

2nd International Symposium "NEW METROPOLITAN PERSPECTIVES" - Strategic planning, spatial planning, economic programs and decision support tools, through the implementation of Horizon/Europe2020. ISTH2020, Reggio Calabria (Italy), 18-20 May 2016

Sustainable urban development perspectives in the era of tourism experience

Daniele Demarco^{a,*}

^aIriss-Cnr, Via Guglielmo Sanfelice 8, Napoli 80134, Italy

Abstract

Today in economic and management field it is taken for granted that the reason of a tourist service is basically the promotion of experiences. Indeed, tourists travel in order to live unconventional experiences. Consequently, the competitive advantage of the destinations essentially originates from the ability to meet such a need. And yet, which are the suitable tools to make the experience lived by tourists unforgettable? In this respect, the specialized literature offers a wide and multifaceted array of opinions. This essay highlights the problems and the issues of a specific school of thoughts, which sees the experience basically as a vehicle of spectacular suggestion. In this sense, experience and entertainment are quite the same, whereas in order to reach the optimum in the tourist offer it is necessary the building of artificial scenarios. In these scenarios, which can also be defined "dramatic", the tourist can feel the extraordinary of situations which otherwise may be taken for granted (for example visiting the historic part of the city or going to shopping centers). The building of such scenarios surely confers sensationalism to a mere tour. However, how can these scenarios be included in cultural landscapes already established without somehow compromising also their authenticity? This paper arises exactly from this issue. In the attempt of giving an answer, the issue will be looked at from a perspective which takes into consideration philosophic, anthropologic and sociologic reflection. Therefore, this perspective is inter-disciplinary and basically epistemological. The aim of this essay is to develop a theoretical background feasible in defining an optimal experience. On the contrary, the building of an alternative model of experience is up to the future development of the research.

© 2016 The Authors. Published by Elsevier Ltd. This is an open access article under the CC BY-NC-ND license (<http://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-nc-nd/4.0/>).

Peer-review under responsibility of the organizing committee of ISTH2020

* Corresponding author. Tel.: 39-081-247-0974; fax: +39-081-247-0933.
E-mail address: d.demarco@iriss.cnr.it

Keywords: Tourism experience; Authenticity; Sustainable urban development

1. What is experience today?

When we try to explain the wide range of connotations implied by the word “experience”, we often get a frustrating feeling of finding definitions that are too abstract, elusive and vague. There is always something lacking in incisiveness. The philosopher Hans Blumenberg compared these definitions to “metaphors” (1979). We use them every time our language cannot bear the weight of the meanings that it would express with words.

For example, this happens when we try to give a narrative form to horizons of knowledge that are too problematic for us. “Sacred”, is one of these horizons, and so are “nature” or “infinite”.

As will be demonstrated, “experience” is also the part of this category.

It is no coincidence that the pioneers of the Experience Economy that go by the name of Pine and Gilmour, in attempting to clarify to the reader their peculiar idea of experience, end up resorting, albeit unwillingly, to a figurative image: a metaphor..

They tell the story of a man and his wife who arrive in Venice and ask the doorman of the hotel where they can soak up the authentic atmosphere of the city, in what square or street. With no hesitation, the doorman tells them that Piazza San Marco is the best place to go, at the famous Florian Café. Once there, the couple sits on the terrace enjoying the crisp morning air, sipping coffee and losing themselves in the spirit of one of the most charming old-world cities. One hour later, they get the bill. It is at this point that the couple discovers that this ordinary plain coffee cost more than fifteen dollars. Was it worth it? The answer is yes: “Absolutely!” (Pine & Gilmour: 1999).

And here we are: according to Pine and Gilmour this is an experience as it should be. It is not the consumed object itself (in our case a coffee), but how, where and with whom we savour it.

In this sense, experience is not something that can be briefly defined, but rather a complex set of environmental, formal and social factors that help shape a situation and give it value.

2. The birth of the Experience economy

All the activities of consumption tend towards the spectacular (Türche: 2012). As a result, the current consumer society is also a “society of performance” (Debord: 1967). Since the mid '90s, following the industrial economy and services crises, this mixture of consumerism and spectacle seems to have paved the way for a new market horizon; the so-called experiential marketing (or economy) (Pine and Gilmour: 1999). Today there is a great demand for experiences. And the only reason for this lies in the fact that the latest experiences have been more impoverished than past experiences.

People indeed believed that there was nothing more to “experience” after the Great War, the revolution of 1917, the crisis of 1929 and the advent of fascism, or after the fall of the Berlin Wall and the end of the bipolar world. A “poverty” of experience that fed the need for experience itself. And along with this need, the demand that emerges is the natural requirement for a market offer.

Today the market seems to answer to this demand with the supply of experiences with emotional content. Therefore, experience management is defined aimed at prescribing techniques able to “dazzle the senses, hit at the heart, stimulate mind and imagination, teaching how to astound the customers by all incentives or “clues “ the companies may have (products, services, personnel, physical environment, pricing, sales channels, communication, packaging, brand)” (Rescigniti: 2004, p.20).

We tend to say that experience can also have a gnoseological value as well as a sentimental value, but we assume this more as a matter of principle than in reality. In fact, although in theory we recognize “the complex nature of the experience of consumption with its cognitive, sentimental and sensorial aspects”, actually we tend to give a “prevailing attention, if not exclusive, only to the last two aspects” (Rescigniti: 2004, p.22). For example, we say that experience (that is what every consumer actually tends towards) develops “through activities” (Abbott: 1955, p.40) and in any case into a process that encourages bypassing a rigid rational evaluation. In this process the aspect of extraordinariness, is also evident (Mac Cannell: 1973).

Download English Version:

<https://daneshyari.com/en/article/1107576>

Download Persian Version:

<https://daneshyari.com/article/1107576>

[Daneshyari.com](https://daneshyari.com)