its survival depends on an understanding of the changes that society goes through. The context of the consumer in tourism presents characteristics that favour experience and that lead us to reflect on the authenticity of products and services (Mkono, 2013). Besides this, it is clear that any tourism activity generates an experience, whether good or bad. Therefore, tourism planners try by all possible means to provide tourists with an unforgettable and unexpected experience.

To some researchers, the touristic phenomenon is built upon the interaction of stakeholders, giving place to a complex network of relations (e.g., Bramwell, 2006; Dredge, 2006). In this wide context, the creation and implementation of public policies must consider the actors involved in the process, including the tourist or visitor, and the place/location where tourism occurs, thus avoiding fragmentation of the destination (Dalonso et al., 2013). Regarding public policies for the event segment, it is possible to identify both positive and negative impacts for the destination where these events take place and the involvement of all the actors of the destination (Dalonso & Lourenço, 2011). There are several models that discuss the interrelations of this complex process and more recent studies about events in the context of tourism experience (Tan, Kung, & Luh, 2013; Whitford, 2011).

Methodology

A theoretical model that establishes an interrelationship between events and public policies in a destination called “Intertwining Model” is applied to the case studies. This exploratory temporal model (Fig. 1) consists in a graphical sequence of phases that have to be identified. According to the proposed model, the key rationale for these temporal divisions is the existing policies, first at the local level and

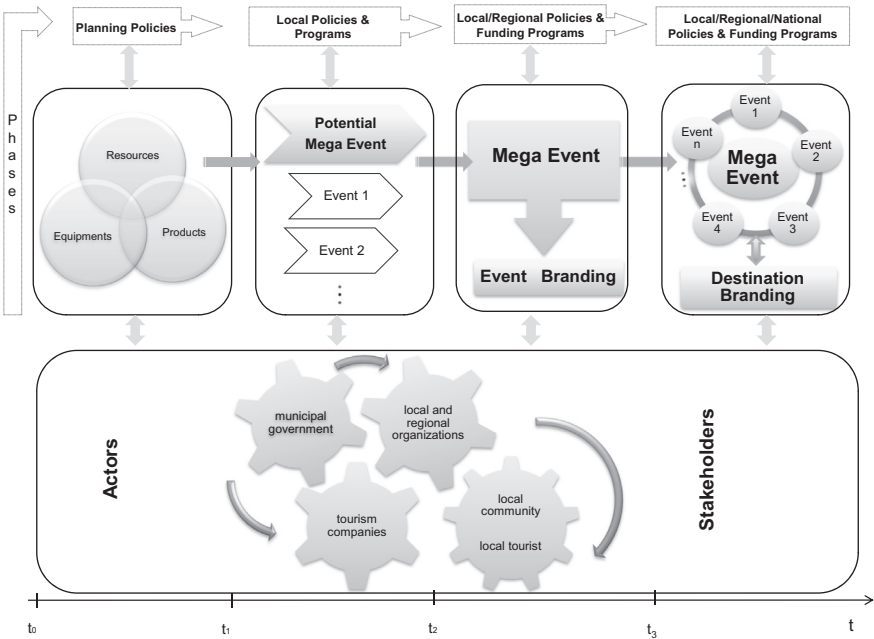


Fig. 1. Intertwining model.

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