

“The Role of Wine Events in Sustainability of Wine Sector”

G. BENEDETTO (1), G.L. CORINTO (2)

(1) Dipartimento di Scienze della Natura e del Territorio

Via E. De Nicola, Sassari, Italia

gbenedet@uniss.it

(2) Dipartimento di Studi sullo sviluppo economico

Piazza Oberdan, 3, Macerata, Italia.

gianluigi.corinto@unimc.it

ABSTRACT

Scopo del lavoro è quello di focalizzare l'attenzione sul ruolo degli 'Eventi Vinicoli' come strategia di comunicazione sostenibile con i consumatori e turisti del vino, da un lato, e come strumento per la sostenibilità delle comunità locali di produzione, dall'altro. In generale l'organizzazione di un evento presenta una forte connessione con il concetto di sostenibilità in senso lato. Ma nel caso della promozione vinicola, l'evento influisce su un gran numero di fattori ambientali, economici, politici e sociali legati all'attuale natura dei sistemi agricoli territoriali, alla conservazione del paesaggio rurale, alla preservazione degli stili di vita e delle comunità rurali e all'interesse sulla qualità e sicurezza alimentare. Dopo aver identificato le principali tendenze del turismo del vino, il lavoro riporta i risultati di una breve rassegna della letteratura inerente i festival e gli eventi sia a carattere generale che con specifico riferimento al settore vitivinicolo. I risultati della rassegna hanno portato all'individuazione di alcune linee di ricerca future fra cui l'utilità del *network stakeholder approach* per l'analisi di casi studio.

The paper aims to focus on the role of 'Wine Events' as a strategy of sustainable communication with consumers and wine tourists, on the one hand, and as a tool for the sustainability of local production, on the other. The organization of an Event always deals with sustainability in a broad sense. But in the case of Wine Events, this affects with a great number of environmental, economic, political and social concerns relating to the nature of actual agricultural systems, conservation of rural landscapes, maintainability of rural lifestyles and communities and to the interest over food quality and safety. Having identified the main trends of wine tourism, the paper refers about literature on festivals and events, considering first a general point of view and then focusing on wine sector literature. The literature study allows us to suggest some future lines of research which deals with the necessity of deepening comparisons between different cultures in making festivals and the importance of analyzing local events by means of case studies using the *network stakeholders approach*.

INTRODUCTION

The paramount increase in global demand for tourism over the past decades has been fostered by the strong upgrading in living standards, due to general growing wealth and air travel lowering tariffs (UNWTO, 2011). The travel and tourism industry is rapidly becoming one of the leading economic sectors in the world inducing opportunities of development also in economic sub-sectors such as grape and wine producing. Moreover, in Italy since at least 30 years a new culture of food and wine productions rooted in the territory has strongly increased, changing a lot the consumer behavior and the eating style and habits. In more

recent years – in the last decade – a new tourism market has developed around wine and food, featuring as strong resources of many resorts. Wine and many other typical products became an important element of the tourism market, fostering local economy of many Italian agricultural areas and regions.

In the same last decade, forms of tourism have changed. In a framework of general recovery of traditional types of tourism, after the 2009-10 biennial deep crisis (ETC, 2011), new trends are actually detectable in tourists' behavior, pertaining mainly to short lasting holidays during week-ends, spread of niche tourisms, seasonal adjustment, all items that focus our attention on new social paradigms (Taiti, 2012):

- larger diffusion of environmental awareness;
- demand of experiences in new places and contexts;
- consumer's active participation in self building personal "menu" of tourism occasions, events and social meetings.

The real economic dimension of wine tourism in Italy is almost uncertain and origin of disputes among different syndicates of farmers (Brancaccio, 2011). Nevertheless, we register that some (MTV, 2011) declared that in 2010 the Italian sub-sector wine tourism has a turnover of € 2.5 billion, with a growth projection of the 8% (in term of presences) and of the 10% in turnover for the next year. Wine is one of the most important tourism attractor for foreign people and involves primarily a medium-high segment of consumers, who are specially sensitive both to good bottles and landscapes, gastronomy and cultural heritage.

Moreover in 2010, about 6% of Italians lived tourism experience related to wine and food and wine (about 3 million people) and for 2011 is evaluated that this rate may increase (11%) and affect about 5.5 million of people (Taiti, 2011).

Wine tourism – as a subset of food tourism – has been defined as: "*visitation to vineyards, wineries, wine festivals and wine shows for which grape wine tasting and/or experiencing the attributes of a grape wine region are the prime motivating factor for visitors*" (Hall and Sharples, 2008, p. 5).

In this framework, this paper aims at analyzing the role of Wine Events (festivals) in communicating with consumers and wine tourists and in assuring sustainability of wine producing local communities.

MATERIALS AND METHODS. A BRIEF LITERARY REVIEW.

The literature about the general issues "festival", "wine tourism" and "festivals" is very vast and it is not possible to resume an exhaustive review. Nevertheless, it is impossible to avoid the quotation of the scholarly overview in the field of wine tourism made by René Baretje-Keller in the CIRET data-base of more than 131,000 documents (Carlsen and Charters, 2006) by means of using a qualitative analysis software. The detected thematic groupings, that capture most of the research publications, are five in ranking order (Carlsen and Charters, 2006, p. 5):

- (i) wine tourism culture and heritage;
- (ii) wine tourism business;
- (iii) wine tourism marketing;
- (iv) wine tourists;

(v) wine tourist systems.

Under (ii) are included several fundamental issues such as commercialization, development, management, economic impact, international tourism, festivals, forecasting and cost-benefit analysis. For the aim of this paper, we will focus our attention in considering the role of wine festival in the sustainability of wine producing local communities.

In wine marketing, where finding a point of differentiation is essential, the concept of terroir may offer a strong possibility, as wines of similar organoleptic characteristics show price differentials depending on region of origin (Vaudour 2002, Ditter 2005). Terroir is synonym of local, and today globalization of markets make localism fundamental in economic competition. Studies on localism allow to enucleate the spirit of place as a tool for differentiation. Local groups of actors are working to redefine their local environment, local products and localized productions, and to design their identity as a marketing leverage. Wine is actually a cultural product able to connect local and global, deriving from mobilization of local resources (natural and human) which confer singularity both to the wine itself and to the related territory (Crenn, Téhoueyres, 2007).

The *concept* of terroir has been originated in the French culture and practice of wine production and marketing. Nowadays, it is still largely accepted to define the site specific origin of wines even though the actual relevance of terroir to wine is questioned both amongst consumers and producers. In 1976, during the Paris Wine Tasting a panel of mainly French experts ranked Californian wines over France's best reds and whites. From this time ahead, many wines from the New World – the United States, Australia, Chile, Argentina and South Africa – were increasingly marketed by varietal, like cabernet sauvignon, chardonnay, merlot or sauvignon blanc rather than by chateau or vineyard as in the traditional Old World labels (Whalen *et al.*, 2009, p. 83).

Research on wine tourism and Wine Events has been conducted mainly by anglophone authors who have clearly stated that “*it seems essential that more research is undertaken in Europe, examining what destinations offer, how they function, the relationship of wine tourism to the – in this case well-established – wine industry, and how consumers engage with the product.*” (Carlsen and Charters, 2006, p. 264).

The terroir concept is still important both for consumers, who are willing to discover real qualities of local products, and for producers who are interested in increase value of their products linked to geographical denominations. Terroir with no doubt indicates a demarcation systems that does not operate within a legal framework, but in a more philosophical and viticultural dimension (Charters, 2007). It should be clear that the current use of the idea and its importance for some consumers is a “construction” born in the twentieth century.

The terroir concept is also important in the perspective of sustainability. “*Terroirs constitute a responsible alliance of man and his territory encompassed by know-how: production, culture, landscape and heritage. By this token, they are the fount of great human biological and cultural diversity. Terroirs are expressed by products, typicality, originality and the recognition associated with them. They create value and richness. A terroir is a living and innovative space, where groups of people draw on their heritage to construct viable and sustainable development. Terroirs contribute to the response to consumer expectations in terms of diversity, authenticity, nutritional culture and balance and health*” (Unesco 2005).

As a socio-economic “place” it is characterized by the active presence of both a community of people and an agglomeration of firms in a geographical and historically bounded area. In this sense, following the Marshallian roots, Italian Scholar Becattini (1987) made a specific conception of local development, to be intended as a socio-economic change, has clearly been defined, stating that social and economic changes are organically detectable in the variable shapes of territory. Localities, and selected sets of sites, are actually well localized spaces but, in the same time, living, towing elements as well as the result of reality transformation (Corinto, 2011).

The point is how to make singularities visible to all and how to ensure their sustainability. The Events represent a tool capable of performing this function: however, before addressing this topic, it is useful to recall their definition and classification as reported in the literature devoted to these arguments. Getz (2005) has built a classification of different types of events planned (Fig. 1). The word Festival was defined as “*a sacred or profane time of celebration marked by special observances*” (Falassi, 1987, p. 2) and, as reported in Getz 2010, “*celebrate community values, ideologies, identity and continuity*” (p. 30).

Moreover, Getz (2008) proposed a classification of different events as a function of their attractiveness to consumers, by proposing a sort of pyramid: on the apex of the pyramid lies the Hallmark which “*describes an event that possesses such significance, in terms of tradition, attractiveness, quality or publicity, that the events provides the host venue, community, or destination with a competitive advantage. Over time the event and destination can become inextricably linked...*” (Getz, 2008, p. 407). Even considering only these few references it is possible to look at the Events as strictly linked to the local culture and being strong expressions of local identities. In fact, the close connection with social and cultural values, with a sense of belonging and local identity, is a constant if not in the definition of event in its characterization (Goodland, 2002; Garcia, 2003; Musgrave, Raj, 2009). Precisely because they represent cultural constructs, performing different meanings in different countries and places, they fall within a multitude of studies that refer to the term Festival in a broad sense (Getz, 2010).

Food and Wine Events, sometimes referred to as Hallmark or Special Events, are a peculiar form of events in which the food is to be celebrated. In the literature they were defined as: “*Fairs, festivals, expositions, cultural, consumer and industry events which are held on either a regular or one-off basis*” (Hall, Sharples, 2008, p. 5). Just as Events in general, also the Food and Wine Events produce potential positive and negative impacts. Musgrave, Raj (2009) have proposed a list by placing them in what they call the “three pillar” impacts of Events (p. 5). Positive impacts are manifold: *socially* produce promotional benefits for long-term, increase employment opportunities, promote community development and increase civic pride; *environmentally* increase sensitivity to environmental issues, will help maintain areas for a long period; *economically* produce additional trade and business. Within the economic pillar falls what has been called the primary function of an event as indicated by Hall, Michell (2008), the marketing function, that has the purpose of providing products, sponsors, host communities and other stakeholders with an opportunity to secure high prominence in the market-place, while also adding brand value and building customer and consumer relationships. Among the negative seems to be emphasized: within social ones, the destruction of lifestyle, community apathy and antagonism and unequal distribution of wealth; within

environmental ones, site location and short long term damage, waste and pollution, noise pollution, increase in energy demands and other natural resources; within economic ones, cost of event failure to local economy, inflated price of products, services and amenities.

In the case of Food and Wine Events these different impacts are clearly broadened by the strong connection between food and places of production, involving a number of other economic, political and social concerns relating to: the nature of contemporary agricultural systems; conservation of rural landscapes; maintenance of rural lifestyles and communities, and concerns over food quality. So Food Events are differently and strongly connected to senses of place and community pride in the products they produce (Hall, Sharples, 2008, p.5). In the following section the discussion will tend to deepen the issue of sustainability of events with particular reference to Wine Events.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION. THE WINE EVENTS AS SUSTAINABLE COMMUNICATION TOOL FOR THE SUSTAINABILITY OF LOCAL COMMUNITIES

There are at least two strictly intertwined reasons which deal with Wine Events sustainability. The first is related to the intrinsic characteristics of any event as a communication tool between producers and consumers. The second one deals with the social impact of events, to be intended mainly as a strong social leverage.

In our discussion great deal of attention will be paid to the second issue, tending to give an answer to these questions:

- (i) Why a Wine Event is useful to the sustainability of local communities?
- (ii) Which gears or mechanisms are to be implemented to obtain a durable (sustainable) Wine Event?

With respect to the Triple Bottom Line (TBL) Approach, as a useful paradigm of sustainability, we can put the first reason within the economic research line, and in particular within the marketing thinking and operating. The Wine Event, as a communication tool, aims at promoting both the territory and the food and wine products, by transferring uniform concepts and symbols to consumers: in this sense, we can consider it a *softer* instrument than others. Moreover, it performs also as internal communication tool, which can spread, disseminate and share common values among involved actors, contributing to the increase of sense of belonging (Benedetto, 2008).

The second reason lays within the socio-cultural line of research because, as Foley *et al* (2009) recalls from literature, Events can be viewed as the “social glue” of communities by aiding capacity building and through cementing a sense of place identity (whether a nation, a city, or a neighborhood) (p. 17). Here, we wish mainly underline the importance of Wine Events as social leverage, meaning their role in building and/or strengthening social capital. As stated by McDonnell *et al* (1999) or by Foley *et al* (2009) the benefits of generating shared experience can replace other forms of collective solidarity that have diminished in importance (e.g. trade unions, political parties). We can look at the events as a way of facilitating search and of fostering trust, hence improving social exchange. Since the events encourage the construction or strengthening of social capital, the link between different actors involved in the organization, the community building, they are actually instruments of sustainability.

There is some evidence to suggest that events can allow dialogue and relationships to form across age, gender, social class and ethnic categories that are otherwise very difficult to bridge

(Foley *et al*, 2009). As the theory suggests, events can generate a sense of collective responsibility by encouraging participation in community initiatives, then their potential for long-lasting social value can be realized (Foley *et al*, 2009).

Even if there is a clear link between social capital building and event hosting, yet some distinctions are seemingly to be underlined about how a Wine Event arises and can last over time. Whatever the geographic dimension (national, regional or local) any event usually involves several stakeholders, more or less interested in its organization and implementation. We will consider characteristics and specific goals of involved stakeholders in discussing the Event-Social Leverage Benefit linkage.

In order to organize our discussion, we focus on a theoretical local (sub-regional) Wine Event trying to reason about some eventual scenarios that rotate around the stakeholder which first originated the event and on his/her fundamental purpose.

The main hypothesis takes origin from empirical evidences of real socio-economic scenarios.

Fig. 1. Table of interactions

		Residents	
		Good	Bad
External entrepreneurs	Good	Symbiotic coexistence (lichen model)	Conflictive coexistence with adverse selection
	Bad	Conflictive coexistence with residents expulsion	Entropic coexistence (grasshoppers model)

First we discuss the extreme scenarios. The first scenario (lichen model) is described as follows. The Event originates from the initiative of a local stakeholder which directly and immediately shares experience with the community. Usually, he/she is a local leader trusted by the entire community. It is realistically arguable that social benefits are positive both in building and strengthening interpersonal relationships and in supporting social and economic impacts, as above mentioned.

The stakeholders network could enrich and enlarge over time, modifying its structure and including new outside actors (also aliens), but the network governance will soundly remain under the local community’s control. Thus, the local identity will increase and strengthen as well as the local Event will be durable over time and the benefits will be achieved both in short and in long run. The existing social capital does produce the event through governance choices, led by common aims at collective well being achieving.

The second scenario has quite opposite conditions and namely is a “grasshoppers” model. The event is initially designed (imposed) by an “alien” stakeholder, with no roots in the local community. His/her goal is the maximum economic achievement so that he/r is not interested in building a network of local collaborators and remaining apart from local community.

Local stakeholders passively accept collaboration in order to achieve immediate benefits such as employment and wages. The experience seemingly will not be sustainable, as well the TBL equilibrium; the governance still remains in “alien” hands, avoiding a local social capitalization and producing only some revenue increase, not useful to build a future entrepreneurial perspective. In the long run the negative impact could prevail, *socially* (e.g., lifestyle destroy; community apathy and antagonism, unequal distribution of welfare), *environmentally* (e.g. site location damage; waste and pollution) and *economically* (e.g. cost of event failure to local economy). Local community has a scarce social capital or does not invest it, the event comes from an external design, with no stimulus for the local entrepreneurial innovation and change.

Among the extreme scenarios, and apart the other schematic situations shown in Fig. 1, a set of several intermediate situations is possible. Of these, the following seems to be interesting within our discourse.

We can hypothesize and describe the case of an Event originated from a “good” external entrepreneur, facing a local community which cannot actually mobilize local resources due to myopia in designing its potential future. Thus, we can borrow the definition of “transactional actor” of Crenn e Téhoueyres (2007), but also the concept of “integratore versatile” (that we could here traduce literally as “flexible integrator”) proposed by Italian Scholars on Industrial Districts (Becattini, Rullani, 1993) to define the external stakeholder which designs and implements an Event, immediately including local actors in the operating and decisional network, in order to achieve trust and business feasibility. This behavior aiming at trust producing can promote a sustainable implementation of the Event, inducing a socio-economic equilibrium between negative impacts and benefits in the long run.

CONCLUSIONS

The literature study allows us to suggest a clearer research scheme which deals with the necessity of deepening comparisons between different cultures in making festivals and the importance of analyzing local events by means of case studies, using the stakeholders network approach in order to validate the hypotheses we have considered in our discussion on Wine Events theoretical definition of alternative socio-economic scenarios.

REFERENCES

- Becattini G., 1987. *Mercato e forze locali*, Il Mulino, Bologna.
- Becattini G., Rullani E., 1993. *Sistema Locale e Mercato Globale*. *Economia e politica Industriale*, n. 80.
- Benedetto G., 2008. *Il ruolo della comunicazione nel marketing territoriale*. Paper presented at the XXXI OIV International Congress, 15-20 giugno, Verona. Presentation Summaries: pag. 128.
- Bimonte S., Punzo L. F., 2005. *A proposito di capacità di carito turistica. Una breve analisi teorica*. EdATS Working Papers Series, n. 4 Gennaio 2005. Siena: Osservatorio per il Turismo Sostenibile.

- Brancaccio V., 2011. Turismo enogastronomico 2010 boom inesistente cifre incredibili. Press release on <http://www.agriturist.it/>.
- Carlsen J., Charters S., (eds), 2006. Global Wine Tourism. Research, Management and Marketing. Wallingford: CABI Publishing.
- Chalip L., 2006. Towards Social Leverage of Sports Events. *Journal of Sports & Tourism*, vol. 11, n. 2: pag. 109-127.
- Charters S., 2010. Marketing terroir: A conceptual approach. 5th International Academy of Wine Business Research Conference, 8-10 Feb. Auckland (NZ).
- Christensen C.S., 2009. Sustainability as a concept within Events. In: *Event Management and Sustainability*. Raj D.R., Musgrave J., eds. CAB International. UK, MPG Books Group. Pag. 22.
- Corinto G.L., 2011. Wine terroir concept: some preceding in Arrigo Serpieri's agrarian zone. *Enometrica*, Review of the European Association of Wine Economists and VDQS. Macerata: EUM.
- Crenn C., Téhoueyres I., 2007. Local herithage to singularize a wine torroir: the example of pays Foyen (Gironde, France). *Anthropology of food*. Retrieved on april 2012 at <http://aof.revues.org/index469.html>.
- Ditter, J.G. (2005) Reforming the French Wine Industry: Could Clusters Work Cahiers du CEREN 13.
- ETC, 2011. European tourism 2011. Trends and Prospects. Quarterly Report. Q4/2011. Bruxelles: European Travel Commission.
- Falassi, A. (Ed.) 1987. Time Out of Time: Essays on the Festival. University of New Mexico
- Foley M., Mc Gillivray D., McPherson G., 2009. Policy, Politics and Sustainable Events. In: *Event Management and Sustainability*. Raj D.R., Musgrave J., eds. CAB International. UK, MPG Books Group. Pag. 13.
- Garcia B., 2003. Securing sustainable legacies through cultural programming in sporting events. *Culture @ the Olympics*, 5(1): pag. 1-10.
- Getz D., 2005. *Event Management and Event Tourism*, 2nd ed., Cognizant, New York, NY.
- Getz D., 2008. Event tourism: definition, evolution, and research. *Tourism Management*, Vol. 29, n. 3: pag. 403-28.
- Getz D., 2010. The Nature and the scope of Festival Studies. *International Journal of Event Management Research*, Vol. 5, n. 1: pag. 1-46.
- Getz D., Anderson T., Carlsen J., 2010. Festival Management Studies. Developing a framework and priorities for comparative and cross-cultural research. *International Journal of Event and Festival Management*, Vol. 1 No. 1: pag. 29-59.
- Getz, D., Andersson, T. 2008. Sustainable festivals: on becoming an institution, *Event Management*, Vol. 12 n. 1: pag. 1-17.
- Goodland R., 2002. Sustainability: Human, Social, Economic and Envirinmental Encyclopedia of Global Environmental Change. John Wiley and Sons Ltd., Hoboken, New Jersey.
- Gursoy D., Kim K., Uysal M., 2004. Perceived impacts of festivals and special events by organizers: an extension and validation. *Tourism Management*, n. 25: pag. 171-181.
- Guy K. M., 2003. *When Champagne Became French: Wine and the Making of a National identity*. Baltimore: John Hopkins University Press.

- Hall, C.M. & Sharples, L. (ed), 2008. Food and Wine Festivals and Events Around the World: Development, Management and Markets, Oxford: Butterworth Heinemann.
- Hall, Mitchell, 2008
- Hede A., 2007. Managing special events in the new era of the triple bottom line. Event Management, Vol. 11 n 1-2: pag. 13-22.
- MTV, 2011. I dati del movimento turismo del vino. Retrieved at http://www.movimentoturismovino.it/dati_movimento_it.html. Press, Albuquerque, NM.
- Musgrave J., Raj R., 2009. Introduction to a Conceptual Framework to a Sustainable Events. In: Event Management and Sustainability. Raj D.R., Musgrave J., eds. CAB International. UK, MPG Books Group. Pag. 1.
- Sherwood P., 2007. A triple bottom line evaluation of the impacts of social events: the development of indicators. Victoria University Doctoral Thesis, VUIR, Melbourne
- Taiti F., (a c.), 2011. I nuovi dinamismi di un turismo di tendenza. IX Rapporto annuale. Osservatorio sul Turismo del Vino. Roma: Associazione Nazionale Città del Vino - Censis Servizi.
- Taiti F., (a c.), 2012. La Nuova mappa dell'offerta. X Rapporto annuale. Osservatorio sul Turismo del Vino. Roma: Associazione Nazionale Città del Vino - Censis Servizi.
- UNESCO, 2005. Convention sur la protection et la promotion de la diversité des expressions culturelles, Paris.
- UNWTO (2011). Travel & Tourism 2011. Retrieved at http://www.wttc.org/site_media/uploads/downloads/traveltourism2011.pdf.
- Vaudour, E., 2002. The quality of grapes and wine in relation to geography: Notions of terroir at various scales. Journal of Wine Research, 13(2), 117-141.
Vol. 29 n. 3: pag. 403-28.
- Whalen P., 2007. A merciless source of happy memories: Gaston Roupnel and the Folklore of Burgundian Terroir, Journal of Folklore Research 44.1: p. 21-40.
- Whalen P., White M., Jones G., 2009. Land and Wine, Nature Geoscience 2 : 82-84.